

Jesús Tronch (Universitat de València)

"Emending the Middleton-attributed *Timon*"

In this essay, I examine to what extent the attribution to Thomas Middleton of sections of *Timon of Athens* has a bearing on the editorial decisions to retain or emend suspect readings in these sections. In principle, the authorship issue should matter, since an author's *usus scribendi* and analogous readings elsewhere in the author's canon are among the criteria editors usually take into account in the constitution of their edited text. Yet, does it really have an effect in practical terms in the text of the Middleton-attributed sections of *Timon*? Do editions vary if the text has been edited assuming divergent positions as to Middleton's involvement? And if so, to what degree?

To answer these questions, I have analyzed the behaviour of a range of *Timon* editors in their emendations or retentions of readings and compared them in relation to their views of the authorship issue, and to their more or less conservative editorial practice. In terms of their position about the play's authorship, the editors I have examined could be grouped into four categories:

I) editors supporting Shakespeare's sole authorship (Kittredge 1936, Maxwell 1957, Oliver 1977, Hibbard 1970, Klein 2001);

II) editors that are non-committal or silent and have the play advertised as by Shakespeare only (Bevington 1997, Dolan 2000);

III) editors for whom the identity of the collaborator is difficult to determine (Evans 1997)

IV) editors accepting Middleton's collaboration as probable or almost certain (Giddens 2016)

V) editors endorsing and defining Middleton's contribution to the play (Jowett 1986, Jowett 2004, Jowett 2007, Bate and Rasmussen 2007, Dawson and Minton 2008, Connor 2016).

Gregory M. Schnitzspahn (Lesley University)

**Shakespeare, Middleton, and The Anxiety in Fluids:
From Lucrece's "Poor Revenge" to Her "Blood and Tears and All."**

Most critics agree that Thomas Middleton's 1600 poem *The Ghost of Lucrece*—written when the poet and playwright was only about nineteen years old—is just not very good. But this virtual continuation of William Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* affords a unique opportunity to observe the "anxiety of influence" in action. This paper considers *The Ghost of Lucrece* as Middleton's deliberate and self-conscious attempt to fashion himself a poet on par with Shakespeare, years before their direct collaboration on *Timon of Athens*. In particular, *The Ghost of Lucrece* echoes and amplifies *The Rape of Lucrece*'s images of permeable bodies, overflowing fluids, and wild beasts (especially Tarquin as "night-owl"). But while Shakespeare's poem concludes with a stopping of tears and the restoration of order through the founding of the Roman Republic, Middleton's female complaint calls these troubling images of disorder back from the dead and sets them loose. Building on Celia Daileader's assertion that Shakespeare's poem effectively "re-rapes" Lucrece while Middleton's "revenges" and "un-rapes" her, this paper also considers what might appear to be signs of the junior poet's protofeminist sympathies. For instance, Middleton's ghost of

Lucrece takes control of *The Ghost of Lucrece* itself, and it is the female character, not the male poet, who holds the pen by the complaint's conclusion: "Bleed no more lines my heart. This knife, my pen, / This blood, my ink, hath writ enough to lust. / Tarquin, to thee, thou very devil of men / I send these lines." In this metapoetic moment, the same blood that "seems to weep" in *The Rape of Lucrece* becomes the very ink in which the vengeful and raging lines of *The Ghost of Lucrece* are written.

Gretchen E. Minton (Montana State University)

'Revening, or Remembering, the Dead in *The Revenger's Tragedy*'

The strong links between revenge tragedy and memory are well-established. This paper considers how Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* engages with this aspect of the genre in order to question traditional Catholic modes of remembering the dead. The first two sections of the paper use *Hamlet* as a point of contrast. Unlike Shakespeare's play, *The Revenger's Tragedy* offers no ghost as proof of a connection to the world of the dead; deprived of such haunting, Vindice also loses a clear moral justification for revenge. Similarly, whereas Hamlet happens upon Yorick's skull and reanimates it through memory, Vindice's brutal use of Gloriana's skull reveals a crazed revenger who digs up a corpse and forces it to perform unnaturally. In this way, Middleton's play underlines the fundamental meaninglessness of corpses, showing discomfort with the cult of memoria and its attendant rituals.

Because of the differences between *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy's* engagement with the problem of remembering and revenging the dead, Shakespeare the Middleton's *Timon of Athens*, written shortly before *The Revenger's Tragedy*, offers a particularly interesting case study about how the dead are remembered. The final section of the paper explores this connection, showing how the endings of both plays take up the question of epitaphs, portraying them not as stable arbiters of memory, but instead as repetitious and unstable signifiers that frustrate claims that the dead can be made to mean anything.

Mark Kaethler (Medicine Hat College)

"Untimely Revenge: Medieval Resonances in *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy*"

Hamlet is many things, but one possibility Margareta de Grazia offers is the Vice from the medieval dramatic tradition. The character's demonic associations and forms of direct address establish complicity with the audience and lure them into pursuing topical social vices. Although Alan C. Dessen has already shown us that the figure of the Vice is a common element in Shakespearean drama, unlike the Shakespearean characters Dessen examines, Hamlet is arguably Vice-like rather than a fully-fledged Vice.

This paper aims to examine the ways in which Shakespeare suggests this reading through the Ghost's questionable influence, especially given the ambiguous nature of the Ghost's resting place (Greenblatt). Hamlet's likeness to the Vice after this initial encounter with the specter and its allusions to a Catholic afterlife haunt the play. These aspects cause the play to take on what Jonathan Gil Harris calls an "untimely" quality; they evoke the medieval theatrical traditions in order to create textured interpretive effects in the theatre.

Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* serves as an amplification of *Hamlet*'s nuanced portrait of its titular character. As Howard Felperin and others since him have noted, the play mirrors Shakespeare's text in several ways. This paper adds to this critical conversation by exploring the manner by which Vindice functions as an overt characterization of one side of Hamlet, namely the Vice, or what is rotten in Denmark. Where *Hamlet* is a subtle palimpsest that allows interpreters to critique or align themselves with Hamlet, *The Revenger's Tragedy* explodes this underlying dimension, providing us with an early insight of the ways in which *Hamlet* and Hamlet were regarded by their early modern audiences.

Amy K. Burnette (Syracuse University)

**“Origins of Revenge Tragedy in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*
and Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*”**

In an oft-cited article on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*, Scott McMillin writes, “By recognizing the difference between two plays which obviously resemble each other, one learns an interpretative vocabulary that might be true to the processes of textual generation. The parent is inherent in the child, but it is the differences between them that tell the child's story” (McMillin 1984: 275). Building on McMillin's observation, this paper explores issues of origins in *Hamlet* and briefly in *The Revenger's Tragedy*—specifically how these texts articulate ideas about literary origins by developing their own respective interpretive vocabularies, and what this might mean in terms of how we read the plays' relation to each other, their literary forebears, and to ideas about English Renaissance revenge tragedy more broadly. My particular interest lies in language to do with procreation and sterility, and how this language merges with literary, specifically tragic, process. I look primarily at the opening scene of each play, paying attention to specific etymologies and word definitions in an effort to trace how words and concepts related to literary origins develop and accumulate meaning.

Tracey Hill (Bath Spa University)

**‘Partners in the businesse’: Middleton, Dekker, Jonson, Munday, Harrison, Christmas,
Norman, Bucket, Challoner, Wilde’**

The theme of this SAA seminar is Shakespeare's collaborations with Middleton. I want to use that focus as the starting point for an exploration of Middleton as a collaborator in other contexts: with fellow writers other than Shakespeare, with other creative professionals, and in genres outside of the professional stage, such as the royal entry and the Lord Mayor's Show.

Middleton produced a large body of dramatic work across the entirety of his career which was staged outside of the professional theatres. His playwrighting can be dated back to 1602, when he was in his early 20s, and he first appears as a contributor to civic pageantry a year or two later. As in the theatre, he collaborated in this context with a number of peers, including Anthony Munday, Ben Jonson and Thomas Dekker. He also worked closely with other creative artists such as Garrett Christmas, the master carver, as well as with corporate bodies including the Great Twelve livery companies. My paper will reveal the extent of Middleton's creative networks and the varying ways in which he presents himself and his collaborators as part of a collective enterprise. I will then use the 1617 Show, printed as *The*

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triumphs of honor and industry, as a case study to draw out these connections in more detail and to demonstrate the truly collaborative nature of Middleton's output.