

Milton, appears not to have retracted this after the fall of the Protectorate. The closest connection between the two men would seem to be Barnes's brother-in-law John Oxenbridge, about whom Marvell wrote to Milton in 1653. What we do know is that Barnes read *The Readie and easie Way* carefully. Milton ends his pamphlet in the voice of one despairing of finding a hearer; Barnes kept a copy with him for many years, and drew on it to formulate a new republican project.

DAVID NORBROOK

Merton College, Oxford, UK

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THE CORRECT PUBLICATION DATE OF MARY WELLINGTON'S '1718' EDITION OF *HAMLET*

The title page of the first duodecimo single-text edition of *Hamlet*, which was published by Mary Wellington, claims that the book was published in 1718. This publication date has been unanimously accepted, not just by generations of scholars, but also by research libraries including the Folger Shakespeare Library and the British Library. However, as this note will show, evidence from the eighteenth-century newspapers *The Post Boy* and *The Daily Courant* shows that the 1718 edition was actually published and first sold to the public in December 1717.¹ This is relevant not just for bibliographers, but also theatre historians who are working with the edition in connection to performance. Additionally, this evidence puts into question publication dates for other books published by the Wellington family in the same period.

The title-page dating of the 1718 edition has been followed by many scholars over at least the past century. Henry N. Paul² and H. L.

Ford³ both referred to this date of publication in seminal publications of the 1930s, while more recent scholars including Alan R. Young,⁴ Andrew Murphy,⁵ and Zachary Lesser⁶ have also accepted this date. In my own research so far, I have also followed conventional wisdom and described the edition as being published in 1718 in a recent note in this journal about the Player King and Player Queen speech-prefixes in *Hamlet*.⁷ Scholarly opinions on this issue have been supported by research library catalogues provided by the Folger Shakespeare Library, British Library, and the Horace Howard Furness Memorial Library, in addition to *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, all of which state that the edition was published in 1718.

However, two newspaper advertisements provide evidence that the correct date of publication is, in fact, December 1717. The first of these advertisements was published in issue 4425 of *The Post Boy*, which covers the dates December 5th 1717 to December 7th 1717. Page two of this newspaper contains an advertisement, under the heading 'Just published', for three books that were 'printed by J. Darby'. *Hamlet* is the second of the books to be described:

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark; a Tragedy: Written by William Shakespear. Printed in 12ves, of a very fine paper, and Elzivir Letter. In this Edition Care has been taken to correct the many Errors which scap'd [?] in former Editions, and also to distinguish those Parts of the Play which are left out in the Acting. Price 1 s.

Four pieces of evidence identify this as the 1718 edition. To start with, this was the first single-text edition of the play to ever be printed in '12ves' or duodecimo format. Secondly, the 1718 edition includes inverted commas to mark

⁴ Alan R. Young, *Hamlet and the Visual Arts, 1709-1900* (Newark/London, 2002), 25.

⁵ Andrew Murphy, *Shakespeare in Print: A History and Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing* (Cambridge, 2003), 34.

⁶ Zachary Lesser, *Hamlet after Q1: An Uncanny History of the Shakespearean Text* (Philadelphia, 2015), 148.

⁷ Andy Reilly, 'The Origins of the Player King and Player Queen Speech Prefixes in *Hamlet*', *N&Q* cclxvi (N.S. 68) (2021).

¹ For the purposes of clarity and readability, I refer to this edition as the '1718 edition' throughout this note.

² Henry N. Paul, 'Mr Hughs' Edition of *Hamlet*', *MLN* xlix (1934), 438-43.

³ H. L. Ford, *Shakespeare, 1700-1740* (New York/London, 1935), 71.

lines that are, in the identical wording of the 1718 edition's short prefatory text, 'left out in the Acting'.⁸ Thirdly, the prices in the advertisement and on the title page, one shilling, are identical. Finally, J. Darby is identified as the printer in both the advertisement and on the title page of the edition. It is clear that the edition described as being 'Just published' on December 7th 1717 is, in fact, the 1718 edition.

The second of the two advertisements indicates that the 1718 edition was not only printed in December 1717, but was also already available for sale in the publisher's bookshop by the end of that month. On page two of issue 5050 of *The Daily Courant*, published on Friday 27 December 1717, an advertisement lists a number of plays available for sale at the bookshop of 'R. Wellington . . . over against St. Clement's church in the Strand', including 'Hamlet Prince of Denmark, in 12ves'.⁹ Once again, the duodecimo format of the advertised edition matches the 1718 edition, suggesting that they are one and the same. However, this is not all, since the bookshop itself provides further evidence. 'R. Wellington' refers to Richard Wellington, a publisher who had, according to Terry Belanger, 'died intestate in 1715', after which his widow, Mary, had continued the business before her sons eventually took over.¹⁰ One of the business decisions Mary took after her husband's death was to publish a new edition of *Hamlet*, the 1718 edition, as indicated by the title page colophon, which names her as 'M. Wellington' and provides the same address as the *Daily Courant* advertisement. As such, it is clear that the edition of *Hamlet* described as being already available to buy on 28 December 1717 is also the 1718 edition.

If this were the only edition published by the Wellingtons with a misleading title-page date, we might be tempted to chalk it up as a simple mistake, but this is not the case. Mary Wellington's edition of Aphra Behn's *Histories and Novels*, also printed by J.

Darby, is similarly described on the title-page as being published in 1718.¹¹ In fact, an advertisement on page two of issue 4421 of *The Post Boy*, which covers the dates Tuesday 26 November 1717–Thursday 28 November 1717, advertises the edition under the heading, 'This day is publish'd'. This book, like the 1718 edition of *Hamlet*, has clearly been assigned an incorrect publication date, and should be described as being published in late November 1717. However, this was not the first time that a member of the Wellington family had published books with misleading title-page dates. Mary's husband, Richard, had also published a number of editions of *Hamlet* with similar problems. These editions, referred to in Andrew Murphy's chronological appendix as Q10-Q14, are tricky for bibliographers since, despite clearly being printed over a number of years, they all have the same publication date on the title page, in this case, '1703'. This title-page problem could, perhaps, be attributed to Wellington himself, although Henry N. Paul believes that it may be due to a printer slavishly copying every detail of the title page when commissioned to reprint the edition over time.¹² Whether the responsibility lies with the printer or the publisher, the fact that the date was unchanged over at least three editions according to Paul, or five editions according to Murphy, suggests that Richard Wellington was somewhat relaxed about title-page dating for his editions of *Hamlet*. As the evidence shown in this note suggests, Mary seems to have shared her husband's relaxed attitude and, as such, it may be useful to conduct similar research on dates for other Wellington editions published during this period.

From a purely bibliographical point of view, accurately dating this edition is important in and of itself, but there are also broader theatre-historical implications to the change from 1718 to 1717. Since the title page claims to represent the play 'As it is now Acted by his MAJESTY's Servants', we can now more confidently speculate about which historical

⁸ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (London, 1718), 4.

⁹ The advertisement was reprinted on December 28th, January 1st, and January 6th.

¹⁰ Terry Belanger, 'Tonson, Wellington and the Shakespeare copyrights', *Studies in the Book Trade in Honour of Graham Pollard* (Oxford, 1975), 197.

¹¹ Aphra Behn, *All the Histories and Novels* (London, 1718).

¹² Henry N. Paul, 'Player's Quartos and Duodecimos of *Hamlet*', *MLN* xlix (1934), 369–75.

performances may have a claim to being represented in the edition. The three performances of *Hamlet* at Drury Lane in 1718, which took place on February 1st, September 20th, and December 20th, can no longer be seen as potential sources for the edition. Similarly, while there was a performance of the play on 28 September 1717, it is doubtful how much of an influence such a late performance could have on an edition that would be published just ten weeks later. As such, the most recent performances of the play that can be reasonably assumed to have had an influence on the edition are the three performances of the 1716/1717 season, on 6 October 1716, 12 January 1717, and 8 April 1717. It is by accurately dating the publication of the 1718 edition that we can undertake a more finely-tuned analysis of the connection between the edition and the performances it claims to represent.

As this note has shown, the title page of Mary Wellington's 1718 edition of *Hamlet* is not correctly dated. With the more accurate date of early December 1717 offered by the newspaper advertisements, the edition's connection to performance practice can be explored in a more targeted way. In addition, the evidence suggests that further research into title-page dating of other editions printed by the Wellingtons may also yield useful results in the future.

ANDY REILLY

Université de Lausanne, Switzerland

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PROVERBIAL SOURCES IN SWIFT'S *POLITE CONVERSATION*

As is well known, Jonathan Swift makes extensive use of proverb lore in his work *A Complete Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation* (1738), generally known as *Polite Conversation* after the form of the title found in the Dublin edition by George Faulkner in the same year. This topic has been thoroughly discussed in scholarly articles, and two editions have traced a source for

Swift's usages. A popular version by Eric Partridge (London, 1963) enlisted the impressive knowledge of catchphrases, historical slang and informal speech for which the compiler was famous. More recently the work was included in a volume on *Parodies, Hoaxes, Mock Treatises* which forms part of the Cambridge Edition of Swift (2013). Here Valerie Rumbold provides a more complete register of the known proverbial origins of the phrases exchanged by Swift's fashionable speakers, and cites a wider range of manuals listing a given expression.

In some cases Partridge and Rumbold were unable to locate a precise original, either because the item was absent from historic dictionaries of proverbs, commonly on the grounds that it was regarded as more of a commonplace or familiar idiom than a true proverb, or because no example antedating the instance in Swift could be found. Partridge's well established interest in slang and popular idiom led him to label many sayings as 'catchphrases,' and it is true that much of the dialogue makes use of fashionable conversation-fillers of the day. However, Rumbold was able to find a more durable basis for their currency in many instances. Notoriously, it is all but impossible to make hard and fast distinctions between proverbs, axioms, adages, maxims, sententiae, aphorisms, commonplaces, saws, and other varieties of familiar sayings. Self-evidently we cannot accept the claim by the supposed compiler 'Simon Wagstaff' that he had expunged proverbs from his collection as they were banished from 'all ingenious Discourse' (Rumbold 271). It is worth attempting to sort out the different kinds of usage found in the text, since as Adam Fox has shown that, along with their presence in common speech, proverbs played an important part in serious educational practice and philosophic discourse.¹ The joke in *PC* is to reduce all the expressions, whatever their origin, to the status of banal colloquial counters, which today we would stigmatise as cliché.

¹ See especially the illuminating chapter on 'Proverbial Wisdom', 122–72, in Fox's study *Oral and Literate Culture in England 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000).