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Review Essay

The Oxford Middleton

LARS ENGLE AND ERIC RASMUSSEN


I. SVEN AND LEIF

*Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* and *Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works* present reviewers with a complex task. This review comes well after the long-deferred launch of the edition and thus can hope to offer narrative commentary on how the books are being used, along with evaluative commentary on how they ought to be regarded. The edition itself is internally diverse, produced on what Gary Taylor calls "federal" principles, which do not aim at the level of formal regularity usually found in one-volume editions that are the product of an editorial hierarchy. The process by which the edition came to be is itself of considerable interest, as a somewhat unusual paradigm for editing and as a bold attempt to raise professional and public awareness of a major underedited author. The authors of this review found that neither of us could pursue a clear evaluative line without being interrupted by the other (and to some extent by himself) with qualifications, caveats, or contradictions. As a result, we have chosen to present this review as a conversation about the edition between two scholars named Sven
and Leif, each expressing views that derive from one or both, in order to get an appropriately rich set of reactions to the edition before the readers of Shakespeare Quarterly. A federal edition deserves a response that does not repress its dialogic tendencies. As we begin we hope, but by no means guarantee, that Sven and Leif will converge on the kind of verdict reviewers aim for, sometimes achieve, and often fudge.

II. The Conversation

Sven

Let's begin by saying some obvious good things. Not only is this the first twenty-first-century Middleton, it is the first attempt ever at a comprehensive Middleton edition, and the first major edition since the nineteenth century. It combines a sophisticated view of the complexities of authorship with a large-scale attempt to democratize the process of editing. It is, in effect, an innovative social project, as well as an innovative textual project. It provides convenient (if weighty) access to all work currently ascribed to Middleton. The Companion provides important general essays, with substantive discussion of the textual issues in each work. While it is not the case with any recent one- or two-volume edition of the other comparably important English Renaissance dramatists—Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe—that the biographical and scholarly materials included in the edition will form the basis of scholarly work on their authors, this is likely to be so with Middleton, and the materials provided do form a helpful basis for such work. It is now possible to teach a graduate seminar or undergraduate lecture course on Middleton far more conveniently than ever before. Moreover, the general reader can feel that some parts of the edition—Gary Taylor's introduction, for example—encourage and provide a basis for nonexpert interest in Middleton.

Leif

Okay. But wouldn't most of these interests—those of students and teachers of Renaissance drama, and those of general readers—have been better served by an edition that was more conventional, more uniform, and less weighed down (literally) with such oddities as an unannotated, original-spelling, virtually unpunctuated Macbeth? Or The Old Law with the notes sometimes on the top of the page? And could you expand a bit about authorship and about democratic editing?

Sven

Let me put the claim as strongly as I can, so that we can then worry away at it. The Oxford Middleton is an edition that recognizes, more clearly than any other I'm aware of, the contingencies of authorship,
editing, and canonical status. Establishing a standard edition of a would-be major author, it incorporates distributed, varied scholarly attention and energy that would normally be the desired result of a standard edition into the process of editing Middleton. A wide array of scholars, drawn from tastemakers in Renaissance studies without requiring a vocation for textual work, has been brought into the edition from the outset and asked to pay attention to Middleton’s merits and, by writing introductions, to make assertions about the interest of Middleton’s writing. Many of the seventy-five or so involved in editing—perhaps as many as half—seem to have done their first editing on this project. Quite a few others (although here we cannot estimate except by the very rough data supplied by the notes on contributors posted at the Middleton web site) ¹ seem to have done their first real work on Middleton in the process of contributing to the edition. Since the volume’s publication, Gary Taylor and Trish Henley have organized another round of commentary in a forthcoming Oxford handbook to Middleton, thus engaging another group of scholars in edition-related Middleton work.

While we cannot ascribe intentions to the general editors with certainty (and John Lavagnino’s remain a mystery to readers of the edition), the extremely broad group of scholars associated with the project serves the large purposes announced in Gary Taylor’s general introduction: that is, to get teachers to raise their estimation of Middleton and to acquire a stake in Middleton studies. The assignment of editions may reflect strategic aspects of this broad purpose. Major plays serving the claim that Middleton is a feminist tend to be edited by well-known feminist scholars; for instance, Valerie Wayne edits A Trick to Catch the Old One, Linda Woodbridge A Chaste Maid in Cheapside, Coppélia Kahn The Roaring Girl. The editors and introducers of major plays that might support a counterclaim that Middleton is a misogynist, like The Changeling (introduced by Annabel Patterson) and Women Beware Women (edited and introduced by John Jowett), do not make this counterclaim.

Taylor first announces the edition’s commitment to variety when discussing annotation in “How to Use This Book”:

This edition aims to make a virtue out of multivocality, illustrating a range of possible approaches to annotation. . . . This edition does not attempt to provide or impose a unified view of Middleton or his works. . . . This diversity

is deliberate. It derives from a belief that authors and their readers are better served by a 'federal' than a 'unified' edition. By calling attention to the variety of ways in which the works of an author may be interpreted and edited, a 'federal' edition celebrates the play of difference and acknowledges the foreclosure of possibilities entailed in every act of choice.

(Works, 18, 19)

LEIF Let me interrupt briefly to note that an edition that is consistent in its conventions may facilitate rather than repress divergent readings by putting the works on a level playing field with each other.

SVEN Perhaps. But I think that it would be unfair to Taylor and his collaborators to assume that by making a virtue out of multivocality they are, post hoc, making a virtue of necessity and dignifying an irregular product. Rather, the edition has been ingeniously organized so that in the process of being created, it begins to use itself in ways that anticipate a variety of subsequent uses.

There is a general view of authorship here, nicely represented by John Jowett's fine essay in the Companion, "For Many of Your Companies: Middleton's Early Readers," a Middleton-centered account of broad issues of early modern authorship. In appendices to the essay, Jowett lists Middleton's publishers, dedications (some by Middleton) to printed books containing Middleton's work, Middleton songs in miscellanies, and known seventeenth-century readers of Middleton (a long list). Jowett also transcribes early marginal comments in printed texts. In the essay, he reflects intelligently on the readers that Middleton's works and prefaces imagine for themselves, as well as the readers, of various professional kinds, that they must have had. Many are also what Jowett calls "textual transmitters" (Companion, 286). These include scribes, compositors, collaborators (poetic, theatrical, and civic), actors, censoring authorities, publishers, adapters, early collectors, playtext commentators, miscellanists, and quotation compilers. In Jowett's account, what distinguishes Middleton, as he was read in the seventeenth century, from other major Elizabethan and Jacobean authors is precisely how he was widely read and yet not strongly constituted as an author:

The Middleton canon had a weak authorial underpinning. . . . Middleton's texts often reached their readers through systems invented by intermediaries, even when, as in the case of [Humphrey] Moseley's project, the system was itself author-based. The transmitting reader was vital in repositioning the individual text for subsequent readers. Most of
them had left the author behind and were thinking forward to their own audience. In this version of transmission and reception, the author's readers are utterly without loyalty to him. (Companion, 312)

Obviously, the Oxford Collected Works intends to arouse readers who are loyal to Middleton as singular author, even though some features of the Works and many of the features in the Companion scrupulously describe how an author acts as a somewhat artificial or contingent center to a variety of indefinitely ramifying networks. Jowett closes with a comment on how he in his own mind lifts the siege of contraries involved here: "This variable and often invisible author as read in the seventeenth century differs profoundly from the author as studied in the modern university curriculum. A 'Collected' Middleton such as is presented in the present volumes depends on an editorial act of willed centripetalism against the dispersive energies of production, circulation, and reading. Those energies might well remain recognized in our own readings of Middleton" (Companion, 312). That is, Jowett the editor acknowledges centripetalism, while Jowett the reader-commentator-scholar disavows it. But he disavows it as an editor, as well: his essay is centripetal in offering an overview, centrifugal in offering an impressive array of diverse examples that pull outward from an imaginary "Middleton." Moreover, the essay is a representative part of "the present volumes," and the edition is distinctive, on the one hand, as an author-establishing and canon-reshaping act of will and, on the other, as an unusually collective and dispersed project that theorizes collaboration and dispersal as the real story about most authorship most of the time. I've been suggesting that we should celebrate the edition's success in modeling this somewhat paradoxical combination, partly by incorporating dispersal and variation in its editorial practices.

I'm grateful to you and to Jowett for complicating and to some degree neutralizing the initial terms in which the edition congratulates itself for its own diversity. "Centrifugal" and "centripetal" seem more appropriate than "difference-celebrating" and "unity-imposing" as overall descriptors of an editorial stance. But I'll argue that this edition would be more useful if it were more centripetal, and thus more like most other one-volume editions.

First, let me point out the importance of Taylor's quite appropriate statement that, while Shakespeare has had a long series of one-volume editions since 1623, Middleton has only gotten one now. I do not think there will be another for a very long time, if ever. Tablets of the
future may shimmer with alternate editions—more probably, editions of particular works than of the complete works—but laps of the future will not be weighed down by alternate large- and baby-sized books containing everything Middleton wrote. As a result, bold variations in editorial presentation within this edition are quite different from bold ventures in the presentation of Shakespeare, because there is no shelf full of editorial sobriety to compare them with. Admittedly (and uncannily), the publication of the Oxford Middleton coincides with the availability of Bullen and Dyce to anyone with access to Google Books, and of course some plays partly or entirely by Middleton such as The Changeling, Women Beware Women, and A Chaste Maid in Cheapside have been successively edited by nineteenth-century antiquarians, scientific bibliographers, and contemporary anthologists.

A centrifugal edition demands more from its readers than a centripetal one, because (as I interjected above) it demands that, in making comparisons, readers adapt to differences in presentation and editorial choice alongside the differences between different plays or poems. Comparing readers must distinguish the former from the latter. A centripetal edition regularizes; a good centripetal edition makes clear on what principles and in what ways it has regularized, so that inquiring readers can backtrack in the direction of a less-edited, messier history of textual transmission. But most readers, especially most new readers, are not inquiring in this way. They no more want excurses on the contingency of judgment from their editors than they want dilations on the uncertainty of diagnosis from their physicians. One-volume Shakespeares characteristically provide genial authoritative guidance in a consistent tone of voice, whether the voice involved is that of a single editorial titan like Kittredge or Bevington or that of a team under the direction of a general editor (and, usually, a stringent handbook of regularizing guidelines involving presentation). Now the editorial guidance provided by Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino, assisted by John Jowett, MacDonald P. Jackson, Valerie Wayne, and Adrian Weiss, presents itself in the passage quoted above as though it were out of the Tao Te Ching:

The Master sees things as they are,
without trying to control them.
She lets them go their own way,
and resides at the center of the circle.2

From the still center of the turning centrifuge, Taylor et alia rejoice as a hundred flowers bloom. If these hundred blooms differed markedly one from another in species and cultivation, I've been suggesting, the result would be undesirable as the sole single-volume Middleton. Moreover, if the Master does not have a somewhat split personality, so that there's a control freak or (at the very least) a quality-control freak at the center, the hundred-flower bouquet will not be harmonious and some of the blooms will disgrace the whole.

But, as I detail below, there has clearly been a good deal of scrupulous centralizing insistence on accuracy in most (although not all) of the works variously edited. Moreover, as one can discern from an attentive reading of "How to Use This Book," the formal irregularities in the edition concentrate themselves in a few key texts: The Old Law; the two forms of A Game at Chess; the unpunctuated, unannotated, original-spelling Macbeth; and several of the nondramatic works that are produced with alternate typefaces to indicate typographical variety in their early textual forms. The editorial boldness of Valerie Wayne in changing the speech prefix "Curtizen" to "Jane" in her edition of A Trick to Catch the Old One is mentioned in "How to Use This Book," alongside the provision of some historical character names in A Game at Chess: A Later Form, but in general the Oxford Middleton maintains generic speech prefixes. (One might compare what Wayne does to what almost all Shakespeare editors do in editing The Merchant of Venice, since both forms of emendation may have some ideological force in shaping the reception of the text by modern readers. Shakespeare editions change the speech prefix "Jew" to "Shylock" when the speech prefix "Shyl" or "Shy" becomes "Jew" or "Jewe" at points in Q1 and F Merchant, but the word "Shylock" occurs constantly in Merchant as a proper name and predominates as a speech prefix. The name "Jane" occurs in Q Trick as part of a deception practiced by Witgood and the Courtesan, and never as a speech prefix. The Shakespeare editors regularize, perhaps with some loss of signification; Wayne emends in order to allow a feminist Middleton to emerge more clearly, as she suggests in pages 375 to 376 of the Collected Works.)

In any case, the variability of editorial practice in the Oxford Middleton can easily be exaggerated. And I think that's a good thing.

Sven

Before you turn to details about the accuracy of elements of the edition, let me reflect on one of the outliers in terms of editorial practice, Jeffrey Masten's edition of The Old Law / An Old Law / A new way
to please you. What is distinctive here is the annotation. Taylor comments in “How to Use This Book” that “the commentary to Old Law, adopting the protocols of recent historicist and materialist criticism, mixes textual apparatus with annotation and photography with type” (Works, 18). To signal the adoption of these protocols (now not quite so recent), Masten’s Old Law prints the notes in a variety of spatial relations to the text—beside a single column of text in its own column (late in the play, rather inefficiently and leaving a lot of blank space, as on pages 1375 through 1381), underneath a double column of text in three columns (standard page-filling practice elsewhere in the Works), and starting on page 1350, occasionally in three columns above the two-column text (also page filling and efficient, but defamiliarizing in its insubordination). The commentary begins in three columns below the variable title with a quotation from S/Z, Roland Barthes’ wonderful book-length demonstration that commentary can be at least as creative as the text on which it comments (Balzac’s novella Sarrasine): Masten quotes Barthes on how “this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds” and how reading “cannot be merely...a parasitical act, the reactive complement of writing” but must instead be understood as “a form of work...I write my reading” (Works, 1335).

It would have surprised me if the notes to Old Law had, like S/Z or the mad commentary in Nabokov’s Pale Fire, exceeded the commented-upon text in interest, and in my view they don’t. What they accomplish, however, is to admit plurality of meaning (and thus uncertainty of interpretation) much more extensively than most notes do or than most editions allow (in this, Masten’s notes are a bit like Stephen Booth’s famous commentary on Shakespeare’s Sonnets). Masten is particularly concerned to illustrate the interdependence of typographical uncertainties and lexical, allusive, and interpretive uncertainties. Masten invents a rather nice word for this purpose. He annotates the stage direction “Enter Creon and Antigone” as follows: “The names recall (not altogether sensically in this context) the tyrant king and resistant heroine of Sophocles’ tragedy Antigone” (1.1.201.1n). “Sensical” is listed in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as a rarely attested old word meaning “sensible,” but Masten’s “sensically,” not in the OED, is an ingenious back-formation from “nonsensically” (compare “not altogether sensical” at 1.1.309n). What many of Masten’s

notes do, often by meditating on the process of modernizing spelling from an ill-printed control text, is weigh what we might call “semisensical” possibilities in editing. Thus, Masten considers not modernizing “tortor” as “torture,” and notes the semisensical possible reference to the Executioner lost by his choice to modernize at 1.1.457n, and he explores the quite sensical range of relevant meanings that lead him not to modernize the Clown’s term “venter” at 3.1.177n. Most of Masten’s meditations on the classical backgrounds of Old Law, especially those sponsored by character names, are semisensical in this way: see especially his long note on the revelation that the Executioner is really “Cratilus” at 5.1.618n.

In sum, then, Masten’s Old Law seems a useful outward tug on the already rather variable norms of annotation in the edition.

I have cast a cursory eye over the first and last scenes of each play in this edition and in so doing discovered that the quality of the textual editing varies greatly. Some veteran editors (Taylor, Jowett, David M. Bergeron) have produced perfect texts, while others (see below) have stumbled. Some of the scholars new to the editing business have distinguished themselves by producing superb texts: especially worthy of note are Douglas Bruster’s Changeling, Coppélia Kahn’s Roaring Girl, Jackson’s Revenger’s Tragedy, and Masten’s Old Law. Otherwise, there are indications of somewhat unreliable texts. In Linda Woodbridge’s A Chaste Maid in Cheapside at 5.1.17, “left” should read “lost.” In Suzanne Gossett’s A Fair Quarrel, “This is” should read “‘Tis” and “while” should read “whilst” (Epistle, II. 1, 8); at 5.1.394, “Surgeon’s Hall” should read “Surgeons’ Hall.” In Wendy Wall’s Microcynicon, the Author’s Prologue, line 19, “with” should read “in”; in Satire 1 at line 95, “greater yet then he” should read “greater yet than he.”

Most unfortunately, some of the texts for which there was a genuine need of a new edition turn out to be the ones that have received rather sloppy textual editing, especially those edited by Anthony Parr. Honourable Entertainments are a mess. In the First Entertainment, line 10.3, for “towards” read “toward”; at line 28, for “began” read “begun” (a particularly unaccountable error given that the rhyme word in the couplet is “sun”); at line 92, for “drunk” read “drank.” In the Third Entertainment, line 7, for “time” read “times”; in the Fourth Entertainment, line 46, for “neglectful” read “doubtful” (one would have thought that the clumsy extra foot in the pentameter line might have tipped off some proofreader along the way). In the Seventh Entertainment,
line 65, for “Thus” read “So thus”; in the Eighth Entertainment, line 76, for “That” read “They”; in the Ninth Entertainment, in the stage direction following line 61, for “Flora closes” read “Flora thus closes.”

Parr’s edited text of the short manuscript An Invention is also highly suspect. Although I have not been able to check the original manuscript, I note several instances in which Parr’s text differs from Bullen’s. The fact that Parr does not collate these apparent variants in Bullen, combined with a sense that Bullen’s readings are often preferable, suggests that the variants were slips on Parr’s part. In any case, the interested reader should note that at line 32 Bullen reads “your noble crest,” where Parr has “yond noble crest”; at line 48, Bullen has “To,” where Parr has “For”; at 57, Bullen reads “through the land,” where Parr reads “through a land”; at 66, Bullen has “the magistrate’s,” where Parr has “the magistrate.”

In the lilting opening to his extensive (279-page!) discussion of the textual witnesses of A Game at Chess, Taylor provides a get-out-of-reading-this card to those “who are prepared to trust anything I say,” allowing them to “skip immediately to Section XXIX, and rest in peace” (Companion, 713). Although I, for one, am always prepared to trust Gary Taylor implicitly, it has to be said that he occasionally makes assertions that are demonstrably false. For instance, Taylor asserts categorically that A Game at Chess “was never entered in the Stationers’ Register, and no seventeenth-century edition contained any indication of author, printer, or publisher” (Companion, 718). This is simply not true. What Taylor terms “the so-called ‘third quarto’” of the play (Companion, 715), published circa 1625, avers on its title page that it was printed “in Lydden by Ian Masse.” Moreover, there is an entry in the Stationers’ Register from 15 March 1654/5 that records the transfer of copyright from Martha Harrison (widow of John Harrison) to John Stafford and William Gilbertson of “The Game att Chess.” (This last may well not refer to the play, but probably should have figured in Taylor’s discussion.)

To take another instance, in explaining this edition’s practice of citing original texts by their printers’ names (rather than using the

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5 A game at chesse as it hath bine sundrey times acted at the Globe on the Banck side (Ghedruckt in Lydden: By Ian Masse[. 1625?]). STC 17884.
standard nomenclature of Q1, Q2, F1, F2), Taylor observes that "because the Shakespeare canon is significantly divided into folios and quartos, we are used to sigla like Q1, Q2, F1, F2"; but, he maintains, "such formulae are unhelpful in the canon of Middleton . . . no work which appears in quarto also appears in folio" (Companion, 21). Again, this is demonstrably false. A Yorkshire Tragedy—which Taylor fully embraces as Middleton's—was published in quarto by Thomas Pavier in 1608 and 1619 and then appeared in the Shakespeare Third (1664) and Fourth (1685) Folios; similarly, The Puritan Widow was published in quarto in 1607 and in F3 and F4 as well.

For the record, I am not a fan of referring to quarto and folio texts by their printers. It seems to me that it's clearly the publisher, rather than the printer, who fulfills the role of "agent" as our modern notions of "agency" conceive it. (Surely Taylor & Co. would be mortified if their edition were to be called the "Rotolito Lombarda Middleton"—after its printer.)

Sven

And I'd like to register a complaint about the way editors' names morph between flesh-and-blood people and mere sigla for the editions that they produced, as in these two sentences from Taylor's essay, on the Huntington manuscript (EL 34.B.17) of A Game at Chess: "The first modern editor of Game, Dyce, consulted this manuscript, and recorded a few of its variants. Price . . . provided the first physical description of the manuscript, but his account has been superseded by Howard-Hill . . . which also provides a complete transcription" (Companion, 714). Not much virtue in that "which."

Leif

Indeed. And may I say that the narrative in the Companion in which Jowett refutes, in the third person, the earlier tentative conclusions made by himself and Gary Taylor regarding Measure for Measure is nothing short of bizarre? "They gave three reasons for doubting Middleton's authorship of the interpolated lines after the song; none of them, however, is compelling. . . . Jowett and Taylor's third reason for dismissing Middleton was the 'general blandness' of these lines. This is poor evidence for an attribution" (419).

Sven

It's no secret that this project probably could have (or should have) gone to press more than a decade before its eventual publication in 2007. For those interested in teasing out the trace elements confirming that the volumes—or at least large sections of them—were prepared many years ago, there's a revelatory bit buried in Taylor's textual essay on A Game of Chess, where he speaks of using an editorial
model that was articulated "in this century . . . by McKerrow, Greg, Bowers, and Tanselle" (Companion, 847). That century, of course, was the twentieth, which ended seven or eight years before the Oxford Middleton came forth.

Let me describe in more detail an instance where the long publishing process may be at fault for an error, but where the basic virtues of the two-volume structure also shine through. One way the edition works to facilitate culturally informed reading is by including a system of cross-referencing. At the end of each introduction in the Works, there are references with page numbers to the Companion. Cross-references also appear at times in the introductions. Sometimes these don't work quite as well as they should. For instance, Stanley Wells's intelligent and persuasive introduction to A Yorkshire Tragedy, a 700-line work dramatizing a 1605 pamphlet, contains the following claim: "Thematically the dramatist's main development of his source material lies in the notion that the Husband's actions result from demoniac possession. This theme was probably suggested by the talons on the hands and feet of the dark figure of an old man depicted beside the murderer on the title-page of the pamphlet (reproduced in the Companion, 130)" (Works, 453). Page 130 of the Companion contains no such illustration. However, John H. Astington's excellent essay "Visual Texts: Thomas Middleton and Prints" prints the title pages of this and a 1591 pamphlet with the same dark, taloned figure, the same murderer, and most of the same victims, but with a good deal more besides (Companion, 229, Figures 4 and 5). On the next page, Astington comments, "as evidence of things in the Jacobean world . . . contemporary woodcut illustrations should be treated very cautiously" (Companion, 230). He continues,

The 1605 pamphlet Middleton used as a source for A Yorkshire Tragedy . . . is a case in point. In the title-page picture Calverley is not armed with a knife, as he is both in the pamphlet account and in the play, but with some kind of cudgel, and his oddly disjoined victims are all the same size: the children are not infants. There is an odd figure with clawed hands and feet emerging from the left frame, and an entirely superfluous dog in the right middle ground—although technically there is no ground: all the figures float in white space. The explanation of this crude and odd arrangement of figures is that the publisher—Nathaniel Butter, who also illustrated plays—has re-used an old woodblock, first published in 1591 . . . . This block,
made for the [1591] book, shows the devilish Ashford father and his hired assassin, armed with an axe, standing over the bodies of three adolescent children. The background shows a dog miraculously discovering a murdered child—a separate incident recounted in the book. For the 1605 pamphlet the old block has been thoroughly but crudely cut down to serve the Calverley story, with which it has no connection at all.

(Companion, 230)

Thus, when Wells conjectures that the talons in the frontispiece may spark Middleton’s enhancement of the pamphlet’s account of the husband’s homicidal depression to include demonic agency, an accurate cross-reference to Astington would show how this thematic development might have come about through printing-house image recycling—a nice instance of the convergence of material culture with authorial meditation. Neither Astington nor Wells seems explicitly aware of this connection between their arguments. I personally doubt that Wells inserted an inaccurate parenthetical reference to page 130 of the Companion into his introduction; this looks like a cross-reference introduced during production on the basis of a hurried misreading of a text search for the words “Yorkshire Tragedy” in the paginated Companion. At any rate, the case suggests what interesting cultural stories lie waiting to be told or retold in the two volumes read side by side.

LEIF

Yet another victim of the publication delay is that Theodore B. Leinwand appears to have prepared his text of Michaelmas Term before Gail Kern Paster’s important Revels Plays edition appeared in 2000—and there’s no evidence that Leinwand made an attempt to update his work (Paster’s Revels edition is not even listed among “previous editions” [Companion, 536]).

SVEN

More generally, the social structure of this edition is quite mysterious to me. There are two general editors, Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino. Taylor is everywhere, Lavagnino nowhere. Taylor edits or is involved in editing ten of the texts, writes the “Lives and Afterlives” introduction (sometimes as “I” and sometimes as “we”), and writes or cowrites four of the major essays in the Companion. I presume, without knowing, that Taylor also performed or orchestrated the vital text-checking function that makes the edition on the whole accurate. Lavagnino’s name does not appear in the table of contents of either the Works or the Companion. Lavagnino’s general editorship may in fact reside in two sentences at the end of “How to Use This Book”: 
Website. At http://thomasmiddleton.org we publish further information relevant to Middleton and his texts, including additional indexes, illustrations, and links to other sites. It is hoped that this expanding site will eventually contain a concordance to The Collected Works. (Works, 22)

So far, that hope is unrealized. There is no concordance, and there are no links to the other sites that make searchable texts of some of Middleton’s plays available to students. No reports on performance have yet been collected, although there is a page soliciting them. In fact, the site is not a hugely helpful one, but for investigators of the edition’s social structure there is, in the “Corrections” page, the tantalizing clue that “MacDonald P. Jackson, John Jowett” should be corrected to “John Jowett, MacDonald P. Jackson” in the list of associate general editors on the title pages of the Works and the Companion. At the head of “Corrections” the following statement appears:

If you notice an error in either The Collected Works of Thomas Middleton or Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture, please contact gtaylor@fsu.edu or John.Lavagnino@kcl.ac.uk.

We will correct the error in the digital edition and in subsequent printings of both volumes.7

What digital edition? Amazon.com says, below its photo of the Works, “Tell the Publisher! I’d like to read this book on Kindle”—Amazon’s standard way of saying that no digital edition is available. Oxford University Press web sites for the United Kingdom and the United States list the paperback editions now available as of March 2010 in Britain and April 2010 in the United States, but no digital edition. So perhaps a digital edition under Lavagnino’s direction is contemplated, but it does not yet exist firmly enough to be mentioned except on the thomasmiddleton.org Web site. No future digital edition is mentioned in the press release from Lavagnino’s home institution, the Centre for Computing in the Humanities at King’s College London, celebrating the Oxford Middleton’s receipt of the Modern Language Association’s 2007–8 Prize for a Distinguished Scholarly Edition. You would think that if a digital edition were in the offing, Lavagnino would have mentioned it while being interviewed there. Maybe Lavagnino handled the digital aspects of preparing the print edition: no small task, but not usually the sole contribution of a gen-

eral editor on a massive project like this one. I do hope a digital edition emerges; if not, I hope a concordance to the Works appears on the Web site. Both would be very helpful tools.

Returning to the social structure question, it may be relevant that John Jowett holds copyright, along with Taylor and Lavagnino, a fact perhaps related to his unalphabetical precedence over MacDonald P. Jackson among the associate general editors on the corrected title pages. Jowett edited, by himself or in collaboration, seven of the Works. He, Taylor, and Bergeron have had a documented hand in large numbers of the editions, with Bergeron focusing on civic and courtly entertainments.

LEIF

One can glean a tiny bit about reception from various bits of information already mentioned or available on Amazon. There have been two printings. Oxford has brought out a paperback edition of the Works, at a much-reduced price. These are positive signs. On the other hand, by comparing Amazon entries for the sixth edition of Bevington's Complete Works of William Shakespeare, published by Longman in July 2008, with the Works, published in January 2008, one can learn a lot. The books are physically fairly similar: Bevington 6 contains 2,032 pages, occupies 196.3 cubic inches, and weighs 5.6 pounds (a density of 0.029 lbs/cubic inch); the Oxford Works contains 2,018 pages, occupies 218.2 cubic inches, and weighs 7 pounds (a density of 0.032 lbs/cubic inch). They differ markedly in price: in February 2010, Bevington 6 cost $70.35 on Amazon; Oxford Works cost $159.20. But the most remarkable difference is in sales rank: Bevington's sixth edition, one of at least seven oft-assigned one-volume Shakespeares I can think of immediately, ranked 11,879 in Amazon sales, while the Oxford Works, the only one-volume Middleton ever, ranked 658,101. The second edition of the Norton Shakespeare, also published in 2008, ranked 4,450. The Pelican Shakespeare, published in 2002, ranked 13,906. Obviously these aren't real sales measures, but the order of magnitude of the difference tells us a lot about what it would take to move from semicanonical to hypercanonical English Renaissance dramatist—also why publishers will invest endlessly in complete Shakespeares and hesitantly and slowly in other scholarly editions.

8 The data cited in this paragraph are derived from various pages at http://www.amazon.com/ (accessed February 2010).
III. Epilogue

Macdonald P. Jackson begins his fine essay "Early Modern Authorship: Canons and Chronologies" by quoting Sam Schoenbaum: ""Those who study plays want to know who wrote them." (Companion, 80). Those who read reviews doubtless have the same desire, and Eric Rasmussen and I should not immodestly require that Jackson turn his formidable analytical skills to the task of determining which of us wrote which parts of this review. Those of you who think that much of Leif, especially the direct audits of textual accuracy, derives from Eric are right (although Lars checked these on Early English Books Online where Eric did not have the copy text to hand, and made some corrections). Those of you who find Sven's commentary on institutional aspects of editing, and perhaps his evaluative tone, Lars-like are also mostly right.

But we should stress that, while this has not been a case where "co-authors, no less than single authors, strive for coherence and unity" (Companion, 87)—we chose this dialogic pseudonymous format specifically in order not to be burdened by that aim—it is also true here that "the compound of two authors may produce an effect different than the work of either author in isolation" (Companion, 88). Each of us has contributed to and commented on the work of both Sven and Leif in ways that would be ill represented by rendering "Sven" as "Lars" and "Leif" as "Eric."

What freed us to comment in this way is the inescapable saliency of the Oxford Middleton. It would be rather absurd to assume that our commentary will tell Shakespeare Quarterly readers whether or not to buy it or order it for their libraries. Serious students of Renaissance drama already own these books. Most may not yet have fully explored their uses, and we hope our account helps this process of exploration along. All surely feel that Middleton's importance justifies this edition and is enhanced by it.