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2010

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How to cite

ERNE, Lukas Christian. "Our Other Shakespeare"? Thomas Middleton and the Canon. In: Modern philology, 2010, vol. 107, n° 3, p. 493–505. doi: 10.1086/650565

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:14484>

Publication DOI: [10.1086/650565](https://doi.org/10.1086/650565)

absorbs and reinterprets a vast array of Renaissance cultural systems. What is outside and what is inside, the corporeal world and the mental one, are “similar”; they are vivified and governed by the divine spirit that emanates from the Sun, “the body of the *anima mundi*” in Walker’s correct interpretation.⁵¹ Campanella’s philosopher has a sacred role, in that by fathoming the mysterious dynamics of the real through scientific research, he performs a religious ritual that celebrates God’s infinite wisdom.

“Our other Shakespeare”: Thomas Middleton and the Canon

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To T. S. Eliot, Middleton was the author of “six or seven great plays.”¹ It turns out that he is more than that. The dramatic canon as defined by the Oxford Middleton—under the general editorship of Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, leading a team of seventy-five contributors—consists of eighteen sole-authored plays, ten extant collaborative plays, and two adaptations of plays written by someone else. The thirty plays, written for at least seven different companies, cover the full generic range of early modern drama: eight tragedies, fourteen comedies, two English history plays, and six tragicomedies. These figures invite comparison with Shakespeare: ten tragedies, thirteen comedies, ten or (if we count *Edward III*) eleven histories, and five tragicomedies or romances (if we add *Pericles* and *Two Noble Kinsmen* to those in the First Folio). Shakespeare’s total is higher than Middleton’s because of the number of history plays, but if Taylor is right in conjecturing—based on Middleton’s usual rate of production—that more than half of Middleton’s plays have perished (*Works*, 51–52), his dramatic writings must have been far more extensive than Shakespeare’s.

Nor was Middleton solely a dramatist. Like Shakespeare, Middleton wrote poems: *The Ghost of Lucrece*, for instance, appeared six years after *The Rape of Lucrece*, and, like Shakespeare’s poem, it was written in rhyme royal. Like Ben Jonson, Middleton composed masques, and even more than masques, he wrote civic pageants. Indeed, Middleton was for

This article reviews Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, eds., *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 2016, and *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1183.

1. T. S. Eliot, “Thomas Middleton” (1927), in his *Selected Essays*, 3rd ed. (London: Faber, 1951), 162.

51. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, 227.

the City what Jonson was for the court, dominating civic revels just as Jonson dominated the court masque. Unlike Shakespeare or Jonson, Middleton also wrote prose pamphlets such as *The Black Book*, a sequel to Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penniless; News from Gravesend*, a plague pamphlet coauthored by Thomas Dekker; and, perhaps most surprisingly, *The Two Gates of Salvation*, a theological treatise, unprinted since the early seventeenth century, which explores the relationship between the Old and the New Testament. The scope of Middleton's extant writings, covering the three decades from 1597 (when Middleton was only seventeen) to his death in 1627, is astounding: besides the thirty plays, the Oxford Middleton includes three masques, over a dozen civic pageants, and twenty-two pamphlets and poems.

For every one of Middleton's works, the Oxford Middleton provides a freshly edited text (usually in modernized spelling), a critical introduction, a commentary, and—in the *Companion*—an account of its authorship and date, a textual introduction, and textual notes. The texts are arranged not by genre but in the order of composition, allowing readers to experience Middleton's works in the sequence of their original creation, an experience that makes for occasional surprises, as when *The Two Gates of Salvation* is immediately followed by *The Roaring Girl*. *The Collected Works* and the *Companion* amount to over three thousand pages, in double columns. Given that a number of Middleton's works had received no prior modern edition, and that many others had received editions which left much of the work to be done, the amount of original scholarship that must have gone into the edition during the twenty-odd years of its making is remarkable. It is a pity, though, that much of the work completed by the mid-1990s was not updated prior to its publication in 2007. The chapter titled "Thomas Middleton: Oral Culture and the Manuscript Economy" was clearly written without awareness of Peter Blayney's seminal 1997 article, "The Publication of Playbooks," which disposed of the myth that companies considered print publication of plays in their repertory against their interest.² Several references to the twentieth century as "this century" survive (e.g., *Companion*, 88, 847). And one contributor to the *Companion* regrets that an article published in 1995 "came too late for me to incorporate some of its many insights" (*Companion*, 261).

What must have contributed to the complications in the making of this edition is that a preliminary task of the Oxford Middleton was to

decide what Middleton wrote. The canon of an author's works is usually defined by earlier editions, but the only one that attempted to do so for Middleton, the 1840 *Works* by Alexander Dyce, turns out to have been massively inaccurate. That edition included three plays for which the Oxford editors find no trace of Middleton's authorship: *Blurt, Master Constable*, *The Honest Whore, Part Two* (both assigned to Thomas Dekker); and *The Family of Love* (now believed to be by Lording Barry). On the other hand, the Oxford Middleton includes ten plays—authored, coauthored, or revised by Middleton—that were absent from Dyce: *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *Timon of Athens*, *The Revenger's Tragedy*, *The Puritan Widow*, *The Bloody Banquet*, *The Lady's Tragedy*, *Wit at Several Weapons*, *Macbeth*, *The Nice Valour*, and *Measure for Measure*. Dyce was further unaware of *The Ghost of Lucrece*, *The Two Gates of Salvation*, and the city pageant *Honourable Entertainments* and failed to include several other prose pamphlets and poems. In a very real sense, then, the Oxford Middleton is groundbreaking not simply because it vastly improves on earlier editions of Middleton's works but because it is the first one.

The reason why the Middleton canon remained unfixed for so long is that many writings were not attributed to him when originally published. Four of his plays were published anonymously, as many misattributed to other playwrights, and two only survived in anonymous manuscripts. Five plays he coauthored were assigned to his collaborator, and two assigned parts to fictitious collaborators. Early authorship evidence of Middleton's thirteen prose pamphlets proved even more elusive: many were published anonymously and only one bore Middleton's full name on the title page. All in all, authorship "confusions affected half of his surviving canon" (*Works*, 50).

Given how little external evidence links many of Middleton's texts to his name, authorship attribution in the Oxford Middleton often needs to rely on internal evidence. Indeed, the edition is characterized by great optimism in the belief that the attribution or de-attribution of anonymous plays, or parts of plays, is possible. Those unfamiliar with recent methods of authorship attribution may wonder how reliable the results of such research might be. The ill-fated attempts of scholars in the early twentieth century to distribute anonymous early modern plays among the known playwrights, often doing so on no better grounds than the occasional parallel of rare words or phrases, gave authorship attribution a bad name. Even seemingly more sophisticated, computer-supported research of more recent date has led to results whose inadequacies have become only too glaring. A case in point is Donald Foster's notorious misattribution of "A Funeral Elegy" to Shakespeare, which led to the poem's short-lived inclusion in several complete works until

2. Peter B. Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 383–422.

Foster conceded his error.³ So how reliable are the attributions that underlie the canon of the Oxford Middleton? And on what basis are they made?

The answers to these questions are mostly reassuring. As MacDonald P. Jackson explains, external evidence allows the establishment of a corpus of twelve plays whose Middleton authorship is not in doubt. "More doubtful attributions must be assessed in their light" (*Companion*, 83). From the analysis of the confirmed corpus of twelve plays, tested against "a control corpus of over a hundred plays by all the prominent dramatists of the time and many of the lesser ones" (*Companion*, 84), emerges an "identikit" of Middleton's characteristic linguistic practices, such as certain contracted and colloquial forms (e.g., the rare "gi'n't" for "given it"); "a" as a weakened form of "of"; enclitic "'t" (as in "for't"); "does" and "has" rather than "doth" and "hath"; distinctive expletives (e.g., "push," as in De Flores's memorable "Push, you forget yourself. / A woman dipped in blood, and talk of modesty?" [*The Changeling* 3.4.125–26]); avoidance of a range of blasphemous expletives favored by many contemporaries; idiosyncratic spellings such as "theire" for "they're"; preference of "toward" over "towards"; and an exceptionally high rate of interrogative repetition. Corroborated by further tests in the Chadwyck-Healy electronic database, Literature Online (containing four thousand plays from the medieval to the modern period), the data, Jackson argues, "leave no doubt whatsoever that the 'core' Middleton plays share a highly idiosyncratic linguistic and orthographical profile that is almost as reliable a guide to identification as actual physiognomy—or as fingerprinting" (*Companion*, 84). Building on and confirming earlier work by David J. Lake, R. V. Holdsworth, Jackson himself, and—a century ago—the fine-eared E. H. C. Oliphant, the attributions in the Oxford Middleton generally inspire confidence.⁴

3. Donald Foster, "A Funeral Elegy: W[illiam] S[hakespeare]'s 'Best-Speaking Witnesses,'" *PMLA* 111 (1996): 1080–95. Following the publication of Gilles Montserrat's "A Funeral Elegy: Ford, W. S., and Shakespeare" (*The Review of English Studies*, 53 [2002]: 186–203), and with the publication of a book-length study by Brian Vickers imminent ("*Counterfeiting Shakespeare. Evidence, Authorship and John Ford's Funeral Elegy*" [Cambridge University Press, 2002]), Foster withdrew his ascription of the poem to Shakespeare in an e-mail message submitted to the Shaksper listserv on June 13, 2002 (<http://www.shaksper.net/archives/2002/1484.html>).

4. David J. Lake, *The Canon of Thomas Middleton's Plays: Internal Evidence for the Major Problems of Authorship* (Cambridge University Press, 1975); R. V. Holdsworth, "Middleton and Shakespeare: The Case for Middleton's Hand in *Timon of Athens*" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1982); MacDonald P. Jackson, *Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare* (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1979); and E. H. C. Oliphant, "Problems of Authorship in Elizabethan Dramatic Literature," *Modern Philology* 8 (1911): 411–59.

Many of the finer problems in defining the Middleton canon are related to the amount of his collaborative work. It is by now a well-established fact that most early modern playwrights—including Marlowe, Jonson, Heywood, Dekker, Marston, Beaumont, Fletcher, Webster, Massinger, and Ford—sometimes wrote collaboratively. Even Shakespeare, who was long thought to epitomize individual authorship, shared the writing of a number of plays: *The First Part of Henry VI*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens*, *Henry VIII*, *Pericles*, *Two Noble Kinsmen*, the lost *Cardenio*, and quite possibly *Edward III* and *The Second and Third Parts of Henry VI*.⁵ The proportion of Middleton's shared dramatic writing is even higher, with over a third of his plays being assigned one or several coauthors in the Oxford Middleton: three with Dekker; one with Dekker, Ford, and Rowley; three with Rowley; one with Rowley and Heywood; one with Webster; and one with Shakespeare: *Timon of Athens* (see *Companion*, 86). Besides the plays, Middleton also collaborated on several prose pamphlets and pageants as well as on a masque. Coauthorship seems to have brought out the best in Middleton: contrary to Shakespeare, who composed his best plays alone, Middleton wrote some of his finest plays with a collaborator, including *The Roaring Girl* (with Dekker) and *The Changeling* (with Rowley).

The Oxford Middleton pays much attention to authorship attribution of the collaborative plays, though it does so unevenly. A mere paragraph is devoted to the particularly interesting case of *The Changeling*, for instance. The idea of "collaboration within scenes" (*Companion*, 423)—which challenges the traditional division according to which Rowley was in charge of the hospital plot and the play's first and last scenes and Middleton in charge of the castle plot—is mentioned but not substantiated. For other plays, the analysis is so detailed that much seems necessarily speculative, as when the text of *The Spanish Gypsy* is parceled out into short passages that are attributed to one of the four postulated collaborators, Middleton, Dekker, Ford, and Rowley (*Companion*, 433–37). Yet, at their best, the authorship analyses of Middleton's collaborative texts are genuinely illuminating: for instance, the respective contributions to *The Roaring Girl* can easily be distinguished (Dekker: scenes 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10; Middleton: scenes 3, 4, 5, 8, 11), but the "heterogeneous mix of markers" (*Companion*, 87) in *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore* (formerly called *The Honest Whore, Part I*) allows no such neat distinctions, suggesting that Dekker and Middleton's collab-

5. See Brian Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (Oxford University Press, 2002); and Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor, with John Jowett and William Montgomery, *William Shakespeare: A Textual Companion* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 69–144.

oration on *The Patient Man* was much closer than that on *The Roaring Girl*. The careful work on authorship attribution that underlies the Oxford Middleton thus makes it possible to distinguish not only between what Middleton wrote, partly wrote, or did not write but also between different forms of collaborative writing. "Qu'importe qui parle?" Foucault asked, quoting Beckett.⁶ Gary Taylor and his editorial team give a detailed answer.

The Oxford Middleton amply establishes its author's importance, but Taylor's claim goes further than that. He wants Middleton to be "our other Shakespeare," with the *Collected Works* functioning as "The Middleton First Folio": "*The Collected Works of Thomas Middleton* invites readers to think of our language as the home of two world champion playwrights, not just one" (*Works*, 58). Accordingly, the aim of the edition is not just "a wider appreciation of [Middleton's] achievement" but also "a new understanding of the English Renaissance" (*Works*, 18): "We can now see the English Renaissance stereoscopically, from the perspectives of two very different geniuses. We do not have to choose between them, any more than we need choose Mozart over Beethoven, or Michelangelo over Leonardo da Vinci. We are simply blessed, enriched, by their coexistence, their wrestling with each other and the world" (*Works*, 58). It is not uncommon to think of the English Renaissance as the home to two very different literary giants, but the other one has not been Middleton but Milton, as far back as Coleridge ("Shakespeare became all things well into which he infused himself, while all forms, all things became Milton"), or as recently as Nigel Smith ("*Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?*").⁷ Taylor's argument is reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's famous advocacy of Donne at the expense of Milton.⁸ In fact, Taylor would like the Oxford Middleton to rewrite the canon.

After a moment's reflection, several of Taylor's claims for Middleton turn out to be tendentious and hyperbolic. Granted, *The Revenger's Tragedy* is a fine play, but is it "a masterpiece unequalled in laser intensity" (*Works*, 55)? What about the intensity of Jonson's finest comedies? What about *Othello*? I find it hard to believe that "most critics consider [Mid-

dleton and Rowley] the best doubles team in the history of European drama" (*Works*, 44). Indeed, many critics are probably unable to name a single collaboration of Middleton and Rowley besides *The Changeling*. Isn't the suggestion seriously blinkered, privileging the early modern and the English over everything else? Aren't Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill a superior doubles team? As for the claim that "Middleton was the only playwright trusted by Shakespeare's company to adapt Shakespeare's plays after his death" (*Works*, 25), the real consecration was surely not the choice of Shakespeare's adapter but that of his successor as in-house playwright, an honor that went to Fletcher, not Middleton. And is it true that "Thomas Middleton and William Shakespeare were the only writers of the English Renaissance who created plays still considered masterpieces in four major dramatic genres: comedy, history, tragedy, and tragicomedy" (*Works*, 25)? Many will grant that Middleton wrote fine comedies, tragedies, and tragicomedies, but which of Middleton's history plays is a masterpiece? Taylor must be referring to *A Game at Chess* (the only other extant play that the edition lists as a history play is *Hengist, King of Kent*). But *A Game at Chess*, despite its huge success in 1624, when its explosive topicality was immediately recognized and embraced, is hardly considered a masterpiece today. Its modern stage history is almost a blank. It makes for unexciting and difficult reading, as Taylor concedes (he tells us that Trollope simply gave up [*Works*, 1825]). Its construction is loose, with too many plot strands that fail to cohere. The subtle plotting that Thomas Kyd had introduced to the English stage and handed on to Marlowe (in *The Jew of Malta*) and, supremely, Shakespeare, is simply absent from Middleton's play. Fletcher arguably wrote as fine a comedy, tragedy, and tragicomedy as Middleton did, and Fletcher contributed to a much finer history play, *Henry VIII*, than Middleton did. In fact, some of Taylor's more hyperbolic affirmations could equally be made for Fletcher, though neither really qualifies as "our other Shakespeare."

Not only are we disinclined to go along with some of Taylor's claims, but Middleton's total lack of cachet in his own time is striking. There were hardly any harbingers of Middleton's recent rise to literary prominence. Few contemporaries seem to have considered Middleton an important dramatist, and some were downright disparaging. After witnessing a court performance of Middleton's *More Dissemblers Besides Women* in 1624, Sir Henry Herbert, the Master of the Revels, called it "the worst play that ere I saw" (*Companion*, 186). Ben Jonson called Middleton a "base fellow," distinguishing him from the "Faithful Poets," clearly "a judgement on the quality of his writing," as John Jowett points out (*Companion*, 186, 311). Jonson (1616), Shakespeare (1623), and "Beaumont and Fletcher" (1647) had their works enshrined in prestigious

6. Michel Foucault, "Qu'est ce qu'un auteur," in *Dits et écrits, 1954-1988*, 4 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 1:792, 812. For the source of Foucault's quotation, see Samuel Beckett, *Nouvelles et textes pour rien* (Paris: Minuit, 1955), 143.

7. J. Tomalin's report of Coleridge's fourth lecture on Shakespeare and Milton, November 28, 1811, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 5.1, *Lectures 1808-19 on Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes (Princeton University Press, 1987), 253; and Nigel Smith, *Is Milton Better than Shakespeare?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

8. T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in *Selected Essays*, 281-91 (for the direct comparison of Donne to Milton, see 290), first published in *Times Literary Supplement*, October 20, 1921, 669-70.

folios, while Lyly (1632), Marston (1633), Chapman (1652), Brome (1653), and Shirley (1653) received smaller-format collections. The only collection Middleton received was a modest gathering of *Two New Plays* in 1657. While the resonance of Shakespeare's name was such that a number of publications were misattributed to him, several of Middleton's works were attached to other names. Middleton's *The Puritan* was ascribed on its 1607 title page to "W. S.," and the following year, Middleton's *A Yorkshire Tragedy* was published as "Written by VV. Shakespeare." "Shakespeare" sold, "Middleton" did not. If Shakespeare's canon was basically fixed by 1623, while Middleton's remained unfixed until 2007, this is partly because Middleton's reputation in his own day was such that no one thought it worthwhile to gather his textual remains.

What the Oxford Middleton will bring about, I believe, and partly has already brought about since its more than seventy contributors started working on the edition in the 1980s, is an advance in the dramatist's reputation to that of one of Shakespeare's chief contemporaries, on a level with Marlowe and Jonson rather than with Peele and Massinger. Middleton's rising status can be assessed by comparing two anthologies of early modern, non-Shakespearean plays. *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (2002) includes five of Middleton's plays, three sole-authored (*A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, *Women Beware Women*, and *The Revenger's Tragedy*) and two coauthored (*The Roaring Girl* and *The Changeling*).⁹ This puts Middleton in the first division of Shakespeare's contemporaries, alongside Marlowe and Jonson with four (sole-authored) plays each, well ahead of second-division playwrights represented by two plays (Dekker, Webster, Fletcher, and Beaumont), and third-division playwrights such as Massinger and Ford (one play). Greene, Peele, and Shirley do not even make it into the edition. In 1934, by contrast, the anthology of *Elizabethan and Stuart Plays*, edited by Charles Read Baskerville, Virgil B. Heltzel, and Arthur H. Nethercot, placed Jonson and Fletcher in the first division (four plays), followed by Marlowe, Dekker, Beaumont, and Ford with three plays. Middleton, with *The Changeling* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, is represented by two plays, as are Peele, Greene, Webster, Massinger, and Shirley.¹⁰ This suggests that the rise in Middleton's reputation, which the Oxford Middleton consolidates, is transforming a writer who used to be considered one of Shakespeare's minor contemporaries into a major one. But to claim that Middleton deserves to be considered as Shakespeare's only rival for

9. David Bevington, gen. ed., *English Renaissance Drama: A Norton Anthology* (New York: Norton, 2002).

10. Charles Read Baskerville, Virgil B. Heltzel, and Arthur H. Nethercot, eds., *Elizabethan and Stuart Plays* (New York: Henry Holt, 1934).

preeminence among English Renaissance authors tells us more about the investment in Middleton of someone who has spent twenty years working on him than about the relative stature of, say, Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Jonson, Sidney, Marlowe, Donne, and Middleton.

Taylor's ambition to present Middleton as "our other Shakespeare" is embodied in the form of the Oxford Middleton's publication. Before turning to Middleton, Taylor had worked on the *Complete Works of Shakespeare*, of which Stanley Wells and he served as general editors. That edition appeared in 1986, in one volume, with a *Companion* following the year after, both published by Oxford University Press. The two-volume format, both printed in double columns, is imitated by the Oxford Middleton. Yet in other ways, the two editions are very different. In particular, the Oxford Middleton signals a welcome departure from the theatrical paradigm that dominated the Oxford Shakespeare. The earlier edition—spearheaded by Wells from the center of Britain's theater industry, Stratford-upon-Avon—claimed to present plays "as they were acted in the London playhouses,"¹¹ an editorial aim that has been shown to be as tendentious as it is futile: what have survived are texts, in print or—more rarely—manuscript, and how these texts relate to what exactly was performed is simply beyond recovery.¹²

The Oxford Middleton sensibly privileges bibliographic contexts over theatrical ones, insisting on the physicality of texts, their creation, dissemination, and reception. The change of orientation is particularly apparent in the *Companion*, which—as its main title has it—is devoted to *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture*. Its first part, in particular, is a book-historical treasure trove, and this review cannot do justice to all the fine work in many of its essays. Harold Love contributes a chapter on Middleton and the "Manuscript Economy," Jackson provides a masterful account of Middleton and early modern authorship, Adrian Weiss introduces the topic of "Printing in Middleton's Age" (a must-read for all future editors of early modern plays), Cyndia Susan Clegg explores Middleton's relationship to the book trade, Maureen Bell investigates the publication of Middleton's texts after his death (1627–85), John H. Astington examines "Visual Texts" in Middleton publications (woodcuts, engravings), Jowett provides a detailed account of Middleton's early readers, and Taylor writes the history of dramatis

11. Stanley Wells, introduction to *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), xxxvii.

12. See, e.g., David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 65; and Andrew Gurr, "A New Theatre Historicism," in *From Script to Stage in Early Modern England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 71–72.

personae lists in English drama and incisively analyzes how that history relates to lists in other areas of textual culture.

Another major difference between the Oxford Shakespeare and the Oxford Middleton is that while the four editors of the Oxford Shakespeare adhered to common guidelines, making for editorially unified texts, the Oxford Middleton, with its seventy-five contributors, is a "federal" edition, in which "different editorial practices are adopted for different works" (*Companion*, 19–20). This decision is not first and foremost a matter of convenience but an enabling strategy to make visible the impact of editorial intervention. Some may find it irritating to have one text (the original version of *A Game at Chess*) in original spelling and another text (*Macbeth*) without punctuation. But the former decision makes visible what the usually modernized spelling effaces, and the latter reminds us that punctuation of printed texts is compositorial, not authorial, and encourages readers to explore how punctuation can affect meaning. Besides, those who read *Macbeth* in the Oxford Middleton are likely to know the play well enough to manage nonetheless.

Since the days when Taylor and a few others advocated that Shakespeare revised *King Lear*, a theory he enshrined in the Oxford Shakespeare by publishing two texts of the play, Taylor has been a leading exponent of editing as a profoundly argumentative pursuit. As an indication of just how far we have come, we need to remind ourselves of the editions Fredson Bowers prepared in the second half of the twentieth century, *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, and *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*.¹³ Bowers conceived of editing as something almost scientifically objective; he identified compositors and the sequence of typesetting but provided neither critical introductions nor commentary. Bowers's bibliographer's editions took to heart the statement by W. W. Greg: "What the bibliographer is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks; their meaning is no business of his."¹⁴ Perhaps no editor in early modern English studies has disagreed with this view more emphatically than Taylor.¹⁵ I disagree with the pro-

13. Fredson Bowers, ed., *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, 4 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1953–61), *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1973), and *The Dramatic Works in the Beaumont and Fletcher Canon*, 10 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 1966–96).

14. W. W. Greg, "Bibliography—an Apologia," in *Collected Papers*, ed. J. C. Macwell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), 247, reprinted from *The Library*, 4th ser., 13 (1932): 113–43.

15. See, for instance, Gary Taylor, "Inventing Shakespeare," *Shakespeare Jahrbuch West* 122 (1986): 26–44.

vocative claims that Middleton is another Shakespeare and the Oxford Middleton another First Folio, but I welcome the approach that sees editing as intricately linked to thought-provoking arguments.

The payoff of interventionist editing in the Oxford Middleton may be illustrated with a few examples. *The Lady's Tragedy* (known hitherto as *The Second Maiden's Tragedy*) is extant in a single manuscript from which the editor, the late Julia Briggs, reconstructs two versions of the play: an early one, "as the scribe originally copied it out from Middleton's working papers," and a late one, "with the cuts imposed by the censor Sir George Buc, six additional passages supplied by the playwright, and a range of further cuts, alterations and stage directions added during rehearsal" (*Companion*, 619). The resulting parallel-text edition allows instructive insights into the kinds of changes a play underwent before and during production.

Also presented in two versions is Middleton's *succès de scandale*, *A Game at Chess*. It was performed on nine successive days in August 1624 before the Privy Council banned the play, temporarily closed down all London theaters, fined the company, and jailed the playwright. As a result of its notoriety, the play left more substantive textual witnesses than any other English Renaissance play, namely, eight: six in manuscript and two in print. Into this maze steps Gary Taylor, whose brilliant textual analysis of *A Game at Chess* occupies almost three hundred pages, or a quarter of the whole *Companion*. Taylor shows that the textual situation is not unlike that of *King Lear*, with an earlier, more authorial, and a later, revised and more socialized version, except that "for *Lear*, there was only one substantive witness to the revised text; for *Game*, there are seven" (*Companion*, 847). The revision not only led to additions (most notably the Fat Bishop, Gondomar's special chair because of his anal fistula, and the final episode in which the black pieces are put in the bag symbolizing hell) but also local abridgment, which Taylor, contrary to Howard-Hill,¹⁶ believes to have been undertaken by Middleton himself rather than by the scribe Ralph Crane (*Companion*, 765). Taylor provides not only the first fully eclectic edition of the revised version (on which all previous modern editions have been based) but also the first modern edition of the original version. No other play permits more detailed insight into its early textual history, and no other edition has charted this history more fully than Taylor's.

The inclusion of three plays from the Shakespeare canon is another daring editorial decision that pays off. The presence of *Timon of Athens*, edited by Jowett, will perhaps raise few eyebrows, given that Shake-

16. Thomas Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, ed. T. H. Howard-Hill, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester University Press, 1992).

spare scholars have increasingly accepted that Shakespeare and Middleton collaborated on the play in 1605–6.¹⁷ But *Measure for Measure* (also edited by Jowett) and, especially, *Macbeth* (edited by Taylor) are a different matter. Belief that Middleton adapted the two plays is not new. Jowett and Taylor presented a detailed case for *Measure for Measure* in 1993.¹⁸ As for *Macbeth*, it has been known since the late eighteenth century that two songs identified in Folio stage directions of *Macbeth* (1623) appear in a manuscript of Middleton's *The Witch*, usually dated to 1616 or earlier, and the suggestion—first advanced in 1869—that their presence is the result of interpolations (the “Hecate passages”) that Middleton made after Shakespeare's death has generally been accepted (*Companion*, 384). Yet, given that the affected area in *Measure for Measure* is small, and that Hecate only appears in two easily detachable passages (modern productions often omit her part), most of the plays' editors, critics, and spectators have considered *Macbeth* and *Measure and Measure* as essentially Shakespeare's. Period.

Taylor's approach to *Macbeth* from the angle of Middleton's adaptation takes off from simple but pertinent observations. The play's brevity poses a problem: it has only just over two thousand lines, whereas the other tragedies average more than three thousand. If the extant text has been cut, as many suppose, then the abridgment was probably part of the process that affected the *Witch* scenes, so that Middleton was likely in charge of both. And if Middleton revised the *Witch* scenes and abridged the play throughout, then “it is obvious that he may also be present elsewhere” (*Companion*, 385).

Taylor's textual analysis conjecturally identifies such Middletonian presence in several other passages than those involving Hecate, for instance, in the speeches of the bleeding captain in act 1, scene 2. He further argues that Middleton made major transpositions of passages, of which one resulted in the contradiction that Macbeth knows of Macduff's flight in act 3, scene 6, but is shocked when he hears about it in act 4, scene 1. Taylor also contends that Middleton changed the gender of the three original witches from female to male, thereby reducing casting pressure on boy actors. Based on different kinds of evidence, such as clusters of verbal parallels, the frequency of function words (“and,” “by,” “or,” etc.), the phrasing of stage directions, and differences between the extant text and Simon Forman's account of a *Mac-*

beth performance in 1611, Taylor believes that about 11 percent of the extant text is “Middletonian or mixed writing” (*Companion*, 397).

Taylor's edition of *Macbeth* makes visible the conjectured adaptation by means of a genetic text, with different font styles, added, rewritten, and transposed passages in bold type; passages apparently deleted or intended for deletion and transposed passages in their original location in gray. Jowett's *Measure for Measure* similarly uses bold and gray fonts to represent the play's supposed development from an earlier, purely Shakespearean state to a later one that incorporates Middleton's revision. By making the supposed Middletonian transformations the focus of these editions, the editors justify the texts' inclusion and enable the reader to observe an (admittedly conjectural) process of adaptation. Here as elsewhere, the Oxford Middleton places Middleton amid his textual culture and provides editions that are both scholarly and innovative.

The Oxford Middleton's main achievement, and a superb achievement it is, thus resides in the full and complex picture it paints of Middleton's interaction with so many writers, literary genres, cultural practices, and sociopolitical institutions, a picture that does justice to Middleton's manifold and complex involvements with early seventeenth-century English textual culture. The other main achievement of these volumes is a triumphant vindication of the importance of editorial intervention. Taylor and his team emphatically demonstrate that editors are no harmless drudges. Editing matters, editors, and their choices make a difference. Editions do not simply reproduce texts, but produce new ones and, in the process, advance critical arguments. There is no doubt that, while the Bowers editions will keep gathering dust, the Oxford Middleton will have a lasting impact.

17. See Vickers, *Shakespeare, Co-author*, 244–90; and Anthony B. Dawson and Gretchen E. Minton, eds., *Timon of Athens*, The Arden Shakespeare, 3rd ser. (London: Cengage Learning, 2008), 1–10, 401–7.

18. Gary Taylor and John Jowett, *Shakespeare Reshaped, 1606–1623* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993).