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Edited by Joost Daalder, Digital Renaissance Editions

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***The Honest Whore, Part I*, by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton
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by Dr. Stephen Wittek, McGill University

Joost Daalder's very fine edition of *The Honest Whore, Part I* is among the first titles to become available from Digital Renaissance Editions (digitalrenaissance.uvic.ca), an online series officially launched at the 2015 Shakespeare Association of America conference in Vancouver. Scrupulously edited, peer-reviewed, and freely accessible without the encumbrance of a subscription or user account, the edition will certainly become a leading choice for scholars and students alike in the years to come.

Dekker and Middleton's play is a city comedy that presents the intertwined stories of a repentant courtesan, a preternaturally patient shopkeeper, and a pair of lovers from feuding families. These three plots unfold in a version of Milan that bears a conspicuous resemblance to early modern London (particularly in the final act, which somehow takes place at Bethlem Hospital). In addition to an intriguingly realistic depiction of contemporary settings, the play is noteworthy for what seems to have been an extraordinary and long-lasting popular appeal. Five quarto editions appeared in the years between 1604 and 1635, a record that places *The Honest Whore, Part I* among the most-published dramas of the era.

Daalder's scholarly apparatus includes a textual introduction, a performance history, a literary analysis of approximately 25,000 words, and more than 2,500 textual annotations, the vast majority of which are of a succinct, definitional nature. His editorial labor overall exhibits a confident mastery of the materials and a workmanlike preference to focus on technical matters, such as textual or historical detail, rather than matters related to theoretical or interpretive inquiry. On a similar note, his prose throughout the edition is clear, straightforward, and not given to jargon or stylistic flourishes.

Not surprisingly, Daalder also prefers a restrained approach to editorial emendation, a feature that sets his text apart from Paul Mulholland's 2007 edition of the same play for the Oxford Middleton. Taking a cue from an entry in Henslowe's diary, Mulholland made the unconventional decision to use the title *The Patient Man and the Honest Whore*, rather than *The Honest Whore* (the title for the first quarto) or *The Honest Whore, Part 1* (the title used by editors since 1840). In the first section of his editorial introduction, Daalder devotes nine full paragraphs to an aggressive critique of Mulholland's choice, constructing a very persuasive case for preserving the title established by foregoing editorial practice. Future editors of the play will find his argument difficult to ignore.

Of course, one of the most striking and original features of this particular edition of *The Honest Whore, Part 1* is the digital platform itself, which derives from

programming originally developed for the Internet Shakespeare Editions series. In addition to the standard search functionalities one might expect from a digital text, the interface offers a citation aid, hyperlinked annotations, options for comparing textual witnesses, and a helpful scroll-over mechanism for viewing lineation. There are also a number of tools for producing statistics on specific characters and scenes. For example, by referring to the Lines Spoken tool, one may discover that the character with the most lines is Bellafront, while the Word Cloud tool shows that “love” is one of the most frequently used terms in the character’s overall vocabulary. Most impressive of all, however, is the selection of supplementary materials, which includes transcriptions from the first two quarto editions of *The Honest Whore* and digitized facsimiles of original texts from the Folger Shakespeare Library and the National Library of Scotland.

Yet, impressive as the digital platform may be, it is unlikely to entirely satisfy users accustomed to more sophisticated systems for electronic reading. Unlike most other digital texts, editions in the series are not downloadable, which makes access contingent on Internet connectivity. Users will also have to do without basic functions such as bookmarking and options for adjusting text appearance. Highlighting and annotation tools are available, but only for “friends” of the Internet Shakespeare Editions series, a distinction one may attain by making a modest donation to the University of Victoria (Canadians receive a tax receipt for 80% of the amount of their donation).

Ultimately however, one may safely assume that functionality will only improve as this very exciting, very ambitious project moves forward. The scope of Digital Renaissance Editions includes a corpus of more than 400 commercial plays written between 1567 and 1642, plus assorted moralities, interludes, entertainments, pageants, and much more. Daadler's edition of *The Honest Whore, Part 1* has set the bar very high for future installments in a series that will undoubtedly make a profound and lasting contribution to scholarship on drama of the period.