

A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY RECUSANT FAMILY LIBRARY: MIDDLETON OF STOCKELD

By Maureen Johnson and Bessie Maltby

The homes of strangers have a potent fascination. They tell us something about their lives and tastes; they help us to establish them within the framework of our understanding whereby we categorise them according to their economic, social and intellectual position. Their bookshelves give us an even greater insight into their individual mental orientation, even though, as Jason Scott-Warrens warns, 'a book owned is not necessarily a book read' and 'much that is read is not owned'.¹ Nevertheless, the choice of what books to buy, either to read or to put on the shelves, tells us something about the purchaser's interests or self image. It was for this reason that the discovery of a seventeenth-century library list in the archives of the Middleton family was immediately alluring as it promised to throw light on the reading habits of a Catholic recusant family.² It appeared worthy of further examination, despite the obvious limitation imposed by the fact that no trace of the books themselves could be found.³ On the assumption that the book purchases represented the tastes and interests of the inheritors of Stockeld and their families, the library has been analysed in detail. However, prior to describing the catalogue, a brief history of the family and the five Middletons who headed it during the period under discussion has been outlined so that the conclusions can be seen more readily in context.

THE MIDDLETONS

By the time of the Reformation, the Middletons were old-established Yorkshire gentry whose landholdings were in the Wetherby area and in Middleton and Ilkley in Wharfedale. By the sixteenth century the main domicile of the head of the family was at Stockeld in Sicklinghall in the parish of Spofforth; their other manors were either rented out or managed by younger sons or dowagers. Before the time of the Reformation, they had enjoyed the respect and responsibilities of their class. At least two had been knighted and one had been High Sheriff of Yorkshire. They were linked by marriage to many of the influential families of the county. Elizabeth's religious settlement, however, had forced uncomfortable choices upon them, and along with some other gentry families in the area they felt unable to conform to the rites of the established church. From this point until the end of the seventeenth century, the family suffered varying fortunes according to the strength of individual conviction, the prevailing climate of opinion and the energy with which the authorities attempted to enforce the legal penalties of recusancy.

¹ Jason Scott-Warren, 'News, Sociability and Book buying in Early Modern England — The Letters of Sir Thomas Cornwallis', *The Library*, 7th series, 1 (2000), p. 382.

² Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MD59/5/5/11, formerly MD59/12/61. (The Middleton MSS are being recatalogued and renumbered. New and former numbers are given where possible.)

³ Only one book, *The Office of the Blessed Virgin* believed to have belonged to Mary Middleton in the late 1650s, was traced to the archives of Ampleforth School, ref. AA061/8C43, but it cannot be stated with any certainty that it was one of the two volumes of that name on the Middleton list. David Carpenter, *The Road to Ruin* (Oley, 1999), p. 286, claims that two of the books found their way into private collections in America.

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Of those who headed the family from the late sixteenth century, the first, William Middleton, inherited from his father John Middleton while he was still a minor in 1565. Some of the vicissitudes of his life have already been dealt with in an article previously published in the *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* which details his travels in France and Italy in the period 1579-84.⁴ After his second marriage in 1592 to Anne Towneley of Towneley, he appears to have become more stubbornly recusant and he was imprisoned for his faith in York Castle in 1599.⁵ He was succeeded in 1614 by his son, Peter Middleton, who was of a much more flexible disposition. Knighted by James I in 1617, he appears to have been a church papist, who attended his parish church and thus avoided the more severe financial pressures endured by his father and son; nevertheless he paid the recusancy fines of his wife, Mary, daughter of David Ingleby, who remained obdurately Catholic throughout. There is a suggestion that Sir Peter was a genial man, much liked by his tenants and neighbours.⁶ Letters from Endymion Porter in 1638 and 1639 refer to hunting hounds received or requested from Sir Peter which suggests that he was a well-known dog-breeder for the chase.⁷ Despite his known Catholicism he seems to have been well connected, and friendly letters exist from Fairfax of Menston⁸ and from Thomas, Lord Wentworth (later the Earl of Strafford) when he was the king's Lord Deputy in Ireland in 1638.⁹ A collection of receipts testifies that he and his family employed the services of the king's tailor, Peter Macaulay or Pierre Macala as he was sometimes known.¹⁰ Both Sir Peter and his wife died during the Civil War, Lady Mary Middleton being apparently buried in York Minster in 1643 during the Siege of York.¹¹ Sir Peter Middleton's son, William Middleton, who succeeded him in 1645, was more overtly Catholic, and as a noted recusant who had fought on the side of the King in the Civil War, his estates were confiscated and sold in 1651.¹² The remainder of his life was devoted to retrieving his estate, which had been purchased by friends. He died in 1658, still hugely indebted, and his infant son, John Middleton, inherited the mortgaged estate. John's early years, under the influence of a Catholic mother, Katherine, the daughter of Viscount Dunbar, saw the final restoration of the estate in 1668/9.¹³ He married Jane Strickland in 1672 but died without progeny in c. 1700.¹⁴ During the 1680s, John Middleton spent about four years abroad, whither he had fled in the wake of the Popish Plot of 1678. He had been associated with Thomas Gascoigne in the deposition of Robert Bolron brought before Richard Shaw, Lord Mayor of York in October 1679, in which Bolron claimed that various Catholic gentlemen had conspired together to plot the assassination of the King in favour of his Catholic brother James (later James II), then Duke of York.¹⁵ Although Bolron's testimony was discredited, John Middleton, as a noted recusant, clearly felt vulnerable to the anti-Catholic hysteria which swept the country as

⁴ J. Bosworth, P. Hudson, M. Johnson & D. Shillitoe, 'William Middleton: Innocent Abroad or Government Spy?' *YAJ*, 72 (2000), pp. 93-106.

⁵ J. C. H. Aveling, *The Handle and the Axe* (Tiptree, Essex, 1976), p. 160.

⁶ Robert Collyer and J. Horsfall Turner, *Ilkley: Ancient and Modern* (Otley, 1885), p. 88.

⁷ YAS, MD59/13/Misc/46, 48 (original number).

⁸ YAS, MD59/13/Misc/43 (orig. no.).

⁹ YAS, MD59/13/Misc/121 (orig. no.).

¹⁰ YAS, MD59/19/284 (orig. no.).

¹¹ The evidence for the Minster burial is circumstantial and has been deduced from the following documents: 'Register of Burials in York Minster', ed. Robert H. Skille, *YAJ*, 1 (1870), p. 233 no. 33; YAS, MD59/19/122, 138.

¹² Public Record Office, State Papers, SP23/105.

¹³ YAS, MD59/4/4/13, formerly MD59/14/135.

¹⁴ Joseph Foster, *Pedigrees of County Families of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, II (London, 1874).

¹⁵ West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds, Gascoigne MSS, GC/F6/16; *Depositions from York Castle*, ed. James Raine, Surtees Society, 40 (1861), p. 243 fn.

a result of the supposed plot, and deemed it wise to absent himself awhile from his native land. Perhaps significantly, for a brief period in 1688, before James II's 'abdication', he was nominated by Thomas Howard, Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire, as one of his deputies.¹⁶ His brother Peter Middleton inherited the estate upon his death. Like John, he was a devout Catholic who was reputedly imprisoned at York in 1680 for refusing to take the Oath of Allegiance.¹⁷ It is not certain how long he remained in prison, or whether he too escaped to France. It is recorded on 4 April 1679 that he and his brother John with three servants and Thomas Gascoigne had applied to travel to parts beyond the seas,¹⁸ but whether he had actually returned from abroad by the time of his imprisonment, or had not actually left the country has not yet been ascertained. He died in 1714, four years before the book list was compiled, and eleven years after the last dated book on the list.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CATALOGUE

The list is handwritten in an unbound stitched paper book in folio consisting of six and a half sheets including the covers. The writing covers ten sides. It was drawn up and signed by a William Sagg in 1718 and it catalogued books which were printed (though not necessarily first published) between 1550 and the beginning of the eighteenth century and which were said to have been housed at *Stockhill*, the spelling of Stockeld sometimes used by non-family members. For this reason it has been concluded that William Sagg was not a member of the Middleton household, or else that he was newly arrived. It seems most likely that he was an outside assessor, although the date of the list does not correspond to the known death of any Middleton so it does not appear to have been part of a probate inventory. The collection was valued at £30 *os. od.* The books were listed according to size, and Sagg had put a total for each section: folios (seventy-nine), quartos (sixty-one) and octavos and others (202) giving a grand total of 342 items.

The catalogue follows the normal pattern of giving author, short title, date and place of publication. Unfortunately there are many gaps in this basic information, particularly towards the end of the list; sometimes the name of the author is omitted, sometimes there is no place of publication and/or date.¹⁹ Occasionally some reference is made to the state of the volume, for example 'Lodge's Josephus wants Title and Binding'; 'An Old Latin Bible wants the Title'; 'Chaucer's Works old', or to a particular type of binding. Three of those printed in the Low Countries in the 1660s have ELZ written after them which is an abbreviation for Elzevier, the name of a family of printers in Amsterdam and Leiden (1592–1680) which was famous chiefly for its editions of the classics. These books were apparently bound in limp vellum and prized because of their generous size and the width of their margins.²⁰ There are some unhelpful entries such as '11 vols: more of Italian & Spanish'.

A total of 342 items seems a very modest collection to represent the acquisitions of a century, although it must be said that it is not known whether this represents all the books possessed by the family, who owned several houses. It is possible, as Scott-Warren suggests, that only reputable books have been listed and that the racier sort of literature

¹⁶ YAS, MD59/7/1/8–12, formerly MD59/5/96–100.

¹⁷ *Depositions*, Surtees Society, 40, p. 269 f.n.

¹⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1679–1680*, p. 338.

¹⁹ YAS, MS1671. Joan Knott has transcribed the book-list and given the complete title with reference to STC, Wing, BL and other published catalogues and bibliographies where it has been possible.

²⁰ Esther Potter, 'To Paul's Churchyard to treat with a Bookbinder', in *Property of a Gentleman*, ed. Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester, 1991), p. 29.

might have been omitted as not worthy of notice.²¹ The Stockeld library is small compared with that of the notable seventeenth-century scholar, John Locke, who had a library of about 3000 books at the time of his death, or with that of the collector John Morris, who is thought to have possessed in excess of 1500 titles.²² However, despite the fact that there were three Elzevier editions, there is no further evidence that the Middleton family were either book collectors or particularly scholarly, and other gentry book-lists that we shall discuss later fell short of the two notable examples quoted above, which suggests that the Middletons were reasonably representative of their class.²³ What is noteworthy about the Middleton list is that more than 50 per cent of the books were in languages other than English which points to the fact that the family (or the book-buying members of it) seemed to be at home in a wider European culture.

THE LIBRARY AT STOCKELD, SUBJECT ANALYSIS

In order to make some sense of the list, the contents of which had been grouped by size rather than subject, author or chronology, an attempt was made to place the books into ten major subject categories. That this was not always easy to do, or wholly satisfactory, will become apparent later.

In a century and a half in which religion was the driving force, it is hardly surprising to find that theological works account for nearly a third of the library. This is in line with what had been noticed in some, though not all, seventeenth-century libraries. However, as the Middletons were a Catholic recusant family, many of the books of interest to them would have been difficult to come by. The licensing system for the publication of new books devised by Elizabeth in 1559 was aimed at suppressing the Roman Catholic point of view, and subsequent legislation ensured draconian punishment of those who sought to violate the law or to attempt to import forbidden books from

TABLE I: The Middleton holdings by subject

Subject	Number	% (rounded)
Theology	101	29.5
History/Biography/Letters/Memoirs	93	27.0
Politics/Law	26	7.5
Modern Literature	25	7.5
Geography/Exploration/Travel	19	5.5
Philosophy	13	4.0
Reference	13	4.0
Classical Literature	4	1.0
Miscellaneous	11	3.0
Unidentified	37	11.0
Total	342	100.0

²¹ Scott-Warren in *The Library*, 7th ser., 1, p. 382.

²² *The Library of John Morris*, ed. T. A. Birrell (British Library Publishing, 1976); *The Library of John Locke*, ed. J. Harrison and P. Laslett (Oxford, 1965).

²³ Derbyshire County Record Office, 'The Library of Anne Ravell (1724) D184/M/F15; The Library of the Gell family of Hopton (n.d. but predominantly seventeenth century) D258/32/27; Northamptonshire Record Office, 'The Library of the Brooke Family of Oakley (1716), B(O) Vol. 4; Castle Howard Archives, 'Catalogue of Charles, Earl of Carlisle's books in his library in So-Ho Square, London' (1698), H2/3/8.

TABLE 2: Comparison of subject matter in the libraries of the Middletons (1718), Anne Ravell (1724), the Brooke family of Oakley (1716) and the Gell family of Hopton (c. 1718), and the London library of the Earl of Carlisle (1698)

Subject	Middleton		Ravell		Brooke		Gell		Carlisle	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Theology	101	29.5	192	37.0	40	13.0	382	39.0	129	18.0
Hist/Biog etc.	93	27.0	42	8.0	21	7.0	122	12.5	183	28.0
Politics/Law	26	7.5	56	11.0	66	21.25	77	8.0	56	8.0
Mod. Lit.	25	7.5	32	6.0	66	21.25	19	2.0	69	10.0
Geog/Travel	19	5.5	12	2.5	2	0.5	16	1.5	39	5.0
Philosophy	13	4.0	22	4.0	6	2.0	78	8.0	39	5.0
Reference	13	4.0	23	4.5	15	5.0	30	3.0	19	2.0
Class. Lit.	4	1.0	5	1.0	17	5.5	36	3.5	20	3.0
Science, Medicine & Maths			27	5.5			31	3.0	26	3.0
Miscellaneous	11	3.0	49	9.5	38	12.25	76	8.0	67	9.0
Unidentified	37	11.0	57	11.0	38	12.25	114	11.5	63	9.0
Total	342	100	517	100	309	100	981	100	710	100

abroad.²⁴ It therefore seemed interesting to examine more closely the nature of the theological books that they had collected.

As might have been expected, a large proportion of them, about forty-four in number, were books which were entirely devotional in character and included Bibles, missals, catechisms, sermons, meditations and confessions. Examples of this class of book were the *Officium beatae Mariae Virginis*, St Augustine's *City of God*, Brekeley's *The Lyturgie of the Masse*, *Les Confessions of St Augustine*, de Bersat's *Sermons*, Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*, Père Novet's *Méditations* and the *Eikon Basilike*, which was based on the supposed meditations of Charles I before his execution. As far as could be judged from the books which Sagg had dated, most of the devotional books seemed to belong to the later part of the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century, and to the decade 1660–69. Relating these to the family, the earlier ones could have been purchased by the William Middleton who was imprisoned for his faith, and the later ones by the widow of the second William Middleton.

Of the remaining fifty-seven theological books, some seemed fairly controversial in character. There were several books relating to the Council of Trent (1545–63) which had sought to reform church abuses and to strengthen the power of the Roman Catholic Church. However, one in particular, Brent's 1620 translation of *The History of the Council of Trent* by Paolo Sarpi (1553–1623), the Venetian historian and philosopher, who had previously waged a pamphlet war against papal power and pomp,²⁵ would have been of especial interest to the beleaguered Middletons for whom, faced with enormous pressure to deny the supremacy of the Pope, the subject of papal authority must have been of vital interest. Surprisingly there was also a book by the anti-Jesuit Jansenist, Blaise Pascal, *Les Provinciales or the Mystery of Jésuitisme* (1656–57). Coming closer to home were several works referring to or disputing with the Bishop of Worcester, Dr Stillingfleet, who in 1671 had published a discourse criticising the idolatry practised by the Church of Rome.

²⁴ F. S. Siebert *Freedom of the Press 1476–1776* (Urbana, Ill., 1965), pp. 56 ff; A. C. Southern, *English Recusant Prose 1559–1582* (London and Glasgow, 1950), pp. 33 ff.

²⁵ Marvin O'Connell, *The Counter Reformation 1566–1610* (New York, 1974), pp. 307 ff.

Notable were the *Catholique Apologie* of the Earl of Castlemaine, which contained a complete justification of the Catholics morally and politically, and Thomas Godden's *Catholicks No Idolaters or a Full Refutation of Dr Stillingsfleet's Unjust Charge*. The impression that members of the Middleton family had followed ancient and contemporary disputes within the Roman church as well as the more recent arguments between Catholic and Protestant was reinforced by a substantial collection of theological histories written by both the French Jesuit, Maimbourg (*Histoire de l'Hérésie des Iconoclastes; Traité Historique de l'Établissement et des Prerogatives de l'Église de Rome et de ses Evêques; Histoire de Calvinisme; Histoire de l'Arianisme*) and the English Protestant, Peter Heylin (*History of the Reformation and History of the Presbyterians* published in 1661 and 1670 respectively). Certain classic books were also present, such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, translated as *History of the Church of England*, in its 1565 Antwerp edition and Dugdale's *Monasticon*, an account of English monastic houses.

If any conclusion can be reached from an examination of the theological holdings, it must be of a family devout in the practice of their religion, interested to keep abreast of Catholic writings and controversies and, towards the end of the seventeenth century, either because there was an easing of religious persecution or because the book-buying members were temporally resident in a country more sympathetic to their religious persuasion, able to cast a more detached eye over the vicissitudes of the previous centuries. Overall, in matters theological, the Middletons seemed unexpectedly wide-ranging in their choice of material.

Although the books categorised as History/Biography were second in popularity to those of a theological nature, it must be admitted that there were problems of classification. After consideration it was decided to omit from this section all titles which seemed to deal with the history of the Church, putting those, as was seen above, under the general umbrella of Theology. As, however, it must be borne in mind that this was an age when politics and religion were inextricably mingled, this involved some difficult decisions. Davila's *The Historie of the Civil Wars in France*, it could be argued, could belong to either category since the conflict described was rooted in religious difference. However, as the leading protagonists were engaged in a struggle for political power, we finally decided to classify it as history. This was the criterion we used for the rest. In this section we also included Memoirs, as for example those of Henriette-Sylvie de Molière and of De Bassompierre, and Letters, which included collections of Erasmus, James Howell and Busbecq, imperial ambassador to the Turks. The Biographies covered Mary Queen of Scots and all the Tudor monarchs with the surprising exception of Mary Tudor. There were also biographies of French monarchs and statesmen like Colbert and Mazarin and of Italian churchmen like Cardinals Bentivoglio and Bellarmine.

Of those which were categorised as History, the histories, both ancient and modern, of many major European countries were included. Various classical texts about the ancient world were listed, for example those by Tacitus, Quintus Curtius and Lodge's translation of *The Famous and Memorable Workes of Josephus*. There appeared to be an avid appetite for modern European history and these included histories, both general and particular, of France, England, the Low Countries, Spain and Italy. A 1579 English translation of Guicciardini's *The historie . . . containing the warres of Italie and other partes*, was a reminder that this was the year that William Middleton left England for his travels abroad, which took him into Italy, and one feels the book must surely have been purchased in preparation for this undertaking.²⁶ Books on the contemporary conflict between Turkey and Austria were purchased hot from the press, it seems, for there were two 1684 dated copies of

²⁶ Bosworth *et al.* in *YAJ*, 72 (2000), pp. 93 ff.

Johann Peter von Valcaren's *Siege of Vienna*, an event which had taken place the previous year. As Scott-Warren points out, there was often a close relationship between the buying of books and the demand for news.²⁷ There was an early book (1600) entitled *The History of the Troubles of Hungarie* and several known to have been published in the 1680s on *The Conquest of Buda* and *The Present State of Hungarie*. The overriding impression of the historical collection was that there had been a deep and continuing interest throughout the period in European affairs.

The Philosophy section, albeit fairly limited, yet showed a certain coherence with its emphasis on the works of ancient and contemporary stoics. Although we categorised Lodge's Seneca as Classical Literature, philosophically it expressed stoicism, which was also dominant in the work of the second-century writer, Marcus Aurelius, a life of whom published in the sixteenth century may have influenced other writers on our list, including Lipsius.

The books which came under the heading Law/Politics contained ten law books and sixteen which seemed to have a political connotation. As country landowners, the family were involved in the manorial courts of their estate except during the interregnum.²⁸ Dalton's *Country Justice* (1622) is listed as well as Coke's commentary (1629) on Sir Thomas Littleton. These, along with *Landlord's Law* (undated but first published in 1665) and Swinburne, *A Briefe Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills* (1590) suggest useful books of reference for a family in their position. The books deemed political dealt mainly with the trials of those people believed to have been involved in such conspiracies as the Popish Plot of 1678 (Plunkett, Stafford and Oates) and the Rye House Plot of 1683 (Walcot and Russell). These trials would have been of burning interest to the Catholic Middletons, particularly to John and Peter Middleton. There was also the Earl of Castlemaine's *Manifesto*, which was a defence of himself against the charge that he was concerned in the same plot.

Disappointingly, there was little literature, but what there was of modern literature (i.e. post Chaucer) was written in English, Latin (John Barclay's *Argenis*, first published in 1621, and Hugo Grotius's *Poemata*, dated 1639 in the Middleton list), Italian (Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* which was first published in its complete form in 1532) and French (Mme de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* in its 1678 edition). There was a translation from the Spanish of *Guzman de Alfarache*, a picaresque novel (dated 1623, the year after it was first translated into English). Some English playwrights appeared on the list, for example, Ben Jonson (1573–1637), Beaumont (1584–1616) and Fletcher (1579–1625) and Aphra Behn (*The Lovers' Watch*, published in 1686),²⁹ but Shakespeare (1564–1616) was noticeably absent. Neither were there any of the quarto collections of plays, such as those found in the library of Thomas Mostyn of Mostyn Hall, which apparently counted as light reading in this period.³⁰ The poets Donne (1572–1631) and Herbert (1593–1633), both of whom could be described as religious poets, were represented, but there was also a copy of Spenser's *Faerie Queen* (dated on this list 1617 but first published in 1589) and an old undated copy of work by Chaucer (who lived 1343–1400). Amongst the works difficult to classify were several *Miscellanies*. Although these were eventually categorised as Unidentified, it could be that, as Birrell suggests, they contained light reading, 'facetiae, burlesques and joco-seria'. One of them might have referred to the *Miscellanies* of John Aubrey published in 1696, which was a book of stories and folklore, but without dates

²⁷ Scott-Warren in *The Library*, 7th ser., 1, pp. 382 ff.

²⁸ YAS, MD59/3/7/10, formerly MD 59/12/203 207, 209, 213, 226, 227.

²⁹ *Compact Edition of the Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP, 1975), p. 126.

³⁰ T. A. Birrell, 'Light Reading in the Seventeenth Century Gentleman's Libraries', in *Property of a Gentleman*, ed. Myers & Harris, p. 114.

it is impossible to identify them precisely.³¹ The erotic was to be found in *Lettres d'une Religieuse Portugaise* (1681 but first published in 1669) attributed to Marianna Alcaforado but more likely written by the French writer Guilleragues.

Classical Literature was represented by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in the English translation of Sandys (1632 but first published 1621–26), Lodge's translation of the works of Seneca (possibly a first edition of 1614), an unattributed English translation of the *Pharsalia* of Lucan and a translation of *The Epistles* of Ovid, who enjoyed much popularity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

What is very noticeable is that most of the modern literature dates from the first half of the seventeenth century, that is, the period when Sir Peter Middleton was the head of the Middleton family, while the second half, with the exception of the work of Aphra Behn, is dominated by untranslated French novels or poetry such as the elegant society-verse of Voiture and Sarasin, and was probably purchased by John Middleton or possibly by his younger brother, Peter, who might have accompanied him into exile.

Of the nineteen books classified as Geography and Travel, eight appeared to be descriptions of individual countries — Italy, Poland, the Levant, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, Britain, Russia — while some seemed to concentrate on individual towns — Candia (the Italian name for Iraklion in Northern Crete), Paris, Moscow and London (Stowe's *Survey of London*). One or two took a wider canvas, such as the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* of the Antwerp scholar and geographer, Abraham Ortelius, first published in 1570, which was reputedly used by Marlowe when he planned Tamburlaine's conquests,³² and Michel-Antoine Baudrand's *Novum lexicon geographicum* (1677).

The Reference section contained dictionaries, catalogues, gazetteers, an almanac and Dugdale's *The Baronage of England*.

The Miscellaneous section consisted of those books whose subjects could not be fitted into any of the major categories, but whose subject matter was clear from the title, such as Markham's *Country Farm* and *Maister-Piece* on country affairs and horsemanship respectively; Hodder's *Arithmetick*; Hannah Wooley's *The Gentlewoman's Companion*; Brooke's *Discoverie of Errors in Heraldry*; Moore's *Elements of Architecture* and John Parkinson's *Garden of Flowers*, all of which speak quite eloquently for themselves.

Finally there were those unidentified items which had neither title nor author (fifteen volumes in Italian and Spanish; three Latin manuscripts; five manuscripts; three miscellanies) of which there were twenty-six altogether, or whose title gave insufficient evidence of the content (such as 'A manuscript of the Earl of Essex' or 'Recueil [sic] des Édits de la Hoguet 3 vols') or which were identified simply by a name (*La Comtesse d'Issembourg*) of which there were twelve.

While all libraries reflect the character and interests of the owner or owners, what is omitted from a library can sometimes be as telling as what is included. It has already been mentioned that there was little that could be categorised as light reading in the book-list, nor indeed very much in the way of literature. When other similar lists were examined, it was noticed that the Middleton library contained other significant omissions. Some libraries seemed more representative of the lay interests of the period.³³

It has to be remembered that this was an age of intense scientific speculation and enquiry. Although Galileo's discoveries were by no means universally accepted, there was ongoing fascination for things astronomical as well as astrological. Newton's theories of gravitation, although not published until 1687, had been formulated about twenty

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 114; *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Margaret Drabble (Oxford, 1985), p. 49.

³² M. St Clare Byrne, *Elizabethan Life in Town and Country* (Stroud, 1987), p. 253.

³³ See Table 2.

years previously, and there was also interest in medicine and mathematics. The Gell, Ravell and Carlisle catalogues all contain introductions to the subject of astronomy, whilst the Middleton library contains nothing of this nature at all.³⁴ Carlisle and Ravell possess books on the various branches of mathematics and its applications whereas the Middletons could only list Hodder's *Arithmetick*, a basic primer. Nor was there any apparent interest in natural history or in anatomy or physick (that is, medicine). Several books like Sir Kenelm Digby's *Receipts* and Culpepper's *English Physitian* were found on the lists of the Gells, Ravells and Carlisles and would have had a practical application in a large household of family and servants, but were absent from the Middletons' library. Whereas the profession of law would almost certainly have been open to the younger sons of gentry families, this was an avenue theoretically prohibited to convicted recusants for much of the period under discussion. So it is not surprising to discover that the Middleton list lacked the books found in the Brooke catalogue which suggested that the law had been systematically studied.

What is perhaps more remarkable is the lack of books or pamphlets on what must have been the burning issue during the middle years of the seventeenth century, namely the balance of power between the king and parliament. Although they were clearly keen to follow events as they unfolded, witness the bundle of newsletters and copies of crucial speeches made by the king and members of parliament between 1621 and 1641,³⁵ yet they appear not to have been inclined to study political theory. *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, Harrington's book in which he outlined his republican ideas,³⁶ though found on the list of Sir John Lowther of Whitehaven, is not included in that of the Middletons;³⁷ both the Ridell and Gell lists contain several books by the political philosopher, Hobbes, while the Middletons possessed only Thomas Hobbes's *A Letter about Liberty and Necessity* (1677); and despite the fact that William Middleton made use of the services of the Republican, John Wildman, in 1652 when he was repurchasing his estates after they had been confiscated by parliament,³⁸ and is known to have entertained that gentleman's wife at Stockeld,³⁹ none of his pamphlets appear to have found a resting place amongst his client's books, either because they were too dangerous or maybe because, as Catholics, the members of this family were never in any doubt where their loyalties lay.

The overriding impression created by the omissions in the Middleton book-list is of people who had little interest in keeping abreast of those abstract intellectual developments of the age which might have challenged the assumptions of their world-picture.

ANALYSIS BY DATE OF PRINTING

A hundred and ninety-four books were dated out of a total of 342 items (56.5 per cent). It will be seen from Table 3 that the dates of printing started in the decade 1530–39 and the last date mentioned was 1703 with an almanac for that year. Two sixteenth-century decades, 1540–59, were completely unrepresented. Only fourteen of the total dated were printed in the sixteenth century (7.2 per cent). One hundred and seventy-nine (92.3 per cent) were printed in the seventeenth century and only one in the eighteenth century. It would be dangerous to make too much of these figures since there are not sufficient dated

³⁴. DCRO, D184/M/F15; DCRO, D258/32/27; Northants. RO, B(O) vol. 4; Castle Howard Archives, H2/3/8.

³⁵. YAS, MD59/22/A (orig. no.).

³⁶. M. Ashley, *John Wildman* (London, 1947), pp. 131 ff.

³⁷. Cumbria Record Office, Earl of Lonsdale MSS, D/Lons/W1/54.

³⁸. John Wildman acted as an intermediary in the sale of William Middleton's sequestered property in 1652/3. YAS, MD59/4/4/11, formerly MD59/25/30.

³⁹. YAS, MD59/13/Misc/101, 102 (orig. no.).

TABLE 3: Dates of printing

Decades	Number
1530-39	3
1540-49	0
1550-59	0
1560-69	2
1570-79	3
1580-89	2
1590-99	4
1600-09	8
1610-19	10
1620-29	21
1630-39	17
1640-49	7
1650-59	8
1660-69	19
1670-79	35
1680-89	47
1690-99	7
1700-09	1
1710-18	0
Total of dated books	194
Total of undated books	138
Manuscripts	10
Total	342

books to see them as representative of the whole collection. Although it was possible to discover the dates of first publication of a fair number of the undated books,⁴⁰ it would be unwise to assume that the Middletons acquired these books when they were first published. In fact, when a comparison was made between the dated books and the known date of first publication, it was found that fifty-seven (about 29.5 per cent) were printed in the first year of publication, ten (*c.* 5 per cent) within four years and twelve (*c.* 6 per cent) within twenty years of first publication. The rest (about 60 per cent) were printed outside this twenty year time scale. It is difficult to make a definite conclusion from these figures. One could argue that some attempt had been made in later years to acquire first editions, or one could assume simply that the family bought some books of interest to them as and when they appeared on the market and others any length of time after first publication, very much as a modern reader would.

If one concentrates solely on the dated books on our list, it is tempting to see the increase in numbers as time goes by as symptomatic of the increase in reading matter being published and a growth in book buying generally; on the other hand it could be that older books had been lost or discarded over the years. Having made these qualifications, it is interesting to note the increase culminating in eighty-two (41.9 per cent of all dated books) being published in the twenty years 1670-89. There is a drop in numbers for the decades 1640-59, the period of the Civil War and Interregnum. Otherwise, there is a steady increase over the whole of the seventeenth century until the final decade when there is an unaccountable dropping off. How do we interpret these findings? It is known

⁴⁰. YAS, MS1671, Knott.

that the Middleton family suffered greatly as a result of their Catholicism and their support for the king during the Civil War. Their estates were confiscated and sold, and although it is known that they managed to buy them back over a long period of time through a third party, this would have involved them in enormous expense which would have left them little for the luxury of buying books. On the other hand, book-buying is an extremely personal matter, and the years of plenty might have reflected the personal disposition of the owner. Certainly John Middleton, who inherited the estate in 1658, seems to have presided over the period of most intense book acquisition. He died in 1700. It could be that his final illness and demise accounted for what seems an extraordinary decline in the final decade of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth century. His brother seems to have added nothing to the library.

It was difficult from the limitations mentioned above to determine whether any particular interest predominated with one owner of the estate over another. Theology and History seem to have been the main interests throughout the period. In the years up to 1600, Theology seems to have predominated, but between 1600 and 1669, with the exception of the decade 1620–29, there appear to be more historical acquisitions. Thereafter, Theology seems the favoured subject. If the dated books show a representative cross-section, it would seem that the more pragmatic Peter Middleton concentrated less on Theology, whereas his father and, particularly, his grandson were more avidly interested in religious matters. What is marked is the increased interest in the politics of the period following the 1679 plots, with accounts of the trials of suspected persons, but this is easily explained by John Middleton's alleged involvement in the Popish Plot.

ANALYSIS BY LANGUAGE

It has already been noted that more than half the books on the Middleton list were in languages other than English. Table 4 reveals that books published in English account for about 48 per cent of the total; Latin and French account for 19 per cent and 18.7 per cent respectively. It is not so surprising to find a quantity of books in Latin, since this was still the lingua franca of Europe and would, in any case, have been the natural second language of a Catholic family. It is more surprising to find so many written in French.

When an examination was made of the dated books, it was discovered that there was only one publication written in French before 1620. There was a steady increase from 1640 onwards until the decade 1680–89 when dated items in French overtake the English dated books. It is interesting to conjecture what events precipitated this acquisition on a fairly large scale of volumes written in French and published in France. There exists a

TABLE 4: Analysis of the languages represented

Language	Number
English	164
Latin	65
French	64
Italian	19
Spanish	3
Spanish and Italian (grouped together)	11
Unsure	16
Total	342

passport dated 29 June 1625 for John and William Middleton of Stockhill to travel overseas provided they did not go to the city of Rome.⁴¹ This must refer to the two eldest sons of Sir Peter Middleton, who would have been quite young at this time, probably not much more than ten years old. However, as it is certainly known that one of his youngest sons, Thomas, was educated overseas and was later ordained a priest,⁴² maybe these two also were sent abroad to a Catholic seminary. In this case it would not be surprising if, when they reached manhood, they should be interested in or at least able to read French. It has already been mentioned that John Middleton, the grandson of Sir Peter Middleton, possibly accompanied by his brother, fled to France in 1679 in the aftermath of the Popish plot but that he was home again by 1685, since there are records of leases bearing his signature dating from that year. A sojourn of four or five years abroad might indeed account for the number of French publications of the 1680s and it is certainly not too fanciful to imagine John Middleton whiling away the years of exile reading Maimbourg's religious histories.

It seems likely that the Italian manuscripts and the *Descrittione di tutta l'Italia* (1577) date from the period of the earlier William Middleton's travels abroad in the late sixteenth century, as also the copy of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the Boccaccio and Bishop Cornelio Musso's *I quattro libri delle prediche*. Maybe the Spanish manuscripts also entered the family library following a period of travel.

It was this preponderance of books written in the romance languages which significantly differentiated the Middletons from the other gentry families whose library lists we studied. All of them had a much greater proportion written in English and only the Earl of Carlisle came anywhere near possessing the same number of French books in what was a much larger library.

ANALYSIS BY PLACE OF IMPRINT

Sagg identified the place of printing of 161 items out of a total of 332 printed books (48 per cent). As might be expected, nearly half were printed in England and the majority of these in London. A word of explanation is necessary about the *Colonia* imprints. These are possibly publications of Cologne in Germany, but they could have been of several other places like Geneva, Naples or Basle according to the word which followed *Colon*.⁴³ As the word *Colon* in the Middleton list was sometimes further abbreviated to *Col*, and

TABLE 5: A comparison of the languages represented in the libraries of the Middletons, Anne Ravell, the Brooke family of Oakley, the Gell family of Hopton and the Earl of Carlisle

Language	Middleton	Ravell	Brooke	Gell	Carlisle
English	164	487	271	843	562
French	64	9	3	2	71
Latin	65	19	30	129	68
Italian/Spanish	33	—	—	2	6
Greek	—	2	4	4	3
Hebrew	—	—	1	1	—
Unsure	16	—	—	—	—
Total	342	517	309	981	710

⁴¹ YAS, MD59/24/21 (orig. no.).

⁴² YAS, MD59/4/4/3, formerly MD59/21/packet 7/36.

⁴³ *Oxford Companion to English Literature*, p. 216.

never had any amplification, it is difficult to determine which place of imprint was intended, and as five were written in French and two in Latin, the language gives no clue. The Short Title Catalogues, while acknowledging a false imprint, suggest variously Amsterdam, Rouen and Utrecht as well as England for the *Colon* imprints.⁴⁴ The only one written in English with a *Colon* imprint was Breereley's *Liturgie of the Masse* which was reputedly published secretly at the Birchly Hall Press in Lancashire.⁴⁵ Although Breereley's *The Protestants' Apologie for the Roman Church* was also published secretly in England in 1604, Sagg's list appears to contain a later edition (1608), the date of one known to have been published by the St Omer English College press.

A considerable proportion of the library, about 28 per cent, was published in France, and the majority of these were published in Paris. When the dates for the Paris publi-

TABLE 6: Place of imprint

Country	Town	No.	%
England			
	London	70	
	Oxford	4	
	Canterbury	1	
Total		75	46
France			
	Paris	43	
	Douai	3	
Total		46	28
Low Countries and Germany			
	Amsterdam	9	
	Antwerp	7	
	Leiden	1	
	Utrecht	1	
	Hanover	1	
	Brussels	1	
	Leuven	1	
Total		21	13
Italy			
	Venice	5	
	Turin	1	
	Genoa	1	
	Bologna	1	
Total		8	5
Modern Switzerland			
	Basle	4	
Total		4	3
Colonia		8	5
Total for all with place of printing		162	100

⁴⁴ YAS, MS1671, Knott.

⁴⁵ A. F. Allison & D. M. Rogers, *A Catalogue of Catholic Books in English printed abroad or secretly in England 1558-1640* (Bognor Regis, 1956), pp. 23, 24.

cations were studied, it was discovered that twenty-nine out of the thirty-nine which had a date as well as a place of publication were published in the period 1670–89. This corresponded as was seen above to the period of greatest representation. Nineteen of the Paris imprints were published between 1680 and 1687, with eight being published in the year 1680 and four in 1682. It is reasonable to assume when one looks at the number of Paris imprints culminating in the year 1684 that John Middleton brought the books back with him after his self-imposed exile. However, it must be noted that some of the undated Paris publications go back to the 1640s, and some French works were printed in Douai in 1620 and the early 1630s. The Middleton family, it seems, acquired books published in France over a considerable period of time, some of which were doubtless acquired on their travels. Others might have been obtained through legitimate booksellers who were importing books from abroad on a regular basis.

Towards the end of the document, Sagg's recording of the dates and particularly of the places of imprint became more erratic. It has been suggested that books which were printed either surreptitiously at the presses of licensed printers or at temporary presses operating in hiding places in various parts of the country either had a false imprint or no imprint at all.⁴⁶ Many of the books which we classified as theological had neither imprint nor date; a number with the same titles were discovered to have been printed abroad,⁴⁷ at the English College at St Omer or at Douai, or, like the Brekeley books mentioned above, to have been printed secretly in England. Among those thought to have been printed abroad were Kellison's *Of the Hierarchie and Divers Orders of the Church against the Anarchie of Calvin* (Douai, 1629), *An End to Controversie* (Douai, 1654) and various works by Becanus (St Omer), but while it cannot be assumed with any certainty that these, or any of the books on other subjects for which dates or imprints were discovered in the catalogues, were the actual editions on the Middleton list, yet it seems likely that many proscribed books found their way into the Stockeld library from abroad. It is known that the *Officium beatae Mariae Virginis* was a popular title printed abroad by the exiled English printer, Roger Verstegan, and smuggled into England, but again, it is not known whether the book of that title on our list was one of those or whether it was the 1572 edition printed by Christopher Plantin in Antwerp. *Saint Augustine's Rule in Paris*, dated 1636 on the Middleton list, was known to have been published in Paris and translated by Miles Pinkney for the benefit of the English nuns there.⁴⁸ Other theological books without an imprint in the list but known to have been published abroad include Matthew Patten's *The Image of Both the Churches Hierusalem and Babel* (Tournai, 1623) and Thomas Bayley's *End to Controversy* (Douai, 1654).

While some of the books for which dates and imprints are not given certainly seem of

TABLE 7: Dates of Paris publications

1610–19	1
1650–59	2
1660–69	6
1670–79	9
1680–89	20
1690–99	1
Total	39

⁴⁶ Allison & Rogers, *A Catalogue of Catholic Books*, p. ii.

⁴⁷ Allison & Rogers, *A Catalogue of Catholic Books*, pp. 14, 80.

⁴⁸ Allison & Rogers, *A Catalogue of Catholic Books*, pp. 9, 75, 146.

a religious nature, many seem innocuous enough like Hodder's *Arithmetick* and Donne's *Poems*. There seems no easy answer to the problem of these omissions and one wonders if the compiler was simply tiring of his task towards the end, when dates and imprints get notably sparser.

Nevertheless, a large number of books were of a Catholic nature; almost certainly there would have been difficulty getting them published legitimately at the presses of the licensed English printers, since the printing, importation, circulation and even reading of Catholic books were forbidden. In consequence, we get a tantalising picture of the Middleton family as the readers of proscribed books, some of which might have been obtained from a bookseller like John Foster in York in the early part of the seventeenth century, whose inventory of 1616 contained several Catholic books. It is thought these might have been intended to provide anti-Catholic ammunition for the Anglican clergy like Archbishop Matthew, whose library contained forbidden Catholic books, or they might have been intended for influential Catholic buyers in the locality like the Middleton family.⁴⁹ However a comparison of Foster's inventory and the Middleton list yielded only a handful of common titles, and all but two of the Middleton editions had been printed at a date later than 1616. Possibly Henry Swinburne's *A Briefe Treatise of Testaments and Last Willes* dated 1590 and an undated Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* could have been purchased there. Unfortunately no receipts for the purchase of books have survived in the Middleton archive, and one is left to conjecture that some of their books might have been obtained illicitly, possibly smuggled into England either by priests bound for the English mission or in the baggage of sympathetic travellers.⁵⁰ Or they might have been obtained through the auspices of Sir Peter Middleton's brother-in-law, Sir Robert Hodshon of Hebburn, who was a notorious recusant and who was suspected by the Bishop of Durham of 'the receving and conveyinge of Popish persons and their carriages' at his Tyneside dwelling.⁵¹

CONCLUSION

To twenty-first-century eyes, the Middleton family presents a puzzlingly paradoxical face. On the one hand they seem to have lived in a fairly restricted mental world which they viewed predominantly through the tinted spectacles of their religion, knowledgeable of their immediate historical background but hesitant to engage in the scientific and political developments which were to mould the future. On the other, they seem startlingly modern in their European orientation: they were clearly as interested in European history as they were in British; they were familiar with the broad canvas of reformation and counter-reformation; to all appearances they were confident linguists, particularly of the romance languages. One might almost describe them, in the jargon of today, as good Europeans. How can one explain this seeming contradiction?

The answer perhaps lies in an understanding of the world they lived in. Nationalism rather than internationalism was the key to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the religious settlements of the Tudors, there was a turning away from Rome and a desire for national autonomy and aggrandisement. Latin, the common language of the old world, was giving way in all countries to the vernacular. There was a hardening of national boundaries.

From this perspective, it is possible to see people like the Middletons as stranded in

⁴⁹. John Barnard and Maureen Bell, *The Seventeenth Century York Book Trade and John Foster's Inventory of 1616*, Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 24 (1994), pp. 29 ff.

⁵⁰. Southern, *Elizabethan Recusant Prose*, pp. 33 ff.

⁵¹. E. Mackenzie & M. Ross, *History of Durham* (Newcastle, 1834) p. 15 f.n.

the medieval world. Their Catholicism was maybe the cause of this, though it might equally well have been the manifestation of their backwardness.⁵² To look out to the Continent for spiritual sustenance, refuge, and maybe education, even if under duress, was to hark back to a world which was fast disappearing. So what seems to us on the part of the Middletons as a commendable lack of insularity might well have seemed to their contemporaries treasonable at worst, or, at best, simply old-fashioned.

The Middletons were country landowners. As far as we know they did not speculate or dabble in trade. Deprived by the penal laws from taking part in the administrative responsibilities of their class, and with their estates, and therefore their livelihood, constantly threatened by rulers who suffered from an unremitting shortage of money, it is not hard to see why they responded as they did to what must have been a chronic insecurity, even if in doing so they further jeopardised their position; they clung to what they knew and to the old certainties. In this they were no different from millions of people before or since.

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⁵² Certainly the Catholic Church in the seventeenth century was unwilling to countenance officially Galileo's theory concerning the universe because it was seemingly contrary to holy scripture. See Dava Sobel, *Galileo's Daughter* (London, 1999), pp. 255 ff.