



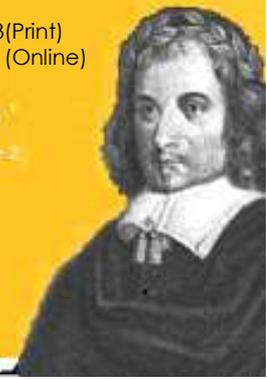
ISSN 1751-5653(Print)
ISSN 1751-5661(Online)

'Here's the book I sought for so'
Julius Caesar Act 4 Scene 2

THE SHAKESPEARE BOOKSHOP

Issue 9 – December 2007

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to our final offering of the year. Keen-eyed subscribers will see that the familiar face in the top right hand corner has been usurped temporarily by Thomas Middleton in celebration of the newly published *Collected Works*, reviewed below. We also have a review of Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger* and the usual round up of new books and special offers. Thanks to everybody who has supported the bookshop in 2007. We wish you all a very merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. Will Sharpe (editor) Adam Sherratt (bookshop manager)

Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works

General Editors:

Gary Taylor & John Lavagnino

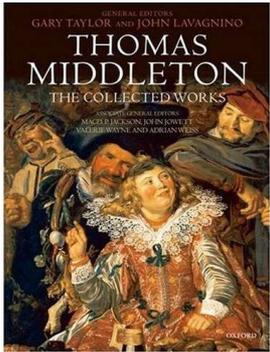
Associate General Editors:

MacD. P. Jackson, John Jowett,

Valerie Wayne & Adrian Weiss

Oxford University Press £85.00

ISBN 9780198185697 Hbk



Thomas Middleton and Early Modern Textual Culture

General Editors:

Gary Taylor & John Lavagnino

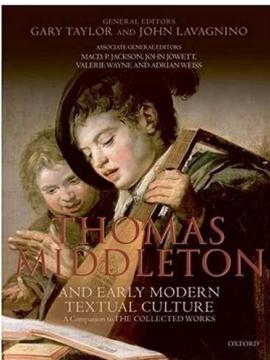
Associate General Editors:

MacD. P. Jackson, John Jowett,

Valerie Wayne & Adrian Weiss

Oxford University Press £100

ISBN 9780198185703 Hbk



November finally saw the release of the long-awaited *Oxford Middleton*, a project mooted and begun shortly after the release of the *Oxford Shakespeare* in the late '80s. Gary

Taylor, the then-wunderkind, who, under the guiding hand of Stanley Wells, and richly supported by John Jowett and William Montgomery, changed the face of modern Shakespeare scholarship in a whirlwind of intellectual energy that is still being assimilated, contested, and built upon twenty years later. Commentators who have taken umbrage with Taylor's precocity have tended to focus on predictable things in their critiques of the edition, disproportionately obsessing over his attribution of the infamous "Shall I Die" verses to Shakespeare, or the fact that the edition adopted – horror of horrors – the first quarto of *1 Henry IV*'s moniker 'Oldcastle' for 'Falstaff'. Yet the former example was a theory that got people talking, while the latter was consistent with the project's quest for Shakespeare's original theatre scripts lying beneath the textual palimpsests that are early printed editions of plays. Insufficient credit has been given in the popular media to the monumental bequest to scholarship that the edition represents, along with its *Textual Companion*, which provided in a single volume a canon and chronology of all the known works, an account of all the doubtful ones, of the apocrypha, full collation for and a textual introduction to each play, and a muscular introduction by Taylor himself on the role of the editor, the principles of editing, and the processes by which Shakespeare's texts have come down to us. In short, it was a heroic, landmark achievement that, like all great works, contained the methodologies that have been used subsequently to praise or critique it, and for editors of Shakespeare there is no other resource like it. And so it is with this edition of Middleton: Taylor has had many weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth for several years now with his continual

assertions of Middleton's status as 'our other Shakespeare', not only in mainstream media circles – usually in his pieces for *The Guardian* – but also in his entry on Middleton for the *Dictionary of National Biography*. What may have seemed like commercial opportunism, making an unfair or even unwarranted comparison in order to boost the edition's sales figures, now looks, on the evidence of the two volumes in front of me, like a deeply held belief. The claim would be scarcely convincing if expressed as a simple boast, a turf-war of words about who's best: rather, the staggering array of timely, original scholarship shows that, for the foreseeable future at least, Middleton will provide a new point of entry to studies of English Renaissance drama and textual cultures. If you go into this hoping to discover a writer who can deliver in exactly the same way as Shakespeare, a playwright by another name who smells as sweet, you might feel a slight sense of disappointment. If you go in expecting to be taken around the well-trodden cultural demesnes of the English Renaissance with the eyes of a newly-landed traveller, you will indeed look on in wonder. Middleton has been given scholarly representation of the kind never before afforded to any of Shakespeare's contemporaries. Even Herford and Simpson's mammoth 11-volume treatment of Jonson (1925-52) provided little more than copious annotation, and failed to get its hands really dirty in the editorial sense by opting for original spelling. In other words, saying Middleton is a genius won't wash; editing him like he is one won't necessarily make it so; but preparing an edition on this scale will force the landscape of the study of early modern drama to change forever. Taylor has been keen to assert that he doesn't feel Middleton is likely to replace Shakespeare, but he

is immovable on the stance that they are essentially equals in terms of what their respective achievements represent:

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 to 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.

Yet we must be realistic about the way this will play itself out across popular culture; Peter Holland's *DNB* entry on Shakespeare notes:

Shakespeare's plays are quoted in every kind of popular film and television programme. Episodes in many situation comedies show how contested the place of Shakespeare is in American or British society as children wrestle with Shakespeare homework, parents quote Shakespeare defiantly, or the school Shakespeare production looms.

It seems unlikely that an episode of the 22nd century's equivalent of *The Cosby Show* or *Home Improvement* will feature the cultural journey of a gloomy adolescent forced into an unwanted lead role in *Hengist, King of Kent*. Yet what Taylor seems to be saying, or, rather, what I feel is the most profitable way of interpreting his words, is that the work contained within these two volumes is set to make us think afresh about Shakespeare's world by forcing us to look away from him and see the wood for the trees. Shakespeare, for all his apparent transcendency, was an early modern playwright, simultaneously bound to the theatre's conventions and its limitations while pushing them down, as his works continually sought to break out (think of the cinematic geography of *Antony and Cleopatra*, or the storms and deities that proliferate in his mature narratives). Through Middleton, another early modern playwright with the same aspirations, the picture comes into a brand new relief, and in that respect he is 'our other Shakespeare'.

This review cannot hope to function as a qualitative assessment of what you're going to get for your money as the scholarship is so abundant, and so new-minted, that the real reviews will be seen in the ways in which it redirects the field over the next twenty years – and it'll probably take you that long to read it – and, of course, in

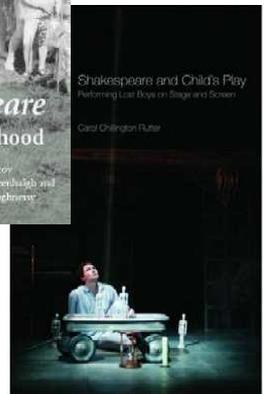
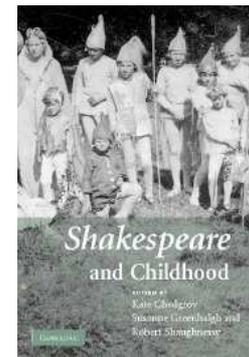
which the stage brings Middleton back into canonicity. Volume one has all of Middleton's works, fully introduced by whichever one of the 63 editors drafted into the project worked on them. With 35 plays, including all of the Shakespeare collaborations and adaptations – *Measure for Measure*, *Timon of Athens* and *Macbeth* – 3 masques, 22 pamphlets and poems, and 15 works of civic pageantry, Middleton was certainly an abundant writer. The whole lot, with on-page glosses, comes in at 1,920 double-columned pages, so please forgive the reviewer for not having a measured opinion on each one at the time of writing. The volume also boasts a seminal life and times of Middleton, an essay on the London he described, and on the theatres he wrote for. The latter two are things that have been written about many times before, but usually with Shakespeare at the hub; by shifting the focus onto Middleton we can only learn more about these subjects generally, and about Middleton's work specifically. For example, through a consideration of the particular staging requirements of his plays – noted as more of a designer's writer than Shakespeare, whose complex mechanical arrangements, like the death-masque that closes *Women Beware Women*, are virtually unrealisable by low-budget black box companies – we can recalibrate our understandings of what was possible on early modern stages, and of how it was achieved. *The Textual Culture* volume is similar to the *Shakespeare Textual Companion*, though as its title suggests it is dedicated to functioning as much more than a repository for all the 'editing' stuff. It is broadly concerned with what Don McKenzie called 'the sociology of texts', boasting essays on tables and lists in Middleton's texts; his authorship; marginalia in the surviving copies of his plays, and what that can tell us about the relationship of a text with its owner in the early modern period; the book trade during both Middleton's lifetime and the interregnum (when many of Middleton's texts first came into print, and a period sorely neglected by scholarship); on oral culture; music; printing; visual culture; reading habits, and censorship, the sheer volume and ambition of new work represented here is breathtaking. Added to which, the remainder of the book is taken up with an account of the canon of Middleton's works, as well as detailed collation of them all – including a mammoth 200-page account of the texts of Middleton's greatest hit, *A Game at Chess*, written

by Taylor himself – it will be the resource to which future editors of Middleton will go first. It is not, I think, overstating the case to say that the release of this edition feels epochal, and the sense of recognition at what it has added, as well as what it will inspire over the ensuing decades, is already palpable. *The Oxford Middleton* is a truly momentous work, and it is now in the hands of you, 'the Great Variety of Readers'.

(Will Sharpe)

Special introductory offer: Buy the two volume set for only £150.00 and save £35.00

New Titles



Shakespeare and Childhood edited by Kate Chedgzoy, Susanne Greenhalgh and Robert Shaughnessy (CUP £55) is a wide-ranging collection of essays examining the representation of children and childhood in the plays, as well as the relationship between Shakespeare and children in print and performance up to the modern day.

Carol Chillington Rutter's **Shakespeare and Child's Play** (Routledge £19.99) more specifically analyses children's roles in recent performances on stage and screen, including Greg Doran's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Penny Woolcock's *Macbeth* on the *Estate* and Julie Taymor's *Titus*.

Shakespeare's Poems edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones and H.R. Woudhuysen (Arden Shakespeare £9.99) features the narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, as well as poems from *The Passionate Pilgrim* and 'The Phoenix and The Turtle'. Look out for a full review of the edition in our next newsletter. In the meantime we're offering the *Arden Poems and Sonnets* together at the special price of £16.00.

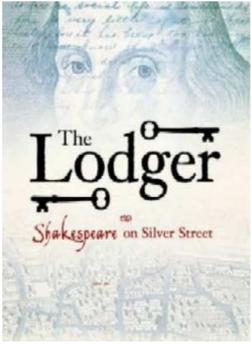
(Adam Sherratt)

The Lodger: Shakespeare on Silver Street

Charles Nicholl

Penguin £20

ISBN 9780713998900 HBK



How do you solve a problem like Shakespeare biography? Charles Nicholl's *The Lodger* starts with testimony that Shakespeare gave at a 1612 claims hearing over a dowry promised by his former landlord, Christopher Mountjoy, a French Huguenot fire and wigmaker, to his prospective son-in-law and apprentice, Stephen Bellott, way back in 1604. Apparently Shakespeare had formally betrothed the couple, though probably came to wish he hadn't. This, like all things Shakespeare, ultimately offers little insight into the private world of the man himself, as all he apparently said, through a notary, was that he couldn't really remember anything, though it is the only record we have of him – somewhat reluctantly it seems – speaking in his own voice. From then on the case has served its purpose in Nicholl's story, feeling entirely wrung out in terms of what it can tell us after a chapter. What Nicholl is really after, using a metaphor of forensic science – which he cleverly rejects, having planted it in the reader's mind – are Shakespeare's slippery coat-tails as they swish out at the back door, attempting to elude yet another biographer. Through the evidence of the Mountjoy's maid, Joan Johnson, we know that Shakespeare 'laye in the house' on Silver Street at the time of the betrothal, meaning we know where he was at a time we can identify:

these documents are a way into the little world of Silver Street, and to Shakespeare's living presence

within it ... His deposition is a beginning: a few curt sentences of reminiscence. From there the paperchase leads on, through the dark streets and alleys of Jacobean London, to arrive at a certain house where a light burns dimly in an upstairs window. After 400 years the traces are faint, but he is there.

He is there. This is quite an aggressive opening gambit, and seems to suggest that if the biography takes as its foundation stone an incontestable fact regarding the whereabouts of its ever-mysterious subject, then any ensuing claims will take care of themselves. Such hedging is rather trying and unnecessary, yet it is undeniable that we are in the presence of a master narrator, determined to illustrate the world of Shakespeare, not panoramically, but through the keyhole as it were (the jacket features two images of keys in case we don't get the point). Another way of reading the image is Nicholl furnishing and feathering the world he paints with the detritus of the everyday. One of the soundbites for his book on Leonardo da Vinci on the back cover praises the way he 'startlingly demystifies his enigmatic subject', and this is clearly what he wants to do with Shakespeare. He is keen to give us the quotidian Bard, sitting in his Silver Street bedroom, paying his rent, dodging his tax bills, and going shopping (Nicholl provides a rather strange and, I think, over-reaching mini-chapter on how the Droeshout engraving is based on a picture that must have been drawn in 1604, showing Shakespeare wearing a ruff he probably bought from his landlord). Yet Shakespeare the artist also gets a look in: Nicholl reasons that Shakespeare must have lived with the Mountjoys 'c. 1603-5', and settles on 1604 as the year of our story. In this respect the book is Nicholl's version of 1599, and though it doesn't encompass the wider political world as Shapiro's did, it likewise anchors itself to what Shakespeare was working on during that year. We see a balding, middle-aged, slightly jaded Shakespeare, slowly pouring his gall into the problem plays – *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well* – until it eventually swells to become the pool of unfiltered venom that is *Timon of Athens*. Even

with *Othello*, the jewel in the crown of this lot, we are invited to think about Emilia's lengthy ruminations on infidelity, and what that might say about what was going on in Shakespeare's head at the time, not only about his own marriage, but also about the domestic setup to which he was exposed daily, between his landlady and her 'crabby, tight-fisted husband'. Apropos of *Timon*, Nicholl also weighs in on the issue of Shakespeare as a collaborator – so prevalent in the scholarship of the last twenty years – adjudging that 'he did not, one suspects, take naturally to it'. He notes that this collaboration with Middleton was 'the first for about a decade, and that for most of his career he was 'remarkably solo'. The book also looks at the trade of Shakespeare's landlord, firemaking, at the history of the Mountjoy family and the plight of Huguenot exiles, and reproduces all the surviving documents related to the case. *The Lodger* is never less than an engaging read, and takes us one small step closer to the man, who has, of course, got away again.

(Will Sharpe)

All Things Shakespeare

Kirstin Olsen

Greenwood World Publishing £25.00
ISBN 9781846450389 Hbk

Described as a concise encyclopaedia, *All Things Shakespeare* is actually a detailed and fascinating reference book. Designed as a useful guide to the world that Shakespeare lived in and recreated in his work, the book is accessible, informative (without being dry) and often surprising too. Its contents range all the way from 'Alchemy' to 'Writing' via a great many entries on well-trodden topics and some more obscure subjects. Everyday life is described through entries on clothing, markets, household objects, business and marriage but more unusual or difficult concepts are also explained. The reader will find entries on the Nine Worthies and the Five Wits, religion, suicide and astrology. Infinitely useful for students, teachers and the interested general reader alike, there is also a bibliography and topic guide with suggestions for further reading.

(Emma Mulveagh)



Owned by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the charity that cares for the world's Shakespeare Heritage.

The Shakespeare Bookshop is situated in Henley Street, opposite the entrance to Shakespeare's Birthplace.

WINTER OPENING HOURS:

TUESDAY – SATURDAY 10am – 5pm,
SUNDAY 12 – 4pm
MONDAY Closed

We offer a 10% discount to Friends of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.
For further information about the Friends, please telephone Ann Wilson on +44 (0) 1789 204016

The Shakespeare Bookshop
39 Henley Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire CV37 6QW
T. +44 (0) 1789 292176
F. +44 (1) 1789 296083
E. bookshop@shakespeare.org.uk
Registered charity no 209302

www.shakespeare.org.uk