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**Chester N. Scoville, ed., *The Digby Play of Mary Magdalene*. (The Broadview Anthology of Medieval Drama.) Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2018. Pp. 113. \$15.95. ISBN: 978-1-55481-423-7. Theresa Coletti, ed., *The Digby Mary Magdalene Play*. (Middle English Texts Series.) Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018. Pp. vii, 181. \$19.95. ISBN: 978-1-58044-285-5.**

The *Digby Play of Mary Magdalene* is of unique importance in the history of early English drama. With over fifty speaking parts and staging that requires not only many scaffolds, but a peripatetic pageant ship, extensive pyrotechnics, and mechanisms for elevating the eponymous heroine from earth to heaven, *Mary Magdalene* is, as John Coldewey has argued, “the most extravagant play in the whole of early English drama” (*Early English Drama: An Anthology*, 186), and testament to the ambition and wealth of its East Anglian producers. Until now, however, it could only be found in print in medieval drama anthologies and scholarly editions of Bodleian Library MS Digby 133. That two stand-alone editions of this singular play should now be published in such close proximity is indicative of the increased scholarly appreciation of this extraordinary play and a recognition of its place in English dramatic history.

Chester N. Scoville’s *The Digby Play of Mary Magdalene*, a Broadview Anthology of Medieval Drama edition, is, like the anthology that precedes it, expressly designed for use by undergraduate students. As Scoville states in the introduction, he therefore follows the same editorial procedures as Fitzgerald and Sebastian’s anthology, which aims “to provide accessible texts, with a sufficient amount of information and current scholarly understanding [. . .] to enable students at all levels to read, perform and interpret the plays on their own” (Fitzgerald and Sebastian, xi). This involves modernising spelling and punctuation, providing annotations and glosses for obsolete words, and translating speech attributions from Latin into modern English (Scoville, 13), though there is no bibliography to guide students’ further reading. The result is a text that reads well, is clear and easy to follow, and reduces the language barrier that

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many undergraduates find difficult to overcome. Perhaps the most pedagogically valuable part of Scoville's edition is the 'In Context' section, a continuation from the *Broadview Anthology* that provides some source material associated with the story of Mary Magdalene, alongside photographic facsimiles and transcriptions of two folios from the Digby manuscript. Undergraduate accessibility is not, however, the only rationale for Scoville's editorial practices. Because the Digby *Mary Magdalene* falls "within the beginning of the Early Modern English period by the reckoning of many linguists," like Fitzgerald and Sebastian, Scoville employs procedures that are "unusual in the presentation of medieval drama but are common in the presentation of Early Modern texts." "Rather than give an impression of something like Chaucerian Middle English with its quite different pronunciations," Scoville's edition instead places "the text in line with its later theatrical cousins as most undergraduate students encounter them" (13).

Theresa Coletti's edition for Medieval Institute Publication's Middle English Texts Series, in contrast, situates the play firmly within Middle English literary and cultural traditions, as appropriate for METS publications. Aimed at both researchers and students, it provides extensive explanatory and textual notes, a full bibliography and a glossary. Coletti's detailed introduction also covers many of the key contexts that inform *The Play of Mary Magdalene* (for example, English and Continental hagiographic traditions, regional cultures, traditions of female sanctity), and emphasises the devotional and locally-significant purposes of the play (3). Importantly, Coletti also foregrounds the link between plays and the "cultural locales" that produce them (1), as well as the "the performative nature of public life in medieval societies [that has] recently revised our conception of what constitutes drama, theater, [and] plays [. . .] in these environments" (5). This hints at the very different nature of the play as compared with later theatrical modes and flags the conceptual shifts necessary to understand it fully.

While Scoville's modernising improves the play's undergraduate accessibility, the express alignment with later theatrical traditions on linguistic grounds underplays the importance of the pre-Reformation performance practices and cultural contexts highlighted by Coletti and many recent critics. This could potentially work to conceal the very different approaches required to study plays like *Mary Magdalene*, and tempt anachronistic assumptions about what drama is and does, working against current critical thinking and so Broadview's stated aims. Nevertheless, Scoville's edition is valuable and well suited to introducing first-year undergraduates to the *Play of Mary Magdalene*; accessible, affordable, and with basic contextual information, it invites students to engage with this remarkable play without feeling overwhelmed by its strangeness and cultural difference. However, for more advanced students from second year and beyond, who might be studying the play on a medieval literature course or who are expected to work more independently, Coletti's fuller, scholarly edition is perhaps more appropriate, providing the contextual detail and resources that form a rich foundation on which students can explore the diverse cultures of performance represented by the play, and develop their own self-directed critical enquiry. Furthermore, in their different approaches, both editions highlight the issues caused by *Mary Magdalene*'s liminal status, sitting awkwardly as it does between and across scholarly categories and period boundaries. As such, these editions prompt readers, whether students or experienced scholars, once again to recognise and discuss the problems and limitations that such artificial constructions impose on the teaching of and research into early English performance.

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