

Authors of the Mind

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Abstract

The article is a brief examination of certain issues affecting the allocation of authorship in early modern plays. Such things as spelling variation, transmission and editorial intervention by hands other than the named 'author' could potentially alter the text in ways which are undetectable, thus leaving authorship studies with a number of unresolvable issues as regards its relationship to objective verification.

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There are known knowns; there are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns – there are things we do not know, we don't know – (United States Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, February 12, 2002)

In early modern authorship studies, there is an interest in trying to establish the identity of various authors, particularly of certain key early modern collaborative texts. In our electronic age, we tend to read or analyse these texts in an 'electronic' form. New technology has allowed the textual scholar to analyse quantitatively the linguistic structure and forms of the early modern text and thereby attempt to distinguish between their 'authors'. Or so it would seem. The question might be put: 'but which hand is here being analysed?' For it is nevertheless generally admitted that the process by which early modern play-texts attain print is complex – there are various kinds of hands which have contributed to the existence of each text: the poet/playwright, the scribe, the compositor, the editor, the prompter, perhaps various actors, etc. (not to mention modern editors). Which authorial hands then, are detected by our modern electronic counts and how/by what means might we distinguish between them and, most importantly, by what means of verification shall we know we are right? In order to try framing these questions more accurately, let



us turn to an influential early twentieth century editor of Thomas Middleton. Discussing the Ralph Crane (scribal) manuscripts of the Middleton play, *A Game at Chess*, R.C. Bald notes a significant list of spelling and other changes between the Crane ‘transcripts’ and the Middleton ‘autograph’ manuscripts, including ‘crucial stage directions’ and act and scene divisions. Perhaps most strikingly, Bald goes on to state that:

If only the MSS. had survived it would be an even more baffling task than it is at present to explain why one MS. lacks certain passages found in another, and *vice versa*. The known facts of the production and suppression of the play preclude any theories of alteration and revision for later performances such as critics tend to fall back upon to explain the differences between Shakespearean texts, such as the Second Quarto and Folio versions of *Hamlet*. (1929, 34)

Thus, in this particular Middleton play, a large number of key ‘authorial’ markers and textual details are significantly changed *in manuscript* by a person *other than the named author* – such that were we not to have the evidence here rarely provided by the existence of more than one manuscript and multiple printed texts, our explanations for the existence of these variants/textual details might be very different. We must then consider not only the ramifications for our textual analysis of multiple texts such as *Hamlet* and *King Lear* but our general attitude to these kinds of markers where other evidence is not available.¹ In other words, the case of *A Game at Chess* in having a plethora of evidence which in the majority of other cases of textual cruces is not available, demonstrates the apparent failure of inductive reasoning to provide a sure answer from limited evidence. This is what we might call the ‘black hole’ at the centre of many authorship studies. Given the necessity of editors and critics to determine the origins of texts, they naturally induce theories from the available evidence – frequently in the process using similar evidence to come to quite different conclusions.

A particular problem is the kind of evidence which can be used to mark the presence or absence of an author in a text. Sometimes a *lack* of authorial markers is taken as evidence *for the presence* of an author (or authorial equivalent, such as a *censor*). Yet how is one to count absences? Howard-Hill says in his textual introduction to his 1993 edition of *A Game at Chess* (discussing Q1 [STC 17882] of the text): ‘The *presence* in Q1 of *such distinctive Middletonian forms* as “ha’s” for “has” suggests that the playwright wrote printer’s copy up to *about* IV.ii.63, after which textual links with Crane’s Q3 and the *absence of authorial peculiarities* indicate that he turned the task

¹ For example Trevor Howard-Hill’s 1993 edition of *A Game at Chess* notes the cuts made by Crane to the original manuscript (8).

over to Crane' [my italics] (Howard-Hill 1993, 8; my italics). Note that the Middleton markers here are said to be distinctive when they are present, but that when they disappear, their *absence* becomes itself a marker of the work of the scribe Crane 'about' scene 4.2.63. A brief look at my database of 457 early modern plays reveals that, though 'Middleton' texts often use 'ha's' for 'has', so do multiple texts 'by' Jonson, Shakespeare, Fletcher, Massinger, Ford and Rowley. Moreover, the usage per scene can vary quite considerably. As such, the 'presence' or 'absence' of the particular spelling – which Howard-Hill himself sees as being possibly adapted by the scribe, Ralph Crane, seems *a priori* a weak marker of 'the hand' of 'the author' Middleton (certainly in the case where we do not have other evidence available) since not only is it employed by others, but the use of the variant forms varies greatly between scene, act and play. The fact is that, though we may know that Middleton indeed spells the word 'has' with the apostrophe, we also know that, in many texts of the period, the authorial manuscript attains print via the hands of scribes such as Crane, who may have different spelling habits. Moreover, in the case of most other authors of the period, we simply do not have multiple manuscripts to consult in order to check the differences between 'authorial' text and printed text.

Another example from *A Game at Chess* is that of further emendations made to 'Middletonian' spellings by Crane. In his 1993 edition, Howard-Hill notes the 'clear evidence' of the text's sophistication (in):

Crane's heavy punctuation and the expansion of Middletonian elisions into the 'Jonsonian' form (e.g. 'they'had' (Ind.6) for Tr.20, theyde). There are other occasional textual alterations, apparently made on Crane's own initiative ... Further omissions do not seem to be accidental. (1980, 9)

Note that in this very special case of *A Game at Chess*, in which six distinct manuscript/transcripts of the play exist, including at least two substantive quarto texts, Howard-Hill still uses the word 'apparently' to describe other textual alterations and omissions made to the text he is describing (BL MS Lansdowne 690), whilst at the same time referring to the style of the changes made to the 'Middleton' text by (the scribe) Ralph Crane as 'Jonsonian'. Note particularly the last sentence: 'further *omissions* do not *seem* to be *accidental*' (my italics). Howard-Hill's key terms here are at best imprecise, while his Middletonian text becomes a conceptual minefield.

Let us take another famous example. In the world of John Ford studies, one of the markers of Ford's authorship is the use of the abbreviation 'd'ee' or 'dee' (an abbreviation for 'do ye'). Certainly, some Ford texts have a preference for the abbreviation. However, Ford's texts are not unique in employing it and the counts in each text vary quite considerably. The abbreviation is also

found in the works of several of Ford's contemporaries.² We note particularly the tremendous variance of the abbreviation in both Brome and Ford texts – where some works contain only one or two occurrences, others contain up to 23 (in Brome), and 18 (in Ford). One might expect that were the abbreviation just habitual, the variance between texts might be less. Differences may derive from characterisation or may have been introduced by hands other than Ford's (scribes, compositors etc.). Indeed, even where we have a manuscript, we see how having only the printed text would give us a false impression of its 'authority'. The Ford editor Gilles Monsarrat notes significant differences between two printed texts of the Ford prose work *A Line of Life* in which consistent textual alterations emerge from the *same* manuscript, which are clearly due to the printing house, rather than to Ford himself. We must imagine here how our explanations for the textual changes might differ, were the manuscript missing.³

These examples are intended to show that whereas in the case of *A Game at Chess* we have the evidence of hand-written texts, and at least two 'good' printed texts to compare them with, in most cases in which the question of authorship becomes a concern, none, or very few of the supposed markers can be compared with the actual original papers of their supposed 'author'.⁴ Spelling, punctuation, lineation (verse and prose setting), stage directions, scene and act divisions, title page attribution, all are used in order to attribute printed texts to their 'authors'. These types of evidence are also central in disputes concerning authorial 'revision' and 'bad quartos' such as in the case of the different texts of *King Lear*, *Hamlet* or *Romeo and Juliet*.⁵ However, in these three cases, none other than printed texts exist. Now of course all of this evidence must have a place in our accounts of authorship, but the kinds of certainty which many critical accounts seem to have in their outcomes seems misplaced. Moreover, the kinds of 'author' to which texts are thereby

² Brome's (presumably) single authored works in fact contain the abbreviation more often overall than do Ford's single authored works. E.g. Ford uses it most if you assume that the sections which use it in his collaborative works are 'Ford'.

Brome	SUM = 63
Ford	SUM (incl. Collaborative texts) = 69
Ford	SUM (not incl. Collaborative texts) = 54

³ 'Comparison of the two texts' [of *Line of Life*]: 'There are many spelling differences, each text with its own consistency and usage' (Monsarrat, Vickers, Watt 2012, 553).

⁴ Even in the case of *A Game at Chess*, in which we have authorial papers, we do not know the full extent that Middleton himself 'authorised' changes/cuts etc., in the printed text. As both Bald and Howard-Hill point out, there are sections of the documents which seem to bear the influence of *both* Middleton and his scribe.

⁵ See Taylor and Warren 11983; Petersen 2010.

attributed are perhaps more authors of the critical mind, than authors of the actual printed text.

Let us turn to a more recent example. In their piece for the *TLS*, in which they detected the hand of Middleton in the Shakespeare Folio text *All's Well that Ends Well*, Laurie Maguire and Emma Smith cite some of 'Middleton's favoured contractions, colloquialisms, exclamations, collocations and orthographical preferences' as they had been collected by 'Lake, Holdsworth, Jackson, Taylor, and Jowett' (2012a). One of the contractions cited by Maguire and Smith is the 'Middletonian' abbreviation mentioned earlier, 'ha's', for 'has'. We note that in the 'Shakespeare' canon this abbreviation occurs 205 times, with equivalent or higher counts to those in *All's Well That Ends Well* in purely Shakespearean works such as *Coriolanus*, *Anthony & Cleopatra*, *Hamlet* (F1), and *The Winter's Tale*. Significantly, there are 4 instances of 'Ha's' in F1 *Hamlet's* scene 5.2, but no instances of 'Has', whereas in the Q2 text there are 5 instances of 'Has'. This indicates that instances of the form in Shakespearean texts, are variable depending on the text. Once again, though 'Shakespeare' is said to prefer 'hath' in his texts, similar or higher counts of the alternative 'has' to those in *All's Well* occur in four non-contested Shakespeare texts – *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Twelfth Night*. And so with Shakespeare's perceived preference for 'doth' over 'does': equivalent or higher counts to those found in *All's Well* occur in *Anthony & Cleopatra*, F1 *Hamlet*, *Othello* (Q1), and *Twelfth Night* (leaving out others in contested texts such as *Henry VIII*, and *Timon of Athens*). In actual fact, of the abbreviations listed by Maguire and Smith, there are 'Shakespearean' equivalents, equal or greater counts, by scene, act, or full play to all of the perceived 'irregular' counts in *All's Well That Ends Well*.

The number of irregular spellings of the exclamation 'O' for 'Oh' is also commented on by Maguire and Smith in their *All's Well* article (1012b), where they see higher instances of 'oh' as un-Shakespearean, yet we find the number of 'o' exclamations in *All's Well* fits the 'Shakespearean' norm (2012b). There are in fact a number of purely 'Shakespearean' texts which instead favour 'oh': *The Comedy of Errors* (all scenes featuring the exclamation except 3.1, which shares an equal number of 'O' and 'Oh'), *The Taming of the Shrew* (all scenes featuring the exclamation except 3.3, which has one count of 'O' and zero of 'oh'), *Richard II* (all scenes featuring the exclamation, except 5.3, which has 3 'o' and 1 'oh', and 5.1 which has equal numbers) and Folio *Othello* (all scenes featuring the exclamation favour 'oh'). The issue of authorship here relates to both what counts as a 'Shakespearean' norm, and which texts represent acceptable evidence of such.

To some extent, of course, it depends on what one expects from the evidence and the purpose of counting certain textual features. For example, Jonathan Hope's account of the declining use of the marked 'do' auxiliary (as in 'I do wish thee well') during the late Elizabethan period, is an extremely

valuable contribution to our understanding of the perceptible changes in language usage across time. However, tests of this linguistic trait using statistical measures of varying counts between authors, can be interpreted differently. In their article on Middleton's possible contribution to *All's Well*, Maguire and Smith (2012a) quote approvingly the separation of percentages between Middleton and Shakespeare they find in Hope's account, noting that '13 of the play's 22 scenes fall outside Shakespeare's normal range' [of the unregulated 'do'] yet our own statistical evaluation of Hope's data (with extended counts of the data provided) show that there is not enough separation between the 'Shakespeare' and 'Middleton' groups to provide a firm attributive basis. Moreover, our own function word and vocabulary tests of controversial texts such as *1 Henry VI* provide very different results and interpretations to other scholars who have used similar methods of analysis. Subtle differences of analysis between such studies make for incompatible means of comparison, meaning that the linguistic-statistical analysis of textual authorship has yet to achieve anything like scientific verification. Different scholars use different texts and different (though similar) methodologies and sharing of resources is rare.⁶

The point is that while literary scholars may be absolutely right to point out and enumerate the linguistic features of a text, noting the differences and variations which seem to exist between the different 'authors' of those texts, we must be aware of the limitations and uncertainties of our interpretation of the data. Sometimes the data is simply misunderstood, and the error is easily rectified. For example, following our checks of their article, Maguire and Smith now recognise as simply false their statement (regarding stage directions) that 'Shakespeare's preference is for "omnes" (used as a speech prefix 6 times in *F Anthony and Cleopatra*, once in *Coriolanus*)'.⁷ Our evidence showed that this stage direction/prefix is found in 19 of Shakespeare's texts and with the exception of the high counts in the quarto texts of *Merry Wives of Windsor*; *Contention*; *True Tragedy* and slightly higher counts (8) in *Anthony & Cleopatra*; *Coriolanus* (4) and *3 Henry VI* (3), it does not occur more than 2 times in any other play. The two occurrences in *All's Well* thus seem entirely normal in the Shakespeare canon and it is in fact the high counts which appear more unusual. We note too that the number of 'Omnes' increases

⁶ Our analysis of the perceived collaborative authorship *Macbeth* has been impeded by lack of access to the same electronic texts as the Oxford editors. For our analysis of the 'Do' auxiliary, see Dahl 2004, 200-226. The results of our 87 function words, Principal Component and Discriminant Analysis tests on *1 Henry VI* and other early Shakespeare Folio plays directly or indirectly contradict the results of later studies with similar methodologies, including Craig and Kinney (2009).

⁷ Maguire and Smith (2012b) state: 'we were wrong about the use of "All" and "Omnes" as speech prefixes in the Folio, for instance'.

between *2 Henry VI* (Folio) and *Contention* (Quarto of *2 Henry VI*) and *The Merry Wivevs of Windsor* (F-Q) by a considerable amount (with the Quartos seemingly *adding* ‘Omnes’ directions). This really does not appear to be something we can know that ‘Shakespeare’ did.⁸

Let us take another (not uncontroversial) example of a supposedly ‘authorial’ stage direction. Gary Taylor in his introduction to his *Middleton Works* text of ‘Macbeth’ sees the presence of a ‘Middletonian’ stage direction in the Folio text of the play as evidence of Middleton’s hand:

Holdsworth’s comprehensive survey of English plays written before 1642 demonstrates that the form of the entrance direction for Hecate at 3.5.01-2 – ‘Enter the three Witches, meeting Hecat; Enter A, meeting B – is rare in Early Modern drama, outside Middleton. Middleton uses it 10 times in his undisputed works (including two examples in the autograph *Game at Chess*); in the other 623 plays, masques and shows from the period 1580-1642, it only occurs 27 times. Of those, many come from Thomas Heywood’s plays, and ten assume that ‘B’ is already on stage (which is not true in any of the Middleton examples). No one suspects Heywood here. Elsewhere in the Shakespeare canon, it only appears in a Middleton scene in *Timon of Athens* (1.2.0.20). Shakespeare instead prefers ‘Enter *seuerally*’ or ‘Enter A at one door, B at another’. (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 384)

Taylor’s statement brings up some interesting putative facts. Firstly, he is technically incorrect that the formula ‘Enter ... meeting’ does not occur elsewhere in ‘Shakespeare’ since it also occurs in the Quarto text of *King Lear* thus:

‘Enter Bast. and Curan meeting’

Though not *exactly* the same as the directions in *Macbeth*, we can see that the construction is essentially the same. Next we note that a similar formulaic direction actually appears *twice* in *Timon of Athens* (both in ‘Middleton’ scenes 3.4, 3.5). Significantly, a similar construction also occurs in the Shakespeare Folio text of *Henry VIII* (in 4.1, a scene commonly attributed to Fletcher). Thus in ‘Shakespeare’, the formula occurs four times (though three times in scenes attributed to other authors). It also occurs once in the 3rd Folio text *Sir John Oldcastle* (attributed on the title page to Shakespeare, but commonly attributed, thanks to records in *Henslowe’s Diary*, to Munday, Drayton, Hathaway and Wilson). Outside of Shakespeare, as Taylor suggests, the stage direction is rare though is most common in *Heywood*, but also appears in texts attributed to Dekker, Rowley, Massinger and ‘Anonymous’. Thus while the presence of the

⁸ The single instances in *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *The Merry Wivevs of Windsor* (Q) of ‘All’ are in fact ‘Enter All’.

stage direction ‘Enter ... meeting’ in the Middleton autograph manuscript of *A Game at Chess* and its frequency in other texts attributed to Middleton certainly seems to link it with his authorship, it is not linked with his hand in any exclusive sense. Significantly, the scribal redaction of *A Game at Chess* by Ralph Crane actually *removes* at least one ‘Enter ... meeting’ from the text:

In Ar. [Archidall-Folger Ns. V.a. 231] the initial entrance for V.i starts ‘... (*Lowd Musick*) [*Litter.*] Enter Bl. King ... & Bl Knight: meeting ...’ where Middleton’s own Tr. Manuscript reads ‘Musique Enter the Black Knight/in his Litter! ...’ (Tr. 2002-3). (Howard-Hill 1993, 3)

This shows something a little different in the process of transmission of the ‘Enter...meeting’ formula. Namely that we may be missing instances which may have originally occurred in other texts of the period, but were removed (for whatever reason) by the text’s scribes. Moreover, since *Macbeth* was (according to Taylor) a text created from a prompt book by an unidentified scribe, with a text which ‘most closely resembles *All is True* [*Henry VIII*, a collaboration with Fletcher], how many of the text’s features might we assume are derived from autograph? Indeed does this not present a link with Fletcher as well as Middleton?’ (cf. *Henry VIII*). Clearly the ‘Enter...Meeting’ formula is rarer in ‘Shakespeare’ texts than Middleton – but can we rightly assume that the presence of the stage direction in *Macbeth* is evidence *for* Middleton (since ‘Shakespeare’ does use it) and deduce from the absence of the direction from the majority of ‘Shakespeare’s’ texts that he did not use it more in manuscript? Since it is also extremely rare in Dekker, Massinger, Fletcher etc., must we assume that their texts also only used the form once or twice from a mere twinge of instinct – or like the apparent removal of the formula from the Middleton transcript of *A Game at Chess* by Ralph Crane, may we not suspect that scribal redactions contain more or less numbers of the formula depending on the will of the scribe? As such, given that, as Taylor states, the text of Folio *Macbeth* was created by an unknown scribe, perhaps the presence there of two instances of the ‘Enter...meeting’ formula, was merely a fortuitous preservation or textual addition. The question is, how could we know for sure?⁹

The issue of the absence of ‘authorial’ evidence is even more acute in the Middleton-Rowley-Ford-Dekker collaboration, *The Spanish Gypsy*. In his text of the play, Taylor inserts ‘Middletonian’ oaths, which he believes to have been removed from the published texts by the censor (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a,

⁹ See Sandra Clark’s helpful analysis of the debate surrounding the ‘Enter ... meeting’ stage direction in the new Arden edition of *Macbeth* (Clark and Mason 2015). It should be noted that a limitation on the verification of data concerning the Middleton canon is the restricted access allowed to the Oxford Middleton Works electronic text database. Until this database can be freely examined by other scholars, assertions concerning its relationship to the Shakespeare canon cannot be objectively verified.

1105). Sensing the presence of Middleton in several key passages, but detecting few of his traditional textual markers in the text, Taylor attempts to aid his readers by ‘restoring’ those Middleton features which he supposes have been removed. This attempt to remake the text is of course particularly striking, since it demonstrates a key area of contention in the philosophy of editorial practice. What constitutes the ‘best’ text of a work? Which is the most ‘authentic’ version of a work? How is this ‘authenticity’ to be determined? And so on. Yet we should notice how these questions can lead to conflicting concerns for editors and readers. If one is looking for the presence of ‘Middleton’ in *Macbeth* or *The Spanish Gypsy*, as Taylor’s quote states above, where another author (such as Heywood for instance) is not suspected, then one seeks out positive evidence *for* that author, but also perhaps (as in the case of the Middleton oaths) evidence of his absence, where his presence had been assumed. Amazingly, given how much emphasis Taylor appears to put on the presence of the ‘Enter ... meeting’ formula in the Middleton autograph text (and his ignoring of the removal of one of them in the Crane transcription) he elsewhere states that ‘speech directions (“aside”, “to X”, “aloud”) ... almost never occur in contemporary manuscripts’ (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 691). Thus it would seem that Taylor at once disclaims and upholds the power of seldom occurring variables to provide evidence of an author’s hand. Yet detecting the *presence* of features itself falls into question, since the argument *for* becomes circular. Again, if there is no external qualifier of the evidence *for lack* (as in the case where no other texts of the work exist) then unlike in the case of *A Game at Chess* (where the absence of an ‘Enter ... meeting’ formula can be seen in the transcribed version of the text when compared to the autograph copy), the absence can also only be verified by the presence somewhere else of positive evidence for its having been there, which in the case of *The Spanish Gypsy* cannot be done.

Interestingly, though Taylor uses traditional measures of Middleton’s language (such as those provided by Lake, Hoy etc.) to detect Middleton’s hand in both *Macbeth* and *The Spanish Gypsy*, in his edition of the Middleton Works, he appears to dismiss much of this evidence in the case of Shakespeare:

Spelling produces a more intractable editorial problem. Punctuation and certain kinds of stage direction can be entirely eliminated; but words *have* to be spelled, one way or another. The spelling of [the 1623 Folio] like its punctuation, is primarily compositorial, and to a less extent scribal. (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 691)¹⁰

In his account of *Macbeth*, however, Taylor attempts to contrast the linguistic features found in the text, according to divisions of authorship, which are founded entirely in the one existing First Folio version of the text, which he also believes to

¹⁰ Nb. It is thought the spelling ‘scilens’ which only appears in the manuscript of *Sir Thomas More*, and the Quarto text of *2 Henry IV* is Shakespeare’s own. See Jackson 2007.

have been ‘almost certainly not in the handwriting of Shakespeare or Middleton’ (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 691). In other words, though there are only inductive ways of verifying the textual features contained in the text as authorial; even though he himself thinks the text of the work which went to print was *not* in the author’s hand; and even though there is no way of checking the absences and presences of certain textual features by comparison with a manuscript (or even printed quarto) since none exists, Taylor’s authorship attribution goes ahead nonetheless. In another good example of this double sided thinking, Stanley Wells, running out of ideas as to how to explain ‘inexact’ character identifications and stage directions in the (Folio only) Shakespeare text *Measure for Measure* (and following Taylor and Jowett’s case for the play’s collaborative origins), speculates rather wildly that Middleton and Shakespeare may ‘not have been entirely happy; indeed it is quite likely that they gave it up as a bad job before the play was complete’ (Wells 2008, 187). It is interesting to think how one might scientifically ascertain the exact nature of Shakespeare’s feelings on this matter.

The wider problem seems to lie in the *structure* of many authorship and editorial methodologies, in that there is no way of qualifying the sufficiency/significance of each argumentative strand. For example, let us say there are 10 main argumentative strands *for* the presence of Thomas Nashe’s hand in the Shakespeare First Folio play, *The First Part of Henry the Sixth*. How many of these strands are necessary or sufficient to prove or refute the case? In all the pieces written on the co-authorship of this play (with many different candidates suggested, including Shakespeare, Nashe, Marlowe, Greene, Kyd and Peele – in fact, all the main playwrights of the period) it is still unclear which evidence might be most significant to proving the case for each collaborator or perhaps most importantly, disproving it.¹¹ For instance, the varying use of ‘o’ and ‘oh’ in

¹¹ In our own marked up text of the play, using a plagiarism analysis of all related authorship contenders, linguistic links with Marlowe appear to be the strongest. This does not necessarily mean that Marlowe was the author of the text. For a copy of the marked up text of *1 Henry VI* showing all matches, please contact Marcus Dahl.

***1 Henry VI* Rare Phrase Matches with 7 author groups**

%	Author Group	Phrase Count	WC
0.026172	Marlowe	37	141373
0.02403	Shakes (including <i>Ed.III</i>)	207	861429
0.022111	Greene	69	312063
0.019599	Lodge	21	107150
0.016073	Kyd	20	113566
0.010648	Nashe	22	202612
0.009668	Peele	7	72401

exclamations in the different parts of the play is taken by some commentators to be indicative of different hands in the text. Yet, if there may be some doubt as to the meaning of this particular bit of evidence (as we have seen above in the case of *All's Well*), how significant would the removal of it be from the case for variant hands in *1 Henry VI*? Again, it seems that the evidence itself can be interpreted differently depending on the context. For example, Taylor and Jowett, explaining the 'striking disparity between the use of "o" and "oh" in the two halves of the book' of the Quarto *Richard III*, think it 'clear' that 'either ... the two printers were working from different kinds of copy, or that one shop altered the preference of its copy'. Explaining the 'alternating' pattern of 'O' and 'Oh' in the same text, Taylor and Jowett, avoid following Jackson's suggestion of variant copy and suggest that the text is more likely from 'memorial reconstruction' *and hence provides dubious evidence of Shakespeare's own spelling preferences*' (Taylor and Jowett 1993, 248, 259; my italics). So, whereas in one text (*1 Henry VI*) the change of spelling forms is seen as evidence for the change of authors, in another text (Q *Richard III*) it is regarded as dubious evidence of authorship. This seems merely inconsistent use of evidence.

In *1 Henry VI*, the use of variant names for the character of 'Joan la Pucelle' and the inconsistent naming of the Bishop of Winchester/Cardinal (the so-called 'Cardinal's Hat Dilemma'), is seen as indicative by most commentators, of various authorial hands. Yet one bit of the evidence for Middleton's (unassisted) hand in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is the use of *variant* numbering of character prefixes, which matches his practice in plays such as *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, *Five Gallants* and *The Phoenix*. As George Price points out, 'Middleton uses 1 and 2 for different pairs of persons in the same scene' (1960, 266). Another example of inconsistent character prefixes in an apparently solo authored play is the various naming of Edmond as 'bastard' or 'Edm' in Folio *King Lear*. Perhaps the most famous example of a character name change in a text nevertheless thought to be by a single author is in

***1 Henry VI* All Footnoted Phrase Matches 7 author groups**

%	Author	Phrase Count	WC
0.046685	Marlowe	66	141373
0.03738	Shake (with <i>Ed.III</i>)	326	861429
0.031404	Greene	98	312063
0.028932	Kyd	36	113566
0.020532	Lodge	22	107150
0.016574	Peele	12	72401
0.016456	Nashe	34	202612

Munday's *Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntington*, in which the heroine of the play is referred to as Maid Marian for the first 781 lines, and Matilda for the remainder.¹² Thus we see how similar kinds of evidence can be seen in different types of text, to mean different things for different arguments. Variant and changeable character names in the 'Munday' texts of *Death* and *Downfall* are acceptable to some scholars as entirely consistent with single authorship and the loose use of numbered speech headings in *The Revenger's Tragedy* is seen to link the text with Middleton's solo practice. Elsewhere, however, the similarly variable use of speech headings/character names (as in *1 Henry VI*) is interpreted as a distinct sign of multiple authors. Where multiple hands are suspected, the existence of variant copy from a single hand is rejected:¹³

In the Brome manuscript play *The English Moor* several speakers are mis-identified and speaker's names are omitted, but since clearly the errors are in the manuscript, their origin cannot be ascribed to the compositors, though whether they derive from Brome himself, or a scribe, is unknown. (Steen 1983, ix, 18-23)

Critical discussion concerning the text of *King John* is another good example of where a particular kind of evidence is re-interpreted depending on argumentative necessity. Taylor and Jowett note that 'a single compositor spelt the same word differently in the two parts of the text'. Yet this is precisely the kind of evidence which in *1 Henry VI* is seen as unthinkable – that one compositor or scribe could spell the same word differently.¹⁴ The brilliant flexibility of the textual scholar's interpretative technique here is surely unique in science. Taylor and Jowett go on to state that: '... *it seems reasonably clear [sic] ... that King John was either set from a scribal transcript, in which a second scribe took over towards the end of 4.2, or from a composite manuscript, with foul papers at the beginning of the play and a transcript at the end*' (Taylor and Jowett 1993, 252-253; my italics). So, according to the evidence from 'o' and 'oh', the text of *King John* was set from *either* a mixed scribal text *or*

¹² The play's Malone society editor John C. Meagher believes the play to be all the work of Munday (vetoing the evidence for 'Chettle'). Similar inconsistent character naming also occurs in the parallel quarto text *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntington*. See Meagher and Brown 1965.

¹³ Paul Vincent (2005) has suggested that *1 Henry VI* was in fact revised, with Shakespeare revising the work of another hand in certain scenes.

¹⁴ Howard-Hill (1980) states that even the assumption of consistency of compositorial spelling habits throughout 'long periods' rests on 'infirm' grounds. What then of the practise of authors? (Howard-Hill 1980, 171). It is further interesting to note that in a modern edition of *The English Moor*, the editor normalises spacing in contractions 'as it is often impossible to tell from the handwriting whether for instance, "to't" or "to 't" was meant'. This shows us that the inconsistencies of compositors may in certain instances (in which 'normalisation' is not an option) correspond to the copy's intelligibility (Steen 1983, ix, 9).

from authorial foul papers mixed up with a scribal text. Presumably Taylor and Jowett got the idea of this from *A Game at Chess*, but unlike *A Game at Chess* (for which annotated manuscript documents exist) no equivalent documents for *King John* exist.

I am interested here to point out the level of inconsistency which appears to be orthodox in these matters. Another example occurs in Bald's account of the *Malone 25* manuscript of *A Game at Chess*. Describing 770 lines which appear to have been 'cut' from 'the full text' (note the assumptions which lie behind these statements too), Bald notes that 'if there were no other texts one would never suspect that so many lines had been omitted' (1929, 29). Notice the black hole appearing in the counter-factual (were we not to have alternative manuscript texts, we could not suspect that it had been 'cut'). Consider then how this kind of 'cut' might affect arguments about 'revision' or 'adaptation' in (respectively) *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. MS *Malone 25*, in which 'there seems to be no reason to doubt ... is [in] ... Middleton's own hand', has massed stage directions at the beginning of scenes and very few other stage directions. This fact Bald compares to texts such as Folio *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (in contrast with the Quarto text, which has many stage directions, including numerous instances of 'omnes') and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (which was first printed in the First Folio). Now let us recall the idea that stage directions (the use of 'omnes' etc.) are often used as signs of an author's hand (e.g. the repeated use of the 'here' stage direction in Act 1 of *1 Henry VI*, is often seen as a sign of Nashe's authorship),¹⁵ then let us remember that this presumably *revised*, presumably autograph text, in fact seems to *cut* stage directions (or just not bother to put them in at all) as well as a considerable number of lines, in such a way that were we not to have *other* texts of the same work, we would not know these 'cuts' had been made. Might we therefore assume from this fact that other texts with extended (so called 'literary') scene directions are therefore *less* authorial?¹⁶ Moreover, is it not normally the case that *shorter* texts (as with the so-called 'Bad Quartos' or 'adapted' texts such as *Macbeth*) are considered to have been *tampered with* by hands other than *the author*?¹⁷ And yet in this one document are not both common assumptions negated?¹⁸

¹⁵ The evidence is thin. See Dahl 2004, 109-111.

¹⁶ John Jowett believes that the stage directions in *The Tempest* are attributable to Ralph Crane, rather than 'Shakespeare' (cf. Wells, Taylor *et al.*, eds, 1987).

¹⁷ The mislineation in *Macbeth* is again blamed on 'compositorial error' by Taylor, who also cites corroborative articles by Werstein and Brooke (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 690).

¹⁸ Sara Jayne Steen notes that in the printed *octavo* text of Brome's manuscript play, the stage directions 'are more specific'. Do these therefore derive from the 'author', the play house or elsewhere? How *could* we know? (Steen 1983, 26).

Another fascinating example of the apparent adaptability of textual critics comes in a Bald footnote – as he explains ‘the disturbance of the text in the autograph MS of Massinger’s *Beleeue as You List*’ which Bald (quoting Sisson) believes would have led to ‘false verse lining’ if the document had ever gone to print. For the same feature in Middleton’s autograph *Trinity* MS, the explanation is apparently that Middleton was ‘copying mechanically from papers in which the last word or so was crowded out, and did not trouble to make the correction’ (1929, 35n.). Apparently then the fault lies here with a lazy ‘author’. Yet is it not this feature which elsewhere is seen as an error in the print shop? Mis-lineation – the curse of bad quartos everywhere? Where scribes and compositors are normally blamed?¹⁹ Or, wherein the corruption of stage house documents is seen to be at fault? Yet here *because for once we actually have the document in the author’s own hand*, the explanation is altered in order to fit with the perceived evidence. Consider then the multiple explanations available to Scott McMillin to explain similar facts:

Both *Famous Victories of Henry V* and *True Tragedy of Richard III* are printed with long stretches of mislineation – verse printed as prose, or (the more interesting case) prose printed as verse. The former of these, verse printed as prose, presents no puzzle, for it can be readily explained as a way of saving space, either in the printing house or in the theatre manuscript. Turning verse into prose, which runs to wider margins, would be an economical move for either a printing-house compositor or a playhouse scribe. (The manuscript play called *John of Bordeaux* shows verse being written out as prose, apparently by a playhouse scribe). (McMillin 1998, 113)

Note how the mis-lineation *presents no puzzle* though the explanation is *either* the need to save space in the printing house *or* something in the nature of the theatre manuscript itself – surely two very different things – one being a printing issue (in which case, the question as to what kind of manuscript the printers used is still pertinent) the other being a textual issue (i.e. who wrote the document used by the printers, and how did the printers in fact print this document?). Note, too, the move into speculation concerning what *would be economical* for the supposed printers and the manuscript of *John of Bordeaux*, which was *apparently* redacted by an ‘unknown’ scribe. Where has our ‘author’ gone? The slide into speculation is so confident and so contradictory depending on the context, that we are apt to forget that any such induction is occurring at all.

It is Gary Taylor who provides us with what is perhaps the best example of the textual scholar’s narrative adaptability. Taylor believes that the Folio-only

¹⁹ Cf. Duthie, on the argument between Greg and Hubler on the reason for mislineation in *Q Lear* – Hubler suggested compositors (1941, 23).

text of *Macbeth* was set by two compositors (A and B) from a 'late theatrical adaptation of an earlier original play by Shakespeare' having spelling 'primarily compositorial and to a lesser extent scribal'. The text is said to resemble *All is True* (*Henry VIII*) for having scene divisions, extensively using round brackets (though not the ones so apparently loved by Ralph Crane) and preferring the spellings 'ha's' and 'o'. It is also apparently connected with the scribe who set the 1622 edition of *Othello*, and also with 'Shakespeare', who favoured 'o' as well as the author Thomas Middleton who favoured 'ha's' (but not both the scribe and the author at the same time, since Middleton also apparently prefers 'oh'). Since however, this scribe is 'unknown', and since 'we know little (some would say nothing) about Shakespeare's preferred spellings' (except, presumably 'o'), Taylor sets his own text of *Macbeth* in 'modern' spelling, commenting that 'the resulting orthography is not authoritative, but that is part of its point: there *is* no authority in these matters' (Taylor and Lavagnino 2007a, 690-691). But if there is *no authority* in these matters, then what of all these textual arguments? What of the presence of 'Middleton' in *Macbeth*? What of the 'unknown' scribe who shares some (but not all) traits with both 'Middleton' (i.e. 'ha's', 'o') and 'Crane' (i.e. use of brackets, but not indeterminacy of 'o' to 'oh' and lists of persons in the play)? What of the whole great game of attributing all these scribes, compositors, printers and authors? If there really is *no authority* in these matters, then why all these debates about authorship and the need for 100 page textual introductions? Something is clearly amiss.

In his review article on 'The Oxford Middleton' (2011-2012), Kenneth Tucker quotes the argument which arose between the two Shakespeare biographers A.L. Rowse and S. Schoenbaum concerning methodology, in which statements logically deduced from reasonable premises, were contrasted to the need for 'invincible evidence'. This argument, as Tucker sees, is of course eternal, yet it seems particularly pressing to key questions of canon construction, authorship and bibliographical studies today. Tucker notes that for many of the key texts in the new Middleton edition, there are elaborate attributional arguments underlying their inclusion in the collected Works. Yet, it seems, the 'evidence' and 'methodology' which puts these texts in print in their present form is far from being universally agreed upon, nor the wider implications, results and objectivity of this scholarly and editorial venture objectively verifiable.²⁰

²⁰ This verification is of course doubly required if reliable statistical results are to be gleaned from linguistic and quantitative analysis of the electronic texts of the works. Cf. Tucker 2011-2012, 97-98.

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