



Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture: A Companion to the Collected Works

John Lavagnino

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Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture is not only a companion to The Collected Works of Thomas Middleton, which every scholar of Renaissance literature will find indispensable. It is also essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the book in early modern Europe.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, on 'The Culture', situates Middleton within an historical and theoretical overview of early modern textual production, reproduction, circulation, and reception. An introductory essay by Gary Taylor ('The Order of Persons') surveys lists of persons written by or connected to Middleton, using the complex relationship between textual and social orders to trace the evolution of textual culture in England during the 'Middleton century' (1580-1679).

Ten original essays then focus on Middleton's connections to different aspects of textual culture in that century: authorship (by MacD. P. Jackson), manuscripts (Harold Love), legal texts (Edward Geiskes), censorship (Richard Burt), printing (Adrian Weiss), visual texts (John Astington), music (Andrew Sabol), stationers and living authors (Cyndia Clegg), posthumous publishing (Maureen Bell), and early readers (John Jowett).

The second part, 'The Texts', supplies the documentation for claims made in the first part. This includes detailed evidence for the canon and chronology of Middleton's works in all genres, greatly extending previous scholarship, and using the latest corpus-based attribution techniques. A full editorial apparatus is supplied for each item in The Collected Works: an Introduction, which summarizes and extends previous scholarship, is followed by textual notes, recording substantive departures from the control-text, variants between early texts, press-variants, discussions of emendations, and (for plays) an exact transcription of all original stage directions. Cross-references make it easy to move between the two volumes.

This authoritative account of the early texts includes some extraordinarily complicated cases, which have never before been systematically collated: 'Hence, all you vain delights' (the most popular song lyric from the Renaissance stage), The Two Gates of Salvation, The Peacemaker, and A Game at Chess (the most complex editorial problem in early modern drama, with eight extant texts and numerous reports of the early performances).

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