

'GOE THOU FORTH MY BOOKE': AUTHORIAL SELF-ASSERTION
AND SELF-REPRESENTATION IN PRINTINGS
OF RENAISSANCE POETRY

by

RONALD SCOTT RENCHLER

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William Rockett

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Approved: William Rockett
 Dr. William Rockett

The introduction of printing into England created new opportunities for the Renaissance poet to represent himself more forcefully as a literary artist concerned with the well-being or improvement of his culture and to make public his desire for recognition as a contributor to England's literary heritage. One of the primary ways he could do so was to create a distinctive image of himself in his printed works. He could communicate his chosen image in two ways: in a traditional way, by using the language and content of his poetry, and in a new way--primarily visual rather than linguistic--by conveying an image through textual features made possible with the advent of printing. For example, a poet could guarantee that he would receive perpetual credit for his work and he could link authorship and book directly

in the consciousness of his readers by seeing to it that his name was placed prominently on the title page. He could include an address to his readers, advertize his previously published works, or give information about forthcoming books. He could define himself by using mottoes or insignia or symbolic devices. Perhaps most significantly, he could include a physical image of himself in the form of a woodcut or engraved portrait.

This study attempts to enlarge our understanding of the individual author's role in shaping the Renaissance literary system by analyzing both the linguistic and nonlinguistic features of the printed texts of four Renaissance poets: John Skelton, John Heywood, Thomas Churchyard, and John Taylor. It investigates the way these poets integrated their poetry with the physical features of their printed books in order to gain widespread recognition and to persuade their readers of the value of their contributions to Renaissance literary culture.

VITA

NAME OF AUTHOR: Ronald Scott Renschler

PLACE OF BIRTH: Emporia, Kansas

DATE OF BIRTH: January 4, 1951

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon
New Mexico State University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, 1987, University of Oregon
Master of Arts, 1978, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, 1974, New Mexico State University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Renaissance Poetry

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of English,
University of Oregon, 1976-78, 1982-84, 1986-87

Graduate Teaching Fellow, College of Education,
University of Oregon, 1985-86

AWARDS AND HONORS:

University of Oregon Dissertation Award, 1986
Huntington Library Short-Term Research Award, 1985
Newberry Library Short-Term Research Award, 1985
University of Oregon Graduate Award for Poetry, 1984
Pass with Distinction, Field Exam, 20th-Century British
and American Poetry, 1983

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Notes	26
II. CAXTON AND THE STATUS OF POETRY, 1475-1520 .	28
Notes	83
III. JOHN SKELTON	88
Notes	178
IV. JOHN HEYWOOD	183
Notes	216
V. THOMAS CHURCHYARD	217
Notes	267
VI. JOHN TAYLOR, THE WATER POET	269
Notes	310
VII. CONCLUSION	312
BIBLIOGRAPHY	328

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Title Page of Skelton's <u>A Garlande of Laurell</u> .	119
2.	Woodcut of Skelton on Verso of Title Page to <u>A Garlande of Laurell</u>	122
3.	Title Page to <u>Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne</u> . .	140
4.	Title Page to <u>Diuers Balettys and Dyties</u> <u>Solacyous</u>	141
5.	Woodcut Representing Skelton from <u>Why Come Ye</u> <u>Nat to Courte?</u>	157
6.	Title Page to <u>Pithy Pleasaunt and Profitable</u> <u>Works</u>	163
7.	Excerpt from "Skelton's Ghost".	176
8.	Title Page to <u>A Dialogue</u>	187
9.	Title Page to <u>Two Hundred Epigrammes</u>	191
10.	Title Page to <u>A Fourth Hundred of Epygrams</u> . .	192
11.	Title Page to <u>John Heywood's Workes</u>	194
12.	Title Page to <u>The Spider and the Flie</u>	203
13.	Woodcut Portrait from <u>The Spider and</u> <u>the Flie</u>	204
14.	Woodcut Illustrations (Reduced) from <u>The Spider and the Flie</u>	209
15.	Two-Page Woodcut (Reduced) from <u>The Spider</u> <u>and the Flie</u>	210
16.	Title Page to <u>The Firste Parte</u> <u>of Churchyardes Chippes</u>	230

17.	Cancelled Title Page to <u>A Generall Rehearsall of Warres (Churchyardes Choise)</u>	243
18.	Reissued Title Page to <u>A Generall Rehearsall of Warres</u>	244
19.	Title Page to <u>A Light Bondell of Liully Discourses Called Churchyardes Charge</u>	247
20.	Title Page to <u>A Pleasaunte Laborinth Called Churchyardes Chance</u>	249
21.	Churchyard's Coat of Arms from <u>Churchyardes Chance</u>	251
22.	Title Page to <u>Churchyardes Challenge</u>	254
23.	Advertisement from <u>Churchyardes Challenge</u>	255
24.	Title Page to <u>A Mysicall Consort of Heauenly Harmonie Compounded Out of Manie Parts of Musicke Called Chyrchyards Charitie</u>	259
25.	Title Page to <u>A Pleasant Discourse of Court and Wars: With a Replication to Them Both, and a Commendation of All Those That Truly Serue Prince and Countrie. Written by Thomas Churchyard and Called His Cherrishing</u>	260
26.	Title Page to <u>Churchyards Good Will</u>	261
27.	Title Page to <u>Great Britaine, All in Blacke. For the Incomparable Losse of Henry, Our Late and Worthy Prince</u>	274
28.	Facing Pages from <u>The Muses Mourning; or Funerall Sonnets on the Death of John Moray Esquire</u>	275
29.	Title Page to <u>The Sculler</u>	278
30.	Title Page to <u>A Cast Over the Water</u>	290
31.	Title Page to <u>A Shilling or, The Trauailles of Twelue-pence</u>	293
32.	"The Meaning of the Picture" from <u>A Shilling or, The Trauailles of Twelue-pence</u>	294

33. Title Page to Taylor's Motto, Et Habeo, et Careo, Et Curo 296
34. Title Page to The Scourge of Basenesse: or, The Old Lerry, with a New Kicksey, and a New-Cum Twang, with the Old Winsey 306
35. Engraved Title Page to All the Workes of John Taylor the Water-Poet, Beeing Sixty and Three in Number, With Sundry New Additions, Corrected, Revised and Newly Imprinted 307
36. Printed Title Page to Taylor's Workes 308

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I

Writing in 1505, Stephen Hawes, who later became a groom and poet in the court of Henry VIII, gives an intriguing critical comment on the kind of poetry being written in the opening decades of the sixteenth century. His assessment of poets and poetry in his time is not a very favorable one. Since the death of Lydgate, Hawes says, English poets have failed to write respectable verse. It is not that they are unable to write good poetry, Hawes goes on to say, but rather that they choose to write frivolous poetry, a poetry intended for an audience seeking pleasure rather than instruction. He complains that English poets since Lydgate have not written poetry enduring enough to win them literary fame:

None syth his tyme / art wolde succede
 After theyr deth / to haue fame for theyr mede

But many a one / is ryght well experte
 In this connyng / but vpon auctoryte
 They fayne no fables / pleasaunt and couerte
 But spend theyr tyme / in vaynfull vanyte
 Makyng balades / of feruent amyte
 As gestes and tryfles / without fruytfulness

Thus all in vayne / they spende theyr besynes.
(1385-93)¹

The literary characteristics of the early ballads about which Hawes complains are difficult to define precisely;² but regardless of the exact meaning of the term in the early Renaissance, it is clear that Hawes considers "balades" to be a poetic form that early sixteenth-century poets should refrain from writing and that readers should refrain from reading. In addition to the moral censure his comments contain, they also belie Hawes's envy at the popularity of this type of poetry: he had strictly medieval conceptions of what poetry was supposed to be and do. The early date of his comment is important, too, for if Hawes genuinely felt that popular ballads threatened the kind of poetry of which he approved--a poetry as didactic and as moralistic as that written by his mentor, Lydgate--it indicates a widespread interest in ballads as early as the first decade of the sixteenth century.

Critical attacks on ballads and ballad writers continued to appear throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad" 285-91). While many of the objections to ballads are based on moral or religious grounds, a number of criticisms are leveled by writers who viewed ballads as a threat not only to the kind of poetry that they themselves were writing but to their popularity as individual poets as well. Despite

these incessant attacks--and perhaps in part because of them--the market in printed ballads continued to grow. The Stationers' Register and the number of extant ballads themselves give ample evidence of the frequency with which printers and stationers were hurrying ballads into print (Rollins, "The Black-Letter Broadside Ballad" 260).

Whatever the reasons writers gave for attacking ballads, it is clear that their disenchantment with that kind of poetry was a direct criticism of popular taste. The criticisms were not aimed solely at ballads, either; many types of verse were scathingly attacked throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Fraser). Typical of such criticism is Sir Philip Sidney's famous attack in An Apology for Poetry, where he chastizes the "Poet-Apes" who write frivolous verse rather than true poetry (1: 205), although he does admit to being stirred emotionally by simple ballads about English heroes (1: 178). Predictably, Ben Jonson was also among the most scathing critics of "versifiers." After defining the "good poet" as the "good man," Jonson says of those writers who undeservedly claim the title of poet:

But, it will here be hastily answer'd, that the writers of these days are other things; that, not only their manners, but their natures are inverted; and nothing remaying with them of the dignitie of Poet, but the abused name, which euery Scribe vsurps. (5: 17-18)

Whether the attackers based their objections on religious, moral, or humanistic grounds, it is clear that they wanted to change the taste of the Renaissance reading public, and they presumably wanted to replace popular taste with their own tastes in literature.³

The introduction of printing into England in 1475 gave poets of all persuasions the ability to influence English literary taste more directly because it allowed them to disseminate their works to a much wider range of readers than had previously been possible. In a sense, a poet could impress his own tastes, that is, his own conception of what poetry should be, upon a reading public that may have been particularly impressionable because reading was probably a relatively new activity for many individuals.⁴

The history of the book and the influence and power of the printing press in shaping cultural, political, and religious thought has received much attention recently, most notably in the work of Febvre and Martin, Eisenstein, McLuhan, and Bennett. The press's impact on English literary taste was probably no less dramatic than its influence on other aspects of Renaissance thought (Patterson). Some writers were content to cater directly to the well-established tastes of the reading public; they therefore wrote ballad after ballad and had them printed anonymously for the small price a stationer might pay for

the ephemeral piece. But other writers had loftier visions of what literature might do and be in a nation that was undergoing major economic, political, cultural, and linguistic changes from 1475, when William Caxton began printing books in England, until well after Elizabeth took the throne in 1557.

Long before the English had assimilated Classical attitudes about poetry into their world view, there existed a strong tradition that exalted the poetry of native English writers such as Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. Although Sidney's Apology is justly important as a spirited defense of the value of poetry, his statement coexisted with a number of earlier English defenses of poetry that stressed a different but no less important system of values (Smith). Other less fully developed defenses had appeared in the poetry of several minor English poets writing throughout the sixteenth century. As the following chapters demonstrate, in almost every decade of the sixteenth century, Renaissance poets expressed, directly or indirectly, some concern with the state and status of English poetry at the time they were writing. An expanding readership coupled with the advent of printing provided poets with the opportunity to heighten the status of poetry in England during the Renaissance, and a number of them tried to do so.

II

The printing press gave poets a new tool for promoting their interests in literature; it allowed them to identify themselves more closely with the kind of poetry they wrote. In the preprint era, the difficulties of identifying oneself as a "poet" must have been enormous. The three major figures of the medieval era--Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate--had overcome tremendous odds by being both talented and lucky: they managed to escape the oblivion of anonymity, a category in which the majority of authors of medieval literature are now placed (Matthews 106-12).

Renaissance poets, however, could alter that particular characteristic of the literary system once the printing press allowed them to reproduce their works in large numbers, which in turn led to the development of a sophisticated distribution system that disseminated their books more widely. They could become more effective as speakers for certain literary positions or for certain types of poetry, as Hawes does in the lines quoted above.

Perhaps more significantly, they could create a poetry that had as one of its chief characteristics an emphasis on the poet. There could now be a specific, identifiable, accountable individual who could make a distinct impression upon readers, a poet who could be known for his ideas, his style, his individuality. The act of creating the poem

could become a part of the poem itself. The individual poet could reenact the creative process he went through in writing his poem; he could address the reader directly and explain the psychology or motivation for his work. Of course, a few medieval poets--Chaucer is the obvious example--had accomplished something of the sort even in the absence of print, but this was the exception rather than the rule. If a Renaissance poet wanted to be known for a certain style or subject matter or system of beliefs, he could write that into his poetry, and, using the exigencies of the printing press, attach his name or image to it in a permanent way, thus guaranteeing at least some degree of public recognition for his efforts.

Poets were slow to take full advantage of the printing press for these purposes, and they did so crudely at first. Some poets, though, did exploit the print medium to a much greater degree than others. No longer doomed to anonymity, a few poets seemed especially interested in carefully cultivating their personae as writers. As we shall see, they used a variety of methods to draw attention to themselves and to create a well-defined image for their readers.

III

With the advent of printing, an imaginative, media-conscious poet not only could represent himself as a literary artist contributing to the well-being or improvement of his culture but also could assert his presence by creating consistent images of himself and his role as a poet in his printed works. The image he chose for himself could be communicated in two ways: in the traditional way, by using the language and content of his poetry, and in a new way--a visual rather than a linguistic one--by conveying an image through textual features made possible with the advent of printing. For example, he could more or less guarantee that he would receive perpetual credit for his writing, and he could link authorship and book directly in the consciousness of his readers by seeing to it that his name was prominently placed on the title page. He could address his audience directly--apart from the literary persona he created in his poems--by including an address to his prospective readers in the front matter of the book. There, or in other parts of the text, he could advertize his previously published works, or he could give information about forthcoming books. He could define himself in terms of mottoes or insignia or symbolic devices, such as a coat of arms. Perhaps most importantly he could

include a physical image of himself in the form of a woodcut or engraved portrait.

In a tradition of literature dependent upon manuscript circulation, the poet might possibly have included such material in an initial copy of a work, but after the manuscript left his hands and began to circulate and be copied, he could never guarantee that these images would survive in their original form--or for that matter, that they would survive in any form--in subsequent copies of the book. In printed form, however, these devices would appear in their original form in all copies of a book, so that the poet could be assured that his readers would consistently receive the image he desired to have as a poet.

As might be expected, the poets who used the physical features of the printed text to develop their image as poets generally reinforced their image and their literary aspirations in the linguistic medium of their poetry as well. A few recent works have focused on the ways that Renaissance writers communicated their aspirations and intentions by infusing their work with linguistic signs that defined them as writers of a certain type or school.

One of the most important studies of the concept of self-representation in Renaissance culture is Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance Self-Fashioning. Noting that in the Renaissance, "there appears to be an increased self-

consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2), Greenblatt studies the process of self-representation among six Renaissance literary figures: More, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare.

A similar perspective is taken in Richard Helgerson's Self-Crowned Laureates. Helgerson documents how three poets--Spenser, Jonson, and Milton--claimed for themselves a special place in the Renaissance literary system and investigates the ways that each of these poets sought to separate himself from his fellow English poets in an attempt to fulfill his desire to become England's national, or laureate, poet (Broadus). In seeking laureate status, Spenser, Jonson, and Milton adopted and communicated attitudes toward poetry that set them apart from two other groups of poets writing during the Renaissance: amateur poets, who produced poetry primarily as an intellectual or aesthetic exercise and who consciously avoided having their works printed so as not to appear vulgar and "common" (Saunders), and professional poets, who sought to earn at least a portion of their income from their skills as writers.

One problem with Helgerson's categorization is that he associates professional writers primarily with the theater; he views them almost exclusively as dramatists. Thus, he

implies that amateur writers, who wanted their poetry circulated only in manuscript among a closed circle of intimate acquaintances, and professional writers, who as playwrights were concerned primarily with viewing audiences rather than reading audiences, were relatively indifferent to the opportunities that print offered to make their literary output well-known among a general readership. Helgerson sees a clear distinction between the laureate's desire to have his works printed and the amateur's and professional playwright's lack of interest in print:

The courtly amateur claimed to write only for his own amusement and that of his friends; the professional, for money and the entertainment of the paying audience. The similarity between them is reflected in a trait we have already noticed, their common reluctance, whether feigned or true, to have their work printed. . . . Their reasons no doubt differed--the amateur feared loss of face, the professional loss of income--but they resembled one another in lacking a desire to give permanent form and wide, printed circulation to the products of their wit. In this both differed from the laureates, who not only allowed their writings to be printed, but took great care that they be printed as handsomely as possible. (37)

Helgerson's analysis may well be true when applied to amateurs or playwrights, but it ignores an entire class of professional, or at least semiprofessional, writers who actively used the print medium as a tool to promote their work and to gain a broad, general readership. Soon after the establishment of the printing press in England, a continuous line of nondramatic poets recognized the

potential of the press as a way of shaping English attitudes toward poetry and of marketing their skills as writers, and they began to incorporate into their printed texts a number of promotional techniques that are still standard features in twentieth-century books.

Although the attitudes of the poets Helgerson defines as laureates do differ in certain respects from these nondramatic professional poets, the attitudes of the professional poet toward the practice of writing poetry are often very similar to those espoused by the laureates. The the laureate poets' attitudes toward the use of the printing press for purposes of self-definition in many cases seems quite ambivalent: they recognize it as a necessity yet despise it, like the amateurs, as a vulgarity. Spenser's title pages, for example, failed to give his complete name as author until 1595, when two works, Amoretti and Colin Clouts Come Home Again, were published.⁵

Although Jonson saw to it that his works were printed, he is famous for his scorn toward his reading audience and the popularization of literature. Jonson's condition approximates that of the neurotic: he wants public recognition and yet rejects it because it demeans him and makes him too "popular." In one of several references he makes to the popularization of poetry, Jonson says he does not want his "title-leave on posts, or walls, / Or in cleft-

stickes, aduanced to make calls / For termers, or some clarke-like seruing man" (8: 28). Jonson clearly knew the power of title-page messages, too; his famous use of Horace's pronouncement on the title page of his 1616 edition of The Workes of Benjamin Jonson, "necque, me ut miretur turba, laboro: / Contentus paucis lectoribus" ["I do not work so that the crowd may admire me, I am contented with a few readers"], makes his attitude clear.⁶

A recent work of a more expansive nature on Renaissance self-representation is Eckhard Auberlen's The Commonwealth of Wit: The Writer's Image and His Strategies of Self-Representation in Elizabethan Literature. Auberlen provides an extensive account of the various schools and categories of writers practicing during Elizabeth's reign, and demonstrates how fully they sought to shape their images through the linguistic features of the literary texts they produced.

As the work of Greenblatt, Helgerson, and Auberlen illustrates, Renaissance poets had many different motives for creating memorable images of themselves through the written word, and it becomes very clear that the "pursuit of literary fame," a phrase Muriel Bradbrook applies to Spenser's activities as a poet, took place in many different contexts. If we are to understand the full vitality of the literary system in which Renaissance poetry developed, it is

equally important to investigate the aims and aspirations of poets who have not attained canonical status in twentieth-century terms.

The lesser lights of English Renaissance literature were also concerned with the reputation of poets and poetry in their culture, and they promoted their activities as writers in a number of different ways. They used poetry as a medium for espousing their own system of values. For example, they were often interested in promoting English causes and values; for them, singing England's praises constituted the highest form of civic duty. Some sought recognition because they thought it would translate directly into wealth. A few wanted to display their wit and to be known primarily for that quality. They occasionally played the role of literary parodist or satirist, mocking the conventions of a literary system that had become, in their eyes, elitist and pretentious. But whatever the individual cause they wished to promote, they could now at least have a chance to communicate their attitudes and values in a clear, consistent, and relatively permanent way by using the exigencies of the print medium. Some were more successful than others; most were not as successful as they had hoped; and even those who were successful while they lived often fell victim soon after their deaths to the acutely short-term memory of their reading public.

IV

One source of evidence that has for the most part gone unexamined in studies of self-representation is the way that Renaissance poets used the extralinguistic features of the printed text to reinforce the self-image that they sought to create through their poetry. As Stephen Greenblatt has noted, "Self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language" (9). Linguistic features are clearly the primary avenue by which we gain access and insight into an author's attitude toward self-image, but by including in our investigations the nonlinguistic features related to self-representation in Renaissance printed texts, we may add an important dimension to our understanding of that important cultural phenomenon.

Only a few studies using this approach have appeared thus far. Most notable is R. B. Waddington's article, "Visual Rhetoric: Chapman and the Extended Poem," which traces ways Chapman used print to communicate ideas simultaneously being developed through the linguistic medium of the poem itself. Speaking of Chapman's An Epicede or Funerall Song, Waddington says:

Chapman discovered for himself ways by which the printed poem can compensate for the loss of the orator's voice and presence in engaging an unseen audience. The poem extends beyond its verbal text, incorporating such typographic features as title page, prefatory matter, illustrations, headings, notes, glosses, and spatial arrangement as a

visual rhetoric, ultimately working to make poem
coterminus with the book that contains it. (57)

But in many ways, Chapman was a latecomer to the idea of using typographic features to parallel the development of linguistic ideas in his poem; a great many Renaissance poets prior to Chapman discovered the potential of the printed book's extralinguistic features to communicate their ideas about poetry and their role in the production of it.

Although the linguistic qualities of a writer's work may be the primary motive for picking up a printed text, it is not the first thing a prospective reader, Renaissance or modern, would confront when selecting a book to read. Instead, it is the extraliterary and extralinguistic features a reader first notices: the text's format, design, title page, front matter. All these features are powerful, albeit in many instances subconscious, influences on a reader's assessment of a writer and his work.

Almost every modern reader has probably had the experience of browsing in a bookstore and "discovering" a previously unfamiliar author through the agency of a particularly striking dust jacket or book cover. No doubt, Renaissance readers browsing through the bookstalls in and around St. Paul's also responded to title pages and other physical features of the printed text. Poets, printers, and stationers surely were aware of the marketing potential of the physical appearance of a work, just as they are today.

After all, Renaissance stationers often relied on the title page as a way of advertising the books available in their shops; they attached them to the posts that gave structural support to their bookstalls (Gaskell 183; Sheavyn 72-73), a practice that Jonson found extremely offensive, as his comments above make clear.

Sophisticated marketing techniques for selling printed books are not the creation of twentieth-century advertising executives. Connoisseurs of major twentieth-century poets must decide whether to purchase regular trade editions or elegant and expensive fine printings of their favorite poet's work. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers occasionally had to make similar choices; for example, they might have to choose between an expensive folio edition or a less elegant quarto or octavo printing. John Heywood, a poet essentially popular in character, had one of his works printed in an edition now judged to be among the finest examples of English printing of its time, even though the majority of his nondramatic poetry appeared in unimpressive small-format printings.

This study attempts to enlarge our understanding of the Renaissance literary system and the individual author's role in it by using a methodology that employs both the nonlinguistic and linguistic features of the printed texts of four Renaissance poets: John Skelton, John Heywood,

Thomas Churchyard, and John Taylor. With the exception of Skelton, these poets have received very little critical attention despite the fact that they were among the most popular writers of their day. My treatment of them here is not a defense of their literary merit; instead, it seeks to investigate the ways that they used the features of their poetry and of the printing press to gain recognition for their poetry and to establish themselves as important contributors to Renaissance literary culture despite their limitations as literary artists. They achieved what numerous other poets whose literature is more highly prized today failed to achieve: widespread popularity during their own time. I believe these poets' sophisticated use of the exigencies of the printing press was partially responsible for allowing them to gain this distinction. Furthermore, the laureate poets may have been indebted to these lesser known poets for ideas in using extralinguistic techniques, for the laureates later used many of the same extralinguistic features that their earlier literary counterparts had used to assert and represent themselves as poets of note.

v

Another virtue of the press was that it allowed poets to gain recognition much more rapidly than had ever before

been possible, and there is some evidence that many poets played an active role in personally promoting their works. If a poet were committed and industrious enough, and if he had sufficient money to fund his own printing, he could see to it that his books were disseminated widely among his friends and associates and the general reading public simply by paying for the printing of his own work and subsequently giving away copies of the book. No doubt, this was a common practice throughout the Renaissance (Miller 164-65), but it is easy to forget that early "vanity" printings could have a profound influence on reading tastes, since a book of poetry could be printed in several hundred copies at once and would enter circulation almost simultaneously among a reading audience much more restricted in size than the modern-day reading audience. Among a readership limited both in size and geographic boundary (primarily London), word-of-mouth advertising must have been a vital part of a poet's strategy in winning the public's attention, just as the attainment of success in the various present-day media--print, film, and television--still depends to some degree on that form of advertising. Renaissance poets would, of course, welcome frequent sales, even though sales of their books probably had little direct influence on their income (Sheavyn 75-77).⁷ There was an indirect payoff, however, if a poet could claim widespread readership, for he might well

increase the value of his original manuscripts to the stationer, who by and large reaped the profits from actual book sales. For those poets who sought fame rather than fortune, name-recognition was important not for profits but simply for publicity.

Thus, distributing "promotional" copies of the book's initial printing was one way a poet might guarantee widespread dissemination of his works. Giving away copies of his books may have been a poet's investment in the future, and stationers often paid writers in finished copies of the printed work (Sheavyn 72; Miller 150-51). The value of a poet's manuscript may have risen considerably if he could claim widespread popularity as a writer, so some writers may have issued "vanity" printings to accomplish just this purpose.

This Darwinian arrangement which rewarded those authors who enjoyed widespread readership contributed mightily to the development of a wide variety of techniques for making one's name as well-known as possible. Some authors seemed strangely oblivious to the need for name-recognition, especially in the first four or five decades following the introduction of printing into England. Stephen Hawes and Alexander Barclay, whose works were printed throughout the first two decades of the sixteenth century, are cases in point. While the printings of their works carried some

identification of their responsibility for authorship, the title pages that accompany most of their texts do not make them conspicuous as authors. On the other hand, Hawes's and Barclay's contemporary, John Skelton, was, as we shall see, extremely diligent in identifying himself as author on the title page and in numerous other ways throughout almost all of his printed texts. Clearly, it was Skelton's choice to advertise, assert, and fashion himself as a poet, whereas Hawes and Barclay showed little interest in doing so. Toward the close of the sixteenth century, conditions had come full circle: so many writers had sought to create names for themselves through the medium of print that the the code of conduct among court or amateur poets was to avoid having their poems printed at all so as to avoid appearing too common or vulgar (Saunders).

By the 1550s it seems clear that writers who wished to participate in the physical make-up of their books could do so. The introduction (1-47) to Corbett and Lightbown's The Comely Frontispiece makes it abundantly clear that Elizabethan and Jacobean authors participated in the design of many engraved title pages from the Renaissance period. There is no reason to believe that some authorial control extended to other parts of the book as well.

Some authors were accustomed to haunting the printing shops, for they found supplemental income there as

translators, editors, and proofreaders (Sheavyn 103-104; Johnson 2). Also, authors were usually expected to correct the proofs of their forthcoming books, so they were frequently involved in the production of the book at this basic level (Sheavyn 82-83). But many authors, especially those concerned with using print to establish themselves as certain types of writers for certain types of audiences, treated the publication of their works with the attention and care that we associate with most twentieth-century authors. In a study of two manuscripts by John Taylor, one of the authors discussed in this study, Marjorie Rushforth has shown that Taylor marked his manuscripts for the printer with attention to such fine detail as italics and initial capitals, and that the compositor was in general careful to set the type as Taylor had marked it. Rushforth also indicates that Taylor corrected his own proofs. The occasional authorial complaints about poor printing and workmanship in some printed material is further evidence that at least some authors took a keen interest in the quality of the printing in which their work appeared (Sheavyn 83).

Much of the material included in some Renaissance books is *de facto* evidence that the author was directly involved in the design of the printed work. The inclusion of an address from the author to the reader is one obvious example

of the way in which an author took part in the production of the book: he would have written his prefatory statements for the text only after he knew the book was to be printed. In cases where woodcut portraits are provided, it is apparent that, if the portrait is indeed an accurate likeness of the poet, he would have had to arrange to supply it or to pose for it. There are books of poetry which appeared with the poet's motto or insignia or coat of arms as part of the printing; in these cases, too, the author would have had to supply that material as part of the manuscript or to have directed the printer to it. Although the practice of printing the front matter of a book after the text itself had been printed was to some degree a matter of practical convenience for the printer (Gaskell 52), it may also be an indication that some authors expected to confer with the printer about the contents and design of at least this portion of the book.

The case studies presented in the following chapters also give clear evidence that poets concerned with communicating their intentions and aspirations as writers had some control over the textual features included in their printed texts. One of the poets discussed, Thomas Churchyard, guaranteed that his name would appear somewhere on the title page by simply giving his books titles that included his name: Churchyardes Choice, Churchyardes

Challenge, and so forth. A poet who sought fame or money or respect for his works could and did find ways to have control over the contents and appearance of the printed version of his manuscript.

VI

The dissertation takes a chronological approach to the subject of self-representation and self-assertion among selected English poets. Following this initial chapter, Chapter II surveys the status of English poetry and poets from 1475, when Caxton established his printing press in England, to 1520, just before John Skelton began to communicate his aspirations as a poet and to shape his literary career through the medium of print. Skelton, the earliest and most intriguing example of the process of literary self-representation, is the subject of Chapter III. Chapter IV surveys the life and work of John Heywood, a poet whose importance as a dramatist has been well documented but whose career as a highly popular nondramatic poet has been almost completely ignored. Chapter V investigates the relationship between print and self-representation as practiced in the works of one of the most prolific Elizabethan poets of his day, Thomas Churchyard. Chapter VI analyzes the literary system viewed from the perspective of one of the most fascinating "self-made" poets during the

later Renaissance, John Taylor, the Water Poet. Finally, Chapter VII provides some observations on and some implications of authorial self-representation as a feature of the Renaissance literary system.

Notes

¹ The date of composition is that given by Edwards (26).

² The QED cites early 16th-century uses of the word that include "a song intended as the accompaniment to a dance," "a light, simple song of any kind," the formally constructed seven- or eight-line stanzaic poems, and poems approximating this form. Good critical accounts of the ballad as a literary phenomenon are given by Shaaber, Fowler, and Friedman. Friedman's book is especially useful for its discussion of the differences between traditional and broadside ballads. Also essential is Rollins ("The Blackletter Broadside Ballad"). The continuing popularity of the ballad throughout the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries is documented by Rollins ("An Analytical Index").

³ Buxton and Wright provide important studies of Renaissance taste. Recent works on popular Renaissance literary forms other than poetry include those by Stevenson, Spufford, Capp, and Clark. The popular audience for drama is investigated by Harbage and Cook.

⁴ Literacy in the late Middle Ages and throughout the Renaissance has been the subject of a number of studies. Most important is Cressy's, who attempts a quantitative measurement of literacy by assessing the numbers of Renaissance citizens who could sign their names to legal documents. He correlates ability to sign with ability to read and comes to the following conclusion:

"Evidence from the seventeenth century . . . shows that England was massively illiterate More than two-thirds of the men and nine-tenths of the women were so illiterate at the time of the civil war that they could not even write their own names. (2)

However, Cressy acknowledges that in urban London, literacy rates were much higher, perhaps as high as 67% (72-73). In Small Books and Pleasant Histories, Spufford bases her proposal of widespread literacy on the preponderance of popular literary forms printed throughout the Renaissance (1-82). Other important works on literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance include those by Adamson, Schofield, Stone, Coleman, Clanchy, Thompson, and Bauml. The important consideration of changes that occur when oral transmission

of literature shifts to printed transmission is treated by Ong.

5 The title pages of two earlier works, Daphnaida and Complaints, both printed in 1591, identified their author only as "Ed. Sp." Prior to that time, none of Spenser's publications carried his name on the title page (Johnson).

6 The translation is that given by Corbett and Lightbown (146).

7 Sheavyn and Miller provide book-length studies of author-stationer-printer relationships. Plant's study of the economics of the printing industry is also valuable.

CHAPTER II

CAXTON AND THE STATUS OF POETRY, 1475-1520

I

With the exception of his own prologues, epilogues, and additions to the works he printed, and one prologue by his patron and fellow translator, Anthony, Earl Rivers, William Caxton apparently never printed an original work written in English by a writer living during his own lifetime, or at least no such work has survived.¹ Perhaps Caxton's neglect of contemporary English literature should not surprise us; he was printing in an age when the vast majority of printed books was not of contemporary origin (Febvre and Martin 153, 160). But William Caxton seems to have been no ordinary printer. Unlike Richard Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde, the printers who immediately succeeded him in supplying books to the English reading public, Caxton published only a modest number of the highly marketable religious, legal, and school books that became a standard source of income for Pynson, de Worde, and several later generations of English printers. Instead, he published books of a more literary nature; roughly one-third of his output consisted of histories,

romances, and poetry. He printed 13 separate works, several in multiple editions, by the best of the earlier English poets--Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate--along with two anonymous English poems, The Court of Sapience and The Book of Courtesy, and several English verse translations of the most popular French literature as well (Sands; Blake, Caxton and His World 221-38).² His motivation for issuing these kinds of books has been a focal point for Caxton's biographers and bibliographers, and the issue is important to the literary historian because it involves the question of whether a sizeable reading public interested in such literature already existed when Caxton established his press at Westminster in 1475,³ or whether Caxton played a significant role in creating a new audience for imaginative literature, and especially for poetry, by making books of this type more readily available at a reasonable price.

In 1861, William Blades, Caxton's first major biographer, issued the first volume of his Life and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer.

Blades characterizes Caxton as an astute businessman who,

by bringing his commercial experience to bear, and by suiting supply to the demand, while at the same time in no slight degree directing the channel in which it should flow, . . . contrived to earn an honest living by the produce of his press.

(1: 74)

Nearly half a century later, E. Gordon Duff took the opposing view and portrayed Caxton as a "gentleman" printer

whose financial success from his 30-year career as a mercer and diplomat in Europe allowed him to print the works he himself preferred and to disseminate them among a small but receptive audience. Duff says of Caxton:

When he settled in England as a printer, he was able to consult his own tastes in the matter of what he should print, and this clearly lay in the direction of English poetry and prose romances. The reading public was not then very large, and Caxton directed rather than followed the popular taste. (Cambridge 2: 317)

H. B. Lathrop responded to Duff's claim in an article published in 1922. Lathrop surveyed the evidence related to the frequency with which Caxton acknowledged his patrons in his prologues and epilogues and concluded that the printer's real interest lay primarily in the financial success derived not from sales but from patronage. The books Caxton printed, says Lathrop,

commanded his sincere and fervent preferences, but he did not guide the world or his little public to them. He was himself guided to the books which as he knew in advance, would attract his patrons, sometimes because they were of established popularity, sometimes because the expressed desires of royal, noble, or worthy persons had assured him that if he should publish what they asked, their bounty would give him good cause to remember his benefactors in his prayers. (85)

Henry Plomer, another of Caxton's early biographers and bibliographers, believes that Caxton had altruistic motives for printing most of his works:

The road he set out to make was none other than to educate and brighten the lives of his countrymen, by circulating hundreds of copies of the best

literature at a low price where only half a dozen had been obtainable before, and those only by the rich. (91)

In 1976, the quincentenary of Caxton's first book issued from his Westminster press, several new studies of Caxton's life and work appeared. This new generation of scholars is no more in agreement than earlier ones regarding Caxton's position as a man-of-letters. In William Caxton: A Biography, George D. Painter gives a chronological reconstruction of Caxton's titles and ties the printer's work explicitly to the political conditions and opportunities for patronage under Edward IV, Richard III, and Henry VII. Caxton's patrons between 1476 and 1491 included Anthony, Earl Rivers, Edward IV's brother-in-law; William FitzAlan, 9th Earl of Arundel, who served as Warden of the Cinque Ports under both Edward IV and Richard III; the Earl of Oxford; and Lady Margaret, the Queen Mother. According to Caxton's prologue to Feats of Arms, printed in 1489, Henry VII personally commissioned that work, giving the manuscript to Caxton "to translate . . . and reduce it into our English and natural tongue, and to put it in empynte" (81-82).⁴ But Caxton sought patronage wherever he could find it, numbering a fellow mercer, William Pratt, and an Irish goldsmith, Hugh Bryce, among his patrons. Painter describes Caxton as a somewhat wily businessman who weathered England's shifting political fortunes during his

career as a publisher by printing the right books at the right time for the right people, although perhaps because of his affiliation with the court of Richard III, he was unable to secure royal commissions for books during the first two years of Henry VII's reign. Painter believes that this resulted in a shift in the types of works Caxton printed:

[I]t is not surprising that marked changes appear in Caxton's press after the end of 1485. The next two years, in which he printed only four or five substantial books and about as many smaller pieces, are his least productive period. His choice of texts show that he had been obliged to find new customers. In 1486-8, instead of courtly romances, patriotic histories, merry tales, the English poets and his own translations, he turned to standard church or school books and lay devotional works. (151)

The implication is, of course, that Caxton was completely dependent upon wealthy patrons if he wished to print works of a literary sort, and Painter identifies the shift in subject matter during the mid-1480s as "a symptom of malaise caused by lack of patrons and incentives to translate" (151).

Another of Caxton's quincentenary biographers, Richard Deacon, describes the printer as both realist and idealist. Deacon says that Caxton

never acted on mere whims: in all his work, translating, editing and printing, there is the pattern of a man who moved forward by a series of impulses and logical steps rather than one single motive. . . . When Caxton decided to print a book he had not one reason, but several. (134)

Yet a driving force behind the whole of Caxton's work, Deacon claims, was an almost completely altruistic and nationalistic motive:

Caxton was in effect a schoolmaster for adults. A village schoolmaster, perhaps, and not a scholar. But what shone through all his adulation of the nobility, all his flattery of patrons was an instinctive and quite remarkable sense of integrity. . . .Caxton never lost sight of the fact that . . . the great need, perhaps even the great heart cry, of the English people as a whole was for the raising of their language . . . to standards worthy of a civilized community. (173)

In Caxton: England's First Publisher, a third biography appearing in 1976, N. F. Blake deemphasizes Caxton's dependence on patronage and notes that although Caxton would always welcome additional revenue from a patron, "the printer would get his own reward from the sale of his wares"; patronage, by and large, simply "helped to guarantee safety from attack and [gave] respectability" (176). Of course, such respectability also served as the equivalent of our modern-day product endorsement. Blake attributes Caxton's success to an awareness of the needs of his reading public: "Caxton's policy was to issue texts in the vernacular and to provide reading matter which was up-to-date. In this way he managed to achieve a monopoly in England, though naturally he could not sell his work abroad" (178).

In the most recent survey of Caxton's printed works,

Lotte Hellinga credits him with creating a readership for vernacular literature:

When he settled in Westminster he must have planned to begin an independent press, and to publish literary works in English texts that were his own delight for a public that was not accustomed to owning books. Patrons, royal or otherwise, were a matter of opportunity and not a basis for business. To prepare the way for the Canterbury Tales he printed some appetizing little books which could be assembled to a sizeable volume. Originally court poetry, these texts now began to appeal to the aspiring classes in England. Caxton gave these books a form in print that must have made it easy to win over a wide readership. The continuation of his career in England, with a steady succession of books aimed at the same kind of public, shows that his course had been successful [sic]. He had made readers.
(101-102)

II

Whether Caxton took advantage of preestablished tastes for the poetry of England's medieval poets or whether he helped to actually create a readership for their poetry by making printed texts more widely available is still an open question, but there can be little doubt that the audience for reading material of all sorts was growing rapidly from the late fifteenth century until the end of the sixteenth century. English authors and printers frequently refer to the changing nature of their reading audience, and the frequency with which they identify "unlettered" readers, that is, those readers who know English but not Latin, is surprising. In his prologues and epilogues, Caxton himself

makes frequent mention of the this growing group of readers. For example, in the prologue to the second edition of The Game of Chess, a book Caxton first printed in 1475 and reissued in 1483, we learn that he wanted the book to reach an audience needing moral edification, especially those readers who knew neither Latin nor French, another indication that the reading public was no longer limited to clerical and aristocratic circles. In the prologue to the work, Caxton recounts that when he was in Bruges, he read the French version of The Game of Chess and decided to translate it into English in order to make it available to "that somme which have not seen it ne understonde Frensshe ne Latyn" (p. 88). Caxton reports that the first edition sold well enough to warrant a second printing, this time with woodcut illustrations, a further indication of the book's popular appeal. He says:

And whan I so had achyeved the sayd translacion I dyde doo sette in enprynte a certeyn nombre of them, which anone were depessed and solde.

Wherfore bycause thys sayd book is ful of holsum wysedom and requysyte unto every astate and degree, I have purposed to enprynte it, shewing therein the figures of suche persons as longen to the playe, in whom al astates and degrees ben comprysed. Besechyng al them that this litel werke shal see, here or rede to have me excused for the rude and symple making and reducyn[g] in to our Englisshe. (88)

The broadly defined audience of "every astate and degree" Caxton designates for The Game of Chess is due in part to its subject matter; as he notes, the text itself describes,

and the woodcuts illustrate, persons of "all estates and degrees." In prologues and epilogues to other works, Caxton also designates potential audiences as "every Cristen man" (142), "every man resonable" (119), "such peple as been not lettred" (89), "all maner of peple" (65), and "every estate hie and lowe" (82).

The growth in English readership also helps explain the large number of translations published by Caxton and subsequent Renaissance printers well into the seventeenth century. H. S. Bennett's English Books and Readers, 1475-1557 contains a "trial" list of translations printed between 1475 and 1560 (277-319). While the 821 titles entered in his list is impressive for what they tell us about literary activity during this period of time, the titles and subject matter of the translations are even more informative about the kinds of books being read by English people in the early Tudor period. Devotional literature, almanacks, romances, and popular didactic literature are most commonly translated; translations of Classical literature comprise a surprisingly small number of the texts. The translations of non-Classical literature were obviously intended for a completely new class of readers, a growing group of middle-class, perhaps even lower-class, English men and women whose vernacular literacy was newly acquired and for whom an insufficient amount of vernacular reading material existed.

Writers, translators, and printers frequently acknowledge as much in their works. Caxton's desire to have many of the works he printed disseminated among less sophisticated readers has been cited above. Another early example occurs in Thomas Norton's Ordinal of Alchemy. Although The Ordinal did not appear in print until 1652, when it was included as part of Elias Ashmole's Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum, the 31 extant manuscripts of the work, the two earliest dating from the late fifteenth century, attest to its popularity throughout the Renaissance. In the Prohemium to The Ordinal, Norton states that "this boke is made that lay-men shuld it se" (2), and he concludes the alchemical treatise with a rather optimistic estimation of the size of the book's readership. The work, says Norton, "Is here sett owte in englishce blonte & rude, / For this is so made to teche a multitude / Of rude peple which delyn with these workis / Ten thowsande lay men ageyn two able clerkis" (3089-92). Although Norton may exaggerate the number of laymen he expects his poem to reach, he clearly intends it for an unlettered rather than a highly educated reading audience.

The efforts of authors and translators to reach this unlettered group of lay readers is attested to in the prefaces to a number of books printed throughout the sixteenth century. Alexander Barclay introduces his trans-

lation of Sallustius's Jugurtha, printed in 1520, with an explanation of why he placed his English translation in a parallel text with the original Latin. The treatise, Barclay says,

is writen in latyn by the renowned romayne Salust: whose wordes in latyn I haue also added vnto the marge of this my translation to thintent that such as shal dysdayne to rede my translation in englysshe: may rede this hystorie more compendiously & more obscurely writen in laten. . . . [B]ut vnto many noble gentylnen which vnderstande nat latyn tong p[er]fetyly I dout nat but that this my labour shalbe both pleasure & profet. For by the same they shal haue some help toward the vnderstandyng of latyn: which at this tyme is almost contemned of gentylnen. (a4v)

Thomas Elyot likewise alludes to the lack of "lettered" readers among the intended audience for his translation of Isocrates's Doctrinal of Princes, first published in 1533. Elyot says that "the chiefe cause of this my litle exercise was: to the intente that thei, whiche do not understande greeke nor latine, shoulde not lacke the commoditee and pleasure, which maie be taken in readyng therof" (A2v).

J. Bury's preface to a combined printing of The Book of Cato and Isocrates' Letter to Demonicus, published in 1558, explains that Bury found the English translation of Cato's book and decided that it should be printed because it had been "hydde from common use" and because "the doctrines therin conteined, are most necessary for guiding this life, ne yeat the stile or phrase so unaccustomed or olde, but

that the vulgar people may lyghtly understande the same" (a3r).

In 1580, William Forrest, in his introduction to a translation of still another work by Isocrates, A Perfect Looking Glass, alludes to the continuing decline of Latin as a literary language and simultaneously provides a fascinating glimpse of how quickly readers began to take the printing press for granted. In "The Epistle of the Translatour to the Readers," Forrest notes, with a mixture of hope and distress, that

in no realme, nor in any age heretofore, in this Countrey, the worde of god hath never more flourished, never painfuller preaching and teaching, more godlyer and profitabler lawes never made, never more wiser and graver Counselers, and never more Bookes set forth, especially in this our Englishe tongue, and yet no time to have bene wherein sinne and iniquitye hath more raigned, the leredned lesse regarded, their writinges lesse perused, and all men more careless then they are now.

Forrest compares present conditions with a somewhat romanticized vision of the past:

Who knoweth not howe greatlye in times past our auncestours reverenced and honoured the learned, with what care and dilligence before the Arte of Printinge was found out, they indevoured to write out the Copies of their writinges, what charges they bestowed in penning their bookes, and what great sommes of money they woulde gladleye departe withall, if they heard of any writer before unknowne, respecting no charges, nor regarding any travayle, so that they might obtain them, but nowe, who seeth not how all thinges are turned upside downe. (B2v-B3r)

Forrest makes the transition from Latin text to English text easier for his readers by omitting from the translated text his own lengthy citations from authorities and placing them instead in the margins. He takes this step specifically for readers unaccustomed to Classical literature:

I hope no man will thinke the time ill spent whiche he shall bestow in the reading therof, especially those which being bereft from the benefite therof through their ignoraunce in the knowledge of the Greeke and Latine tongues, could not heretofore come to the perfite understanding of the same. And because the Author himselfe, is in most places of these his preceptes breefer then either the matter would require or that the capacities of the meaner sorte can so easlye gather the meaning therof, I have not spared for their furtherance to adjoine unto divers places certain reasons and confirmations taken out of Aristotle and Tully. (Clr)

Other translators make similar concessions to the "unsophisticated" reader. They also become cognizant of youthful readers and are often hostile to their tastes in literature. Some translators, however, try to nurture the tastes of younger readers. One example is Robert Whittington, one of the participants (the other being Stanbridge), in the grammar wars of the 1530s. Whittington translated Cicero's De Officiis (1534) with the following justification:

I se many yonge persones and rather all for the most parte that be any thyng lettred of whome some scantly can skylle of lettres very studyous of knowlege of thynges and be vehemently bente to rede newe workes and in especyall that be translated in to the vulgare tonge. All be it some of theym where as they judge them selfe very

fruytfully exercysed not withstanding they seme
vaynly occupyed and they perceyve very lytell
fruyte to issue out of their studye.

(qtd. in Lathrop 57)

Presumably, Whittington expected his translation of Cicero to end that problem.

The humanist educator Nicholas Udall translated Erasmus's Apophthegms in 1542. In his preface to the work, Udall first defines his audience as "all maner persones, & in especiall of noble men" (*2r), and then delivers some advice to old and young readers alike. He explains that the intermixture of Greek, Latin, and English is intended for "young scholares and studentes" who are just learning Classical languages. Those who know no Latin, he says, "maye passe it over and satisfie hymself with the Englyshe. Who passeth not on the Greke, maie sembleably passe it over, and make as though he see none suche." Udall says it is his intent to "dooe good to all sortes" of readers: "Leat the unlearned readers somewhat beare with young studentes as the learned must and will doe with theim." Udall concludes by saying:

[M]y onely wille and desire is to further honeste knowlege, and to call (awaye the studious youth in especiall) from havng delite in readyng phantasticall trifles, (which contein in manier nothyng but the seninarie of pernicious sects and sedicious doctrine. (*2v-*3r)

V. L., the author of The Pleasant, Plain, and Pithy Pathway Leading to a Virtuouse and Honest Life, printed about

1552, gives some clues to how authors perceived a younger reading audience as opposed to an older one: "And who is so ignoraunte, but that he well understandeth that youthe commonlye taketh more delectacion in redynge those thynges which in hys age requyreth then in grave sentences cereously pronounced." After citing one authority to make a point, V. L. says:

I omytte other probable auctorities whyche I myghte nowe worthelye bringe herein, to declare that thys lytle woorke is not to be rejected after a nomber of pythe preceptes ther followeth a merye invented mattier placed therein onely to quycken the spyrytes and to avoyde tedyousnesse. (*2r)

Another somewhat more vociferous voice comes from Thomas Drant in his translation of Horace's Art of Poetry, printed in 1567. Drant blasts the tastes of everyday readers and challenges them to read more difficult works, such as his translation of Horace:

I fear me a number of readers think Horaces book is too hard, as I was aunswered by a prynter not longe agone, Though sayth he (Sir your boke be wyse, and ful of learning, yet per adventure it wyl not be so saileable) signifyng indeede that flim flames and gue gawes, be they never so sleighte and slender, are soner rapte up thenne are those which be lettered and Clarkly makings. And no doubt the cause that bookes of learning seme so hard is, because such and so greate a scull of amarouse Pamphlets have so preoccupied the eyese, and eares of men, that a multytude believe ther is none other style, or phrase ells worthe gramercy. (*5r)

The theme that runs throughout this series of comments is that a new reading audience is taking shape. It is

significant, too, how rapidly criticism of the taste of these new readers developed. If we are to believe the conservative comments of some of the English translators above, newfangledness was "in." "Flim flames and gue gawes" threatened to subvert a whole generation of English readers. The wisdom of Horace was "out."

III

The Renaissance social historian Lawrence Stone attributes the growth in the sixteenth-century reading public to an "educational revolution" occurring after 1500. Stone argues that the aristocracy became intellectually lazy during the sixteenth century--a kind of intellectual ennui set in--which led to a decline in literacy among the upper classes of English society. But simultaneously, a newly educated, literate group of humanists emerged from among the members of the peers and gentry. Stone's believes this development helps to explain the great surge in translations at this time:

What distinguishes the English humanists of the second quarter of the sixteenth century from their foreign colleagues is the relative poverty of their scholarship. No great corpus of learning, no monumental encyclopedias came from the English press. Instead there poured forth a flood of translations for the benefit of gentlemen anxious to absorb the lessons of the classics without going to the trouble of mastering the language.

(673)

While Stone's conclusion perhaps holds true for strictly classical texts, it associates the "flood of translations" too closely with Classical literature. As noted above, H. S. Bennett's list of translations makes it clear that other types of literature were far more frequently translated, and thus the "flood of translations" appealed to a much wider audience than Stone's humanist gentlemen. Caxton's own output of translations demonstrates this point. His translated texts which might be termed strictly classical--Tullius of Olde Age, Tullius of Frendship, Cato, and Eneydos (itself translated into English from a French paraphrase of parts of Virgil's Aeneid--were probably intended primarily for an elite or aristocratic audience. But many other books Caxton printed are translations of another sort--devotional works, histories (often implicitly related to English history), and books of instruction and moral wisdom, all of which Caxton presumably felt would be read by a general rather than a limited reading audience.

In his study of English translations of classical works from 1477 to 1620, H. B. Lathrop characterizes the output of translations during the first 40 years of English printing in a much broader way than does Stone:

The works translated to 1517 are translations of standard works popular during the later Middle Ages; and they are from the hands of an earlier generation of French or English writers whose names carried some weight of authority. Indeed they do not at all represent, in scope or quality,

even the larger culture possible in medieval times, but the conventional and narrow outlook of ordinary people who accepted ordinary books.
(15-16)

Lathrop notes that the next 40 years did little to alter this situation: "[T]he horizon widened, the scope of knowledge was extended, more authors were read, and those who were read were better known; but the standpoint was the same, and the outlook was in the same direction" as it had been in the earlier period (31).

Perhaps the impetus for this deluge of translations stemmed in part from the paucity of English vernacular literature; readers and printers simply had to look to classical and Continental writers to meet the growing demand for reading material. In economic terms, demand exceeded supply. The subject matter of the books printed during the English Renaissance has been the focus of several recent studies (Bennett, Klotz, Capp, Spufford, Clark, Stevenson). One of the most general studies is Edith Klotz's survey of the subject matter of printed works issued every tenth year from 1480 to 1640, and her work documents the preponderance of religious and philosophical works over books having other types of subject matter. Her analysis shows that of 3,530 titles surveyed, 1,563, or 44%, had either religion or philosophy as their subject (418).⁵ Such a volume of printed material clearly could not have been intended only for a numerically small and narrow audience of clerical,

courtly, and university-educated readers; there must have been an active readership for devotional literature which extended far beyond the closed circle of such audiences.

Another indication of the growth in readership for religious material is the publication history of English versions of the Bible and other Biblical literature. In the first 75 years of English printing, at least 30 English editions of the Bible and 50 editions of the New Testament were issued. Printings of new editions of English Bibles continued throughout the following century. During the reign of Elizabeth over 100 editions of the Bible and 30 of the New Testament were printed; from 1603 to 1640 new editions of the Bible and New Testament numbered 150 and 50, respectively.⁶

IV

It is, perhaps, not unexpected that religious books should comprise such a large part of the output of English presses between 1480 and 1640, but the fact that books of a literary nature rank as the second most frequently printed type of book among those surveyed might strike us as somewhat more surprising.⁷ Of the 3,530 books surveyed in Klotz's study, 762, or 22%, were classified as being of a literary nature.

The growth of interest in books of a "literary" nature may be assessed by measuring the gradual rise in the number of books of that type that were printed at the beginning of each decade Klotz studies. She identifies no books of a literary nature printed in the years 1480 or 1490; but in 1500, 14 books defined as "literature" appeared. In 1510, 11 such books were printed; and the number rises to 17 in 1520 and remains at 17 in 1530. The number falls back to 9 in 1540, but escalates to 21 in 1550. If the pattern revealed in Klotz's survey is an accurate representation of patterns in the publication of literary works as a group, the gradual increase in publication of works of this type demonstrates the growing appreciation for literature among readers.

The publication of native English poetry certainly constituted a part of this growth in literary publication. But until about 1520, the poetry being printed was of a limited type; in general it was poetry that had circulated for quite some time in manuscript. Very little newly-written poetry appeared between the time Caxton established his press in 1475 and the first decade or two of the sixteenth century. English poetry had a well-developed tradition extending from the age of Chaucer and Gower through the death of Lydgate in 1449, a quarter of a century prior to Caxton's earliest presswork, and printers for the

most part supplied English readers with that earlier poetry instead of newly-written works.

A survey of Caxton's printings of poetry in the 15 years from 1475 to 1490 demonstrates several facets of the literary system as it operated in the early years of English printing. From the beginning of Caxton scholarship to the present day, England's first printer has been praised for issuing the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. Surveying Caxton's press production, William Blades says: "In poetry, Caxton shows to great advantage; he printed all of any merit then in existence. . . . The poetical reverence with which Caxton speaks of Chaucer . . . shows his high appreciation of England's first great Poet" (1: 80).

Writing in 1926, N. S. Auner echoes Blades's sentiments:

All in all, Caxton's treatment of the English poets of his day reflects great credit upon his judgement and taste. A true representative of his time, he shared the general admiration for Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, with just the amount of difference that marked him as a leader (tactful, not revolutionary) and a forerunner of modern tendencies. (174)

In a more recent essay, Donald B. Sands comes to a similar conclusion. Referring to the 13 titles of English verse Caxton printed, Sands says:

There is no patronage here, and presumably their production involved financial risk simply because Caxton had no way of knowing just who would buy them, as he did with sacerdotal and official publications; or how popular they might be, since he

was the person who was printing them for the first time. Here, it seems to me, Caxton's literary sense must have been his guide. He did not, to say the obvious thing, have to publish these pieces. (316)

Not all critics have agreed with such assessments, however; and there is some evidence that Caxton, as virtually the only printer working in England until 1490, was in the fortuitous position of being the only pressman able to supply books which he knew were already in demand (Duff, Printing 1-71). In the view of Curt Buhler, Caxton simply reflected the tastes already developed in his time:

William Caxton showed the interests, tastes, and preferences of his compeers and . . . he instinctively chose to publish the best of the literature that was available to him. It is unlikely that he would have considered printing anything for which he could not foresee a ready market. He probably had neither the intention nor the desire to be an innovator of tastes, and the ten thousand volumes which proceeded from his presses merely served to encourage those literary qualities which he himself respected and admired. One may well ask: Could he have published anything other than what he did put out. (13)⁸

Like many other English Renaissance printers, Caxton acted as pressman, publisher, editor, translator, and stationer simultaneously. As England's first printer, he could easily have established a monopoly on certain types of printed books. His activities as a bookseller would have put him in a position to hear first-hand of the desired reading material of his clientele who visited his shop at the sign of the Red Pale.⁹

The prologues and epilogues provide three examples of instances when literary conversations led Caxton to print specific works. The first instance also demonstrates how untrustworthy manuscript versions of literature could be in the late fifteenth century, and it provides us with a glimpse of Caxton's efforts to establish a definitive text for his printed books. In the prologue to the second edition of The Canterbury Tales, printed in 1484, Caxton says that all copies of the first edition "anon were sold to many and dyverse gentylnen." One of the purchasers, who remains unidentified, informed Caxton that the printing "was not accordyng in many places unto the book that Gefferey Chaucer had made." Caxton insisted that he had followed his manuscript copy carefully in printing his first edition, but the gentleman offered to supply a copy of his father's more accurate manuscript for the second edition. Caxton readily agreed to use the gentleman's manuscript as a copy text in order to avoid "hurtyng and dyffamyng" Chaucer's work (62).

The second instance which provides evidence that Caxton actively sought out suggestions and advice on works he should print is related in the prologue to The Book of Good Manners (1487). Here, Caxton informs his readers that his "specyall frende," William Pratt, a fellow mercer, brought him the French version of The Book of Good Manners and asked him to translate it into English "to th'ende that it myght

be had and used amonge the people for th'amendement of their manners and to th'encecrease of virtuous lvyng" (60).

A similar scenario is laid out in the epilogue to Chaucer's translation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, which Caxton printed in 1478. Caxton relates that he is printing the work "atte requeste of a singuler frend and gossib" (59). The anonymity of the friend makes it likely that the individual was a literary associate and advisor rather than a patron, although N. F. Blake has suggested that the friend was actually William Pratt once again. Blake proposes that since the work was probably of interest primarily to a court audience, any mention Caxton made of a mercer by name would have undermined the value of the book in the eyes of a court reader (Caxton and His World 87-88). Whatever the case, Caxton seems to have relied to some degree on literary "scouts" for promising suggestions on items to print.

His activities as a bookseller and printer would have also required that he have an intimate knowledge of the contemporary manuscript trade; in fact, it is possible that he sold manuscripts along with books from his press. It is significant that the English poets whose works he printed--Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate--all had a firmly established manuscript circulation for their writing throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Analysis of manuscript traditions for individual authors is one of the few sources of quantitative evidence related to the popularity of poets and poetry in the preprint era. The survival into modern times of large numbers of medieval manuscripts may very well argue for wide-spread manuscript circulation in the late Middle Ages; but as E. T. Donaldson has pointed out, just the opposite may be true: manuscripts which were not circulated and read constantly may in some cases survive in larger numbers than the manuscripts of more popular works which were constantly subject to the damage caused by continual circulation. Donaldson gives the example of Chaucer's Treatise on the Astrolabe, which is extant in 25 manuscripts. Says Donaldson: "Scientific translations were not so avidly read as creative works and hence did not suffer the wear-and-tear that must have destroyed many manuscripts of Chaucer's literary productions" (93-94). This phenomenon may also explain why elaborate, expensively illuminated manuscripts owned by the nobility sometimes survive more frequently than manuscripts intended for general circulation; manuscripts owned by aristocrats would have been better protected and thus would have a better chance for survival. But in the case of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, the present-day existence of relatively large numbers of manuscripts of their works, coupled with frequent references to these poets

in other coeval literature, provides persuasive evidence that the poets already enjoyed a wide readership in manuscript at the time Caxton began printing in England, and that in producing printed texts, he was simply supplying the works of these authors in sufficient numbers to meet a pre-existing demand which even the most active manuscript production could not meet.

Manuscripts (including fragments) of Chaucer's works that Caxton printed survive in the following numbers: Canterbury Tales, 85; Troilus and Cressida, 16; Parliament of Fowls, 14; Chaucer's translation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, 10; Anelida and Arcite, 8; and The House of Fame, 3. Forty-nine English manuscripts of Gower's Confessio Amantis, which Caxton printed in 1483, still exist. Caxton printed four works by Lydgate, whose manuscript tradition is especially complex. Twenty-five manuscripts of Stans Puer are extant, twelve of The Horse, Sheep, and Goose, sixteen of The Churl and the Bird, and nine of The Temple of Glass.¹⁰

In a recent study of the provenance and dissemination of manuscripts in the later Middle Ages, A. I. Doyle has surveyed the limited and fragmentary evidence on the subject. Although he is cautious in his conclusions based on narrow evidence, Doyle casts some doubt on the assumption that English literary manuscripts existed solely or even

primarily for aristocratic audiences. He identifies the work of a particularly productive copyist at work at the beginning of the fifteenth century. Doyle believes that the "quality and quantity" of the scribe's work, which included seven extant copies of Confessio Amantis, "leaves no doubt that he was employed commercially" in London. Doyle concludes that the scribe and others like him must have at first produced books to meet a demand for them at court, but he asks:

[H]ow far did they continue to work chiefly for such circles? Early evidence is sparse: the paucity of armorial insignia is not conclusive, but the ownership of these books later in the century by country gentry and London citizens perhaps means that their forebears were as active in acquiring them as their betters. (171)

Doyle argues that by the end of the fifteenth century, it was quite likely that Caxton expected to find a ready market for precisely the kinds of books he began printing after he established his press at Westminster in 1475. There is very little evidence, Doyle notes, "to show that Caxton's was in any way a luxury trade in printed books, or that they were sold chiefly to courtiers rather than citizens, churchmen, or countrymen" (180).

If in fact manuscripts of works by Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate circulated widely in noncourt circles, that in itself would have supplied Caxton with some a priori evidence of the demand for his printed texts. Widespread

manuscript circulation would have also helped to establish the critical reputation of these poets before Caxton's presswork made their books even more widely available in England. Those critics who credit Caxton with establishing these writers' critical reputations, especially Chaucer's, often overlook the fact that they already had a long critical heritage by the time Caxton started his printing career. No doubt, he helped to disseminate these authors' works more widely, but he by no means "discovered" them or rescued them from oblivion. For example, Caxton gives no critical opinion on Gower--the sole mention he makes of him appears in the brief prologue to Confessio Amantis, printed in 1483, where he merely identifies him as the author of the work, gives a brief synopsis of the poem, and announces that the book contains a table of contents to assist the reader. Caxton makes no mention of Lydgate at all in any of the editions of that writer's works he printed.

Appreciations for the work of Chaucer were frequently printed in the books issued from Caxton's press, but these comments must be put in the context of earlier critical appreciations of England's most popular poet during Caxton's lifetime. Praise for Chaucer as a translator and for the beauty of his language is recorded as early as 1385 in a comment by Eustache Deschamps, the French court poet and contemporary of Chaucer. Both Gower and Lydgate praise

Chaucer in their works, and after the three poets had died, their names quickly became linked as a trio of famous English poets. In 1470, George Ashby praises them in a prologue to his manuscript verse treatise, "Active Policy of a Prince":

Maisters Gower, Chaucer & Lydgate,
 Premier poetes of this nacion,
 Embelysshing oure englisshe tenure algate
 Firste finders to oure consolacion
 Off fresshe douce englisshe and formacion
 Of new balades, not used before
 By whome we all may have lernyng and lore.
(Brown 68)

Even though Caxton makes three references to Chaucer in the prologues and epilogues, his comments do not stray far from the critical assessments that Chaucer received throughout the fifteenth century. Representative of Caxton's statements are those expressed by the anonymous author of the Book of Courtesy, which Caxton printed about 1477. This verse treatise on good manners, dating from the mid-fifteenth century, is addressed to "Lytle John," who clearly is not aristocratic, for the treatise is heavily concerned with how one should behave in the presence of one's social superiors, and with what one may gain by making a good impression. A stanza describing the concept of proper "service" provides a good example:

Awayte my chyld / when ye stande atte table
 Of maister or soverayn / whether it be
 Applye for you to be servysable
 That no defaute in you founden be
 Loke / who doth best / and hym ensiewe ye

And in especyal / use ye attendaunce
 Wherin ye shal your self best avaunce.
 (Caxton's Book 113-19)¹¹

That young men such as Little John should be well-read if they expected to better their lot in life is one of the central points that the Book of Courtesy makes. The author tells Little John to "Exercise your self also in redyng / Of bookes enorede with eloquence" (309-310). He follows this advice with 18 rhyme royal stanzas which explain the value of reading works by Hoccleve, Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate. Fully 126 of the poem's 532 lines are given over to praise for reading poetry. How literally the author expected Little John to follow his advice is impossible to know, but the inclusion of such material indicates a consciousness about the importance of including the work of English medieval poets in a child's education.

The extent to which Caxton used the critical appraisals of Chaucer included in the Book of Courtesy may be evaluated by comparing the remarks of the author of the Book of Courtesy with Caxton's own assessments in his prologues and epilogues. The relevant passage from the Book of Courtesy comprises lines 330-350:

O Fader and Founder of eternate eloquence,
 That elemynede all this oure britaigne;
 To sone we lost his lauriate presence,
 O lusty licoure of that fulsome fountaigne;
 Cursed deth, why hast thou this poete slayne,
 I mene Fadir chaucer, mastir Galfride?
 Allas! the while, that ever he from us diede.

Redith his bokys fulle of all pleasaunce,
 Clere in sentence, in longage excellent,
 Brefly to wryte suche was his suffesaunce,
 What-ever to sey he toke in his entent,
 His longage was so feyre and pertinent,
 That semed unto mennys heryng,
 Not only the worde, but verrelly the thing.

Redith, my child, redith his warkys all,
 Refuseth non, they ben expedient;
 Sentence or langage, or both, fynde ye shall
 Full delectable, for that fader ment
 Of all his purpos and his hole entent
 Howe to plese in every audience,
 And in oure toung was well of eloquence.

Caxton uses similar language in each of his three brief appraisals of Chaucer. His first comments occur in the epilogue to his edition of Chaucer's translation of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, printed in 1478. After explaining the value and necessity of English translations, Caxton says that Chaucer "hath deservid a perpetuell lawde and thanke of al this noble royaume of Englund" (59) for having translated the work. He asks that readers of the book "praye for the soul of the sayd worshipful mann, Geffrey Chaucer, first translatour of this sayde boke into Englissh and embelisser in making the sayd langage ornate and fayr, whiche shal endure perpetually and therefore he ought eternelly to be remembrid" (59-60). Caxton then mentions that he had commissioned an epitaph for Chaucer's tomb in Westminster.¹²

The prologue to the second edition of The Canterbury Tales (1484) echoes the language from The Book of Courtesy

even more closely. Caxton's assessment of Chaucer's accomplishments emphasizes once again the poet's mastery of the English language:

[W]e ought to gyve a syngular laude unto that nobel and grete philosopher, Gefferey Chaucer, the whiche for his ornate wryting in our tongue maye wel have the name of a laureate poete. For tofore that he by hys labour enbelysshyd, ornated and made faire our Englisshe, in thys royame was had rude speche and incongrue, as yet it appiereth by olde bookes whyche at thys day ought not to have place ne be compared emong ne to hys beauteuous volumes and aournate wrytynges. Of whom he made many bokes and treatyces of many a noble historye as wel in metre as in ryme and prose; and them so craftyly made that he comprehended hys maters in short, quyck and hye sentences, eschewyng prolyxte, castyng away the chaf of superfluyte, and shewyng the pyked grayn of sentence utteryd by crafty and sugred eloquence. (61-62)

When Caxton printed Chaucer's House of Fame in 1484, he, like later editors, had to struggle with the unfinished text. He explains that he could "fynde no more of this werke tofore sayde," but in his conscientiousness as an editor and his sense of responsibility to his readers, he adds 12 lines of verse as a conjectural ending, inserting his name in the margin to signal his own additions to Chaucer's text. He concludes the work with a prose passage which lauds the poet's work:

[I]n alle hys werkys he excellyth in myn oppynyon alle other wryters in our Englyssh, for he wrytteth no voyde wordes, but alle hys mater is ful of hye and quycke sentences. To whom ought to be gyven laude and preysyng for hys noble making and wrytyng, for of hym alle other have borrowed syth and taken in alle theyr wel-saying and wrytyng. (103)

Some critics have recognized Caxton's comments as derivative rather than original. N. F. Blake's assessment is typical of those who downplay the importance of Caxton's critical appraisals. Blake says of the printer:

Caxton's views of Chaucer are all second-hand. He followed what authorities he could get hold of and used their works to compose his own appreciations. . . . [H]is feeling for Chaucer . . . was largely inspired by the taste of those around him. . . . Commercial gains rather than pietas may have been the principal motive behind those works which Caxton printed on his own initiative.

("Caxton and Chaucer" 34)

Perhaps Blake's assessment is a bit too harsh, for certainly some sense of pietas must have led Caxton to commission Stephen Surigo's Latin epitaph on the poet's tomb; epitaphs on tombs have little commercial value, and there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Caxton's critical comments despite their lack of originality. While Caxton can be credited with having a genuine appreciation for Chaucer's work, his reverence for the poet was shared by many others during the age. Caxton's comments, disseminated on a wider basis than had previously been possible, reinforced attitudes already prevalent at the time.¹³

The absence of prologues and epilogues to the majority of the vernacular poetry Caxton printed may provide some further evidence that English verse was relatively popular even before the printing press allowed it to be disseminated more widely. In general, Caxton is careful to explain his

rationale for printing a work, to describe the circumstances surrounding its appearance in print, and to give a broad definition of the types of readers he expected each book to reach. Such information is absent from two groups of books: religious works, comprised mostly of indulgences and sarums, for whom the audience and rationale would presumably be self-evident, and for English poetry, where the absence of information is much more puzzling.

Caxton appended prologues and epilogues to only four pieces of the thirteen English literary works he printed: The House of Fame, the second edition of The Canterbury Tales, Gower's Confessio Amantis, and Chaucer's Boethius. In none of these instances does Caxton give much information on the motives he had for printing the works or on the financial support he may have used to issue them. The brief prologue to Gower's work gives no information at all on the circumstances leading to the publication of that work. In the prologue to the second edition of The Canterbury Tales, Caxton remarks that the manuscript of the original was "brought" to him, but the absence of the supplier's name makes it likely that the individual did not contribute financially to the publication of the book. Similarly, Caxton says that the printing of the Consolation of Philosophy was suggested by an unnamed person:

[F]or as moche as this sayd boke so translated is rare and not spred ne knowen, as it is digne and

worthy, for the erudicion and lernyng of suche as ben ignoraunt and not knowyng of it, atte requeste of a singuler frende and gossib of myne I, William Caxton, have done my debuoir and payne t'enprynte it in fourme as is hereafore made, in hopyng that it shal prouffite moche peple to the wele and helth of theire soules and for to lerne to have and kepe the better pacience in adversitees. (59)

The vague "requeste" of his friend to reprint the work most probably was a suggestion rather than an offer of financial assistance, for Caxton characteristically gives effulgent praise to those who have supported his efforts financially, or to those whom he hopes will do so in the future. An example occurs in the epilogue to Charles the Great (1485), where Caxton gives full identification to his patron:

And bycause I Wylliam Caxton was desyred and requyred by a good and synguler frende of myn, Maister Wylliam Daubeney, on of the Tresorers of the Jewellys of the noble and moost Crysten kyng, our natere and soveryn lord late of noble memorye, Kyng Edward the Fourth, on whos soule Jhesu have mercy, to reduce al these sayd hystories into our Englysshe tongue, I have put me in devoyr to translate thys sayd book as ye here tofore may see. (68)

This acknowledgement is typical of the language Caxton used when he identified specific patrons, and it would defeat the purpose of dedications to omit the name of his benefactor when financial support motivated him to print a work.¹⁴

In contrast to this explicit acknowledgement in the Charles the Great epilogue, Caxton's "singuler frende and gossib" mentioned in the Consolation of Philosophy prologue remains unidentified; and it is difficult to account for the

anonymity of Caxton's friend and the prologue's emphasis instead on the scarcity of the text of the Consolation and its value to prospective readers. It is likely that Caxton's friend simply gave him information regarding Boethius's text but did not provide any direct financial aid for its publication.

Another motivation for mentioning important names in the prologues and epilogues is advertising appeal. N. F. Blake mentions this point in his review of Caxton's prefatory remarks to the books he printed:

Caxton sought patrons for the same reasons as the writers and scribes of the fifteenth century: financial gain and the recommendation for a particular work which a patron's name gave. In his books he frequently mentions the receipt or the expected receipt of financial assistance from his patrons. However, it was the recommendation a patron's name gave a book which was of special importance to him when he was establishing himself as the court printer. Since the dedication would be the first thing a prospective buyer would see, the choice of patron may often have been crucial for a book's reception, especially with such a fickle commodity as fashionable literature. It may have encouraged "impulse buying." The patron's name rather than the contents may have been of more influence with many buyers, just as today we may be swayed by the name of a well-known reviewer. (Caxton and His World 151-52)

Thus the absence of named patrons for Caxton's printings of English vernacular poetry might lead us to conclude that he did not necessarily print such literature strictly for a court audience--it may not have needed recommendation of a patron for successful sales. Another

possibility is that these titles of vernacular poetry were already so well known that recommendation was unnecessary. In contrast to Caxton's relative silence on patronage in the prologues and epilogues to the works of the English poets, he gives full, sometimes lengthy explanations and acknowledgements in other types of literary works, especially the translations of French romances such as Blanchardin and Eglantine, Eneydos, Four Sons of Aymon, Jason, King Arthur, and The Order of Chivalry. The prologue or epilogue to these works invariably gives extensive information regarding the reason Caxton has printed them. Patronage for these works is quite common; this is court literature in the narrow sense, and Caxton clearly caters to the interest in French literature in the courts of Edward IV and Henry VII.

Blake also notes this fact in his review of Caxton's prologues and epilogues:

It was only those books which needed some form of introduction to a purchaser that would merit a dedication. Works by such poets as Lydgate and Chaucer would be well enough known already--at least by their titles. They would not need a preface. It was only when special circumstances were involved that a few words from the printer became desirable: the incompleteness of the House of Fame, the corrections in the second edition of The Canterbury Tales, and the rarity of manuscripts of Chaucer's prose translation of Boethius. Otherwise, it was when he published a translation, his own or someone else's, of a French work that a dedication was essential, for the book would not be familiar to an English audience. It was necessary to point out what sort

of book it was, how fashionable it was and under whose auspices it was printed. It was because so many of Caxton's printed works fall into this category that we have so many prologues and epilogues from his pen.

(Caxton and His World 153-54)

Finally, Caxton's publication history of the works of English poets provide some hints at his methods of choosing texts to print. In the most recent reconstruction of the chronology of Caxton's printings, Lotte Hellinga notes that "Caxton chose an English book [The Canterbury Tales] with the widest possible appeal to begin his career in England" (68). But actually, he preceded printing the Canterbury Tales with quarto editions of three Lydgate works: The Horse, Sheep, and Goose; The Churl and the Bird; and Stans Puer ad Mensam, all published about 1477. He followed the printing of Canterbury Tales in 1478 with second editions of The Horse, Sheep, and Goose and The Churl and the Bird, along with a first issue of Lydgate's Temple of Glass. Of the 14 earliest pieces Caxton printed in England, 7 of them were editions of English poetry. During this early period, Caxton also produced two more of Chaucer's pieces, The Parliament of Fowls and Anelida and Arcite; Chaucer's Boethius; and the anonymous English verse tract The Book of Courtesy. If Caxton was in fact printing during this time what he thought people would buy, it is clear that he thought that English poetry was a promising area; and his continued production of these types of works throughout his

career (albeit more sporadically), indicates that he had read the market rightly.

If Caxton's presswork does reflect the taste of the reading public for English poetry near the close of the fifteenth century, then we can generalize to say that that taste was clearly conservative and traditional. Put simply, people preferred "old poetry."

Caxton printed no work by a contemporary poet, although he personally knew several likely candidates for publication. The absence of publishing ventures on Caxton's part to print works by living writers may demonstrate a limited consciousness on the part of English readers between 1450 and 1500 about the value of the contemporary author in helping to create and maintain a strong national literary tradition. Certainly England already had a healthy tradition in vernacular poetry in the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, all of whom were revered as "fathers" of English poetry. But no "sons" had established themselves in the evolving literary system to carry on the tradition begun by the three medieval poets. We might say that the reading public had a weak, perhaps even dormant, interest in poetry written during their own time. In his introduction to "A Bibliography and First-Line Index to English Verse Printed Through 1500," William Ringler gives this assessment of

readers' attitudes toward the poetic fare available at the turn of the fifteenth century:

Evidently the late Lancastrian and early Tudor reading public was serious and conservative in its tastes; it wanted works providing useful information or serious morality, and preferred the old to the new. Most of the poetry printed was either religious, didactic, or occasional, and the great bulk of it was between 75 and 100 years old. Less than six per cent of the verse that found its way into print was by living writers. The overwhelming favorites were Chaucer and Lydgate, with a preference being shown for the latter.

(154)

V

A brief overview of the information in Ringler's bibliography illustrates the trends in the composition of poetry during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Ringler divides the printed poetry into four periods of composition: 1300-1350, 1350-1400, 1400-1450, and 1450-1500. He identifies 40 items of poetry that were written between 1450 and 1500, but they account for only 12,062 lines of printed verse, whereas the 22 items composed between 1350 and 1400 and the 31 items written between 1400 and 1450 comprise, respectively, 65,174 and 52,227 lines in print. The 8 items composed between 1300 and 1350 total 12,018 lines in printed form. Clearly, for these four 50-year periods, the vast majority of activity in the composition of vernacular poetry occurred between 1350 and 1450, when measured in terms of printed lines.

The nature of the items written between 1450 and 1500 is also important to consider. Because the 40 items represent the largest number of individual poems among the four periods, it is obvious that more single poems were being written but that they were shorter in length. The printing press itself seems to have contributed to this development, for many of the 40 poems were written by or for printers to accompany the works they were printing. For example, two printers, Caxton and de Worde, printed ten of their own "poems" in works issued from their presses. These ten poems include the printers' own translations of Latin or Continental verse, such as Caxton's 28-line translation of Alain Chartier's balade included in The Curial, which Caxton printed in 1484;¹⁵ miscellaneous additions to problematical manuscripts being used as copy texts (Caxton composed six couplets as a conclusion to his printing of Chaucer's unfinished Book of Fame, for instance);¹⁶ and printers' envois to books being printed.¹⁷

Several more of the 40 items are short poems added to a section of The Boke of St. Albans, first printed in 1486. Although the majority of the text in this printing was written in the early fifteenth century, the 1486 printing includes eight short poems and one long one, all written at some time close to the printing date of the work. With the exception of the longer poem, which comprises 298 couplets

on the art of ventry, the eight remaining short poems are miscellaneous additions, perhaps included for the purpose of filling out an unused leaf of a signature. Another new poem was included in Wynkyn de Worde's 1496 edition of The Boke of St. Albans.¹⁸

Thus, many of the poems written during the last 50 years of the fifteenth century were simply by-products of the newly established printing industry rather than the result of any express desire of poets to produce a "literary" work. Of the 40 poems produced and printed during the last half of the fifteenth century, 13 are substantial enough to be considered "literary." Not unexpectedly, most are thoroughly medieval in form and concept; they are moral or religious tracts, such as The Remorce of Conscience and Wednesday's Fast, both printed by de Worde about 1500. A few others are educational in purpose, most notably two different courtesy books, one printed by Caxton about 1478 and the other a translation of a French courtesy book, printed by de Worde about 1497.

One final point must be made about the printing of verse written in the final 50 years of the fifteenth century. Ringler's estimate that only six percent of the verse printed before 1500 was written by poets living at the time of its printing becomes even more telling when we consider how infrequently the names of these poets appeared

as part of the printed text and thus how seldom the readers of this literature knew the identity of the author of the work they were reading. Only 2 of the 40 items of poetry written and printed between 1450 and 1500 have any attribution of authorship in the printed text.¹⁹

Subsequent generations of readers had the authors of some anonymous works identified for them through fortuitous circumstances; for example, John Skelton's Bowge of Court appeared anonymously in 1499, but Skelton's later mention of the work in A Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, first printed in 1523, allowed the work to be included confidently in his canon from that time forward. But such instances are rare, and seldom could a reader glean any clear knowledge about the author of a poem from the printed text. The role, identity, and importance of the poet seems to have been of little concern to the printers who issued the works, and this in turn influenced the degree of importance the reader would have placed on the role of the author as the producer of the work. Ultimately, this situation may have influenced the way that poets perceived of themselves and of the value attached to composing poetry.

VI

Even when a poet's name appeared as part of the text, it was not necessarily very dependable or informative, nor

was it a highly prominent feature of the text. The two instances mentioned above in which texts had authorial identification illustrate this point. In the 1486 printing of The Boke St. Albans, one section, a verse treatise on the art of venery, is introduced in the following way:

Wheresoeuer ye fare by fayth or by felt
My dere chylde take hede now how Tristram dooth
you tell
How many maner beestys of venery ther werre
Lystyn to yowre dame and she shalt you lere
Fowre maner beestys of venery there are.

(Hands 57)

Several hundred lines later, at the end of the treatise, a colophon identifies the "dame" of the above passage: "Explicit Dam Julyans / Barnes in her boke of huntyng" (Hands 79). The text makes no further mention of authorship, and from these two brief references hidden in the body of the text, modern scholars have attributed the entire venery section to Julianna Berners, whose biography seems to be a mixture of fact and fiction. The attribution is by no means a certain one (Hands lv-lx), especially given the reference to Tristram in the lines quoted above. It was impossible for the text's fifteenth-century readers to gain any clear indication of authorship from these two passing references to "Tristram" and "Dam Julyans Barnes." The subject matter of the book rather than the identity of its author was of predominant importance.

An even more complex problem related to authorship is illustrated by an anonymous quarto printing of The Epitaffe of the Moste Nobel and Valyaunt Late Duke of Beddeford. Surviving in a unique copy housed in the Pepsyian Library at Magdalen College, The Epitaffe was printed, without a date of issue, by Richard Pynson. According to the STC, the poem was printed about 1496, soon after the death of the Duke on December 21, 1495.

The Epitaffe deserves special attention for several reasons. First, it is probably the earliest extant separate printing of a contemporary English poem. Second, some features of the printed text and the poem's history of authorial attribution help to demonstrate the problems that early Tudor readers faced in trying to identify the names of the poets whose works they were reading.

In his Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica (1748), Thomas Tanner, an early English bibliographer, ascribed the poem, without explanation for his attribution, to John Skelton (676). Tanner probably based his attribution on the poem's unusual metrical features, described by William Ringler as "tour de force" (169). Alexander Dyce (347-361), Skelton's nineteenth-century editor, included The Epitaffe in an appendix to his 1843 edition of The Poetical Works of John Skelton; but in a note to the poem, Dyce rejected it as Skelton's, claiming that "the style decidedly proves" that

Skelton was not its author (347).²⁰ Following Dyce's lead, subsequent editors of Skelton's poetry have excluded it from his canon.²¹

Tanner's original attribution to Skelton is especially surprising because he apparently did not notice, as Dyce does, three pieces of textual evidence that seem to indicate clearly that the author was not Skelton but rather the Duke of Bedford's falconer, identified in the poem as "Smert." The first textual reference to Smert, who delivers the actual lament for the Duke, occurs in the poem's third stanza. The line identifying Smert describes him as one who "ouer haukes and houndes had auctoryte." Dyce takes this to mean that Smert is the Duke's falconer, a fact which is apparently reinforced by several references to falconry scattered throughout the rest of the poem. A second textual reference to Smert seems to make the connection even clearer. A two-line tag at the end of the poem, but not part of the poem proper, reads: "Honor tibi, Deus, et laus! / Qd. Smerte maister de ses ouzeaus." The final piece of evidence related to Smert occurs on the title page of The Epitaffe. Although the title page does not supply the author's name, it does include, above the title, a woodcut presentation scene in which a kneeling man with a falcon on his right arm gives a book to a seated king.²²

Given these three references that explicitly or implicitly link Smert with the composition of The Epitaffe, one wonders whether Tanner had actually read the poem before he attributed it to Skelton, whether he had read a version of the poem that differed from the one Dyce printed, or whether he discounted the textual evidence related to authorship and based his attribution instead on nontextual or stylistic evidence. Tanner's reasons for identifying Skelton as the author remain a mystery, but a closer look at the poem makes clear why Tanner did not attribute the poem to Smert.

Historians have thus far been unable to document the existence of an individual named Smert in the service of either the Duke of Bedford or Henry VII. In the absence of such evidence, The Epitaffe has been consistently catalogued in modern bibliographies as an anonymous work of English poetry. The poem is entered as such in the Short Title Catalog, and the compilers of A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language state that "it appears unlikely" that Smert "actually wrote the piece," (67) and they therefore include it in their list of works by unknown authors.²³

In fact, rather than being a person, Smert is most probably an abstraction that The Epitaffe poet uses to personify his own state of psychological distress at the

death of the Duke. The QED records the use of "smert" as "Mental pain and suffering; grief, sorrow, affliction" as early as 1303. The use of abstractions as speaking characters was, of course, a common feature of medieval and Renaissance poetry. Smert's brief dialogue with the poem's other abstract character, Death, thus becomes much more organic when viewed in this context.

The Epitaffe also employs another medieval poetic convention: a framing device in which the poet has a dream or vision and encounters other personifications who deliver narrative material or moralistic messages.²⁴ The Epitaffe follows this convention closely. In the initial four stanzas of the poem, the poet, speaking in the first person, describes how while walking in the English countryside near the Severn River, he comes upon someone he recognizes as Smert, who is at that moment "To the erthe prostrate, rauynge for madnes." The poet says he "shogged" and "shaked" Smert to bring him to his senses; and after several minutes, Smert, "a woful goste," finally raises his head to deliver the long lament for the Duke of Bedford.

To accept Smert and the poetic "I" of the first four framing stanzas as one and the same person requires the reader to imagine the poet meeting himself, reviving himself from his sorrowful frenzy, and then delivering to himself his own lament for the Duke. The bathos implied in such a

reading of The Epitaffe destroys what is otherwise a carefully structured, technically accomplished, and thoroughly sincere expression of grief at the death of an English nobleman. It seems highly improbable that a poet as accomplished as the one who wrote The Epitaffe would make such a critical mistake in structuring the poem.

Significantly, the poem ends conventionally, too, with an envoi in four stanzas that mirror in metrics, rhyme, and theme the four framing stanzas at the poem's beginning. Although the poet does not identify himself as the speaker in the last four envoi stanzas, the lines are clearly no longer a part of Smert's lament. As might be expected in an envoi, they carry the weight of the moral message. In this instance the poet reminds the reader of the de casibus theme; he universalizes the poem by using the Duke as an example:

Kynges, prynces, most souerayne of rounoune,
 Remembre oure maister that gone is byfore:
 This worlde is casual, nowe vp, nowe downe;
 Wherfore do for yoursilfe; I can say no more.
 (360)

Ultimately, the three pieces of evidence that associate Smert with the production of the poem and that have generated the confusion over its true author can perhaps be explained bibliographically. In setting the type for The Epitaffe, the compositor quite easily could have misinterpreted the manuscript reference to Smert as a real

person rather than as a literary abstraction. Thus, at the end of the poem, he simply attributed the entire piece to Smert, and remembering Smert's identification as a falconer, added the subscription "Qd. Smerte maister de ses ouzeaus" at the end of the poem. Once this attribution appeared at the end of the work, it would have been an easy step to mistake Smert for the Duke's falconer, and to issue the poem with a woodcut presentation scene of a falconer delivering the book to Henry VII, the Duke's nephew.

Even if this isn't the scenario which led to the publication of The Epitaffe as the work of Smert, the poem still serves to illustrate how haphazard the process of authorial identification was at the close of the fifteenth century. Late fifteenth-century poets stood little chance of having their names attached to their works. Not a single instance of clear authorial identification is extant on a work of English poetry written and printed between 1450 and 1500. A literary system which imposed such conditions on living poets surely inhibited the growth of an active literary community and the development of a continuing literary tradition, for it prohibited readers from identifying and seeking out other works by authors whom they appreciated. It prevented any significant body of criticism from developing because a particular individual, as author, could not be easily identified as the creator of an

important literary work. It even prevented word-of-mouth advertising in which the author could be mentioned; books had to be recommended by title or subject matter. Perhaps most significantly, the literary system at the close of the fifteenth century prevented poets from establishing themselves as important cultural figures; it kept them from reaping the rewards--material or honorific, public or private--for their writings. They remained obligated to such cultural institutions as patronage if they wished to garner any meaningful attention for their poetry. That the desire for fame and glory had a powerful influence on Renaissance poets has recently been much discussed (Helgerson, Greenblatt). After printing became better established as an industry in England, it served poets as an ideal medium for promoting both their poetry and their aspirations to become nationally recognized as poets. But several factors slowed that development.

VII

George Kane, in discussing the late development of the secular lyric in England, hypothesizes that the lack of a vernacular poetic tradition apart from that represented by Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate was caused in part by "the difficulty of communication, transmission and dissemination in a large and relatively thinly populated country" and by

the fact that "there was no formulated conception of the writing of poetry in the vernacular" (120). Certainly the printing press could in large measure help to overcome the problems associated with England as a geographical unit, and in doing so it could in some smaller measure contribute to the beginnings of a tradition of contemporary printed vernacular poetry. But this lack of tradition had deeper cultural roots. As Kane notes, English writers inherited their attitudes toward poetry from Classical rhetoric, "where poesis, composition in verse, a branch of knowledge embracing philosophy and scholarship, was a subject that could be studied and systematically mastered" (121).

The simultaneous exclusivity and debasement of poetry implied by such a definition is obvious: it limited writers in the way they conceived of the act of composing poetry by labelling it essentially as a craft. At the same time, it shaped the kind of poetry readers had available to them, and the heavy emphasis on learnedness as a prerequisite for either reading or writing poetry limited the numbers of participants in the literary system as a whole.

Court patronage and academic honors that reinforced and sponsored such a conception of poetry exacerbated the problem. Although historical records related to patronage in the latter half of the fifteenth century are meager, the information that does survive indicates that, with one

exception, the poets who were well known in court circles and academic settings all worked exclusively in the poetic tradition Kane describes.

Caxton provides some fragmentary evidence about two such poets at work in England during the time he operated his printing press. Mention has already been made of Caxton's commission to Stephen Surigone for a Latin epitaph for Chaucer's tomb. Surigone, a wandering scholar who taught at Oxford between 1454 and 1464, may have returned to England in 1478, the same year Caxton printed Chaucer's Boethius, which contains the epilogue that mentions the commission (59-60). The irony of having England's most famous poet at that time commemorated in Latin by an Italian humanist is indicative of the attitudes about the stature of the English language as a vehicle for occasional verse. Although Caxton printed Surigone's Latin epitaph for Chaucer at the end of the Boethius text, he evidently printed no other works by the Italian poet and scholar.²⁵

Caxton also had a working relationship with Pietro Carmeliano, another humanist who perhaps taught in England and subsequently found favor in Henry VII's court. Carmeliano's Latin commendatory poems appear in John Anwykyl's Latin schoolbook, Compendium Totius Grammaticae, issued by the Oxford press in 1483. It was also about this time that Caxton published Sex Epistolae, a series of Latin

letters exchanged between Pope Sixtus IV and political officials in the city of Venice. The colophon to Caxton's edition identifies Carmeliano as a poet laureate and describes his role in the production of the book: "Impresse per Willelmum Caxton et diligenter emendate per Petrum Carmelianum poetarum laureatum in Westmonasterio" (137). Once again, no contemporary printing of Carmeliano's poetry has survived from the period, aside from those included in Anwykyl's grammar. However, Carmeliano gained recognition as a court poet by composing various occasional poems celebrating events occurring during Henry VII's reign.²⁶

Although Caxton does not mention him by name, he probably knew the most celebrated court poet in England at that time, Bernard Andreas. The blind poet of Toulouse had a long career as court poet and historiographer during the reigns of both Henry VII and Henry VIII. Andreas holds the honor of having received the first official appointment as England's poet laureate (as distinct from academic credentials as laureate), for on November 21, 1486, he was granted an annuity of ten marks for his duties as court poet to Henry VII.²⁷ Most of Andreas's works are now lost, although a list of his works drawn up during his lifetime does survive.²⁸

These three poets exemplify the kind of poets who were responsible for producing England's state-sponsored

literature at the close of the fifteenth century. They are exclusively either academic or court poets, or both, and they wrote only in Latin or in their native European languages. Apparently, none of their work, except for minor pieces, found its way into print while the poets were alive, so the poetry they produced could only have circulated among very limited numbers of readers.²⁹

The 45 years between the time when Caxton established his printing press in England and 1520, when the works of a new voice in English poetry suddenly began appearing in print, saw the reinforcement of taste in traditional English poetry. The works of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate continued to be issued by printers following the death of Caxton in 1492. A few living poets did have their work printed after 1500, most notably Alexander Barclay and Stephen Hawes.³⁰ But in many ways their poetry was a continuation of the type of verse that English readers were already accustomed to seeing, and in general, these two writers seem oblivious or indifferent to the exigencies of print for making their work, and their own roles as English poets, well known. It was left to a poet who had been writing poetry for quite some time to finally "go public" with his work and to make a conscious effort to create an image of himself as England's living poet laureate. The next chapter traces self-representation in the career of that poet: John Skelton.

Notes

¹ Caxton printed or commissioned the printing of John Russell's Latin oration, Propositio Johannis Russell, which Russell delivered in 1470 at the investiture of Charles the Bold into the Order of the Garter. Russell was alive at the time the Propositio was published (c. 1476). For a discussion of the bibliographical problems associated with this work, see Blades (2: 28-31) and Painter (94-95).

² Sands provides a useful discussion of the categories of books Caxton printed. He counts first editions only and categorizes 21 of 77 Caxton titles as history, romance, and poetry. Caxton's total output numbers 103 titles when subsequent editions of the same work are counted.

³ The evidence used for determining the precise date that Caxton established his press is complex. Hellinga reports the results produced through state-of-the-art dating techniques in her study and concludes that Caxton's English press was operating "early in 1476 or possibly even late 1475" (81). I have elected to use the earlier year as a convenient demarcation.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all subsequent page numbers for citations from Caxton's prologues and epilogues are from Caxton's Own Prose. Caxton's prose has also been collected by Crotch.

⁵ Klotz notes that her category labelled "religion and philosophy" contains only a very few books with philosophy as their subject. Thus, books with religious subject matter are by far the most frequently printed books among those she surveys.

⁶ The figures for Bible printings in the earliest period mentioned are from Bennett (English Books and Readers, 1475-1557 26); for the Elizabethan period, from his English Books and Readers, 1558-1603 (143); and for the last period, from his English Books and Readers, 1603-1610 (95).

⁷ It is important to keep in mind that Klotz surveyed only those titles published every tenth year between 1480 and 1640, and thus it is impossible to make firm conclusions about the overall distribution in subject matter of books for the entire period. My comments pertain only to the results of her survey and cannot be used as generalizations for the entire period.

⁸ Buhler's figure of ten thousand volumes presumably is derived by multiplying Caxton's approximately 100 printings by a rather conservative estimate of 100 copies per edition. Buhler, however, does not explain the source of his figure.

⁹ For a full account of the evidence related to the location of Caxton's business premises, see Painter (98-101).

¹⁰ Manuscript counts for these authors are from the following sources: Chaucer--Donaldson (93-94), who relies on the textual notes in Robinson; Gower--Fisher (304-305); and Lydgate--Renoir and Benson.

¹¹ All quotations from Caxton's Book of Curtesye are identified by line numbers.

¹² The circumstances surrounding Caxton's role in commissioning the epitaph are surveyed in N. F. Blake's "Caxton and Chaucer." At the end of his edition of The Consolation of Philosophy, Caxton printed a translation of the Latin version of the epitaph he commissioned (Brown 79).

¹³ For evidence of the frequent praise Chaucer received from writers throughout the Renaissance, see Brown. For an assessment of Chaucer's influence on subsequent English poets, see Miskimim.

¹⁴ The prologue to Charles the Great refers to Henry Bolomyer as a patron, but Blake (Caxton and His World) has pointed out that Caxton is closely paraphrasing the prologue to the French edition he was translating (154). Blake says that Bolomyer was the patron of the original French version. The identification of Daubeney, the patron of the English version, is given in the epilogue.

¹⁵ For this poem, see Meyer and Furnivall (19).

¹⁶ Reprinted in Caxton's Own Prose (102).

¹⁷ An especially interesting example is provided by Wynkyn de Worde, who, at the end of his 1494 printing of Walter Hylton's Scale of Perfection, includes two stanzas giving the kind of information that within a few decades would appear individually throughout the text in an array of devices, such as the title page, dedication, preface, and colophon:

Infynyte laud, with thankynges many folde,
I yielde to God, me socourynge with his grace

This boke to fynyshe, whyche that ye beholde.
 Scale of perfection calde in every place;
 Wherof thauctor Walter Hylton was,
 And Wynkyn de Worde, this hath sette in printe
 In William Caxton's hows so fyll the case,
 God rest his soul, in joy ther mot is stynt.
 This heauenly boke, more precyous than golde
 Was late dyrect, with great humylite,
 For godly plesur, theron to beholde
 Unto the right nobel Margaret, as ye see,
 The Kynges moder, of excellent bounte,
 Herry the seventh, that Jhu him preserve,
 This myghte princess hath commanded me
 Temprynt this boke, her grace for to deserue.

The poem is reprinted in Plomer (25). Plomer attributes the poem to Robert Copland, de Worde's "literary helper," who later ran his own printing press and composed several other poems.

18 A facsimile of a portion of the 1486 edition is provided in Hands.

19 I exclude such instances of obvious authorship as the brief printers' envois to books, for instance, the one by de Worde quoted in Note 17. Caxton included his name in the margin at the end of his printing of The Boke of Fame to indicate his responsibility for adding lines to Chaucer's original work (see Note 15). I consider these instances to be editorial or publishing matters rather than matters related to literary authorship.

The problem of lost title pages and the fragmentary nature of much English incunabula makes the assessment of author identification practices especially difficult for this period, and the conclusions about such matters must remain tentative.

Another difficulty readers faced was misattribution of authorship. Either from ignorance (the manuscript copy-text not supplying an author's name) or from a desire to increase sales by supplying the name of a particularly popular poet, printers occasionally gave incorrect attributions. One example is The Assembly of Gods, printed by de Worde in 1498, with attribution to Lydgate at the end of the text. The attribution disappears from subsequent editions of the poem. The existence of a substantial body of literature in the Chaucer Apochrypha and the difficulty of establishing any authoritative canon for him are also testaments to the problem of misattribution and to the relative indifference of early printers to identifying the author of the items they printed. See Robinson (xxvii-xxix).

20 All quotations from The Epitaffe are cited by page number from Dyce's edition, which is the most recent.

21 Among Skelton's editors, none of whom includes The Epitaffe in his edition, are Henderson, Kinsman, and Scattergood.

22 Dyce's printing, which was set from a hand-transcription of the original 1496 edition, omits the "Qd." of the subscription and the heading "L'Envoi" found in the original printing. Dyce does not include the woodcut presentation scene either, although he mentions it in a note to the poem.

23 According to Catherine Pantzer, compiler of the second edition of the SIC, Smert is too much of a "shadowy figure" to have been included as the poem's author in the most recent edition of that bibliography.

24 A strikingly parallel use of such abstractions is employed in John Skelton's Bowge of Court, published anonymously by Wynkyn de Worde in 1499. In the poem, Skelton employs a dream vision as a framing device in which he uses the poetic "I" to introduce his material and then identifies himself as "Drede," his actual emotional condition in the court of Dame Saunce-Pere, where his dream vision has taken him. Such parallel formal and stylistic devices may have been the basis for Tanner's attribution of the poem to Skelton.

25 For the limited information available on Surigone, see Weiss (138-40, 153-55).

26 Carmeliano's career and active campaign to attract patrons is described in Weiss (170-72).

27 For the best account of Andreas's career, see Broadus (24-32).

28 A list of Andreas's works is given in Nelson (210-12).

29 That Anglo-Latin verse could not have been very widely disseminated in England in the early Renaissance is shown in Leicester Bradner's chronological bibliography of printed Anglo-Latin poetry. His list (346-47) includes only ten books of Latin poetry issued before 1500. Three of the ten were printed outside of England.

³⁰ See STC 1383.5-1386 for Barclay's publication history, and STC 12942.5-12953 for Hawes's.

CHAPTER III

JOHN SKELTON

I

Surprisingly, the same literary system that may have minimized the popularity of poetry by living writers in the first 50 years after the establishment of the printing press in England also nurtured the first Englishman to make conscious use of the print medium to expand his readership beyond the confines of academic and court circles. Born about 1460, John Skelton was affiliated throughout his life with the three major institutions of his time: the universities, the church, and the court.¹ He took his B.A. at Cambridge in 1480, and several years later, in 1488, was designated as a "laureate" by Oxford University. In 1492, he received the same honor from Louvain University, and one year later was appointed laureate by Cambridge University.² Skelton later made full use of these academic titles, which essentially indicated expertise in grammar and rhetoric, to further his career as a practicing poet. He refers to them constantly throughout his work, and in "Agenst Garnesche,"

written about 1513, he draws attention to himself and his status by describing the laureation ceremony itself:

A kynge to me myn habyte gave
 At Oxforth, the universyte,
 Avaunsid I was to that degre;
 By hole consent of theyr senate,
 I was made poete lawreate. (80-84)³

Beginning about 1495, Skelton served as royal tutor to Prince Henry, the future Henry VIII. During his tutorship, he composed and translated several educational tracts and celebrated court events in poems written in both Latin and English. His tutorship became a source for future self-promotion too; in the same poem cited above, he tells Garnesche, and, by extension, all his readers: "Note and mark wyl thys parcele; / I yave him [Henry] drynke of the sugryd welle / Of Eliconys waters crystallyne, / Aqueintyng hym with the Musys nyne" (97-100). His efforts were evidently rewarded when he was named orator regius in 1512 (Nelson 122-24). In the same way that he used his laureate honors to publicize his poetry, he used this new court honor in many of his works composed after 1512 to draw attention to his role as poet.

Skelton's association with the church began in 1498, when, all in the same year, he was ordained as sub-deacon, deacon, and priest. A few years later, in 1503, he was appointed rector of Diss, in Norfolk. He held this benefice until his death in 1529, although he resided in Diss itself

only until about 1512, when he returned to London and renewed his state duties in the court of Henry VIII. With the exception of a few short poems and passing references, his church affiliations figure little in his career as a poet.

Although his academic, court, and church affiliations clearly were useful to him in gaining publicity, it was Skelton's independent activities as a writer and the way that he used his positions to broaden his readership that made him the important literary figure he was to become. Unfortunately, business records and biographical details about his relationships with printers and other individuals in the publishing world of his day are not recorded; but it is apparent from his printed works that he almost obsessively sought fame as a poet by using the medium of print in his relentless program of self-promotion.

However, Skelton had established himself as a leading literary figure among the English literati of his day long before he had printed a single work. The earliest recorded reference to him is by England's first printer, William Caxton. In a prologue to Caxton's edition of the Eneydos, printed sometime after June 1490, the printer excuses his own faulty translation and refers it for correction to the newly crowned laureate, John Skelton:

But I praye mayster Iohn Skelton late created
poete laureate in the vnyuersite of oxenforde to

ouersee and correcte this sayd booke. And
 taddresse and expowne and englysshe euery
 dyffyculte that is therin / For he hath late
 translated the epystlys of Tulle / and the boke of
 dyodorus syculus, and diuerse other werkes oute of
 latyn in to englysshe not in rude and olde
 language. but in polysshed and ornate termes
 craftely. as he that hath redde vyrgyle / ouyde.
 tullye. and all the other noble poetes and
 oratours / to me vnknown: And also he hath redde
 the ix. muses and vnderstande theyr musicalle
 scyences and to whom of theym eche scyence is
 appropred. I suppose he hath dronken of Elycons
 well. (Edwards 43)⁴

Regrettably, there is no further evidence of a working relationship between Caxton and Skelton; whether Skelton actually corrected Caxton's Eneydos is not known. But the passage itself is sufficient evidence that Skelton had by 1490 established himself as a poet of note to the limited literary circles of the day. That Caxton did not issue any of the Skelton translations he mentions is curious since they are of a type that Caxton frequently printed. The emphasis on Skelton's expertise in the English language is another notable feature of Caxton's comments, for it hints at Skelton's early awareness of the value of cultivating English as a language suitable for poetic composition. Equally significant is Caxton's emphasis on Skelton's knowledge of poetry as a distinct discipline apart from the more generalized field of rhetoric. Although Caxton alludes to Skelton's general learnedness, the overall assessment praises Skelton's knowledge of poetry in an unusually literary context. Thus, as early as 1490, nine years before

his first recorded printed work, Skelton had succeeded in cultivating his status as a practicing English poet, at least to one of the most influential voices in the publishing world at that time.

Caxton's comments that associate Skelton with the fountains at Helicon may demonstrate how effective the repeated use of literary phrases and allusions was in establishing readers' conceptions and expectations about individual poets and their works. In his earliest surviving poem, "Upon the Dolorous Dethe and Muche Lamentable Chaunce of the Mooste Honorable Erle of Northumberlande," written soon after the Earl's death in April 1489, Skelton makes direct reference to Helicon to solicit inspiration and to establish his link with poetic tradition:

Of hevenly poems, O Clyo, calde by name
 In the college of musis goddes hystorfall,
 Adres the to me, whiche am bothe halt and lame,
 In elect uteraunce to make memoryall
 To the for succour, to the for helpe I kall,
 Myne homely rudnes and drighnes to expelle
 With the freshe waters of Elyconys well. (8-14)

Although Skelton's lament for the Earl was not printed until 1568, it survives in a manuscript contemporary with its date of composition. Unfortunately, there is no record of Caxton having read the manuscript, but it certainly could have been the source for Caxton's knowledge of Skelton's poetic gifts and could have led to the printer's conclusion, quoted above, that Skelton "hath redde the ix. muses and vnderstand

theyr muscalle scyences and to whom of theym eche scyence is approped. I suppose he hath dronken of Elvcons well." If this verbal echo derives from Caxton having read Skelton's poem on the Earl of Northumberland, it is an early example of how, consciously or unconsciously, a reader associates literary references with a poet.

Of course, taken in isolation, the reference to Helicon is no more than a traditional invocation to the Muses. But Skelton uses the formula several times in the course of his literary career in a number of different printed works, so the phrase seems clearly intended to have a cumulative effect. I have already quoted his use of the reference to Helicon and the nine Muses as it appears in "Agenst Garnesche," where Skelton takes credit for having introduced Henry VIII to the pleasures of verse. The reference appears yet again in Skelton's most notable piece of self-promotion, The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, printed by Richard Fakes on October 3, 1523. In the poem, Skelton enlists the aid of Dame Pallas to help him gain a seat among the poets in the Court of Fame. The Queen of Fame, who has veto power over aspiring candidates, resists giving Skelton a place in her court. However, on the recommendation of Dame Pallas, the Queen of Fame agrees to reconsider Skelton's request, "since he hath tastid of the sugred pocioun / Of Elyconis well" (73-74). The variety of contexts in which Skelton

employs this reference makes it far more than a hackneyed appeal for inspiration from the fountains of poetry; instead, it is so consistently used over a period of time that it seems specifically designed to call attention to Skelton's desire to be associated with the wellsprings of poetic composition.

Caxton was not alone in praising Skelton and associating him with Helicon and the Muses. In 1499, Erasmus toured England, and although there is no direct evidence that Erasmus and Skelton actually met, a record of Erasmus' fulsome praise for Skelton on two separate occasions does survive. In a letter to Prince Henry, Erasmus congratulates the future king for having Skelton, "vnum Brittanicarum litterarum lumen ac decus" ["that incomparable light and ornament of British letters"], as his royal tutor (Edwards 44). In a lengthy and overly effusive manuscript poem entitled "Carmen Extemporale," Erasmus identifies Skelton with Helicon and the Muses and then honors him with the compliment of being England's national poet:

Graecia Maeonio quantum debebat Homero,
 Mantua Virgilio,
 Tantum Skeltoni iam se debere fatetur
 Terra Britanno suo.
 Primus in hanc Latio deduxit ab orbe Camoenas,
 Primus hic edocuit
 Exculte pureque loqui. Te principe Skelton
 Anglia nil metuat
 Vel cum Romanis versu certare poetis.
 Viue valeque diu.

[As much as Greece owes Lydian Homer, as much as Mantua owes to Virgil, so much should the land of Britain now confess that it owes to its Skelton. He first led away the Muses from their Italian dwelling place into this country. Here he first taught how to speak freely and purely. While you are its principal poet, O Skelton, England need fear nothing, for you are worthy to vie in versifying with Roman poets. Long may you live in health.] (Edwards 45)

Erasmus's assessment of Skelton's poetic skills must have been based on a word-of-mouth reputation that the English poet had already acquired by the time Erasmus was in England, for the Dutchman apparently knew no English (Nelson 73). Thus, he could only have been acquainted with Skelton's Latin poems, and his remark that Skelton "first taught how to speak freely and purely," if they refer to Skelton's skill in English prosody, can only be considered as received opinion on the part of Erasmus, a condition which argues again that Skelton had established something of a national reputation by this time.

Several other references to Skelton as a contemporary poet appear in the first two decades of the sixteenth century. In a manuscript dating from about 1510 that chronicles the history of London, Skelton is mentioned along with William Cornish and Thomas More as writers whose names would presumably be recognized by contemporary readers. He is mentioned in a similar context by Henry Bradshaw in two different saints lives, both printed in 1521 but written

before 1513. In his envoi to The Life of St. Werburge of Chester, Bradshaw apologizes for the rudeness of his work when compared to Chaucer's, Lydgate's, Alexander Barclay's, and "inuentive Skelton and poet laureate." In the second saint's life, The Life of St. Radegunde, Bradshaw says that Skelton or one of the other three poets mentioned above should probably have undertaken the Life rather than Bradshaw himself (Edwards 47-48).

Skelton's academic and court connections also led to his involvement in the Grammarians' war that occurred around 1519.⁵ The immediate reasons for his involvement are unclear, and he seems to have acquired both friends and enemies as a result of his position in the pedagogical debate. Two of the direct participants in the Grammarians' war, Robert Whittinton and William Lily, composed Latin verses in response to Skelton after he had sided with the traditionalists in the fracas over the proper pedagogical methods to be used in the instruction of English youth in Classical languages. Skelton makes his position known in "Speke Parott," composed in 1519, the same year that two competing Latin grammars were published, one by Whittinton, who favored a strict grammatical approach to Latin instruction, and one by William Horman, who deemphasized the importance of the rules of grammar and instead emphasized imitation of Classical authors. Skelton sided with

Whittinton's approach and was rewarded by Whittinton's long Latin panygeric, in which he praised Skelton's poetry in language exceedingly effusive even for the panygeric tradition. William Lily, a disciple of Horman and a spokesman in the issue, responded with a pithy Latin poem that denied Skelton the title of either scholar or poet (Edwards 48-53).

Skelton was also controversial because of the kind of poetry he wrote. He engaged in acerbic satire on a number of occasions. Several titles--"Agaynst the Scottes," "Against Dundas," "Against Venemous Tongues," and "Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?"--give some indication of Skelton's contentiousness. His poem "Agenst Garnesche" is credited with being the first English instance of "flyting" so popular among Scottish poets at that time (Carpenter 73). Given this kind of invective verse, some hostility in return was to be expected. But interestingly, criticism seemed aimed at other less offensive poems as well. For example, in his Ship of Fools, printed in 1509, Alexander Barclay criticizes the kinds of poetry being written by other poets of his time, and he uses John Skelton's mock elegy Philip Sparrow as an illustration:

Holde me excusyd: for why my wyll is gode
 Men to induce vnto vertue and goodnes
 I wryte no Iest ne tale of Robyn hode
 Nor sawe no sparcles ne sede of vyciousnes
 Wyse men loue vertue, wylde people wantones
 It longeth nat to my scyence nor cunnyng

For Phylp the Sparowe the Dirige to synge.
(Edwards 46)

On another occasion, in his Fourth Eclogue, Barclay apparently takes another stab at England's self-proclaimed poet laureate when he refers to "rascalle poets," especially one who was "decked as Poet laureate, / When stinking Thais made him her graduate" (White qtd. by Carpenter 122, 168 n.26).

II

The above review of Skelton's contemporary reputation demonstrates his close ties with intellectual and court circles. Nearly all the references to him, good or bad, come from figures closely associated with such groups. Certainly his work was circulating in those circles, but Skelton's poetry reveals his interest in cultivating a readership and reputation that extended beyond these closed arenas to a different class or type of English reader.

In her recent essay "John Skelton: Courtly Maker/Popular Poet," Nancy Gutierrez uses Skelton's three separate occasional poems on the English victory at Flodden Field as evidence that the poet sought different audiences.⁶ Each of the three poems, she says, is addressed to a different readership. She argues that in his Latin poem Chorus de Dis contra Scottos, Skelton "seems to be speaking as the king's man to the king's court." Of the two English

poems he wrote celebrating the event, she says that one of them, A Ballade of the Scottysse Kynge, is intended to portray him as "a popular poet addressing the people of England as their teacher," while in the other, Skelton Laureate Against the Scottes, "he seems to combine these two functions, acting as both king's poet and popular spokesman" (59-60). Certainly in terms of language, Skelton served as the English spokesman. Of the eight surviving poems written immediately after the battle, six of them--one by Bernard Andre, one by Peter Carmelianus, three by Thomas More, and one by Skelton--are in Latin. With the exception of a prose piece on Flodden Field, A Trewe Encountre . . . or Battayle lately don betwene England and Scotland, Skelton's two poems are the only ones contemporary with the battle itself written in English.⁷

The earlier of Skelton's two English poems, A Ballade of the Scottysse Kynge, shows signs of having been hurriedly written and printed. According to Gutierrez, A Ballade is the earliest surviving news ballad (68), and the fact that the 1513 printing contains a number of typesetting errors has led Skelton's most recent editor to suggest that it may have been hurriedly put into print, presumably in an effort to disseminate the news of the English victory among the general population (Skelton 421).⁸ The text's printed format, a single sheet quarto that would have been

affordable to news-hungry English readers, is another indication of the poem's intent. One other piece of evidence argues for an urgency at work in the poem's composition: several inaccuracies and omissions concerning the battle are made in A Ballade. Because these are corrected in Skelton's subsequent poem on the event, Skelton Laureate Against the Scottes, scholars have concluded that A Ballade was written between September 9, the day of the English victory, and September 22, 1513, the date affixed to Skelton's Latin poem on the event, Chorus de Dis contra Scottos, which contains more detailed information that had become available through state letters describing the battle.⁹

Perhaps the urgent nature of A Ballade, Skelton's first English production in his role of orator regius, a title he was given in 1512, helps to explain the fact that the poem was printed without attribution to Skelton as its author. Mention has already been made that anonymous printings were standard at this early stage of English printing, so the anonymous nature of A Ballade would not be surprising except for the fact that Skelton is a rare exception to anonymous printings: in his entire career as a poet, only three of his printed works appeared without his name. Skelton may have set out to make his authorship clear when he composed the follow-up poem, Skelton Laureate Against the Scottes.¹⁰

The new title of this slightly later poem hides the fact that it is, for the most part, a straightforward expansion of A Ballade of the Scottysse Kynge.¹¹ Although Against the Scottes gives a more accurate version of the events of the battle, the changes in historical detail are minor compared to the wholesale additions Skelton made, most of which have little to do with history but much to do with his role as poet and creator of the poem. The poem's full title, Skelton Laureate Against the Scottes, seems to be an almost willful reversal of the reader's expectations at this time that a poem's title should reveal its subject matter; instead, Skelton has subordinated subject matter to authorship and gives himself pre-eminence over the battle itself. As if to drive the point home, he uses the tag line at the end of the poem for the same purpose. Whereas A Ballade had ended with a conventional prayer for the well-being of Skelton's royal sponsor ("Amen, for saynt charyte and God save nobel Kynge Henry the viij"), he changes the royal reference in Against the Scottes and places it in a secondary position to his own status: "Quod Skelton laureate, oratour to the kynges most royall estate."

However, the most significant differences between the two poems are the lines Skelton adds to the later poem, Against the Scottes. The additions interrupt the celebratory, historical theme to describe, in highly self-

conscious terms, the poet at work composing the poem. They balance the historical context of the work with an equally important literary one by emphasizing the creative act. Midway through Against the Scottes, Skelton interrupts his harangue against the Scottish nation to include three stanzas that give a literal description of himself in the process of writing the poem:

Contynually I shal remember
 The mery moneth of September,
 With the ix day of the same,
 For then began our myrth and game.
 So that now I have devysed,
 And in my mynde I have comprised,
 Of the prowde Scot, kynge Jemmy,
 To write some lytell tragedy,
 For no maner consyderacyon
 Of any sorowfull lamentacyon,
 But for the specyall consolacyon
 Of all our royall Englysh nacyon.

Melpomone, O muse tragedyall,
 Unto your grace for grace now I call,
 To gyde my pen and my pen to enbye!
 Illumyn me, your poete and your scribe,
 That with myxture of aloes and bytter gall
 I may compounde confectures for a cordyall,
 To angre the Scottes and Irysh ketyrynges withall,
 That late were discomfect with battayle marcyall.

Thalya, my muse, for you also call I,
 To touche them with tauntes of your armony,
 A medley to make of myrth with sadnes,
 The hertes of England to comfort with gladnes.
 And now to begyn I wyll me adres,
 To you rehersyng the somme of my proces. (65-90)

Several critics have commented upon Skelton's unconventional use of medieval literary conventions to give his poetry a new and distinctive cast (Heiserman 14-65; Fish 55-81). Certainly Skelton's close description of the writer at work

in the midst of what is otherwise a traditional verse celebration awakens the reader to the presence of the author behind the literary artifact. Even in the staid world of occasional poetry, Skelton seems unable to resist the temptation to thrust himself into the limelight by describing in a self-conscious way his role as poet in creating verse that speaks for the English nation.

As if to reinforce this idea, Skelton appends yet another reminder to the end of Against the Scottes. In a section subtitled "Unto Dyvers People that Remord This Ryming Agaynst the Scot Jemmy," Skelton lambasts those who take exception to his poetic message:

I am now constrayned,
 With wordes nothing fayned,
 This invectyve to make
 For some peoples sake
 That lyst for to jangyll
 And waywardly wrangyll
 Agaynst this my makyng,
 Their males therat shakyng,
 As it reprehending,
 And venomously styngyng,
 Rebukyng and remordyng,
 And nothing accordyng. (1-12)¹²

Skelton proceeds to defend his poem, and ends Against the Scottes with a Latin tag that reveals his attitude toward the duty of the national poet: "Si veritatem dico, quare non creditis michi?" ["If I speak the truth why do you not believe me?"] (39).

Skelton's insistence on defending poetry in all its forms from any detractors and on placing himself at the

center of many of his works are two of his most distinctive features as a writer. His critics have posited a variety of explanations for this: A. R. Heiserman, in Skelton and Satire, sees it as a response to Skelton's belief that tyranny reigned in matters of style and rhetoric in contemporary poetry, a belief that the poet was both party to and rebel against:

In boasting that he was a "laureate," an "orator regius," a "vates," Skelton may have been claiming to be a poet who could resolve the conflict between the "plain" and "aureate" styles manufactured by the rhetoricians. True, he was a protege of the court, and he appealed to its factions; but he was also a spokesman for the whole culture, and he appealed to the common folk whose voice was the voice of God. Skelton seems more than unconsciously aware of the conflict between his role as "vates" and the contemporary doctrines of style which forbade serious literary men to practice any but a certain kind of poetry. (285)

Maurice Pollet is less kind in his psychological reading of Skelton. He describes Skelton as an egotist whose self-interest motivated him to concentrate only on the present moment to the exclusion of the past:

Skelton's interest was limited to the present because he considered poetry from the sole viewpoint of action. His poems are acts. And in the privileged position to which his laurels had raised him he intended to shoulder his responsibilities. Thus he comments on the present not with the detachment of a chronicler, but rather with the prejudice of a militant, with the bravado of a champion who sees everything in terms of himself. (117)

In his essay on Skelton, Robin Skelton places the poet in a long line of "master poets," including Chaucer, Dante, Dunbar, Jonson, Milton, and Pope. In this role, Robin Skelton says, poets consistently show three distinct characteristics: 1) they are omniscient, that is, they are able to write in a variety of genres; 2) their verse is multilingual; and 3) they display self-assertiveness, or self-consciousness, about their roles as poets. Certainly Skelton's bibliography confirms his omniscience. He wrote educational tracts; worked as a translator; and composed masques, lyrics, elegies, panygerics, satires, moral allegories, and ballads. Much of the difficulty modern readers have with Skelton's poems springs from their multilingualistic qualities; the poems often contain patches of French and Latin that presupposes a familiarity with those languages. Finally, Skelton's self-consciousness is perhaps the predominant feature of his work. In classifying Skelton as a master poet, Robin Skelton believes that he had a

clear intention to establish the nature of the poet's authority, and to invent, in his own person, the ideal figure of the true Laureate, the Master Poet. He was concerned to prove himself the first of the nation's Master Poets to fully understand the role. (91)

III

Many of Skelton's poems have been studied in relation to his perspective on poetic fame.¹³ But what scholars have failed to study thoroughly is the way he used the physical text to develop and control this theme in his work. Like the modern reader, the Renaissance reader who bought books was first faced with the physical presence of the text and through it gained immediate impressions about the nature of the contents and the role of its author. The book's format and front matter is of primary importance in conveying such messages. As has already been noted, the development of certain features of books that we now take for granted was a slow process in England. Printings of Skelton's poems are not necessarily the first to use such devices as woodcut portraits, full title pages, mottoes, and so forth; but taken together, they show remarkable consistency in using these features, more consistency than the works of any other contemporary writer in Skelton's day. His publications are innovative in a number of ways. He was the first English poet to print a collection of his lyrics and short poems during his lifetime, he was the first of the sixteenth-century English poets to have his complete poems printed, and he issued more individual printings of poems during his lifetime than any other poet writing in English before 1550. A chronological investigation of the physical properties of

his books, as well as some of the formal and linguistic qualities of the poems themselves, provides insight into his temperament as a writer, into his attitudes toward his readers, and into his use of the print medium to cultivate a wider range of readers for his work.

Only three texts of Skelton's poems printed before 1520 are extant: two editions of The Bowge of Court, both printed by Wynkyn de Worde, the first in 1499 and the second in 1510; and A Ballade of the Scottysse Kynge, printed by Richard Fakes in 1513. Although none of these three printings gives any direct information about the identity of the author, Skelton's hand is apparent in the two poems, for even at this early stage of his literary career, he introduces themes related to poetic composition and fame that were to become more fully developed in poems printed up to the time of his death in 1529.

In the 1499 edition of the Bowge of Court, a satire on the conditions existing in the royal circles Skelton frequented, the poet follows a long tradition in medieval narrative poetry by framing his poem as a dream vision and by employing the modesty topos at the beginning of the work. Before falling to sleep, he recalls the poetic tradition he himself seeks to keep alive:

I, callynge to mynde the great auctoryte
Of poetes olde, whyche, full craftely,
Under as coverte termes as coude be,
Can touche a troughte and cloke it subtylly

With fresshe utteraunce full sentencyously;
 Dyverse in style, some spared not vyce to wrythe,
 Some of moralyte nobly dyde endyte;

Wherby I rede theyr renome and theyr fame
 Maye never dye, bute evermore endure.
 I was sore moved to aforce the same,
 But ignorance full soone dyde me dyscure
 And shewed that in this arte I was not sure;
 For to illumyne, she sayde, I was to dulle,
 Avysynge me my penne awaye to pulle

And not to wrythe, for he so wyll atteyne,
 Excedynge ferther than his connyng is,
 His hede maye be harde, but feble is his
 brayne! (9-24)

Although such incipits are standard fare in medieval dream-vision poetry, Skelton's use of the formula adds a startling new dimension; for as the poet enters the dream world, he does not become merely a typical omniscient bystander reporting to the reader the words and actions of various characters; instead, he becomes an active participant in the drama that unfolds before him. After he falls asleep, he describes the arrival in port of a royal ship, the Bowge of Court, which is boarded by a "prece" of merchants eager to see her cargo of royal riches. Unable to resist the temptation of doing the same, Skelton falls in among the curious throng and boards the ship, where he is questioned by two of the ship's allegorical crew, Dame Saunce-Pere and Daunger. Daunger chastizes Skelton for being "so perte" in his unauthorized boarding. Finally, she demands to know his identity: "Then asked she me, 'Syr, so God the spede, / What is thy name?' and I sayde it was Drede" (76-77). Thus,

at this moment the poet Skelton is transformed into a character who plays a central role in the dialogue and drama that unfolds in the remaining 500 lines of the poem.

A central theme of Stanley Fish's study John Skelton's Poetry is the "interior" quality of Skelton's verse, or the way in which the psychology of the author plays an integral, organic role in the development of the "fiction." Speaking of the character of Skelton/Drede in the Bowge of Court, Fish describes the way that the reader responds to the poem:

Once the reader becomes concerned in an immediate rather than an academic context for the hero's safety, the dangers or evils of the scene are considered only as the hero reacts to them or is affected by them. In short, we watch him rather than them; his situation (mental and physical), not their exposure, is our point of focus, and insofar as that situation includes conflict within, the drama becomes psychological. (77)

Thus, the reader of The Bowge of Court follows the author, simultaneously playing the role of Drede, as he participates in the entire sequence of events enacted in the poem. This two-fold author/character enactment allows Skelton to keep himself in the reader's focus at the same time that he "entertains" his audience, and, as we shall see, he plays this lead role in a number of his other poems as well.

Obviously, such indirect methods of emphasizing the role of the writer would be much more effective if the identity of the writer were actually part of the printed text.¹⁴ As has been noted, the three earliest extant

printings of Skelton's poems, including the Bowge of Court, do not supply his name. But as we have seen, several contemporary references to Skelton as England's foremost poet indicate that he had already established himself in that position before 1520, when he first began using print to promote himself as England's poet laureate. Some of the mystery of how he had been able to accomplish this might be explained by lost printings of his work. In A Garlande of Laurell, printed in 1523, Skelton gives a bibliography of "sum part" of his "bokes and baladis with ditis of plesure." Of the 30 titles he mentions, well over half of them are lost. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century bibliographers make reference to at least 11 printings of Skelton's works that existed in the bibliographers' day but that have since disappeared (Kinsman and Yonge 80-81).¹⁵ Thus it is likely that during his lifetime, Skelton had a number of printed texts circulating that have not withstood the ravages of time. This would be even more likely if these printings, like some of his later works, had been issued in small, inexpensive formats intended for less wealthy readers.

Another possible explanation for Skelton's popularity prior to his use of print for generating reader recognition is manuscript circulation of his works. As we have seen, it is likely that Caxton had read some of the poet's work in manuscript; and for a poet as image-conscious as Skelton, it

is likely that he would have participated fully in the still-conventional method of circulating manuscripts among interested readers.

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, printing was still in its formative stages as a medium for disseminating literary works as opposed to educational, religious, and humanistic texts; manuscript circulation of poetry therefore must have remained an important avenue through which writers expected to expand their readership. Twelve of Skelton's poems and two of his prose works are preserved, in whole or in part, in manuscripts dating from 1500 to 1550 (Kinsman, John Skelton). Of special interest in this area is the manuscript version of Skelton's poem Speke Parrot. The earliest surviving version of this cryptographic poem, which attacks Wolsey and makes various topical allusions all but incomprehensible to modern readers, appears as British Library MS Harley 2252, which is in fact the commonplace book, dating from about 1530, of a London grocer, John Colyns (Skelton 453). Whether Colyns's interest in Skelton's poetry is typical or atypical of the London middle-class at this point in time is impossible to know, but whatever his reasons for recording this now-obscure work, Colyns demonstrates that at least one member of the English middle-class had an interest in English literature being written in his own day.

That lost printings and manuscript circulation of Skelton's poetry may account for much of Skelton's popularity between 1490 and 1520 is reinforced by many of the literary allusions to Skelton and his work mentioned above. For example, Alexander Barclay's pejorative mention in 1509 of Skelton's poem Philip Sparrow and the "tale of Robyn hode" as examples of "iests" of "wantones" indicates that Barclay believed Philip Sparrow would be widely recognized as a "wanton" work; and, as such, it would serve as an effective literary foil to his own more morally uplifting work.

Some other early remarks about Skelton appear in contexts that suggest general rather than specialized audiences for his work. Henry Bradshaw's two mentions of Skelton as a famous contemporary author on a par with two other famous writers from England's immediate past, Chaucer and Lydgate, implies an audience with enough literary sophistication that readers would have at least heard of Skelton; otherwise, Bradshaw's comments would have been too obscure to have been of any value. Significantly, his comments appear in prefaces to saint's lives, themselves a popular form of literature.

IV

After 1520, Skelton seems to have set out on a course of programmatic publication of his work. Between 1521 and 1530, the year after his death, seven of his works were printed. These seven works provide abundant evidence of one kind or another of Skelton's exploitation of the exigencies of print to widen his reputation. The earliest printed text from this period is The Tunnynq of Elynour Rummyng. The poem exists only as a fragment of a signature from the middle of the text, so it is impossible to know whether Skelton, as author, was a prominent feature of the front or back matter of the printing. However, a reconstruction based on the existing fragment indicates that the initial page of Elynour Rummyng was reserved for a title page, with the text proper beginning on the verso of the title page (Kinsman and Yonge 72).¹⁶

The fragmentary nature of the 1521 edition of the poem precludes our knowing whether Skelton's name and image were prominent features of the text; but if the next printing of it, in 1545 (16 years after the poet's death), was in any way based upon the 1521 printing, it is very likely that the original text featured Skelton in a prominent way. The 1545 edition identifies Skelton in several different ways. First, a subtitle to the poem repeats the main title and advertises Skelton and his literary title: "The Tunnynq of

Elynour Rummyng per Skelton Laureat." The identification "Quod Skelton Laureat" is mentioned first at the end of the poem proper and is repeated again a few lines later at the end of an appended Latin poem entitled "Laureati Skeltonidis in Despectu Malignantium" ["A couplet in contempt of the wicked by Skelton the laureate poet"]. At the end of the Latin addition, "Quod Skelton Laureat" is repeated yet again. Because this edition of the poem is a posthumous printing, we cannot be sure that Skelton himself is responsible for the repeated mention of his name and laureate title, for these could be additions made by the compositor who set the type for the poem. However, given the frequency with which such attributions appear in Skelton publications issued during his lifetime, it is not unlikely that the repeated mention of his name as author is a part of the original poem as Skelton himself composed it.

Although the fragmentary nature of the 1521 edition of Elynour Rummyng prevents us from knowing the precise make-up of the physical text, the literary qualities of the poem illustrate Skelton's development as a "popular" poet. The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng is evidently based on an actual person. Allianor Romyng, described in the poem as "a common tippellar of ale," has been identified in historical records from Surrey in the year 1525.¹⁷ It is likely that she resided there several years earlier when Skelton visited the

area near Leatherhead, which Skelton mentions as the home of the Elynour of his poem. Elynour Rummyng gives the earliest example in print of the poet's use of the Skeltonic line, which he seems to have developed as a kind of trademark for his poetry during this period.¹⁸

The poem's opening lines, "Tell you I chyll, / If that ye wyll / A whyle be styll, / Of a comely gyll / That dwelt on a hyll" (1-5) provide an example of what Scattergood identifies as a consciously developed authorial pose: "The opening of the poem, many of the transitions and the conclusion are marked by . . . mocking imitation of the minstrel intrusions of medieval oral verse" (Skelton 449 n.). The popular character of minstrelsy is duplicated in the elements of mumming, which play a key role in the poem's structure (Kinsman, "Eleanora Rediviva"). The pageant of low-life characters who parade through Skelton's imaginary re-creation of Elynour's tavern are controlled through the agency of Skelton himself, who uses first-person interruptions to introduce the various sections of the poem in which one set of characters departs and another enters. Robert Kinsman notes this feature of the poem and describes its effect: "Skelton through his use of direct address seems to talk to the reader and give the pantomimic actions significance as he stands there presenting each new figure" ("Eleanora Rediviva" 322).

The various motifs from popular literature in Elynour Rummyng are ironically encapsulated in the last few lines of Skelton's poem. His irreverent conclusion uses a lighthearted language that belies a sophisticated literary treatment of the folk motifs and their effect on both reader and writer:

God gyve it yll hayle,
 For my fynghers ytche.
 I have wrytten so mytche
 Of this mad mummynge
 Of Elynour Rummynge.
 Thus endeth the gest
 Of this worthy fest.

Quod Skelton Laureat. (617-24)

Skelton's direct mention of mumming draws attention to the entertainment his poem provides. His 600 lines of poetry on a common ale-wife that has led to his itching fingers is perhaps a parodic reference to the sometimes long-winded ballads of his day, and his pointed identification of the poem as a "gest" reminds us again of Barclay's complaint a decade earlier that Skelton's work demonstrates too little moral worth and too much entertainment value. This emphasis on the pleasure that can be derived from poetry continues to develop in Skelton's subsequent publications.

V

Skelton's next printed work, A Goodly Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell, printed by Richard Fakes, is probably

the most self-conscious literary work to be issued in the sixteenth century, so self-conscious, in fact, that Skelton's nineteenth-century editor Alexander Dyce regarded it as unique in literary history. "In one respect," says Dyce, "A Garlande of Laurell stands without a parallel: the history of literature affords no second example of a poet having deliberately written sixteen hundred lines in honour of himself" (I: xlix). Indeed, from the title page with its long title and woodcut representation of the writer at work to its final page, which includes Fakes's elaborate printer's ornament positioned below the title and colophon, A Garlande of Laurell leaves the reader in no doubt that the piece is first and foremost a literary production. A Garlande in many ways defies classification. It uses many elements from the dramatic tradition--stock characters from folk plays exist alongside stylized characters from interludes, elaborate stage directions are sometimes provided, and the plot involving Skelton's initiation into the Court of Fame is imaginative and engaging. The range of poetic devices is astounding; Skelton structures the poem as a dream vision and then blends epic, narrative, and lyric passages in a variety of verse forms--Skeltonics, rhyme royal, cryptograms. He writes in Latin, English, and French. Proverbial folk wisdom is balanced by allusions to Classical literature. The poem perhaps can be best

classified as a celebration, a celebration of poetry in all its forms and of the poetry of one writer in particular: John Skelton himself. A Garlande is Skelton's tour de force; it captures his sense of humor, his sense of irony, his genuine poetic talent in all its variety, while it simultaneously makes a serious statement about the role of poetry at all stages of cultural history--past, present, and future.

Fakes printed A Garlande of Laurell, his colophon tells us, on October 3, 1523. The title page (Figure 1) gives a complete description of what the reader is to expect from the poem: "A ryght delectable tratyse upon a goodly Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell by Mayster Skelton, Poete Laureat, studyously dyvysed at Sheryfhotten Castell, in the foreste of Galtres, wherein ar comprysyde many and dyvers solacyous and ryght pregnant allectyues of syngular pleasure, as more at large it doth apere in the proces folowyng." Such fulsome titles become commonplace a few decades later, but at this early date of English printing, these long titles, which served as the early Tudor equivalent of modern-day dust-jacket blurbs, are quite rare. As in all but one of the printings of his works from 1523 on, Skelton identifies himself as poet laureate in the title of the work. By mentioning the site of composition, Skelton accomplishes at least two things. First, it lends the poem



FIGURE 1. Title page of Skelton's A Garlande of Laurell.
 Courtesy of The British Library.

an added air of elegance. Sheriff Hutton castle was given to the Earl of Surrey after his victory at Flodden Field, which, as has been noted, Skelton commemorated in his Ballade of the Scottysse Kyng. Skelton spent the Christmas season at Sheriff Hutton in 1522, and evidently composed much of the poem there as a compliment to his hosts.¹⁹ A second effect achieved by the mention of an actual location of composition is that it subtly reminds the reader of the work involved in making the poem, that it was "studyously deyvysed" and did not simply spring into being without the active presence of the author. This too, as we shall see, is one of the major themes at work in the poem.

One final point to be made about the lengthy title is its emphasis on pleasure. Skelton, having been criticized by at least one other contemporary writer, Alexander Barclay, for writing "tifies," seems particularly sensitive to the charge, and A Garlande serves in many ways as Skelton's apologia for the kind of poetry he writes. One of the marks of his originality is his break with the didactic emphasis of much medieval verse. Many of his poems, among them Phyllyp Sparowe, Elynour Rummyng, and Manerly Margery Mylk and Ale, are intended primarily as entertainment, and one purpose A Garlande serves is to delight its readers as it simultaneously makes its point about the rigors and rewards of authorship. Skelton was certainly aware of the

Horatian poetic tradition of instruction and delight, for in his catalog of famous writers in A Garlande, he praises the Roman poet for his "new poetry" (352).

The woodcut appearing beneath the title reinforces the theme of the the author as the guiding force behind the work. Woodcuts depicting a seated figure at a lectern are commonly referred to as "scholar" or "schoolmaster" woodcuts because they were often placed on the title page of grammar books, learned Latin treatises, and religious texts, although occasionally they were used on literary works as well.²⁰ In isolation, the title-page features of A Garlande would not be especially significant, but when coupled with the surprising appearance on the verso of the title page of yet another woodcut depicting Skelton (Figure 2), they take on added meaning.

With its full-size headline "Skelton Poeta," this second woodcut, described by Hodnett as "A courtier facing slightly right, a branch in his right hand, a bouquet in his left" (404), is unusual not only in that it repeats the authorial representation made on the title page proper, but in that it also is a rare example of full-length portraiture in English woodcuts at quite an early date. It is impossible to know if the woodcut was custom-made for the printing of A Garlande,²¹ but even if not, it was certainly carefully chosen to reflect the thematic material included



FIGURE 2. Woodcut of Skelton on verso of title page to A Garlande of Laurell. Courtesy of The British Library.

in the poem. The branch represents the laurel of the poem's title. The bouquet of flowers, which play a central role in the imagery of the lyric poems included in A Garlande, is also possibly a visual precursor to the poetic "posies" or "bouquets" presented in such Elizabethan poetry anthologies as George Gascoigne's A Hundreth Sundrie Flowers. The Latin quatrain beneath the cut, "Eterno mansura die dum sidera fulgent, / Equora dumque tument, hec laurea nostra virebit: / Hinc nostrum celebre et nomen referetur ad astra, / Undique Skeltonis memorabitur alter Adonis" ["While the stars shine remaining in everlasting day, and while the seas swell, this our laurel shall be green: our famous name shall be echoed to the skies, and everywhere Skelton shall be remembered as another Adonis"], summarizes the major theme to be worked out in the course of the poem itself.

The plot of A Garlande of Laurell is entertaining and amusing, yet it still works ideally to carry the weight of Skelton's serious message to the reader. Using the standard astrological opening common in dream vision poetry, Skelton describes how while walking through the forest of Galtres and meditating on mutability, he suddenly drifted into his strange dream world:

Whyllis I stode musynge in this medytatyon,
 In slumbrynge I fell and halfe in a slepe;
 And whether it were of ymagynacyon,
 Or of humors superflue, that often wyll crepe
 Into the brayne by drynkyng over depe,
 Or it procedyd of fatall persuacyon,

I can not tell you what was the occasyon.
(29-35)

This passage from the beginning of the poem illustrates Skelton's facility with manipulating literary conventions to make them organic to his purposes and to inject humor into a potentially sterile literary device.²² The three possible causes for his drowsiness--the trance induced by the power of his imagination, the inebriation caused by excessive drinking, and his proclivity, or "fatal persuacyon," to engage in "musynge"--are all traits of poets in the literary tradition Skelton defines in A Garlande. Several hundred lines further into the poem, Skelton returns to the theme of the association of drinking and poetic inspiration when he uses a three-line refrain--"But blessed be Bacchus, the pleasant god of wyne, / Of closters engrosyd with his ruddy flotis / These orators and poetes refresshed there throtis" (334-36)--to add variety to the long epic catalog of famous authors. Yet despite the serious literary treatment of this subject matter, the literal description of the confused and drunken poet experiencing his vision in the forest of Galtres is clearly meant to provide the reader with at least some degree of comic relief. It might be added here that Skelton's sophistication as a poet depends in part on a reading audience sufficiently sophisticated itself to recognize the irony in Skelton's revivification of medieval literary conventions such as the dream vision formula.

In his vision, Skelton witnesses the Queen of Fame and Dame Pallas discuss the legitimacy of accepting him into the Court of Fame, where the famous poets from ages past reside. Dame Pallas has supported Skelton's cause, arguing that he has faithfully served her in his efforts to attain wisdom; but the Queen of Fame, who retains veto power over candidates for her Court, responds that wisdom itself is not enough: Skelton must prove his learning in physical evidence, that is, he must produce books that demonstrate his knowledge. "Good madame," the Queen of Fame explains to Dame Pallas,

the accustome and usage
 Of auncient poetis, ye wote full wele, hath bene
 Them selfe to embesy with all there holl courage,
 So that there werkis myght famously be sene,
 In figure wherof they were the laurell grene.
 But, how it is, Skelton is wonder slake,
 And, as we dare, we fynde in hym grete lake.
 (64-70)

Dame Pallas defends Skelton's lack of productivity by arguing that writers such as Skelton do not publish their works because they fear the responses of their reading public. Skelton has avoided writing, she says, precisely because he has the wisdom to know that his readers will criticize him for it:

For if he gloryously publisse his matter,
 Then men wyll say how he doth but flatter.

And if so hym fortune to wryte true and plaine,
 As sumtyme he must vyces remorde,
 Then sum wyll say he hath but lyttill brayne,
 And how his wordes with reason wyll not accorde.

Beware, for wrytyng remayneth of recordel
 Displease not an hundreth for one mannes pleasure.
 Who wryteth wysely hath a grete treasure. (83-91)

Dame Pallas then cites as examples two Classical poets, Ovid and Juvenal, who suffered banishment for having written works of a licentious or satiric nature.²³ But the Queen of Fame is insistent on her point:

For how shulde Cato els be callyd wyse
 But that his bokis, whiche he did devyse,
 Recorde the same? Or why is had in mynde
 Plato, but for that he left wrytynge behynde,

For men to loke on?

At last the Queen of Fame asks Dame Pallas to call forth Skelton himself to provide evidence for his claim to a place in the Court of Fame. She will accept his petition, she says, "If he to the ample encrease of his name / Can lay any werkis that he hath complyd" (222-23).

This invitation to appear in his own defense allows Skelton Poeta, as he calls himself in the character headings of the dialogue, to take center stage and present his own first-hand account of the events that lead to his eventual installation in the Court of Fame and to his reawakening into the reality that frames his quest for fame through poetic achievement.

After the dialogue between the Queen of Fame and Dame Pallas, the remaining 1350 lines of A Garlande of Laurell are structured as a pageant or entertainment in which characters briefly appear, usually for the purpose of

speaking, or allowing Skelton to speak to them, about his own concerns involving poetry and his place in poetic tradition. He begins by enumerating several dozen of the "thousande poetes" who parade before him in his vision. Significantly, he first describes a group of minstrels, among them Orpheus and Amphion, whose "heavenly armony" causes the forest in which he has come to muse to break into joyful dance. He then identifies a number of Classical poets who pass before him. The catalog of poets is noticeably weighted with ancient Latin poets; if Skelton's knowledge of medieval and contemporary poets is meant to be illustrated in this passage, it is not very extensive, for he gives passing mention to only three such poets: Petrarch, Poggio Bracciolini, and Robert Gaguin, with whom he apparently had engaged in a literary bout of flyting some years earlier (Edwards, "Robert Gaguin"). Skelton reserves a special place, though, for the familiar trio of famous English medieval poets--Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate--and in doing so he aligns himself directly with the native English poetic tradition rather than with the Classical or humanistic one. "Theis Englysshe poetis thre," Skelton says, "repayrid unto me, / Togeder in armes, as brethern, enbrasid" (391-93), and each in turn accepts Skelton, England's soon-to-be-crowned poet laureate, into their brotherhood. After the three poets each provide Skelton

with a personal recommendation for entry into the Court of Fame, they escort him first to Dame Pallas's pavilion and thence to the palace of the Queen of Fame. Skelton uses the occasion to describe the palace and in the process demonstrates his skill in writing poetry in the aureate style:

With turkis and grossolitis enpavyd was the
grounde;
Of birrall enbosid wer the pyllers rownde;
Of elephantis tethe were the palace gatis,
Enlosenged with many goodly platis

Of golde, entachid with many a precyous stone;
An hundred steppis mountyng to the halle,
One of jasper, another of whalis bone;
Of dyamauntis pointed was the wall;
The carpettis within and tappettis of pall;
The chambres hangid with clothes of arace;
Envawtyd with rubies the vawte was of this
place. (466-76)

The three English poets give way to Occupation, who assures Skelton that she too will aid him in his quest for membership in the Court of Fame. She leads him through a dream-landscape of various nations, describes their inhabitants, and then guides him through a fair garden, the locus amoenus of poetry, where Skelton immediately notices the "goodly laurell tre" growing and the nine muses of poetry dancing about its base. At this critical juncture in A Garlande of Laurell, Skelton responds to Occupation's questions about his intentions of pursuing a life devoted to poetry:

Occupacyon to Skelton

'How say ye? Is this after your appetite?
 May this contente you and your mirry mynde?
 Here dwellith pleasure, with lust and delyte;
 Contynuall comfort here ye may fynde,
 Of welth and solace no thyng left behynde;
 All thyng convenable here is contryvyd
 Wherewith your spiritis may be revyvid.'

Poeta Skelton answeyth

'Questionles no dowte of that ye say;
 Jupiter hymselfe this lyfe myght endure;
 This joy exceedith all wordly sport and play,
 Paradyce this place is of syngular pleasure.
 O wele were hym that herof myght be sure,
 And here to inhabite and ay for to dwell!
 (707-19)

To "ay for to dwell" in the land of poetry required, of course, that Skelton create fame for himself as a poet and to preserve for posterity his own corpus of poetry. As is made clear by the long list of titles Occupation reads at the end of A Garlande of Laurell, he had created a substantial body of work, but the greater problem was the preservation of it. It is impossible to know whether Skelton's own personal experience in obtaining the works of other poets he had read played a significant role in his heightened awareness of the fact that if an author did not take a personal interest in preserving and promoting his own literary productions, he ran the risk of having them disappear almost as soon as they were created. A Garlande of Laurell, both as a physical text and as a literary statement, directly addresses this problem.

About 250 lines of A Garlande are taken up by a series of eleven lyric poems addressed to individual ladies in Skelton's acquaintance at Sherriff Hutton Castle.²⁴ He makes this series of complimentary poems organic to the structure of the poem by having Occupation introduce the circle of ladies as they weave Skelton's crown of laurel, the central image of the title in particular and of the poem as a whole. The series of lyrics also serves to showcase Skelton's facility with song and verse forms. But perhaps most importantly, it serves to advance the theme of fame in a two-fold way. As A. C. Spearing has remarked about the lyrics, they remind the reader that "the poet gains fame, symbolized by the laurel, by writing, but also confers fame, good or bad, on those he writes about" (216).

At the conclusion of the lyric series, the ladies present Skelton with the laurel crown they have been weaving. Occupation, Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate return to the scene and lead Skelton again toward the palace of the Queen of Fame. The trio of English poets compliment Skelton on his new laurel crown and remark that it is "the goodlyest / That ever they saw" (1112-13).

Skelton is then given a personal audience with the Queen of Fame. Bedecked with his new laurel crown, he evidently makes a poor impression on the Queen. "She loked hawtly, and gave on me a glum" (1117), Skelton remarks in a

moment of comic relief. Despite Skelton's symbolic claim to fame signified by the crown of laurel, the Queen continues to press her point that he must actually provide the evidence that proves he deserves such an honor, and Occupation again comes to his defense by offering to read the record of Skelton's literary accomplishments from a book that she possesses. The Queen of Fame is at last appeased by this offer of proof but warns again that a prerequisite for fame is a substantial and enduring body of writing. Speaking to Occupation, she says,

'Yowre boke of remembrauns we will now that ye
rede;
If ony recordis in noumyr can be founde,
What Skelton hath compilid and wryton in dede,
Rehersyng by ordre, and what is the grownde,
Let se now for hym how ye can expounde;
For in owr courte, ye wote wele, his name can not
ryse
But if he wryte oftenner than ones or twyse.'
(1149-55)

But before Occupation begins reading Skelton's bibliography, the poet pauses to give a highly detailed description of the "boke of remembrauns" from which she is about to read:

With that, of the boke losende were the claspis.
The margent was illumynid all with golden railles
And byse, enpicturid with gresssoppes and waspis,
With butterflyis and fresshe pecoke taylis,
Enflorid with flowris and slymy snaylis,
Envyvid picturis well towchid and quikly.
It wolde have made a man hole that had be ryght
sekely,

To beholde how it was garnysshyd and bounde,
Encoverde over with golde tissew fyne;
The claspis and bullyons were worth a thousande
pounde;

With balassis and charbuncles the borders did
 shyne;
 With aurum musicum every other lyne
 Was wrytin. (1156-69)

This vivid description of the finely bound, ornately illustrated book, with its metaphoric healing power,²⁵ plays a subtle but central thematic role in A Garlande of Laurell. By encasing his bibliography within what is obviously a work of art, Skelton associates his own body of work, his entire literary output, with art in the broadest sense. The "boke of remembrauns" thus become both icon and symbol for Skelton's attitude toward his poetry--an attitude he clearly hopes to transfer to his readers.

In the long sequence following, Skelton has Occupation do much more than merely read the titles of his works; she often gives lengthy descriptions of the subject matter for many titles. She also uses the occasion at the beginning of her reading to advertise his literary honors and his self-proclaimed role as England's national poet. "Of your oratour and poete laureate," she proclaims, "his workis here they begynne" (1170-71). Similarly, she reminds Skelton's readers of the influence he wielded in his role as royal tutor to Prince Henry and implies that the works he produced in that capacity may have had a profound effect on the national character of England:

The Duke of Yorkis creauncer whan Skelton was,
 Now Henry viij, Kyng of Englonde,
 A tratyse he devysid and brought it to pas,

Callid Speculum Principis, to bere in his honde,
 Therin to rede, and to understande
 All the demenour of princely astate,
 To be our kyng, of God preordinate. (1226-32)

Occupation's digressions often serve as responses to critics of Skelton's works. For example, when she mentions Phillip Sparow, she pauses to reply to literary conservatives such as Alexander Barclay, who criticized the poem for being immoral:

Yet sum there be therewith that take grevaunce
 And grudge therat with frowning countenance;
 But what of that? hard it is to please all men;
 Who list amende it, let hym set to his penne.
 (1257-60)

Evidently, criticisms were levelled against other poems as well, for after giving the titles of four poems written in a lighthearted vein, Occupation feels compelled to defend Skelton's rationale for composing this type of poetry: "To make suche trifels it asketh sum konnyng, / In honest myrth, parde, requyreth no lack; / The whyte apperyth the better for the black" (1235-37).

One further use Skelton makes of the bibliography in A Garlande of Laurell is to raise the issue of the negative effect that writing can have when an author makes public an inferior work--some juvenilia or hack work, for example--and later regrets having done so. This serious authorial problem is handled gracefully though, because Skelton uses the point to inject a moment of humor into the long recitation of titles. When Occupation reads the title "Item

bring Skelton back to his senses, and he awakes again in his musing place in the Forest of Galtres.

Although the actual narrative in A Garlande of Laurell ends at this point, Skelton uses an additional 100 lines to append a series of literary devices to the end of the work. Among these are four different envoys, three in Latin and one in English, all of which serve important purposes in Skelton's literary construct. The first Latin envoy, "Skeltonis alloquitur librum suum," reinforces the concept made evident in the course of the poem itself: Skelton is to be regarded as the English equivalent to Rome's national poets. It also makes further reference to Skelton as another Adonis, a device which links the end of A Garlande to its beginning, where the Latin quatrain identifying Skelton as an Adonis figure was included beneath the woodcut portrait of the verso of the title page.

The English envoy, written in short Skeltonic lines, makes several significant statements related to the poet's attitude toward writing poetry in the vernacular:

Go, litill quaire,
Demene you faire.
Take no dispare,
Though I you wrate
After this rate
In Englysshe letter.
So moche the better
Welcome shall ye
To sum men be;
For Latin warkis
Be good for clerkis,
Yet now and then

Sum Latin men
 May happely loke
 Upon your boke,
 And so procede
 In you to rede,
 That so indede
 Your fame may sprede
 In length and brede. (1533-52)

Clearly, Skelton hopes first that his poem will be read by those readers who have a command of English but who are unable to read Latin. Perhaps of more significance, however, is his wish that learned Latin clerks would take an interest in vernacular literature. By expressing a desire for a wide community of readers, learned and unlearned, Skelton establishes himself more firmly as a poet whose range and scope offers something of value to the full spectrum of English citizenry.

The second Latin envoy serves simultaneously as a dedication and as an appeal for financial support. Skelton first addresses his book to Henry VIII, his former pupil, and hopes that it honors him sufficiently. Then, suprisingly, he also uses the envoy to dedicate A Garlande to Cardinal Wolsey, whom he had scathingly attacked in several earlier poems.

The third Latin envoy, and the last in the series of four, brings the laurel imagery developed throughout the poem full-circle. The envoy, entitled "Admonet Skeltonis Omnes Arbores Dare Locum Viridi Lauro Juxta Genus Suum," is a hymn to the laurel and celebrates it as the highest form

of tree because it symbolizes Skelton's figurative and literal world of poetry. The envoy catalogs and praises several kinds of trees--the ash, fir, olive, oak, and so forth--but concludes with a forceful imperative: "Arboris omne genus viridi concedite lauro!" ["All kinds of tree, give place to the laurel!"]. It is certainly appropriate that Skelton should end his poem with a command to celebrate to the highest degree the laurel as a symbol for the poetic landscape he creates in A Garlande of Laurell. But his imaginative creation in that poem is itself a symbol for his literal existence: he had consciously set out to become England's national poet, and the publication of A Garlande made that fact known to anyone who read it. That his chosen profession as poet had value to him personally is apparent. That English readers of all sorts should also value that profession is the more subtle but perhaps more important message behind his command "Arboris omne genus viridi concedite lauro!" However, Skelton would not be content to let the point die with the publication of A Garlande of Laurell, for he uses the phrase again as his own personal motto on the title pages of his next two printed works, Agaynst a Comelely Coystrowne and Dyuers Balettys.

VI

Having publicly announced his literary aspirations and advertized his past accomplishments with the publication of A Garlande of Laurell in 1523, Skelton continued to promote himself and his poetry in several subsequent publications before his death in 1529. Two of these works, Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne and Diuers Balettys and Dyties Solacyous, were printed in 1527, and a third, A Replycacion, appeared in 1528. The year after his death, two more items, Collyn Clout and Maqnyfyence, were issued. In each of these publications, Skelton continues to publicize himself as England's national poet and to employ the medium of print in ways that demonstrate his interest in broadening the readership for his poetry.

The two items that followed the publication of A Garlande of Laurell are especially interesting in the way that they use material from that earlier poem to provide a thread of continuity from one printed text to another. The two items are companion pieces printed in the order A Comely Coystrowne followed by Dyuers Balettys.²⁶ Each quarto printing is very brief, consisting of only four leaves comprising a title page followed by seven pages of printed text. The two works could easily have been printed as a single text, but by issuing them separately, the printer, William Rastell, kept the price to a minimum. Perhaps, too,

he felt that by offering two separate works instead of a single one, he would have increased the chances of follow-up sales to readers who had enjoyed the first book of poems.

The title pages, reproduced here as Figures 3 and 4, are nearly identical in format. In fact, they employ the same woodcut representation of Skelton, crowned with a laurel wreath and at work at his desk. Only the ornamental frame and the title have been changed on the title pages of the two works.

The full title of A Comely Coystrowne, Skelton Laureate Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne That Curyowlsy Chawntyd, and Curryshly Sowntred, and Madly in Hys Musykkys Mokkyshly Made Agaynste the IX Muses of Polytyke Poems and Poettys Matryculat, gives unusually high prominence to authorship by placing Skelton's name first and by using headline type for the top line. Dyuers Balettys reverses the author/title order but still includes Skelton's name as part of the main unit of the type at the top of the woodcut. As is the case in almost all of Skelton's printed texts, his title of laureate is included with his name.

Perhaps the most important feature of the title page is the motto that is inserted in the upper right corner of the woodcut. Taken from the final lines of A Garlande of Laurell, the motto, "Arboris omne genus viridif concedite

Shelton Laureate agaynste a comely
 Coystrone that curyowly chaunteyd And curysly
 cowntred; And made in hys Huspakyz mokkyshly
 made; Agaynste the .ix. Husps of polytyche Poems &
 Poetys matryculat.



FIGURE 3. Title page to Agaynste a Comely Coystrone.
 Courtesy of The Huntington Library.



FIGURE 4. Title page to Diuers Balettys and Dyties Solacyous. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

lauro" ["All kinds of tree, give place to the laurel"], is meant to communicate to the reader an essential message--- that Skelton is the English representative and spokesman for what he feels is the highest literary form: poetry. Whether Skelton or his printer actually believed that readers would identify the legend as being from the closing lines of A Garlande of Laurell is open to question, but the possibility of them doing so is there. Whatever the case, this seems to be the earliest instance of a living English writer using a literary motto as a feature of his printed text to establish author identification among his readers.

Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne and Dyuers Balettys represent still another first in English literary history: they are the earliest extant printings of a collection of original short poems. While a number of manuscripts and commonplace books from the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance contain transcriptions of short verse,²⁷ until Skelton's time English printers apparently felt that there was little market for collections or anthologies of such poetry. The immense popularity of miscellanies and collections of lyric poetry a few generations later may have its roots in small poetry collections such as Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne and Dyuers Balettys.

The contents of each collection reveal the range of Skelton's poetic talents and his interest in introducing the

reading public to different varieties of verse. The full title cited above of the earlier work, Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne, implies that the text contains only this poem, but upon closer inspection the reader would find three other short poems also included in the collection.

The title poem is a diatribe against a musician who apparently criticized Skelton in some unspecified manner. The poet attacks his detractor ruthlessly by ridiculing his attempts to sing songs and play musical instruments. The mysterious insult that the "coystrowne" has levelled "agaynste the ix Muses of polytyke poems and poettys matryculate" is never revealed explicitly, but it provides Skelton not only with the opportunity to engage in a flyting with his critic but also to advertize his relationship with poetry and to defend his chosen profession. In doing so, he manages to create another public occasion on which he can identify himself on the title page as the grand defender and spokesman for all poets and all poetry.

Skelton's fondness for long, self-promoting titles is revealed again in the next two poems included in Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne. The first, a ten-line poem entitled "Contra Alium Cantitantem et Organisantem Asinum, Qui Impugnabat Skeltonida Pierium, Sarcasmos" ["A Sarcastic Poem against Another Singer and Doltish Musician who Criticized the Muse-Like Skelton"], is a Latin treatment of the same

theme developed in the title poem. In this poem, too, Skelton's role as poet is advertized. The last line condemns his critic for having attacked Skelton, who describes himself as a "sacrum virum," or holy man.

The next poem in the collection, "Skelton Laureat, uppon a deedmans hed, that was sent to hym from an honorable Jentyllwoman for a token, Devysyd this gostly medytacyon in Englysh: Convenable in sentence, Comendable, Lamentable, Lacrymable, Profytable for the soule" is in a completely different vein from the first two poems described above. In 60 lines, the poet takes the conventional medieval poetic meditation on death and gives it a freshness by employing the fast-moving short lines and repeated rhymes of Skeltonic verse.

The last poem, "Womanhood, wanton, ye want!" is a misogynistic poem of 30 lines addressed to a Mistress Anne, to whom Skelton wrote a number of now-lost poems mentioned in A Garland of Laurell (1241-42).

The five poems in Dyuers Balettys and Dyties Solacyous are of a more uniform character than those in Agaynste A Comely Coystrowne. Skelton uses the rhyme royal stanza for each poem, a commonly employed form for song lyrics in the early Tudor period.²⁸ Thus, the poems seem to be lyrics Skelton wrote for musical accompaniment and probably date from 1495 to 1500, when Skelton was serving in Henry VII's

court. However, as is the case for many lyrics from this period, the musical notation for the poems has not survived.²⁹ Regardless of their origin, the fact that the items were printed without music more than 25 years later indicates that Skelton felt that they could stand alone as poetry even though they may have been written originally for another purpose.

The terms used in the title Dyuers Balettys and Dyties Solacyous give some indication of Skelton's perceptions of his audience for these poems. "Balettys" was used, with various spellings, to refer to a broad range of musical and poetic concepts, both popular and courtly; and "dyties" could refer specifically to song lyrics or more broadly to any kind of composition in verse.³⁰ "Dyuers" describes the subject matter of the poems more accurately than the verse forms, since all the poems are in rhyme royal stanzas; and the sense of "solacyous" as pleasant or cheerful reminds one of Skelton's interest in poetry as a legitimate form of entertainment apart from his interest in it as a tool for moral instruction. The variety of words and their various connotations suggest that the title purposely played upon the several meanings in order to attract as wide an audience as possible.

Even though the poems in Dyuers Balettys were originally composed as court productions, there is some

other evidence that they were written with a wider audience in mind. Many of Skelton's poems blend courtly attitudes with popular ones, and the poems in Dyuers Balettys are no exception. Stanley Fish has noticed Skelton's tendency in these poems to alternate between aureate language associated with court poetry and more vulgar language usually found in popular works. "In his lyrics," Fish says, "Skelton joins the voice and often the diction of the unsuccessful courtly lover to the low humor of the betrayed-serving-maid-ballad" (39). A good example occurs in the first poem in Dyuers Balettys, "With 'Lullay, lullay,' lyke a chylde." A bawdy parody of a lullaby, the poem recounts the story of a drunkard who falls asleep in his maiden's lap. She steals away from him almost immediately to find a more attentive partner. In the last stanza, Skelton moralizes the situation in a robust mixture of bombast and humor:

What dremyst thou, drunchard, drousy pate?
 Thy lust and lyking is from the gone;
 Thou blynerd blowboll, thou wakyst to late;
 Behold, thou lyst, luggard alone!
 Well may thou sygh, well may thou grone,
 To dele wyth her so cowardly;
 I wys, powle hachet, she bleryd thyne I! (22-28)

Such language is far removed from the stately aureate language (and the surprisingly Petrarchan sentiments) of this stanza from another poem in the collection, "Knolege, aquayntance, resort, favour, with grace," in which Skelton praises his mistress's virtues:

The topas rych and precyous in vertew;
 Your ruddys with ruddy rubys may compare;
 Saphyre of sadnes, envayned wyth Indy blew;
 The pullyshed perle youre whytenes doth declare;
 Dyamand poyntyd to rase oute hartly care
 Geyne surfetous suspecte the emeraud comendable;
 Relucent smaragd, objecte imcomperable. (15-21)

Such melding of language, style, and subject matter in a small collection of poetry is perhaps a reflection of Skelton's conscious effort to introduce the English reading public to a kind of poetry that is, as the title of the book says, both "dyuers" and "solacyous."

Following the appearance of Aqaynste a Comely Coystrowne and Dyuers Balettys came A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scolers Abjured of Late, printed by Richard Pynson about 1528. The title makes apparent its occasional nature. According to a Latin dedication that begins the poem, Cardinal Wolsey had commissioned Skelton to write it as a warning to Lutherans to renounce their heretical ways. In fact, one of Skelton's biographers, William Nelson, has suggested that the poem was part of a state-sponsored program of publication intended "to destroy the heretical movement in England with the weapon of eloquence" (216). If this was indeed the case, it may be yet more evidence that Skelton had succeeded in establishing himself as England's national poet--as such he would have been the obvious choice to compose a poem that communicated official policy if his work was being widely read at the time.

Although A Replycacion does not give actual names, the individuals Skelton attacks have been identified as two Cambridge scholars, Thomas Arthur and Thomas Bilney, who were accused of heretical teachings in 1527. The two subsequently abjured their positions, but Bilney later resumed his heretical preaching and in 1531 was burned at the stake for doing so.

Perhaps because the poem was a commissioned work, its title page is not particularly noteworthy as a piece of self-advertisement, as several of the title pages of Skelton's previous publications had been. A Replycacion begins, oddly enough, with a Latin prose dedication printed before the actual title is given on the first page. Within the dedication, Skelton identifies himself as author and, as a reader familiar with his work would have come to expect, he also brings attention to his position as orator regius and poet laureate. However, as part of the dedication, this identification is modest in comparison to earlier works. Even though he may have been able to subdue his urge to advertize himself in this instance, he is not able to subdue his habit of defending his work from his detractors, a practice which Skelton followed in a number of the poems he wrote. In A Replycacion his defense occurs near the end of the poem in a section subtitled "A confutacion responsyve, or an inevytably prepensed answere to all waywarde or

frowarde altercacyons that can or may be made or objected agaynst Skelton laureate, devyser of this Replycacion." In his apologia, he lays the groundwork for English theories of poetry that become more fully developed a half a century later by such writers as Puttenham and Sidney. Skelton repeats a charge levelled at poetry that it is not a legitimate form for addressing issues of religious or political import:

Why fall ye at debate
 With Skelton laureate,
 Reputyng hym unable
 To gainsay replycable
 Opinyons detestable
 Of heresy execrable?
 Ye saye that poetry
 May nat flye so hye
 In theology,
 Nor anology,
 Nor philology,
 Nor philosophy,
 To answere or reply
 Agaynst such heresy. (300-13)

Skelton defends his poetry by citing a passage from the preface to the Vulgate Bible where Jerome's letter to Paulinus makes a brief comparison of David's psalms with Classical lyrics. In translating the Latin for his English readers, Skelton expands the short passage into two rhyme royal stanzas:

Kyng David the prophete, of prophetes principall,
 Of poetes chefe poet, saint Jerome dothe wright,
 Resembled to Symonides, that poete lyrical
 Among the Grekes most relucient of lyght,
 In that faculte whiche shyned as Phebus bright;
 Lyke to Pyndarus in glorious poetry,
 Lyke unto Alcheus, he dothe hym magnify.

Flaccus nor Catullus with hym may nat compare,
 Nor solempne Serenus, for all his armony
 In metricall muses, his harpyng we may spare;
 For Davyd, our poete, harped so meloudiously
 Of our savyour Christ in his decacorde psautry,
 That at his resurrection he harped out of hell
 Olde patriarkes and prophetes in heven with him to
 dwell. (329-42)

Such passages from Skelton's poetry serve as one of the few sources for tracing the development of English literary theory in the early Tudor period. Unfortunately, Skelton's fullest treatments of his theory of poetry have not survived. In A Garlande of Laurell, he mentions two works, now lost, that seem by their titles to imply a more complete exploration of the poet's literary principles. One work is known only by its title, The Diologgis of Ymagynacyoun. The other work, The Boke of Good Advertysement, is mentioned not only in A Garlande of Laurell but is fully described in A Replycacion as well. Not unexpectedly, Skelton begins his description by alluding to attacks he has suffered in his efforts to gain recognition for his work, and then he gives a detailed account, presumably taken from The Boke of Good Advertysement, of the psychology that inspires the poetic composition:

Ye do moche great outrage,
 For to disparage
 And to discourage
 The fame matryculate
 Of poetes laureate.

For if ye sadly loke,
 And wesely rede the Boke

Of Good Advertysment,
 With me ye must consent
 And infallibly agre
 Of necessyte,
 Howe there is spyrituall,
 And a mysteriall,
 And a mysticall
 Effecte energiall,
 As Grekes do it call,
 Of suche an industry
 And suche a pregnacy ,
 Of hevenly inspyriacion
 In laureate creacyon,
 Of poetes commendacion,
 That of divyne myseracion
 God maketh his habytacion
 In poetes whiche excelles,
 And sojourns with them and dwelles.

By whose inflammacion
 Of spyrituall instygacion
 And divine inspyracion
 We are kyndled in suche facyon
 With hete of the Holy Gost,
 Which is God of myghtes most,
 That he our penne dothe lede,
 And maketh in us suche spede
 That forthwith we must nede
 With penne and ynke procede,
 Somtyme for affection,
 Sometyme for sadde dyrection,
 Somtyme for correction,
 Somtyme under protection
 Of pacient sufferance,
 With sobre cyrcumstance,
 Our myndes to avaunce
 To no mannes anoyance. (354-96)

Having digressed at this point far from his original topic of the evils of heresy, Skelton returns to the subject again only by mentioning that he intends "no grevance" to those who read his poem about the recently abjured heretics. It is clear that he has by now lost sight of his original purpose of voicing official policy and has succumbed instead

to his enthusiasm for defending the virtues of his beloved poetry.

Just as Skelton had used an occasional poem, Skelton Laureate Aqaynst the Scottes, written 25 years earlier, to serve as a forum for describing himself as an inspired poet, so, too, does he use A Replycacion, the last work printed before his death in 1529, for similar purposes when he ends it with what J. W. H. Atkins has identified as the earliest English formulation of the "doctrine of poetic inspiration" (176). In the process, Skelton also manages to defend his verse in the face of actual or potential critical attacks; to promote an earlier work, The Boke of Good Advertysement, by referring the reader to it for full explication of his poetic theory; and to mention his own name as author of the poem in several different passages.

Had Skelton's habits of self-promotion occurred only occasionally in his poems, the issue might be regarded as merely a writer's natural interest in having his work read. But for Skelton, the urge to include his presence as a writer in the poem was a driving force behind his creative powers, and thus it became a major theme in his work. As has been demonstrated, his concern with issues related to authorship and the role of the writer in his world is apparent both in the literary qualities of the poems themselves and in the physical form--the printed book--that

the poems took. The title pages, the woodcut representations of Skelton as author, and the literary mottoes all combined to make Skelton's readers aware of his presence behind the literary work they were reading. Certainly other writers had cultivated a sense of self-consciousness about their activities as writers and about their relationships with their readers, but none before Skelton had done so in such an insistent manner and in such a variety of ways.

Obviously, the introduction of printing into England facilitated Skelton's efforts to create a literary persona. Print allowed him to make his abstract ideas about the value of poetry and of the individual poet more concrete by putting them in a printed form that preserved the ideas in a consistent and physically durable way. The limitations of the manuscript form in the preprint era for embodying one's ideas in the physical object of the book are obvious. Although an author could perhaps have a manuscript illustrated by hand and see to it that his name was part of the manuscript proper, once it began circulating and subsequently being copied without the author's oversight, these features would rapidly disappear. With the advent of print, the writer could integrate his personal identity into the literary artifact in a permanent way; the writer's personally defined image of himself could then be preserved

in thousands of copies that circulated among the general population rather than in a few copies that passed through the hands of a few selected readers. The printed books that contained Skelton's poetry and that almost invariably included his name, his titles as poet laureate and orator regius, and his image preserved in woodcut representations, had a powerful influence on the way in which his poetry was read not only by readers during his own lifetime but by those in subsequent generations as well.

VII

Skelton's success in establishing a reading audience that continued to grow throughout the early Tudor period and far into the reign of Elizabeth can be measured in some degree by the frequency with which his poetry was printed after his death in 1529. Although Skelton's two chief rival poets from 1500 to 1530--Alexander Barclay and Stephen Hawes--occasionally had new editions of their works printed during the later sixteenth century, Skelton's poetry seems to have been much more popular, judging from the frequency with which it was printed.³¹ Perhaps some of his popularity sprang from the fact that in his poetry he had replaced the slow and heavy-handed moralizing of medieval narrative poetics practiced by such writers as Hawes and Barclay with the much more vigorous and energetic form of moralizing

contained in the satire of his own idiosyncratic versification. English readers at last had available to them a poetry that balanced its moralizing tone with an atmosphere of celebration, wittiness, and entertainment, and they seemed to respond to it with great enthusiasm.

The first hint that Skelton had succeeded in his efforts to preserve his literary reputation beyond the chronological limits of his lifetime came in 1530, the year following his death, when two of his previously unpublished works were printed.³² The first of the poems, Magnificence, described in its full title as "A goodly interlude and a mery devysed and made by mayster Skelton poet laureate late deceasyd," was probably printed as a collaborative effort by two printers, William Terveris and John Rastell. The second work, Collyn Clout, was issued by Thomas Godfray, who also earned a place in English printing history for having printed the earliest extant edition of Chaucer's complete works, in 1532. It is possible that the printing of Skelton's two poems in 1530 is an early example of the modern practice of hurrying a popular writer's unpublished works into print soon after his death for the purpose of capitalizing on his popularity.

Beginning in 1545, the publication of Skelton's poetry is remarkable in the frequency of its printing and in the consistency in the way in which the works were issued. In

1545, the stationer Richard Kele commissioned William Copland to print three of Skelton's poems, Phyllyp Sparowe, Colyn Clout, and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? These three items, each printed separately in the small, inexpensive octavo format characteristic of works of a "popular" nature, could be sold unbound as individual works, or they could be bound together to provide a "nonce collection" of Skelton's medium-length poems. There are, in fact, three such bound collections recorded in the census of Skelton's poetry.

Two of these three items, Colyn Cloute and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?, include woodcuts representing Skelton as author, a practice established in several printings of Skelton's works issued during his lifetime. At the end of both books appears the same woodcut originally used in the 1527 edition of Agaynst a Comely Coystrowne (Figure 3). However, the insert originally used in the woodcut, "Arboris omne genus viridi concedite lauro," had outlived its earlier purpose of serving as a transitional device between the sequential printings of A Garland of Laurell, Agaynste a Comely Coystrowne, and Dyuers Ballettys, so it was replaced in the two items printed in 1545 with the simple identification "Skelton Poet."³³

Some extant copies of the 1545 edition of Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? also include on the verso of the title page another woodcut (Figure 5) representing Skelton. These



FIGURE 5. Woodcut representing Skelton from Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

small, standardized woodcuts, or factotum, were used most commonly in early English printing as illustrations to accompany a book's narrative material rather than as title-page representations of authors. Thus, Copland, the printer, may have used this unsophisticated woodcut in an effort to model the 1545 printing on earlier printings of the poet's works, which often included woodcut "portraits" of Skelton.

One extant copy of the 1545 edition of Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? demonstrates how readers responded to Skelton's own attitudes toward the preservation of his poetry. In the Huntington Library's copy of Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?, a mid-sixteenth-century reader's marginalia on the book's final page captures the essence of Skelton's attitude toward poetic fame that he developed so extensively in A Garlande of Laurell and other poems. The reader, identified at the end of the notation as George Staunton of Cauntell[?], addresses Skelton directly in a brief bit of verse on the theme of literary immortality: "Skelton, tis pittie that thy bookes should rust / Vsed they do live, though thow art turnid to dus[t]."

In the same year that Kele was selling Phyllyp Sparowe, Colyn Cloute, and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? "at the longe shop vnder saynt myldredes chyrche," a rival stationer, Henry Tab, who sold his books "in Poules chyrche yard at the

syne of Iudith," commissioned Richard Lant to print a collection containing ten of Skelton's short poems. The collection, issued under the short-title Certayne Bokes, is in the tradition of the two collections of shorter poems printed about 1527, Dyuers Balettys and Dyties Solacyous and Agaynst a Comely Coystrowne. Certayne Bokes, however, contains no poems in common with those two earlier works; all the poems in the 1545 collection were previously unpublished.

Although Certayne Bokes was issued without a woodcut representation of Skelton, at least one early reader evidently felt that a book of Skelton's poems was incomplete without one, for in an extant copy housed at the Newberry Library, a woodcut representation, probably taken from a copy of the 1545 edition of Colyn Cloute, has been pasted into the book, much in the same way that present-day readers often attach reviews or brief biographies into the inside covers of their own twentieth-century books.

Skelton's poetry sustained its popularity during the 1550s and 1560s as well. The three individual poems printed in 1545 were issued again in 1553 and in 1560. Certayne Bokes maintained its popularity too; a second edition appeared in 1554, a third in 1560. The publishing arrangements for all these printings is remarkably similar to that used in 1545, and the method used may provide some

evidence about the general availability of Skelton's poetry in the mid-sixteenth century. The extant copies of the 1553 editions of Phyllyp Sparowe, Colyn Cloute, and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte? exhibit a complex series of variants on the pages reserved for publishers' colophons.³⁴ The colophons for Phyllyp Sparowe and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?, for example, exist in two variants, one stating that the books were "Imprynted at London in paules churche yerde by [for] Robert Toy," and the other stating that they were "Imprynted at London in paules churche yerde by [for] Iohn wyghte." Colyn Cloute, in its 1553 edition, likewise has two variant colophons: one, "Imprinted at London in Paules Churche yarde at the Sygne of the Rose by [for] Iohn Wyghte" and the other, "Imprinted at London in Fletestrete at the hither Temple gate at the Sygne of the Princes armes by [for] Thomas Marshe." Robert Kinsman and Theodore Yonge, using evidence from typeface styles and ornamental compartments used on the title pages, have identified the actual printer of all three of these 1553 publications as William Copland, the same printer who printed the 1545 editions for Richard Kele.³⁵

When the last of the sixteenth-century editions of these three works appeared in 1560, precisely the same arrangements were made for publication. This time, however, the printer was John Day, who remained anonymous as a

printer and instead gave colophon credit for publication to each of three different stationers. Extant copies of the three items printed in 1560 exist with publication credit going to Anthony Kitson, Abraham Veale, and John Walley.

The publication of Certayne Bokes in 1554 was slightly less complicated; it was issued jointly by John Kynge and Thomas Marshe. Robert Toy, the anonymous printer of the 1560 editions of Phyllyp Sparowe, Colyn Cloute, and Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?, evidently undertook to print and sell the 1560 edition of Certayne Bokes on his own since he mentions only himself as the publisher in the 1560 colophon to that work.

The list of printers and stationers involved in publishing Skelton's poetry between 1530 and 1560 is unusually long. It includes Treveris, Rastell, Godfray, Kele, Copland, Tab, Lant, Toy, Wight, Marsh, Day, Kitson, Veale, and Walley. The cooperative publishing arrangements made for issuing many of Skelton's works served a practical business purpose. Publishers could cut their costs significantly by joining other stationers in issuing a book, and such an arrangement helped to increase the variety of books a stationer could offer for sale in his bookstall or shop.³⁶ But from the sixteenth-century reader's point of view, the arrangement had another effect: it meant that books of Skelton's poetry would be more widely available

since they would be offered in a number of bookshops rather than in a single bookseller's stall. If Renaissance readers "browsed" through several London bookshops, it is likely that they would have found Skelton's poems in at least three or four of them at any one time between 1530 and 1560. The desire Skelton expressed for widespread circulation of his poetry seems to have been fulfilled during these decades, at least as far as general availability of his works is concerned.

The last of Skelton's works printed in the sixteenth century was another collection, but this time it contained more than a few selected short poems; instead, it was a relatively authoritative form of Skelton's "collected works" (Figure 6). Entitled Pithy Pleasaunt and Profitable Works (PPPW), the book was issued in an octavo edition of 384 pages and was printed in 1568 by Thomas Marsh, who had been involved in other publishing ventures involving Skelton's poems in the 1550s. The book's table of contents mentions that the collector of the poems included in PPPW was "I. S.," whom William Ringler has identified as John Stow, a Renaissance antiquarian better known for his Annals of England and A Survey of London, but who also collected and edited literary manuscripts. He became something of an authority on Chaucer; he edited Chaucer's Works when they were issued in an edition printed in 1561, and he

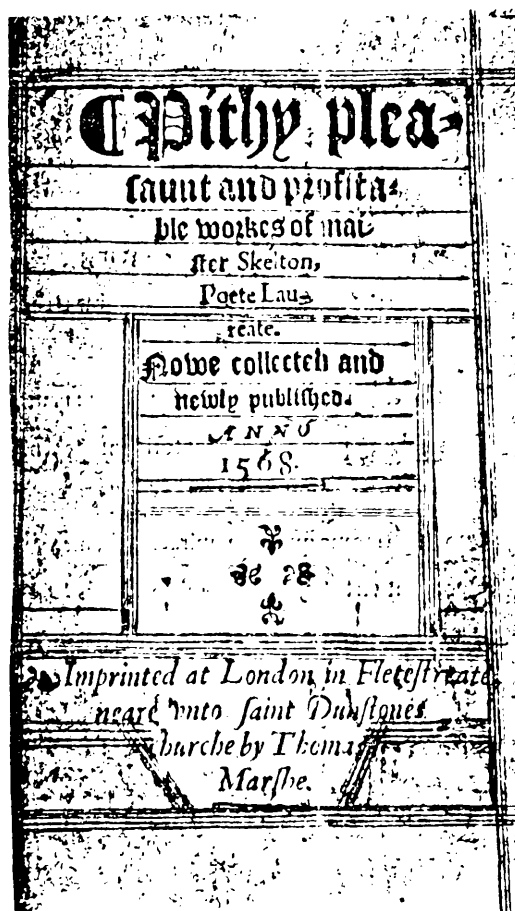


FIGURE 6. Title page to Pithy Pleasaunt and Profitable Works. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

contributed notes to Speght's edition of Chaucer, which was printed in 1598 ("John Stow's Editions"). Stow evidently recognized Skelton's place as an important link in English literary history, for in addition to having avidly collected his poetry both in its early sixteenth-century printed form and in manuscript, he also included Skelton in his catalog of England's "chiefe auncient Poets," a group comprising Chaucer, Lydgate, and Skelton, all of whom Stow describes in his 1615 edition of The Annales of England as poets "by whose singuler paines, and industry, our natue language, hath from time to time, been much refined: and at this time directly by them brought to great perfection" (qtd. by Ringler, "John Stow's Editions" 217 n.9).

The publication of PPPW in 1568 is in itself testimony to the fact that the Elizabethan reading public viewed Skelton as the most important literary figure to emerge in the first half of the sixteenth century, and there is material included in the front matter to PPPW that speaks directly to that point. In an early use of a commendatory poem to introduce another poet's work, Thomas Churchyard, who by the end of the century would himself attain widespread popularity as a poet, marks Skelton's particular literary achievement. Churchyard is a sensitive reader of Skelton. His commendation addresses a number of the issues Skelton himself raised in A Garlande of Laurell--the value

of establishing vernacular poetry as a legitimate literary form, the need to develop an appreciation and taste for poetry from England's recent past, and the responsibilities readers have in preserving England's national literary heritage. Churchyard reminds his readers of this last point in the opening lines of his verses on Skelton:

If slouth and tract of time
 (That wears eche thing away)
 Should rust and canker worthy artes,
 Good works would soen decay.
 If suche as present are
 For goeth the people past,
 Our selves should soen in silence slepe,
 And loes renom at last.
 (Edwards, Skelton 56)

After pointing out that "forrayn realms / Aduance their Poets all," Churchyard laments the fact that books of English poetry "are drowned in the dust, / Or flong against the wall." He argues that English readers have a responsibility to read the works of recent sixteenth-century poets who have struggled to compose poetry in the vernacular during the formative years of the English language:

I pray you, then, my friendes,
 Disdaine not for to vewe
 The workes and sugred verses fine
 Of our raer poetes newe;
 Whoes barborous language rued
 Perhaps ye may mislike;
 But blame them not that ruedly playes
 If they the ball do strike,
 Nor skorne not mother tunge,
 O babes of Englishe breed!
 I haue of other language seen,
 And you at full may reed
 Fine verses trimly wrought,
 And coutcht in comly sort;

But neuer I nor you I troe,
 In sentence plaine and shorte
 Did yet beholde with eye,
 In any forraine tonge:
 A higher verse a staetly[er] style,
 That may be read or song,
 Than this daye in deede
 Our englishe verse and ryme,
 The grace wherof doth touch ye gods,
 And reach the cloudes sometime. (57)

After tracing the development of English versification through Langland, Chaucer, and Surrey, among others, Churchyard places Skelton in the center of that tradition and acknowledges his own indebtedness to him:

Ohe, shall I leave out Skelton's name,
 The blossome of my frute,
 The tree wheron indeed
 My branchis all might groe?
 Nay, Skelton wore the Laurell wreath,
 And past in schoels, ye know;
 A poet for his arte,
 Whoes iudgment suer was hie,
 And had great practice of the pen,
 His works they will not lie. (58)

In concluding his commendatory poem, Churchyard offers the reader the opportunity to become acquainted with Skelton through the pages of PPPW, and stresses the idea that Skelton's poems contain an accurate reflection of the man himself:

Thus haue you heard at full
 What Skelton was in deed;
 A further knowledge shall you haue,
 If you his bookes do read.
 I haue of meer good will
 Theas verses written heer,
 To honour vertue as I ought,
 And make his fame apeer,
 That whan the Garland gay
 Of lawrel leaues but laet:

Small is my pain, great is his prayes,
That thus sutch honour gaet. (58-59)

The idea that the poet is inseparable from his poems was perhaps a new one to Renaissance readers; but as the concluding lines make clear, Skelton had so successfully embedded that idea, and its related symbol--the garland of laurel that signified poetic fame--into the minds of his readers that he continued to be something of a living presence through his poetry long after his death.

VIII

Churchyard was not alone in expressing his appreciation for Skelton, and he in no sense "rediscovered" the early Tudor poet, for Skelton's poetry had been readily available, and presumably frequently read, throughout the period. But Skelton's place in English literary history extended beyond the simple fact that readers continued to buy his books of poetry; of equal importance is the way that his poetic persona evolved over the course of the Renaissance period, an evolution made possible because he had created such a distinct personality in his poetry and in the books in which it appeared. He seemed to have been "required reading" for a number of practicing poets during that span of time, judging from the number of writers who alluded to him or to his works, who imitated and in some cases satirized him in their use of Skeltonics, or who borrowed material from his

poems for their own use. No better evidence of Skelton's widespread influence exists than the numerous instances of Skelton allusions given in Robert Kinsman's John Skelton, Early Tudor Laureate: An Annotated Bibliography, c. 1488-1977.³⁷ The line of English authors who made use of Skelton or his work during the Renaissance is a continuous one and includes such major figures as Wyatt, Spenser, Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson.

Skelton's influence on English dramatists seems especially pronounced, but oddly enough, they draw not so much on his interludes and entertainments for material as on his nondramatic poetry. They were particularly fond of putting Skeltonics into the mouths of their characters and of borrowing material from Skelton's poems for elements of plot and characterization in their plays. Some even used Skelton's self-created literary persona as an actual stage character. Among the more noteworthy borrowers from Skelton was John Heywood, who draws on Skelton's work in three plays--A Dialogue Concerning Witty and Witless, dating from about 1523; The Playe Called the Foure PP, also dating from about 1523; and A Play of Love, dating from about 1534. In The Merry Wives of Windsor, Shakespeare has Falstaff end his letter to Mistress Page with a few lines of Skeltonics. Ben Jonson made frequent use of Skelton and his work, for example, in Cynthia's Revels, The Gypsies Metamorphosed, The

Fortunate Isles and Their Union (which includes Skelton as a character), The Masque of Owles, The King's Entertainment at Welbeck, A Tale of the Tub, and The Divell Is an Asse. But many lesser lights of English drama also imitated or borrowed from Skelton; Kinsman's bibliography cites over 30 plays written before 1640 that draw in one way or another on Skelton or his work. One play, now lost and known only by its title, Scogan and Skelton, dating from about 1600, evidently was based partially on Skelton as a literary legend.

Not unexpectedly, Renaissance nondramatic poets--both major and minor--reveal in their poetry their indebtedness to Skelton and the verse form he popularized. As early as 1525, Thomas Alcop used Skeltonics in the envoy to his version of Chaucer's Man of Law's Tale (Williams). The envoy, which is the only known verse by Alcop, is written in 62 lines of standard Skeltonic verse. Unfortunately, Alcop's address to his book provides no information on his choice of the verse form he employed. The popularity of the form continued long after Skelton's death. Kinsman's bibliography cites no fewer than 50 poems written between 1525 and 1640 in which Skeltonics appear.

While a few of the poems use the form only incidentally, a number of others are notable either for the extent to which they use it or in the way they demonstrate

Skelton's influence on a wide range of English authors. Even those poets whose verse has come to be viewed as "courtly" seem to have been familiar with Skelton's "popular" works. For example, Thomas Wyatt's poem "Who Hath Heard of Such Cruelty Before?" written about 1536 and first printed in Tottel's Miscellany, echoes passages from Skelton's Phyllyp Sparowe (Kinsman, John Skelton 16). In The Shepheardes Calendar, first printed in 1579, Edmund Spenser adopts the Skeltonian persona of Colin Cloute, and E. K. notes in a marginal gloss that he had "sene a poesie of M. Skelton's vnder that title."³⁸ Sir Philip Sidney also seems to have been familiar with Skelton's Phyllyp Sparowe, for in two of his poems he borrows some details and phrasings from that poem (Kinsman, John Skelton 30).

Other poets routinely appropriated Skelton's style. The author of the anonymous anti-Catholic manuscript poem The Image of Ypocracy, dating from about 1534, employs over 2500 lines of Skeltonics to make his attack on the institutions of the Catholic church. Although nothing is known about the circumstances surrounding the writing of the poem, we are reminded that just a few years earlier, in 1528, Skelton himself used his popular verse form for A Replication, which may have been an officially sanctioned work intended to explain state policy to a popular audience. Skelton's earlier work may very well have served as a model

for the author of The Image of Ypocracy. During the 1540s, another popular poet, Luke Shephard, borrowed Skelton's verse form for several anti-Catholic satires of a popular character, most of them several hundred lines long (Kinsman, John Skelton 18-20; King 253-54).

The extensive use of Skeltonics did not happen by accident; "skeltonical" used as a literary term had currency throughout the later Renaissance. Its earliest recorded use was in 1589, when a collection of news-poems on the Spanish armada was printed under the title "A Skeltonical Salutation, Or Condigne Gratulation, / And Iust Vexation, Of the Spanish Nation, / That in a Bravado, / Spent Many a Crusado, / In Setting Forth an Armado, / England to Invado." News-hungry Elizabethans evidently quickly depleted the first printing of the book, for a second edition appeared again in that same year (Kinsman 31). By the turn of the century, writers must have expected their readers to be familiar with the term "skeltonical," since they were using it almost casually. A manuscript poem from 1604 survives with the title "Skeltonicall Observations of Bishops Visitations, Pretending Reformatations, Intending Procuration" (Kinsman 36). John Florio's dictionary Queen Anna's New World of Words (1611) uses the phrase "skeltonicall riming" as part of its definition for "Frottola."³⁹ In Humphrey King's An Halfe-penny-worth of Wit, printed in 1613, readers are

promised a poem "in Skelton's rime." The term is still being used in 1630, when John Taylor, the Water Poet, includes it as part of one of his characteristically jesting titles, "A Skeltonicall Salutation to Those That Know How to Reade"

A writer much concerned with literary traditions, Michael Drayton, seems to have been especially aware of Skelton's work. Drayton draws on Skelton's verse form for two poems included in his Poemes, Lyrick and Pastorall, printed about 1606. In the 1619 edition of the volume, he entitles one of these poems "A Skeltoniad." In one of Drayton's dramatic works, The First Part . . . of the Life of Sir John Oldcastle, which appeared in 1609, he has a character who recommends Eleanor Rumming as a worthy English book.

Renaissance literary critics, too, soon allotted Skelton an honored place in their catalogs of important English authors. Although Churchyard was an early champion of Skelton, he is predated in his appreciation by John Bale, who first mentioned Skelton only as "poeta laureatus" in the 1548 edition of Illustrium Maioris Britanniae Scriptorum Summarium, but later he expanded the entry on Skelton to include biographical information and a full bibliography of the poet's works and included it in his 1556 edition of Scriptorum Illustrium Maioris Brytannie.

In William Webbe's A Discourse of English Poetrie (1586), Skelton is still being described as having "obtaind the Laurell Garland," a reminder of how effectively Skelton's persistent emphasis on that symbol during his lifetime had engrained it into the literary consciousness of future generations of literary critics.

Skelton undoubtedly would have been pleased, too, to discover that Renaissance critics were including him as a member of that exclusive trio of earlier English poets--Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate--a confraternity that he had claimed for himself in A Garlande of Laurell in 1523. The earliest linking of Skelton's name with Chaucer's occurs in Thomas Charnock's Breviary of Natural History, not printed until 1652 but prepared in manuscript form about 1557. The anonymous compiler of The Breviary begins the work with some verses in which he compares Charnock's literary accomplishments to Chaucer's "at his yeares" and to Skelton's "at his yeares." Another Englishman to identify Skelton as a major link in his country's literary development was Richard Robinson, who, in The Rewarde of Wickednesse, printed in 1574, borrows extensively from A Garlande of Laurell. In The Rewarde, Robinson, like Skelton in A Garlande, gains entrance into the House of Fame, where he sees a laurel tree with the names and pictures of the most famous English poets: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Skelton.

The practice of including Skelton among the great English poets of the past continued well into the seventeenth century; other instances appear in works dating from 1579, 1593, 1615, and 1618.

Not all of Skelton's Renaissance critical reviews were laudatory, however. In The Arte of English Poesie, George Puttenham, a literary conservative, grudgingly gives Skelton his place in a chronological listing of English poets and then pauses to remark that he knows "not for what great worthiness" Skelton was given the title of poet laureate. Puttenham goes on to provide some telling evidence in regard to Skelton's readership when he comments that the poet's use of "short measures" and "short distaunces" between rhymes are "pleasing only [to] the popular ear." Furthermore, Puttenham says, "in our courtly maker," such poetics practices should be banished "utterly."

The printing press not only allowed Skelton to create a reputation for himself through his poetry; it also helped him to create a literary persona that extended beyond the poetry he wrote. Skelton, as a writer, was, perhaps, England's first media-created literary legend. His literary persona took its primary form as a character in a number of jestbooks printed throughout the sixteenth century, and then developed into the characterization that came to exist on the stage in English drama. The jestbook characterization

began to develop during Skelton's own lifetime. In 1525 there appeared An C. [Hundred] Mery Tales, a collection of humorous stories recounted not only to entertain the reader but also to draw a pointed moral that concludes each tale. In one of the tales in the book, Skelton is portrayed as a quick-witted responder to some insults heaped upon him by the Bishop of Norwich. Ten years later, in 1535, Skelton appears again as a character in another popular jestbook, Tales and Quick Answers; but this time he is made the butt of a joke. By 1567, the Skelton legend had grown to be larger than life. In that year, Thomas Colwell printed Merie Tales, Newly Imprinted & Made by Master Skelton Poet Laureate. Although this jestbook provides some valuable biographical details about Skelton, it is primarily meant as entertainment, with Skelton appearing as a central figure in each of the 15 apochryphal tales.

Perhaps the most striking use of the Skelton literary persona appears in the 1624 edition of The Tunnyng of Eleanor Rummyng, the final printing of a Skelton work in the seventeenth century. As if to acknowledge that Skelton the writer could not exist apart from his printed works, the printer, Bernard Alsop, arranged to have Skelton make a posthumous appearance in the form of some verses by "Skelton's Ghost" (Figure 7), where Skelton addresses the

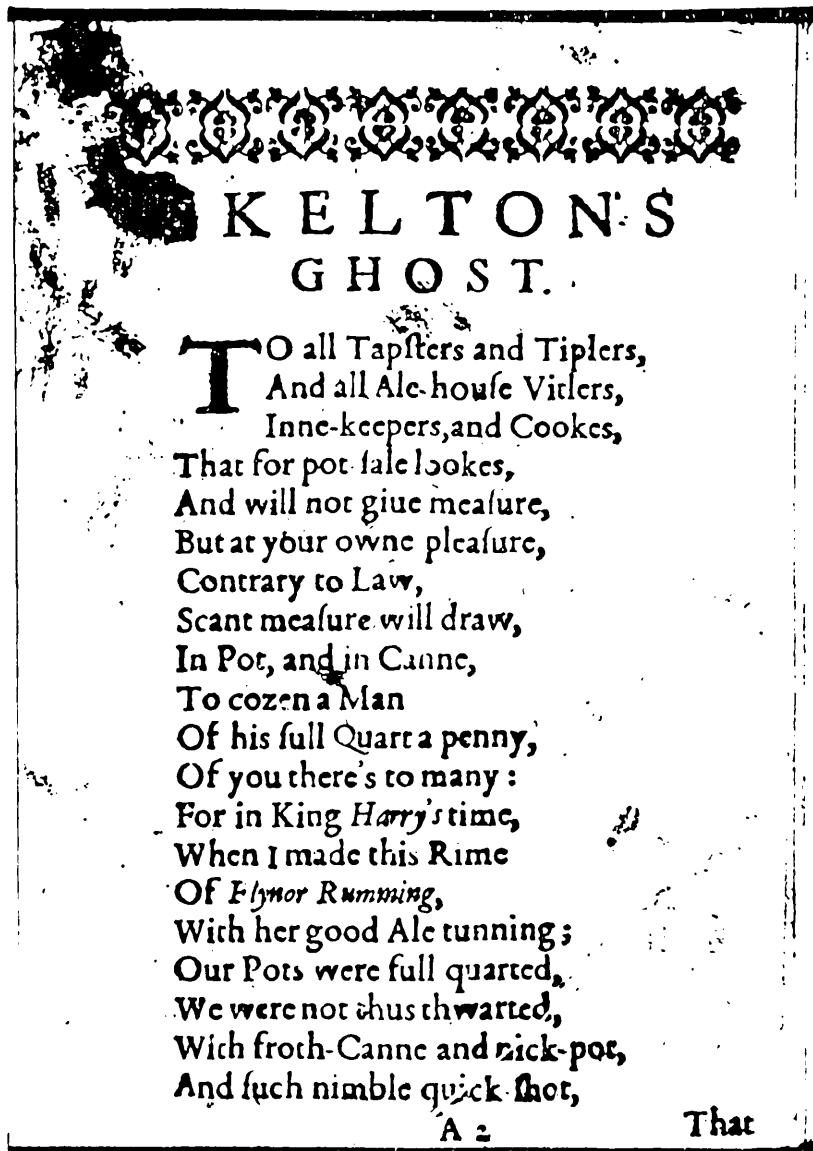


FIGURE 7. Excerpt from "Skelton's Ghost." Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

readers in a reminiscence about life in the days of Henry VIII.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, however, Skelton's "ghost" and the literary influence it had wielded had faded from the memory of most English readers and writers. In a poignant reminder of how quickly respect for a writer's work can change, the printer of the 1639 edition of A Banquet of Jests or Change of Cheare includes an "Address to the Reader," in which he describes offhandedly how Skelton's "meere rime" was "once read, but now [is] laid by." Like a number of other Renaissance poets, Skelton too would have to wait more than 200 years before his poetry was rediscovered.

Notes

¹ Biographies of Skelton include those by Edwards, Gordon, Nelson, and Pollet.

² For a survey of the office of laureate in England, see Broadus.

³ Unless otherwise noted, all line numbers from Skelton's poems quoted in my text are from Scattergood. Translations of Latin passages from Skelton are also from Scattergood's edition.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Renaissance critical appraisals of Skelton, as well as the translations of them, are from Edwards.

⁵ Nelson (118-57) provides the best account of this intellectual and pedagogical debate.

⁶ I have relied on the Gutierrez's account of historical events for my own discussion.

⁷ Several other poems treating the battle appeared later in the century (Gutierrez, 59n.).

⁸ See Scattergood's Notes to this poem for a discussion of the poem's date.

⁹ Chorus de Dis contra Scottos and Skelton's other Latin poems are included in Henderson.

¹⁰ Skelton Laureate Against the Scottes has not survived in a printing contemporary with its date of composition, 1513. The first printed text of the poem appears in Certayne Bokes, a collection of Skelton's poems printed about 1545.

¹¹ Pollet reprints the two poems in a parallel text (251-53). Unfortunately, Pollet prints only the parallel lines and omits the major additions involved in my discussion.

¹² Unfortunately, there is no record of the actual opponents to Against the Scottes or the reasons that they may have had for "remordyng" the poem. It may be surmised from Skelton's defense, however, that they objected to Skelton's indelicate references to James IV. The subsection implies that Against the Scottes had sufficient circulation, either in manuscript or possibly in a lost printing, to

generate some debate about Skelton's tact or lack thereof.

13 In addition to the books and essays already cited, see Loewenstein.

14 Because the Bowge of Court damns the abuses Skelton witnessed at court, he may have kept his authorship anonymous as a necessity, although the characters in the satire are personifications of vices (Disceyte, Dyssimulation, Pavel) which are difficult if not impossible to identify directly with actual persons in Henry VII's court. Of course the general critical nature of the work may have been sufficient reason for anonymous publication.

15 The likelihood of lost printings is also suggested by the fact that two of Skelton's poems, The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng and A Ballade of the Scottysse Kynge, survive only in fragments. Fragments of the former were discovered in 1953. The latter printing was discovered lining the covers of a French romance. See the textual notes to these two poems in Scattergood's edition of Skelton's poems. A list of the poems Skelton mentions in The Garland of Laurel is printed by Lloyd (142-44).

16 For a full bibliographical description of the fragment and its significance to the study of the poem, see Kinsman, "Eleanora Rediviva."

17 See the notes in Scattergood's edition of Skelton's poems and the article by Kinsman ("Eleanora Rediviva").

18 For a discussion on the origins of Skeltonics, see Kinsman ("Skelton's 'Uppon a Deedmans Hed'").

19 The exact date of the composition of A Garlande presents several difficulties. Parts of it may have been written as early as 1492, and the 1523 printing date provides a terminus ad quem for any revisions. For an overview of the issues related to dating the poem, see the notes in Scattergood's edition of Skelton's poems.

20 The standard work on woodcuts in the early years of English printing is Hodnett. One use of a "scholar" woodcut in a work by an early Tudor author occurs in Codrus and Mynalcas, written by Skelton's literary rival, Alexander Barclay. This work was printed by Richard Pynson about 1521, and thus probably predates the use of the title page cut Fakes used in the 1523 edition of A Garlande. See Hodnett no. 1510, Figure 142 for Pynson's woodcut.

21 A Garlande is the only use of this cut that Hodnett cites (see no. 2058); however, there are several breaks in the borders of the cut as it appears in A Garlande, so it may well have been used in other lost printings before it was appropriated for use in Skelton's poem.

22 Spearing provides a good discussion of how Skelton enlivens the traditional conventions he employs in A Garlande. Spearing goes on to relate this point to the theme of tradition developed in the poem and in doing so makes several observations similar to my own.

23 Lloyd, in an early biography of Skelton, has suggested that the Tudor poet may have himself suffered a form of banishment for some indiscretion at court. Between 1503 and 1512, Skelton resided at Diss, as rector there, after abruptly leaving Henry VII's court. Lloyd believes that he was sent there as a result of some provocation and cites the anti-court satire The Bowge of Court, printed in 1499, as evidence of Skelton's disenchantment with court life (18-20). For a counter-argument to Lloyd's position, see Pollet (42-43).

24 The identification of the women in the poem is treated in full by Tucker.

25 A discussion of the development of the concept of the healing power of literature in medieval culture is provided by Olson.

26 The order of publication is established by Kinsman ("The Printer"). Kinsman determines the order of printing by collecting evidence related to differences in typesetting, inking, and the deteriorating condition of the woodcut on the title page. Interestingly, Kinsman admits to the possibility of a printing date as early as 1524, although he believes the more likely date is after 1526. If the date were 1524, it would argue even more strongly that Skelton was engaged in a planned program of publication in which he followed the appearance of A Garlande of Laurell in 1523 with these two new collections of poetry.

27 For information on manuscript collections of shorter verse, see Davies (28-30) and Stevens (1-24).

28 The standard work on music in the early Renaissance is Stevens. He discusses some issues related to the audience for music in Chapter 12, "Domestic and Amateur Music" (265-295).

29 William Cornish's musical accompaniment for one of Skelton's poems, "Manerly Margery Mylk and Ale," is extant. See the headnotes to that poem in Scatterwood's edition of Skelton's poems.

30 See the OED entries for "ballad," listings 1-3, and for "ditty," listings 2 and 3. According to the OED, the notion of "lyric" poetry does not enter the English language until the 1580s; the first use of "lyrical" is attributed to Sidney in An Apology for Poetry. However, Skelton himself uses the word to describe Symonides, a Greek poet, in A Replycacion, printed in 1528. Skelton describes Symonides as "that poete lyrical / Among the Grekes most relucent of lyght" (331-32).

31 Barclay primarily worked on translations and imitations of Classical forms, so it is difficult to place him in the same category as Skelton, whose works are chiefly original. Barclay's Eclogues, which are based on Classical models, maintained some of their popularity in the later sixteenth century; editions appeared in 1548, 1560, and 1570. Hawes's works were popular during his lifetime. Eleven different printings of his various poems were issued before 1530. After that date, however, there was only moderate interest in them, with editions appearing in 1551, 1554, and 1555. Another measure of the relative popularity of the three poets may be taken by comparing the frequency with which Skelton is mentioned in sixteenth-century criticism with the infrequency with which Barclay and Hawes are mentioned.

32 The chronology and bibliographical description of Skelton's printed works in the sixteenth century is given full treatment in Robert Kinsman and Theodore Yonge. I am deeply indebted to their work for many of the bibliographical details discussed in this section.

The dating of sixteenth-century printings of Skelton's poems is especially difficult, since only two of them bear actual printing dates: A Garlande of Laurell dated 1523, and Pithy Pleasaunt and Profitable Workes, dated 1568. I have accepted the Kinsman and Yonge dating in all other cases. Since the titles of the various printings of the same work differ slightly with each edition, I have used the title for the first edition to refer to all editions of that work.

33 The legend appears as "Skelton Poet" in Colyn Cloute, but it is spelled "Skylton poyet" in Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?

34 Shaaber provides a discussion of the complexities and subtleties of interpreting colophonic and title-page publishers' imprints.

35 Copland nowhere identifies himself as the printer of these works, but the practice of crediting a stationer with issuing works actually printed by someone else is a common one throughout the Renaissance.

36 Other examples occur with Chaucer's Works, STC 5069 and 5070, and 5071-5074. Some of Erasmus's works were also issued in this manner: STC 10440 and 10040.2, and 10447 and 10447.5.

37 I rely heavily on Kinsman's bibliography for most of the allusions I discuss in this section.

38 McLane argues that Spenser drew extensively on Skelton's poem for a great number of the thematic, structural, and the poetic elements he used in The Shepheardes Calender.

39 The phrase does not appear in the first edition of Florio's dictionary, printed in 1598, but is added to the 1611 edition, suggesting that the term "skeltonical" had begun to be used more frequently in the interim between editions.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN HEYWOOD

I

"cum yong cum olde,
Cum who cum wyll, here is open householde."
--from "To the reader," A Sixt Hundred of Epigrams

John Heywood's works began appearing in print just a few years after Skelton's death in 1529. The two may have known each other; they presumably frequented similar court circles, although no documentation of an actual acquaintance exists. Heywood's occasional use of Skeltonics in his dramatic works has already been mentioned, so there was probably some literary association between the two, directly or indirectly.

Heywood, like Skelton, might best be described as a court satellite.¹ He seems to have had two distinct periods during which he enjoyed court favor, the first during the reign of Henry VIII from 1519 to 1528, and the second from about 1552 until the end of Mary's reign in 1557. Court records between 1528 and 1552 make only one mention of

Heywood, that as a recipient of a New Year's gift from Henry VIII in 1532.

By 1564 he was forced to flee England for the Low Countries, where he lived as a Roman Catholic exile until his death. In a letter dated April 18, 1575, he wrote to Lord Burleigh to appeal for relief from his son-in-law John Donne, the poet's father, who had failed to send Heywood the rents that had accrued on land still in his ownership while he was in exile. Not only did Heywood experience impoverishment brought on by his exile he describes, but he also suffered religious persecution as a Catholic up to the time of his death, probably in 1580 (Johnson 32-35).

Heywood's literary interests between 1519 and 1528, the period during which he received regular payments for services in Henry's court, seem to have centered exclusively on dramatic works and royal entertainments, including the staging and production of them. In court records he is mentioned as a "singer" and as a "player of the virginals," and, according to Wesley Phy, it was between 1521 and 1529 that all of Heywood's plays were written. Although the plays may have been intended primarily for performance at court, their sixteenth-century printing history attests to their popularity outside those settings as well. Four of the plays--A Play of the Weather, Johan Johan, The Pardoner and the Friar, and A Play of Love--were printed by William

Rastell between 1533 and 1534. Another play, The Foure PP, was printed by William Middleton about 1544. A sixth play, Witty and Witless, survives only in a manuscript version. Three of these plays sustained their popularity: A Play of The Weather was reprinted in 1560, 1565, and 1573; The Foure PP was reissued in 1560 and 1569; and A Play of Love was reprinted in 1550.

It was in his second period of court favor, during the reigns of Edward and Mary, that Heywood turned his interest to nondramatic works, although he was still involved in the staging of court entertainments and perhaps held a position as master of children's acting groups (Reed 58-61).

While Heywood's influence on the development of English drama has been well documented, critical interest in his nondramatic works has remained relatively slight (Colin). This neglect is surprising, for the publication record of Heywood's poetry reveals that his epigrams and poetic dialogues were immensely popular throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century. As Burton A. Milligan, the editor of one of the few critical editions of Heywood's poetry has pointed out in his survey of the poet's Renaissance reputation, "Although popularity may be no gauge of merit, it is a measure of the taste of an age, and there were more editions of Heywood's poems before 1600 than there were of Tottel's Miscellany" ("Introduction" 3).²

Heywood's popularity is perhaps most notable for its longevity. Beginning in 1546 with the appearance of the first edition of A Dialogue Containing the Number in Effect of All Proverbs in the English Tongue, Compact in a Matter Concerning Two Manner of Marriages, until 1598, when the last sixteenth-century edition of John Heywood's Workes was printed, edition after edition of his poetry was issued.

The publication record of A Dialogue is especially impressive because it became one of the most frequently printed books in England during the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was first printed in a quarto edition in 1546 (Figure 8), but the following four printings in 1549, 1550, 1556, and 1561 were all issued in the less expensive octavo size.³ The additional printings of the poem that were included in each of the sixteenth-century printings of Heywood's Works brings the total number of editions of the poem between 1546 and 1598 to ten. As its full title makes clear, the poem, nearly 3,000 lines in length, is a series of English proverbs that Heywood had collected and then cast in poetic form as a colloquy between two friends over the relative merits of marrying a woman old but wealthy or of marrying one young but impoverished. Heywood's choice of subject matter--marriage--and of his poetic material--English proverbs--seems calculated to appeal to a wide reading audience.⁴

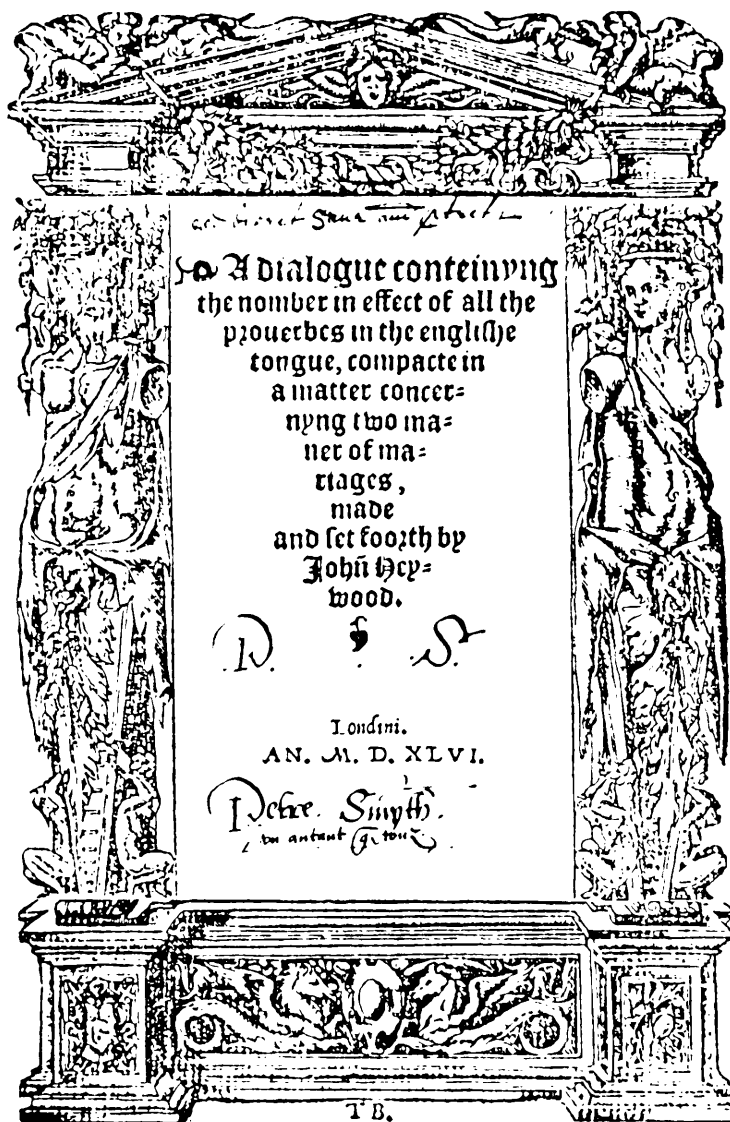


FIGURE 8. Title page to A Dialogue. Courtesy of The Huntington Library

Heywood's direct interest in the production of the book is attested to by the full title of the second edition of the poem, printed in 1549: A Dialogue Conteinyng the Nombre in Effect of All Prouerbs in the Englishe Tongue, Compacte in a Matter Concernyng Two Maner of Mariages, Made and Set Forth by Iohn Heiwood. Newly Ouersene, and Somewhat Augemented by the Saied Iohn Heiwood. The fact that Heywood is credited with having "ouersene" and "augmented" the second edition is a clear indication that he was directly involved with the book's production and with supplying the printer, Thomas Berthelet, who had also printed the first edition, with new material and the author's emendations.⁵

Once he realized that he had struck a rich vein of literary ore in his poetic reworking of English proverbs, Heywood set to work on what was to become the first known use of "serial publication" for his works. Heywood had collected far more proverbs than he could use in A Dialogue. In the preface to his readers, he explains his purposes in using proverbs and he qualifies the claim he makes in the title that A Dialogue contains "all prouerbs in the Englishe tongue":

Among other thyngs profityng in our tong
 Those whiche much may profit both old & yong
 Suche as on their fruite will feede or take holde
 Are our comon playne pithy prouerbes olde.
 Some sense of some of whiche beyng bare and rude
 Yet to fyne and fruitefull effect they allude.
 And theyr sentences include so large a reache

That almost in all thinges good lessons they
 teache.
 This write I not to teache, but to touche, for
 why,
 Men knowe this as well or better than I.
 But this and this rest, I write for this.
 Remembryng and consyderyng what the pith is
 That by remembrance of these prouerbes may grow
 In this tale, erst talked with a frende, I showe
 As many of theim as we could fytly fynde,
 Fallyng to purpose, that might fall in mynde.
 To thentent the reader redyly may
 Fynde theim and mynd theim, when he will alway.
 (18)

Heywood's preface, written about 1546, is a rather early example of what was to become a standard feature in Renaissance books of poetry--the apologia for the poet's work. But the preface serves a more important purpose; it introduces Heywood's concern with "right-reading." This concept dates back in print to 1481, when Caxton instructs readers about proper reading of fables in his prologue to Reynard the Fox (Crotch 60); but with Heywood the issue of right-reading becomes a central concern in several of his later works.

In his preface Heywood also explains that only the proverbs he could "fytly fynde, / Fallyng to purpose" are included in the poem. The difficulty of weaving proverbs of widely diverse subject matter into a coherent dialogue concerning marriage must have been a difficult feat, but Heywood's storehouse of English folk-wisdom was still not depleted after 3,000 lines.

When a third edition of A Dialogue was printed in 1550, Heywood and his printer, Thomas Berthelet, apparently had gained enough confidence in the demand for such books of poetry that they saw fit to issue a sequel to A Dialogue. Using some proverbs that he could not fit into the structure of A Dialogue, he composed a series of epigrams, each of which built its witty twist around the material contained in a proverb. The result was An Hundred Epigrammes published roughly at the same time--1550--as the third edition of A Dialogue. An Hundred Epigrammes was the first in what was to become an extended series of similar books, all containing, in multiples of one hundred, Heywood's brief poems that blended home-spun wisdom with his powers of poetic expression.

The next extant work in the series is dated 1555 and has as its full title Two Hundred Epigrammes, vpon Two Hundred Prouerbs, with a Thyrdē Hundred Newly Added and Made by John Heywood (Figure 9). Given the reference to a "thyrdē hundred newly added," it is possible that this is a sequel edition to an earlier work, now lost but printed sometime between 1550 and 1554, which contained the original 200 epigrams that itself served as a sequel to the 1550 edition of An Hundred Epigrammes. In 1560, the series continued with A Fourth Hundred of Epygrams Newly Inuented and Made by John Heywood (Figure 10). The series

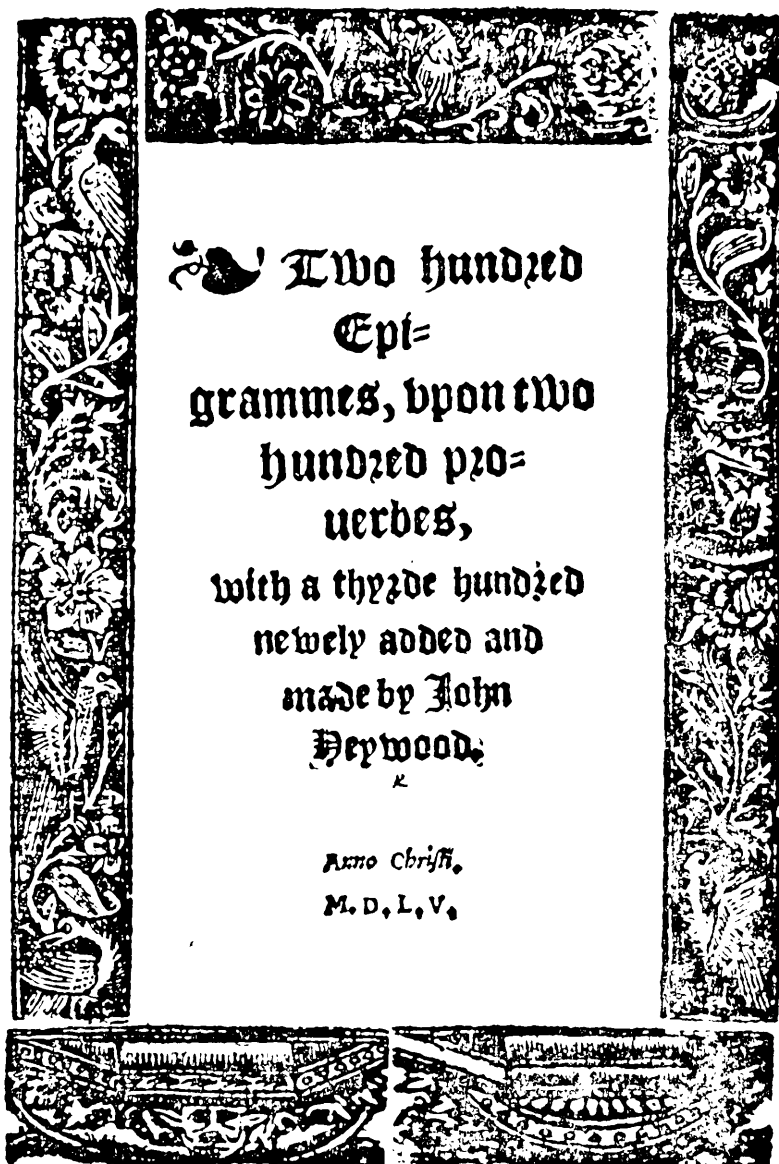


FIGURE 9. Title page to Two Hundred Epigrammes. Courtesy of the British Library.

*A fourth hundred
of Epygrams,*

Newly Invented and

made by

John

Heywood.



LONDINI.

Anno Christi.

1560.

FIGURE 10. Title page to A Fourth Hundred of Epygrams.
Courtesy of The British Library.

ended with A Sixt Hundred of Epigrammes. Newly Inuented and Made by Iohn Heywood, which was not printed in an individual volume but was included in Heywood's collected works, which first appeared in 1562.

Thomas Berthelet, who printed the first three editions of A Dialogue and began the serial printing of Heywood's epigrams, died in 1555, at which time his printing business passed into the hands of his nephew, Thomas Powell (Duff 11-12). Powell continued the series of epigram publications and identified the place of publication in the colophon as "the house of Thomas Berthelet." He began using his own imprint about 1556, and among the first books he issued under his own colophon were a second edition of An Hundred Epigrammes and a fourth edition of A Dialogue.

By 1562, there had been five editions of A Dialogue and a continuous series of individual publications that contained the epigrams. But still the demand for Heywood's poems had not been met. Powell took advantage of that fact to collect A Dialogue and the 500 epigrams, which Heywood augmented with another 100 epigrams he composed specifically for Powell's collection, and issued a quarto edition of Iohn Heywood's Workes (Figure 11), the first "collected works" of a living English poet to be printed in England.

Powell was not the only printer capitalizing on the demand for Heywood's poetry. In what appears to be an

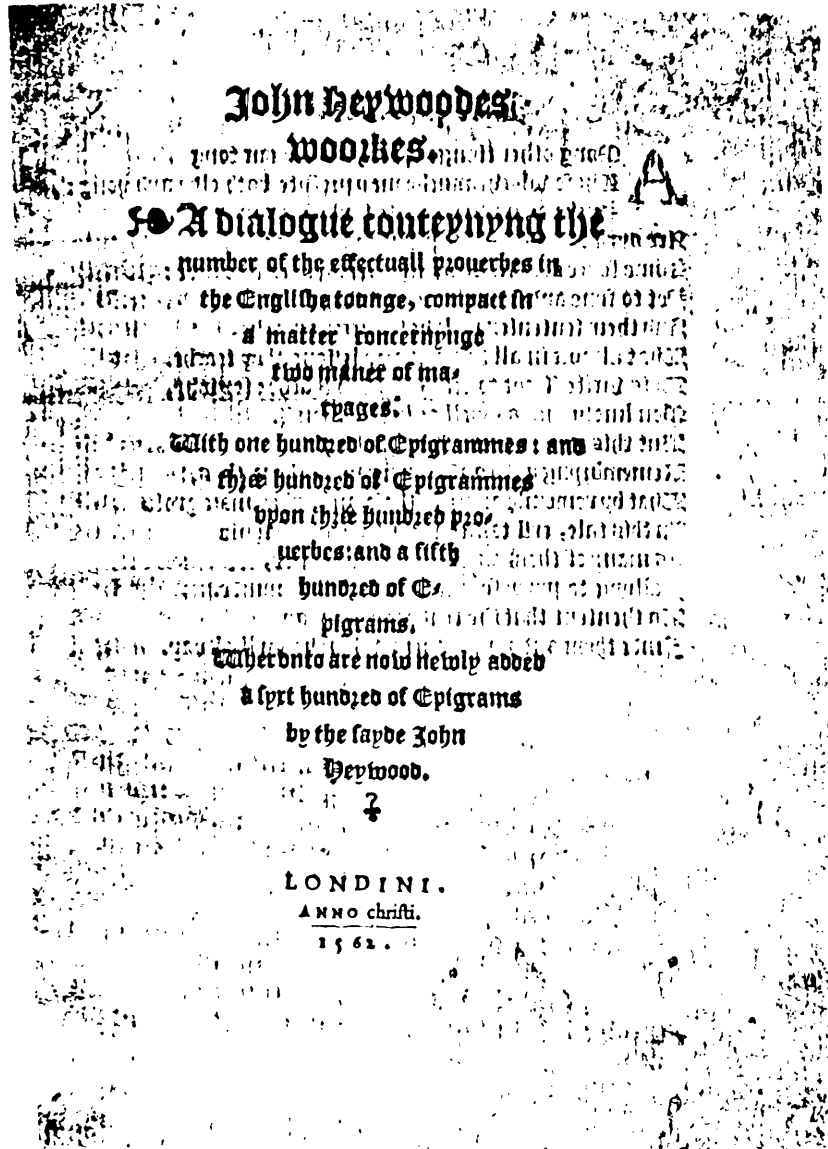


FIGURE 11. Title page to John Heywood's Workes. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

attempt to make a quick profit on the poet's popularity, James Rowbotham, a London bookseller, commissioned the printer Robert Hall to print, in half-sheet folio, two epigrams extracted from the 1562 edition of Heywood's Workes. Rowbotham seems to have earned his living by selling cheap editions of schoolbooks and other popular literature, and he must have sensed a ready market for a ballad-like excerpt from Heywood's Workes (McKerrow 233). In fact, the market may have already been proven for such broadsheet formats of Heywood's poems, for at least three other ballads by Heywood had been printed prior to the appearance of his collected poems in 1562.⁶

Heywood's exile in 1564 interrupted his production of literary works, but it did not diminish the demand that English readers were making for Heywood's collected poems. Only four years passed before Berthelet's former apprentice, Henry Wykes, printed another edition of Heywood's Workes. Following Wykes' 1566 printing, new editions appeared in each decade until the turn of the century--in 1576, 1587, and 1598.

II

Undoubtably, the immense popularity of Heywood's poetry owes much to his choice of the brief and witty form of the "epigram upon the proverb," to his reliance on uncomplicated

subject matter encapsulated in the folk wisdom derived from the English oral tradition, and to the inexpensive formats in which most of the printings of his poems were issued. But there is another dimension to his work that all of these factors complement. That dimension is his acute sense of the relationship between the poet and his audience.

The prefaces appended to A Dialogue and to his books of epigrams, and several of the individual poems contained in those works, demonstrate his strong sense of awareness of the reader-writer relationship. In the preface, quoted above, to A Dialogue, his earliest printed nondramatic work, Heywood explains that he wrote the poem "To thentent that the reader redily may / Finde" the "fruitfull effect" of the proverbs, an effect which continues to operate on the reader even when he is no longer reading the book. This simple message conveyed in the preface to A Dialogue grew in complexity when Heywood published An Hundred Epigrammes in 1550. The preface to that group of poems introduces a full explanation of his concept of "right-reading":

Ryme without reason, and reason without ryme,
 In this conuercion deepe diffrence doth fall.
 In first part wherof where I am falne this time.
 The foly I graunte, which graunted (readers all)
 Your graunt, to graunt this request, require I
 shall,
 Ere ye full reflecte these trifles folowyng here
 Perceiue (I praie you) of the woordes thententes
 clere.

In whiche (maie ye like to looke) ye shall
 espie

Some woordes, shewe one sence, a nother to
disclose,
Some woordes. them selues sondrie senses signifie:
Some woordes, somewhat from common sence, I
dispose,
To seeme one sence in text, a nother in glose.
These words in this work, thus wrought your
working toole
Maie woorke me to seeme (at least) the les a
foole.

Than in rough rude termes of homely honestie
(For vn honest terme (I trust) there none here
soundes)
Wherin fine tender eares shal offended bee
Those folies, beyng sercht in reasons boundes.
Reason maie bee surgion saluyng those woundes.
Turning those sores to salues: for reason doth
gesse
Homely matters, homly termes dooe best express.

But where all defence standth in exempcion
To defend me herein out of folies bandes.
So that to redeme me thers no redempcion.
Graunting, and submitting foly, that so standes.
This last refuge I craue to haue, at your handes,
These folies standing cleere from intent of yll.
In lieu of lacke of good wit, except good will.
(104)

Heywood's mock modesty here belies the serious concern he expresses about the reader's need to read carefully. The multiple senses words have can be potentially dangerous to both reader and writer; misinterpretation has negative consequences for both parties. Heywood's solution to this problem, he says, is to use "homely termes" that convey meaning directly and that make the reader conscious of the possibilities of multiple meanings. The epigram was, of course, an ideal genre in which Heywood could demonstrate his point since epigrams depend for their success upon the

/ To touche any priuate person displeasantly. / Nor none do
 I touche here: by name, but onely one, / Whiche is my
 selfe: whom I may be bolde vpon" (200). As if to prove to
 his readers his honesty in the matter, Heywood ends The
Fifth Hundred of Epygrams with a poem entitled "Of Heywood":

Art thou Heywood with the mad mery wit?
 Ye forsooth maister, that same is euen hit.
 Art thou Heywood that applieth mirth more then
 thrift?
 Ye sir, I take mery mirth a golden gift.
 Art thou Heywood that hath made many mad plaies?
 Ye many plaies, fewe good woorkes in all my daies.
 Art thou Heywood that hath made men mery long?
 Ye: and will, if I be made mery among.
 Art thou Heywood that woulde be made mery now?
 Ye sir: helpe me to it now I beseche yow. (224)

Such gentle self-mockery in the epigrammatic form allows
 Heywood to create an appealing poetic persona in his works.
 Burton A. Milligan has described the effect that Heywood's
 poetic voice has in shaping the reader's attitude about his
 character as an English author:

The source of the almost unique quality of the
 epigrams is the poet's distinct and likable per-
 sonality. His simplicity, arising in his best
 work from sources superior to naivete, rudeness,
 or near-doggerel verses, his good humor,
 tolerance, and shrewdness set him apart from other
 English epigrammatists, most of whom wrote in the
 tradition of Martial or affected to do so.
 ("Humor" 33)⁷

Like Skelton before him, Heywood enters the reader's
 mind as a living presence in the poetry. Like Skelton, too,
 he does not neglect to use the exigencies of print to
 reinforce this effect. As has been mentioned, his series of

verse epigrams and all but the first edition of A Dialogue were printed in octova formats affordable to English readers from most social strata. Despite the resulting smaller size of the title pages, his name was always prominently placed; often it was incorporated into the title itself. When his collected poetry was first issued in 1562, it was not given a title that called attention to the poems but rather to the poet: John Heywood's Workes. Finally, again like Skelton, he gave himself a physical place in the printed works by addressing the reader personally in his prefaces, by including himself as one of the two speakers in A Dialogue, and by including epigrams about himself in his serial publications. The ten sixteenth-century editions of A Dialogue, the series of epigram publications, and the five sixteenth-century printings of Heywood's Workes are evidence of the ways that Renaissance readers responded to him as a writer.

III

There is no better example of Heywood's concern with establishing relations with his readers than his most fascinating poem, The Spider and the Flie, issued in 1556. Although The Spider and the Flie failed to achieve the popular status that his other poetry did--it was not reprinted in a new edition until 1894--it is among his most

important works because it demonstrates better than any of his other texts the ways that Heywood used printing to establish ties with his English readers.

The long allegorical poem of over 50,000 lines has perplexed critics from the time of its publication to the present day. One Elizabethan commentator, William Harrison, described it in the following terms: "One hath made a book of The Spider and the Flie, wherein he dealeth so profoundlie, and beyond all measure of skill, that neither he himself that made it, neither anie one that readeth it, can reach unto the meaning thereof" (qtd. by Bolwell 137). Twentieth-century critics have also failed to find a convincing key--historical, political, religious, or sociological--to the poem's extended allegory. For the most part, they conclude that the correspondences between Heywood's fiction and actual persons and events are general rather than specific.⁸

Heywood was well aware of the difficulties his readers would have with the long and complex (and to most modern readers, tedious) legal, philosophical, and religious arguments among the spiders, flies, and other assorted insects that act out the events taking place in the poem's narrative. Heywood's sensitivity to his readers' difficulties is made evident by the remarkable assortment of readers' aids included in The Spider and the Flie. It is as if Heywood expected the popular audience who had read his

simple proverbial epigrams to take up the far more challenging allegorical narrative, and he therefore designed the book with those readers in mind. As we shall see, he literally guides them through the book's 98 chapters of rhyme royal verse almost stanza by stanza.

The Pforzheimer Library Catalog of English Literature, 1475-1700 describes the 1556 edition of The Spider and the Flie as one of the finest examples of printing in its day: "The illustrations and decorations as well as the general typographical excellence make this book outstanding among English work of the time" (II: 473). Despite being one of the most carefully produced books of the English Renaissance, it has received very little attention in relation to the characteristics of its design and printing. It begins with an ornately framed title page (Figure 12) that identifies the poem as a parable. While the appearance of the author's name on the title page is not a rarity by the mid-sixteenth century, the inclusion of the full-length woodcut portrait (Figure 13) in two different places--on the verso of the title page and again following the table of contents--is a very unusual feature for English books from this period. The portrait casts Heywood in the role of a dignified, educated gentleman; the robe he wears is apparently meant to represent an Oxford M.A. gown (Ward xx11).⁹ The portrait thus immediately establishes the author's identity in a visual rather than in a linguistic

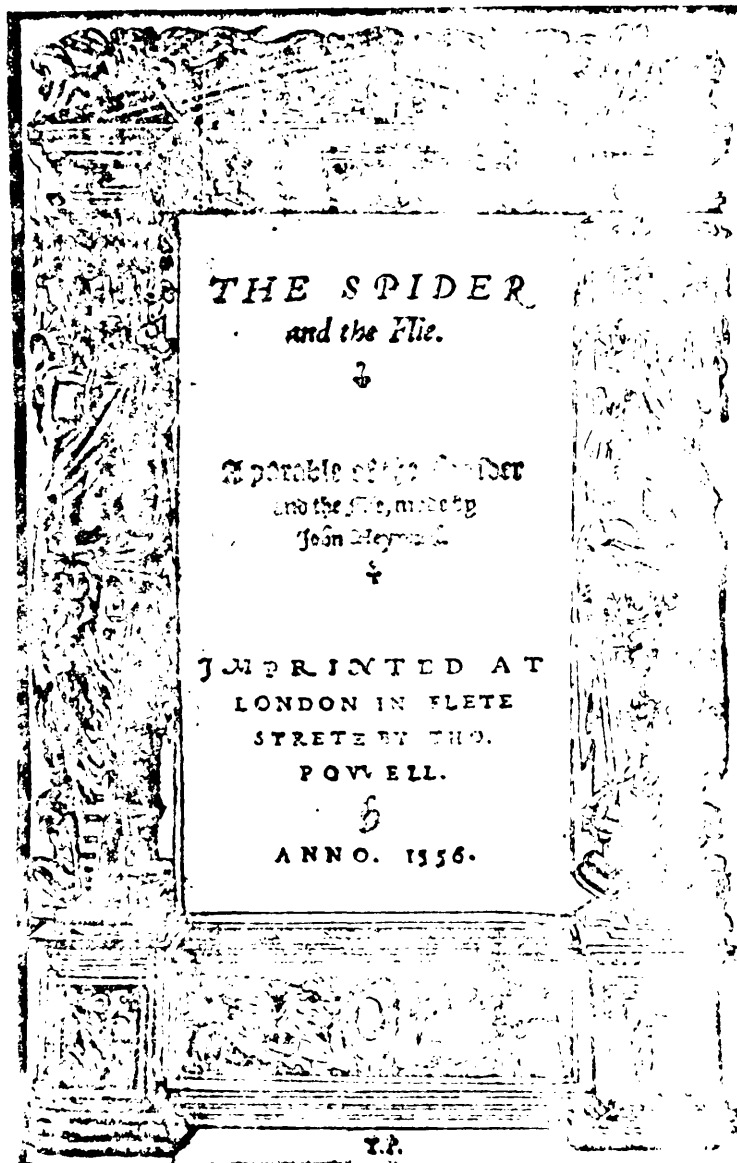


FIGURE 12. Title page to The Spider and the Flie. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

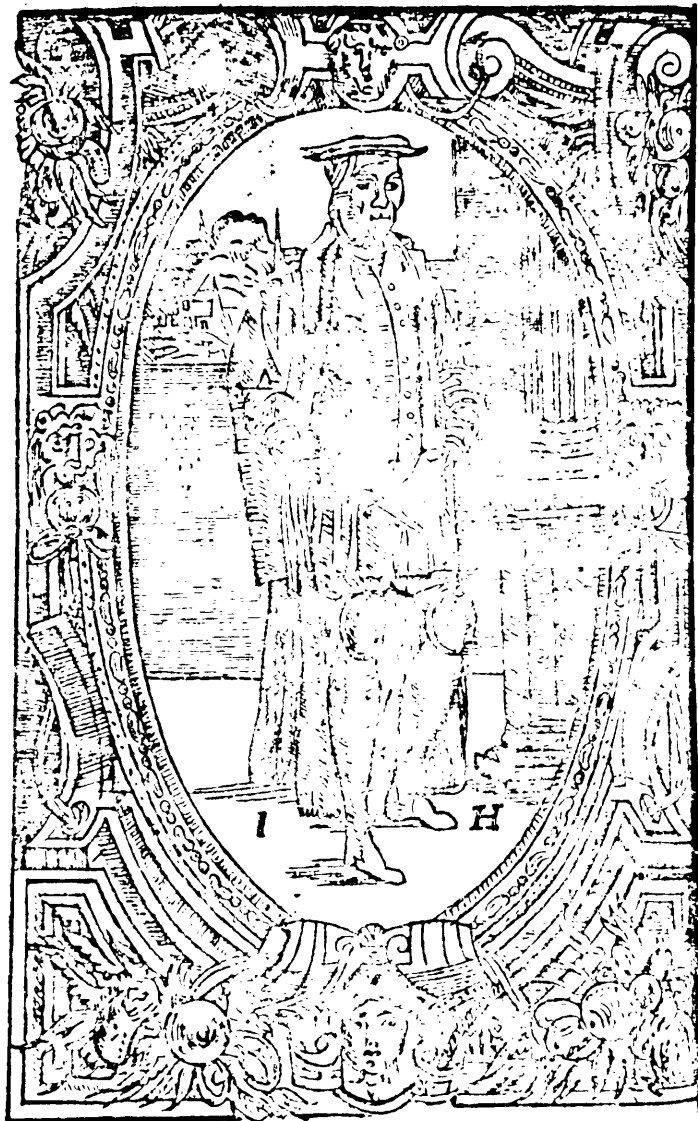


FIGURE 13. Woodcut portrait from The Spider and the Flie.
Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

medium, and in the particular case of The Spider and the Flie, it creates a visual image that will continue to be developed through the rest of the lengthy text.

The printed text of The Spider and the Flie begins with a 112-line preface in which Heywood defines for his readers the parable as a literary form. Following his brief definition, he provides his readers with some guidelines for interpreting the type of poetry they are about to read:

A parable: is properlie one thing,
 That of an other doth conceiuing bring.
 Yea: (oftentims) as parables are scand,
 One score of things: by one, be vnderstand.
 Eche one of all: scanned and vsed well,
 Maie teache the scanner good: to take & tel.
 Contrarilie: scanned and vsed ill,
 Like il likewise, the fruite a mounteth untill.
 (3)

But before Heywood allows his readers to take up the long allegory, he provides them with the opportunity to practice their reading skills. The preface continues:

Wherfore, before entrance to scanning here:
 In present parable here to appere,
 First to induct (for to conduct) the waie:
 How readers and scanners : redilie maie:
 Right scanning (in right reading) here purchase,
 Good readers: reade and scan (rightlie) this case.
 (3)

"This case" refers to a miniature parable which Heywood relates in the following 62 lines of the preface. The brief parable describes three women who dress in front of a mirror. Each woman becomes so preoccupied with pointing out the faults in the appearance of the other two women that she

fails to see her own imperfections. As each of the three women goes sequentially aside, the other two hastily criticize the faults in her appearance. Heywood ends his parable-in-brief with some characteristically amusing word-play:

Thus all these three:
 Deuided thrise in twaine, did thrise agree:
 Eche twayne, the thirde to mocke and geste vpone:
 Tyll euerie one, had mocked euerichone.
 Eche mocking others faute: they fautie all,
 Eche mockers mocke, most on her selfe did fall.
 (4-5)

The preface's ending ties together the act of book-reading, the upcoming parable that the reader will encounter in The Spider and the Flie, and the moral of Heywood's prefatory instructional parable:

Which women and glasse,
 Are a glasse. this booke, and readers to
 compasse.
 In scanning sence to towch men in this booke:
 As glasse lookers lookte: if booke readers looke:
 He vpon him: and he on him: to scan:
 Sence most and best, naie most and worst thei can:
 Scanning who is the spider: who the flie:
 Neither of either: to him selfe taplie:
 Scanning no whit: by scanning here se:
 In case spiders: in case flies: all scand maie be,
 Glass looking: and booke reading: in such wise,
 May well be scand, one lyke vaine exercise.
 Who that this parable doth thus define,
 This parable thus, is his and not mine. (5)

In the final lines of his preface, Heywood makes his point even more explicit:

Thus wishing wishinglie: in reading this,
 Readers: to reade and scan: all sentencis:
 As we first marke and mend our selues: and then,
 To marke: to mend: the fautes of other men. (6)

The design of The Spider and the Flie incorporates several other reading aids into its structure, some of them are standard features of books printed in the 1550s, others quite unusual. The table of contents is unusual in the way each chapter heading spells out at length the narrative events that take place in each of the poem's 98 chapters; this textual device alone takes up 16 pages at the beginning of the book. These descriptions from the table of contents are repeated as chapter headings within the text, thus providing a conveniently located summary of the material included in the forthcoming chapter. This practice of aiding the reader with chapter synopses became very common in later Renaissance works of comparable length, for example, in The Fairie Queene and Paradise Lost, but Heywood's use of them in The Spider and the Flie represents one of the earliest examples of the practice in English printing.

Other examples of readers' aids in The Spider and the Flie include the arrangement of the lengthy narrative into 98 chapters that break up the text into units of manageable reading length. Heywood also realized that his long allegory would not be read from start to finish in a single reading, so he frequently summarizes past narrative events within a chapter in order to refresh the memory of the

reader who has set the book aside and come back to it at a later time.

Of all the book's textual features that demonstrate Heywood's efforts to establish close ties with his readers, the most unusual and fascinating is a series of woodcuts that accompany the text. In addition to having numerous ornamental woodcuts that signal the end of each chapter, The Spider and the Flie also contains two sets of specially designed cuts that illustrate the narrative sequence described in the poem proper. Figure 14 reproduces 4 in a series of 75 smaller-sized woodcuts interspersed throughout the book, and Figure 15 reproduces one of 25 woodcuts that occupy two-page spreads in the middle section of the poem, where armies of spiders and flies prepare for and carry out their battles. Although the same woodcut is occasionally repeated as each series progresses, the great majority of the cuts show the insect participants in different positions that represent changes in the poem's narrative events. The cuts serve an aesthetic function in the way they separate what would otherwise be a visually tedious sequence of the poem's rhyme royal stanzas. More importantly, however, they serve to "visualize the text," a phrase Edward Hodnett uses to describe the role woodcuts play in Jacob Vornagine's Legenda Aurea, printed by Caxton about 1487.

AND THE FLIE

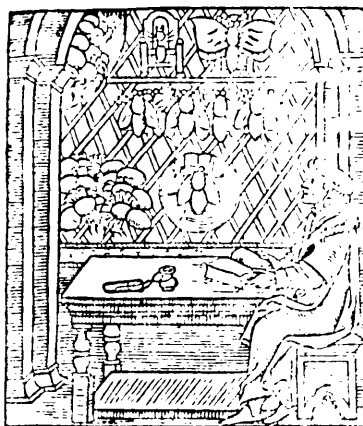
¶ The spider taking comfort, entered in quarrell with the flie. Chap. 4.



208

AND THE FLIE

¶ Upon a house take betweene the arbiters, and the spidere sue for all flies, and sheweth all evidence for the parties: but the spidere at commandements departeth. Chap. 5.



209

THE SPIDER

¶ After a few toofull touches of the spider had to his sonne (they bothe claspedge each other in armes bette naturally) hee smothered and bliseth him. Whereunto that sonne with all the twelve spiders dolefullie departs from the spider. Chap. 93.



210

THE SPIDER

¶ The spiders and flies beinge now absent, the manne sweepeth the window cleane in every place. As for the house and some wylde creature, which toone the departed. Chap. 97.



211

210

FIGURE 14. Woodcut illustrations (reduced) from The Spider and the Flie. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

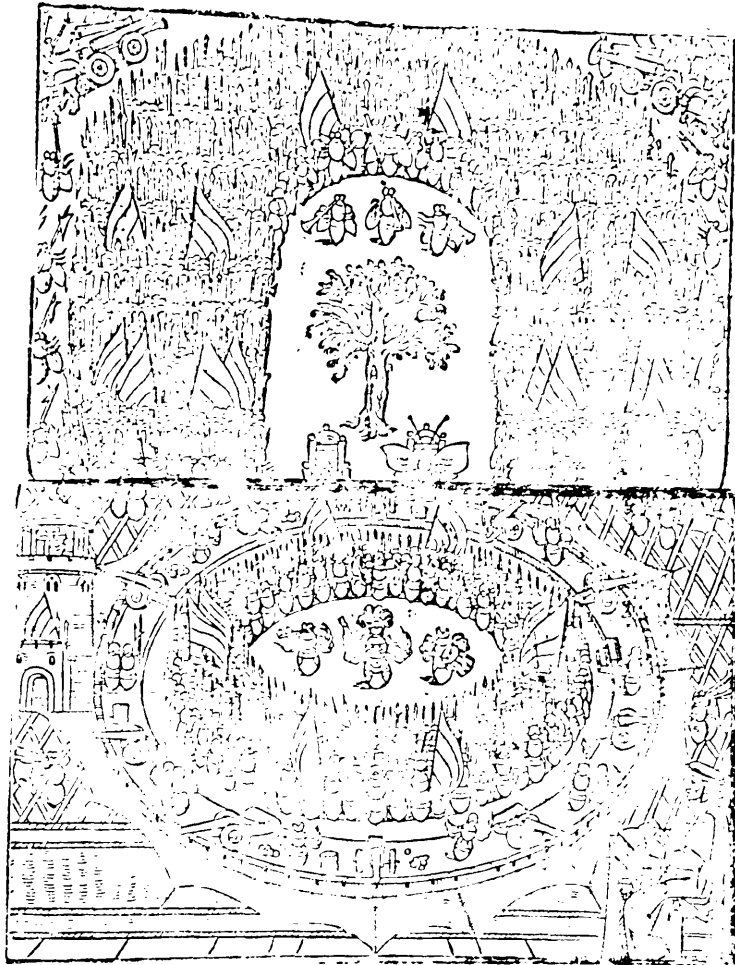


FIGURE 15. Two-page woodcut (reduced) from The Spider and the Flie. Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

"Fundamentally," Hodnett says of the Legenda woodcuts,

the purpose of the illustrations is to fix visually the main aspects of the text in the mind of the reader and to provide him with means of identifying the saints and recalling their legends. . . . They do visualize the text that conceivably is amenable to visualization, and they do it for readers who would welcome such aid and diversion. (4)

Even though The Spider and the Flie was printed almost 70 years later than the Legenda Aurea, the role the woodcuts play in Heywood's poem is very similar to the role they play in Caxton's printing of Voraigne's earlier work. Heywood presumably felt that his readers would respond to the aesthetic function of the woodcuts and would also find them valuable as reading aids to guide them through the narrative development.

However, the message readers received from the cuts clearly goes much deeper than a visualization of the poem's narrative. The focal point of the woodcuts lies not so much in the lattice-work windows where the insects act out their drama, but rather at the poet's writing table where he records the events ostensibly taking place in his study but actually occurring in the "window" of his mind. Heywood, whose full-length portrait was printed twice in the first few pages of the book, is transformed in the smaller cuts into a creator of and participant in the poem itself, and the reader accompanies him in the process of witnessing the events that carry the narrative forward from the poem's

opening stanzas to its closing lines. Even when he leaves the room at crucial points--for example, when the "mayde of the house," Queen Mary, enters the room to restore order among the feuding insects (Figure 14, lower right)--Heywood does not leave the scene completely; he remains in the lower left corner of the cut, peering in through the lattice-work, having taken his writing implements with him in order to continue recording the events from his new viewpoint. Similarly, in the two-page woodcuts (Figure 15), Heywood invariably appears in either the lower left or lower right, seated at a writing desk, dutifully describing the events he witnesses. By using the series of woodcuts to illustrate The Spider and the Flie, Heywood creates a role for himself not only as the omniscient author but also as a constant companion to the reader in the long process of reading the difficult allegorical work. His continual presence in turn causes the reader to consider the essential role that Heywood plays in creating the poem. Thus, the poet's physical presence in the pages of The Spider and the Flie is a subtext that reminds the reader that although the author may dwindle in size from a full-length portrait on the title page to a small face in the corner of a lattice window, he never quite disappears from the text. Few Renaissance books make such elaborate use of illustrations, and none of them do so in a manner that so glorifies the author and that

draws such direct attention to the relationship between reader, writer, and text.

Clearly, the costs of producing such a book, with its lengthy text, elegant printing, and page-by-page use of woodcut illustrations, would have been extremely high; but, surprisingly, the poem contains no direct request for patronage in any part of the text. Except for the direct compliment made to Queen Mary at the close of The Spider and the Flie, there are no dedications or appreciations addressed to persons of wealth from whom Heywood might have expected material support for producing the book. One possibility is that The Spider and the Flie is one of the first "vanity" publications to be printed in England. Only a year before its publication, Heywood received an increase from 40 to 50 pounds in his royal pension (Reed 51). His success with his poems printed before the appearance of The Spider and the Flie may have also provided him with additional revenue to fund the cost of printing his long poem. At the height of his popularity, Heywood may have decided to pay for the printing costs of this most intriguing work himself. Ironically, the price of a copy of The Spider and the Flie would probably have been far beyond the means of ordinary English readers, the very readers who had responded so enthusiastically to Heywood's earlier poetry. But he apparently considered it important to communicate his attitudes about his role as a popular

English poet and to reinforce his literary image that he had developed over an extended period of time in a number of different works. Perhaps he felt that the publication of The Spider and the Flie would help to establish more completely his carefully cultivated image as an English poet.

That Heywood was successful in using print for the purposes of authorial self-representation is evidenced by a commendatory poem appended to the fourth edition of Heywood's Workes, printed in 1587, a few years after the poet's death. In his "Epilogue or Conclusion to This Worke," the printer of the volume, Thomas Newton, documents how Elizabethan readers did in fact perceive the author of the work through the work itself:

Loe, here is seene the fruite that growes by
 painfull quill and braine:
 How after daies of mortal date a man reuiues
 again.
 This Author Heywood dead and gone, and shrinde in
 tombe of clay,
 Before his death by penned workes did carefully
 assay
 To builde himselfe a lasting Tombe, not made of
 stone and lyme,
 But better farre, and richer too, triumphing ouer
 Tyme.
 Whereby hee dead, yet liueth still, enregistred in
 minde
 Of thankfull Crewe, who through his paines no
 small advantage finde.
 And so farre forthe as mortall wightes may
 possibly procure
 A lasting life here on this earth, proceedes from
 learning sure.
 Whereby a man doth in some sort himselfe immortal
 make,

Keeping his name, his fame and state from death of
 LETHE lake.
 Yes, written Workes (which rightly may be tearmde
 the birth of wit)
 To eternize their fathers fame, are known to bee
 more fit
 Then carnall children can or may promote the fame
 or kinde
 Of fleshly parents: leauing nought but pelfe and
 Trash behinde.
 Nowe, as wee may a Lyon soone discerne euen by
 his pawe,
 So by this Worke we quickly may a iudgement
 certaine drawe,
 What kinde of man this Author was, and what a
 pleasaunt vaine
 Of fancies forge and modest mirth lay lodged in
 his braine. (Milligan 277)

Notes

¹ The best biographical sketch of Heywood is supplied by Reed (29-71). Unless otherwise noted, details from Heywood's life are taken from Reed's discussion. A full-length biography is given by Bolwell, and there is a very brief biographical sketch by de la Bere.

² Quotations from Heywood's epigrams and A Dialogue are from Milligan's edition and are cited by page number.

³ The 1549 edition is not recorded in the STC. A bibliographical description of all five editions is included Habernicht (78-94).

⁴ For an overview of the development of the literary treatment of English proverbs and of marriage, see Habernicht (1-50).

⁵ Habernicht identifies 184 new lines and 214 major emendations in his collation of the 1546 and 1549 editions of A Dialogue.

⁶ See STC 13290, 13290.3, and 13290.7.

⁷ Also see the the article by Baldwin that deals in part with Heywood's persona as it relates to the English epigrammatic tradition.

⁸ Part of the problem stems from the fact that no thorough critical analysis of the poem has been undertaken. There are brief assessments in Johnson and Bolwell. Hauser (18) describes the poem as "a continuous dramatic portrayal of the failure of the law courts, the economic grievances of agricultural workers, and the lack of any real temporal or spiritual authority."

⁹ All quotations from The Spider and the Flie are from Ward's edition, which includes reproductions of the woodcuts. Page numbers are given since the printing does not lineate the poem.

CHAPTER V

THOMAS CHURCHYARD

I

I wold that my wordes, were grauen in stone
That all the whole worlde, myght loke them vppon.

From A Myrrour for Man

One of the most distinctive features of Thomas Churchyard's poetry is the way it reveals his obsession with getting recognition for his work in his two separate careers as a soldier and writer. Born about 1520, he lived long enough to see five different English kings and queens occupy the throne, and he served as a soldier in several of their wars and wrote a number of poems commemorating events that occurred during their reigns.¹ But neither his military service to England nor his productivity as a national poet seems to have won him the respect he thought he deserved. He left court in disgust on several occasions, and his disenchantment with life there is recorded in a number of poems, among them A Farewell Cauld, Churcheyards, Rounde, from the Court to the Cuntry Ground, printed about 1566.

His comments at the beginning of that poem serve to illustrate his general attitude:

In Courte yf largies be
 Why parte I thens so bare
 yf Lords were frank & fre
 Su[ch] dradg[?] wold Lordings spare
 To hyme whose tonge and penn
 Myght showe in euey coste
 The worthynes of men,
 And who desaruthe moste. (Alr)

In several other poems, most notably "A Tragical Discourse of the Unhappy Man's Life," included in The Firste Parte of Churchyardes Chippes, Containing Twelue Seuerall Labours,² he simultaneously records his feats of valor in military service and laments the shoddy treatment he received in return for his loyalty.

But if Churchyard was disenchanting with the treatment he received at the hands of his contemporaries, he would be doubly disappointed to learn of his reputation in the twentieth century. Modern critics have described him as "the patriarch of sixteenth-century hacks" (Miller 116) and, condescendingly, as "an honest man, if a poor poet" (Rollins 83). He was, recent critics tell us, a man from whom "we need not look for much self-respect" (Sheavyn 33), who "has no standards" (Lewis 265) and who "produced much unreadable verse" (Miller 118). In fact, his reputation today is so poor that none of his works has yet to appear in a twentieth-century critical edition despite the fact that his

poetry is a valuable source of information on Renaissance life and literature.

Much of the modern-day distaste for Churchyard springs from his seemingly shameless pursuit of patronage and financial gain. For example, C.S. Lewis observes that Churchyard "was driven to the sort of poetry that paid: pageant verses for royal progresses, epitaphs, 'tragedies,' metrical journalism about the wars, an advertisement for a new paper mill" (264). But as a professional writer, Churchyard had little choice; he drew material from current events and his own experience and shaped it in verse forms that he knew would appeal to a wide variety of English readers. His epitaphs are indeed addressed to the relatives of the individual being mourned, and he may have hoped for some reward for having commemorated their lives; but they still communicate a sincere sense of loss, and they are a natural outgrowth of Churchyard's pride in the English nation. A number of them celebrate the bravery and military prowess of soldiers who were his comrades in war.³ Such material served more than the purpose of simply soliciting financial reward for Churchyard; they communicated news to English citizens and helped to establish a sense of national pride for the military leaders who had given their lives in England's cause. It was one of Churchyard's aspirations, in

fact, to be the nationally recognized poet of English soldiers (Langsam 146).

Churchyard had no qualms about seeking patrons wherever he could find them. Almost all his publications printed after 1570 are dedicated to potential or past patrons, and by today's standards some of his dedications go beyond what we consider to be good taste. But Churchyard's efforts to seek sponsorship for his writing in the crowded field of authors who sought out the limited patronage available in the Elizabethan era is not unusual. As Edwin Haviland Miller has pithily observed, "Churchyard was no more crass than Spenser, Jonson, Greene, Nashe, or the courtiers who loved Elizabeth--but her money more" (119).

Churchyard was on occasion very explicit about his expectation that his books would yield him money, as in this passage from "The author to his booke" in A Musical Consort of Heavenlie Harmonie:

Now booke trudge hence, bestow thy Labour right
Set spurs to horse, that flies in aeir with wings
Mount ore the hils, and rest ne day nor night
Till thou do come, before great Queens and Kings
Then flat on face, fall prostrate at their feet
That may from graue, call vp thy masters spreet
Keepe thou these rules, this course and compasse
 hold
So may thy grace, conuert my lead to gold. (B2r)

Perhaps modern critics are troubled too by the fact that Churchyard's honesty about the matter paid off and that he became one of only two Renaissance poets (the other being

II

Admittedly, many of Churchyard's works have only limited literary merit, but if we are able to set aside our critical judgments on that point and instead study his literary output as an example of how one of England's first professional writers employed the medium of print in an attempt to earn at least a portion of his living from his pen, we can perhaps appreciate him as an important link in the development of the Renaissance literary system.

Despite the poverty and disappointment that resulted from his attempts to live off his literary output, Churchyard remained dedicated to a literary life. His bibliography of printed works is a testimony to his devotion; he authored almost 50 works between 1552 and 1604, the year of his death. As a professional writer, he was a tireless promoter of English poetry. His commendatory poem prefacing the 1568 edition of John Skelton's Pithy, Pleasaunt, and Profitable Works has already been cited as an illustration of the growing sense of pride that the English were beginning to develop toward their national literary heritage, and as the author of the poetic commendation, Churchyard stands at the vanguard of that development. He was generous in his praise of poets in many ways much more successful than he. For example, in A Mvsicall Consort of Heauenly Harmonie Compounded Out of Manie Parts of Musicke

Called Chyrchyards Charitie he included his own lengthy verse explication of Sidney's Apology for Poetry, ending it with some moving verses on his fellow poet. Likewise, Churchyard was an early champion of Spenser and included a touching tribute to him in Churchyard's Challenge, where he calls on England to recognize Spenser as "the spirit of learned speech" (**v). Much of Churchyard's appreciation for poetry probably derives from his youth, when he served as a page in the household of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. He later dedicated one of his books, A Light Bondell of Liuly Discourses Called Churchyard's Charge, to Surrey's grandson and, in the dedicatory epistle, describes the elder Surrey as "a nobel warrior, and eloquent Oratour; and a second Petrarke" (qtd. in Campbell 40).

Churchyard's earliest printed works were issued about 1552. One of them, A Myrroure for Man, gives little notice of authorship. Despite being a quarto printing, it seems to have been issued without a title page and begins simply with a heading that supplies the full title but gives no indication of authorship. This piece of information is not provided until the closing page, where a single subscription, "Qd Thomas Churcharde," makes the authorial identification.

The other poems by Churchyard that were printed about the same time are less substantial as literary works, but

they generated a great deal of reader recognition for him and probably helped to engender some of his long-held hope of gaining sufficient fame to allow him to earn his living with his pen. Davy Dicars Dreame, a broadside printed by Richard Lant about 1552, was a brief, conventional poem built around a utopian vision. It became known later as Davy Dicars When because Davy, the speaker, repeatedly uses the word "when" to contrast Churchyard's critical vision of contemporary immorality with his idealistic vision of the future. The poem solicited a spirited response from Thomas Camell, who entitled his poem To David Dicars When. Churchyard, in turn, answered with A Replication to Camell's Obiection, only to be answered again with Camell's Reioinder, to Churchyarde. To this, Churchyard responded with The Surreioindre vnto Camels Reioindre.

By this time, however, a number of other participants had entered into the fray. Before the literary fires had died, no fewer than 15 items related to the controversy had been printed. The authors included William Elderton,, William Baldwin, Geoffrey Chappel, Steven Steple, and Richard Beard, most of whom defended Churchyard and his poem. At long last, Camel had had enough; he ended his part in the flyting with Camels Conclusion, and Last Farewell, Then, to Churchyarde and Those, That Defend His When. Churchyard, too, wrote his final word on the subject and

entitled it A Playn and Fynall Confutation: Of Camells Corlyke Oblatracion.

Although Churchyard wrote only four of the fifteen items that survive from the controversy, he gained a great deal of literary mileage from his efforts. In 1560, the stationer M. Loble collected all the poems generated by the flyting and engaged the printer O. Rogers to print, in a quarto edition, The Contention bettwyxt Churchyard and Camel vpon David Dycers Dream.

Such publicity may have helped established Churchyard's name among important literary figures of the day, for within a few years his poems appeared in two of the most important books of the English Renaissance, Tottel's Miscellany and The Mirror for Magistrates. The inclusion of his poetry in these two immensely popular books may have pleased him at the time, but they later caused him a great deal of consternation, according to remarks he made in some of his own works printed a number of years later. Ultimately, his experience with authorial attribution in these two works seems also to have influenced the methods he used in the publication of many later printings of his own individual books.

Churchyard was among the "other," that is, anonymous, poets mentioned in the full title of the 1557 edition of Songs and Sonettes, Written by the Ryght Honorable Lorde

Henry Howarde Late Earle of Surey, and Other, now popularly known as Tottel's Miscellany. According to Hyder Rollins (84), Churchyard may have been the author of up to 10 of the poems in that section of the book where the authors of individual poems are not identified.⁵ The basis for identifying Churchyard as the author of at least some of the poems in the volume is Churchyard himself. In Churchyard's Challenge, printed in 1593, the poet included a list of his previous publications, and there states unequivocally that "many things in the booke of songs and Sonets . . . were of my making" (qtd. by Rollins 83). Unfortunately, he failed to identify any more fully the poems that were his, and the identification of individual poems as Churchyard's is based only on stylistic evidence.

Churchyard suffered another instance of literary neglect as the result of his contribution of the "Tragedy of Jane Shore" to the second edition of The Mirror for Magistrates.⁶ The issue of authorship of the "Tragedy of Jane Shore" is an odd one, for in the 1563 edition of The Mirror, Churchyard received credit and praise for the poem in a prose link that connects it to the following tragedy on Edmund Duke of Somerset. In the passage, William Baldwin, who has been credited with writing the prose links scattered through the Mirror, says that the group who had gathered to hear the poem on Jane Shore and to decide whether it should

be included in the second edition of the Mirror liked it so well that they "all together exhorted me instantly, to procure Maister Churchyarde to vndertake and to penne as manye moe of the remaynder as myght by any meanes by attaynted at his hands" (Campbell 387).

This must have pleased Churchyard at the time; but in 1571, when the third edition of The Mirror for Magistrates was printed, the prose link, with its glowing praise of Churchyard, had disappeared, and "The Tragedy of Jane Shore" was attributed to the poet only with the simple subscription "Tho. Churchyarde." at the close of the poem.

Between the printing of the third edition and the 1587 edition, Churchyard's authorship of the tragedy had evidently been called into serious question. The 1587 edition restored a prose link to introduce "The Tragedy of Jane Shore," and the link alludes to Churchyard's difficulty in receiving credit for this widely acclaimed piece of writing. Jane Shore speaks to the reader in the link and describes in bitter terms Churchyard's situation:

I now appeare to him that first se mee forth, a
writer of good continuance, and one that dayly is
exercised to set out both matter tragically, and
other prophane histories and verses, whose name is
Churchyard: hee shall not only haue the fame of
his owne worke (which no man can deny) but shall
likewise haue all the glory I can gleue him, if
hee lend mee the hearing of my woefull tale.
(qtd. by Campbell 42)

This prose link may very well have been written by Churchyard himself; its language is very close to that used in Churchyard's introduction to A Reuyuing of the Deade, printed in 1591. In his prefatory remarks to that book, Churchyard lays claim to "The Tragedy of Jane Shore" and serves notice that his next work, Churchyard's Challenge, would document his authorship of the poem and that

thereby the world shall see what wrong I haue
suffred to endure a deniall (by busie tungen) of
mine own workes: Shores wife shall speake in her
kinde, to defend me and such as waites on her . .
. shall tell the world I haue beene abused, and
not iustly and rightly vnderstood.

(qtd. by Campbell 43)

Just as Churchyard had promised, the printing of Churchyard's Challenge in 1593 includes another angry defense of his authorship, and the poem is printed in the book, along with some additional verses Churchyard added to it.

Churchyard's bitterness at having his work neglected may be reflected in the titles he gave to a number of his works issued throughout his long career. In 1566, three years after the first appearance of "Jane Shore" in The Mirror, Churchyard produced four new books, each having a formulaic title that guaranteed that Churchyard would receive due credit for his publications. Churchyardes Farewel, Churchyardes Lamentacion of Freyndshyp, A Farewell Cauld, Churchyardes, Rounde, from the Courte to the Cuntry Ground, and A Greater Thanks, for Churchyardes Welcome Home

were all printed as inexpensive broadsides, and all came from different stationers and printers, a fact that must have made Churchyard's name a common one in the bookstalls of London at the time.

After 1575, Churchyard issued a steady stream of publications written primarily in verse but occasionally blending prose with poetry. In 1575, he collected a number of his early poems and issued them under the full title The Firste Parte of Churchyardes Chippes, Containing Twelve Seuerall Labours, Devised and Published Only by Thomas Churchyard, Gentilman (Figure 16). This collection set a pattern in Churchyard printings that would continue over the course of the next 30 years. His practice was to issue works individually and then to collect them from time to time for publication in a volume bearing the "ch-ch" alliterative title echoing his name.

This procedure allowed him to plan for a kind of serial publication first hinted at in the full title of Churchyardes Chippes. "The Firste Parte" clearly implies that a second part is to follow. This initial use of a current book to advertise past publications and forthcoming ones was to become one of the trademarks of Churchyard's publishing career.

It is evident from the dedicatory epistle printed with Churchyardes Chippes that the poet was in the habit of

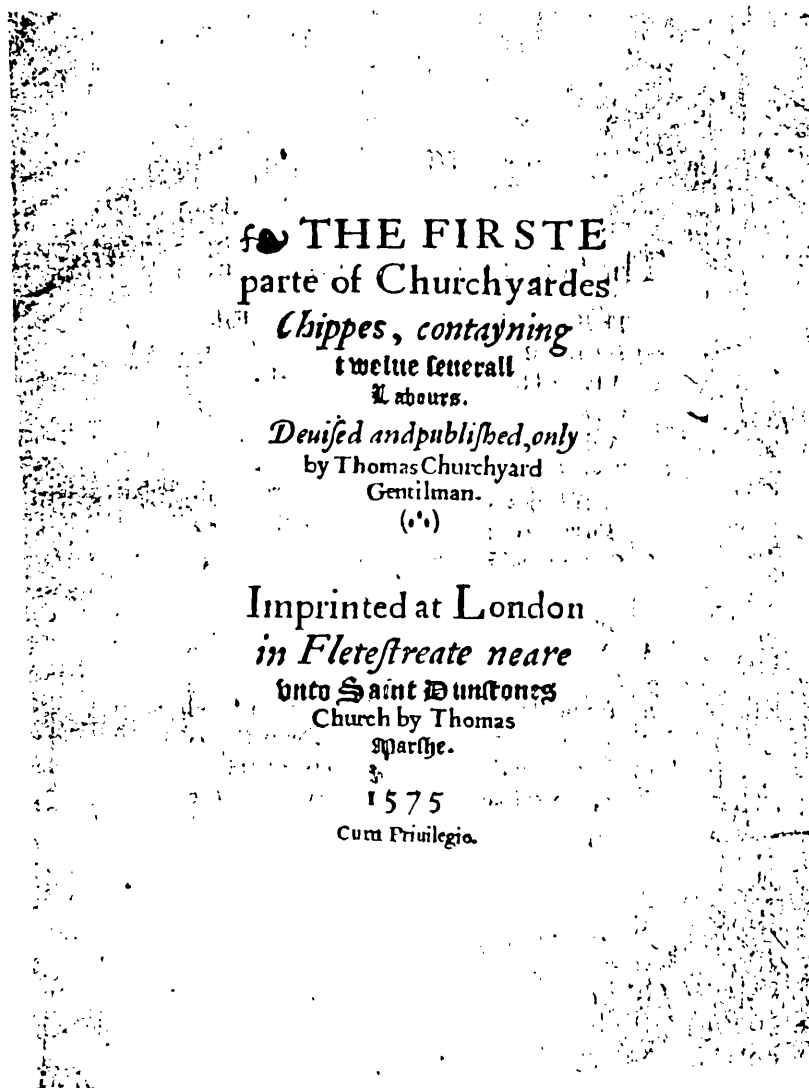


FIGURE 16. Title page to The Firſte Parte of Churchyardes Chippes. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

promising potential patrons that he would honor them with books of poetry. This is the point he makes at the beginning of the dedicatory letter to Sir Christopher Hatton that prefaces Churchyardes Chippes. The poet says that his friendship with his patron "procures my penne presently to performme that I promised, no smal time since, touching a booke of al my English verse in miter" (iii). Churchyard goes on to give a self-effacing explanation of why he chose to call his book of verse "Chippes": "If any other tiolet had bene geven to my trifles than the proper name of Chips, men might have hoped for graver matter than the natuer of my verse can produce" (iii). This rationale for his title provides him with the opportunity to turn his attention to what seems to be his real point in writing the letter--he wants to prepare his patron and his readers for his forthcoming sequel to Chippes. Although the first part of Chippes "hath but few things in it," Churchyard says, "the second [part] shall contain a number of things I trust of no lesse pastime and commodity, weighing mirrely the meaning of my imaginacions" (iv).

In the prefatory poem immediately following the dedicatory letter, Churchyard repeats his advertisement. The poem, entitled "To the Dispisers of Other Men's Works. That Shoes Nothing of Their Owne," reveals something of Churchyard's characteristic mixture of humility and pride as

he defiantly maintains that he will continue to publish his works regardless of the reception they receive:

The best is, though small goodnes be
 in these baer chipps of mien,
 My hatchet hewd them all in deede,
 whear they be grosse or fien.

And when that theas have maed a blaes,
 and bin in world a whiel,
 A bigger basket will I bring,
 to make you worldlings smile.

And wheather theas you like or noe,
 the rest aer neer the stamp;
 Which if you pleas to flinge in fier,
 will borne as cleer as lamp.

Thus farewell frends, or flyring foes,
 I kno not how to fawne:
 I mean to see you ons again,
 so leave my booke for pawne. (vi-vii)

A number of the "twelve several labours" included in Chippes demonstrate Churchyard's expansive publication plans. The first item in the book is "The Siege of Leeth," a verse tract recounting Churchyard's first-hand experiences in the battle of 1560. In several passages, Churchyard stops the narrative to apologize for the cursory treatment he is giving to various aspects of the battle and explains that because he is writing poetry, he must limit the space he allots to his account. However, to appease his readers he promises to supply them with an expanded account of the battle in a prose work to be penned in the near future. His hesitancy to include long lists of names, for example,

stems, he says, from his strict sense of decorum about what is appropriate to include in poetic compositions:

Their names that chargd I thincke unfit to wright;
 Who serveth well at length must needes have fame:
 Let no man thincke their deedes are buryd quight,
 All though not here the persons do I name;
 I nill for that my worke put out of frame.
 To them I leave at large that to disclose,
 That after shall this journey wright in prose.
 (14)

Several hundred lines later, he makes his promise even more explicit. In another instance where he cannot include details he says:

I leve that case, and nowe returne I shall
 To those that daye were leaders in the felde;
 And for in ryme I cannot show it all
 And well set forth in ryme are faultes but selde,
 And wordes I lack, and that I am unskilde
 To seke out termes that apte are for that case:
 In prose I minde therefore the same to place.

That shall I wright when this I draw anew,
 Which in short time I mynde at large to set;
 But for the first, it may suffice to you
 This naked rime out of my handes to get:
 Yet, if I live, I will be in your det,
 To paye you once a better sum, I thinke,
 Then I have yet set forth with penne and ynke.
 (26)

In the course of writing "The Siege of Leeth," Churchyard becomes so preoccupied with thinking about his intended prose version that he abruptly ends his poem, explaining in the poem's last stanza that he faces the pressures of unspecified deadlines and that he will with equal haste produce the promised prose tract:

Here have you harde of Leeth the ordre throwe,
 As farre as ryme will suffer me to wryte:

In prose who liste to make rehersall nowe,
 Thereof hath skope to show in paper whyte
 A better waye that shall you more delight;
 For this was done as there I saw it then,
 And time but shorte I had to use my penne. (31)

Other somewhat less obtrusive advertisements for his work are scattered throughout Chippes. At the beginning of the brief prose piece "A Roed into Skotland," Churchyard reminds the reader that he has already written previously on the same subject (86). In the long lament entitled "A Tragical Discourse of the Unhappy Mans Life," he writes a mock will in which he bestows his past work on those who appreciate his literary efforts. Says Churchyard:

Well, ear my breath my body doe forsaek,
 My spreet I doe bequeath to God above;
 My bookes, my scrowls, and songs that I did maek,
 I leave with frindes that freely did me love.
 (149)

Churchyardes Chippes and the other publications the poet issued between 1575 and 1580 are especially interesting for the way they illustrate advertising methods. One of them even gives some hints at Churchyard's disappointment when his books did not sell well. At the conclusion of A Prayse, and Reporte of Maister M. Forboishers Voyage to Meta Incognita, printed in 1578, we find Churchyard still promising his readers the second part of his Chippes even though they had not received the first part with as much enthusiasm as he had hoped. At the end of A Prayse, he promises his readers "a greater booke to followe of my

Chips, which shall as I hope content the Readers better than my first volume did" (C7r-v). Ironically, Chippes was better received than most of Churchyard's other books--it was issued in a second edition in 1578, the only book to be reprinted among all his works.

The subject matter of A Prayse--Frobisher's adventures in his explorations of Canada--was one of several subjects on which Churchyard served as a kind of self-appointed spokesman for the English people. Other favorite topics included the progresses of Queen Elizabeth and the heroism of English soldiers in combat.⁷ That he envisioned his role as a poet to include literary treatment of current events is made clear by his identification of his audience for a collection of disparate items he gathered together for publication in 1578. The full title of the work informs the reader of the mixed subject matter in the book: A Discourse of the Queenes Maiesties Entertainement in Suffolk and Norffolk. Whereunto is Adioyned a Commendation of Sir H Gilberts Ventrours Iorney. Churchyard had included a poem in the 1575 edition of Chippes that reported on Queen Elizabeth's reception into the city of Bristow, but the piece was placed at the end of that publication, and in hindsight he may have realized that this was a strategic error in the organization of the book's contents. When he published A Discourse in 1578, he made his verse composition

on the Queen's progress the title poem, and in a dedicatory letter to Gilbert Gerrard, Elizabeth's attorney general, he explains his purpose in issuing the poem. First, he says that he is eager to commend the residents of Norfolk and Suffolk for having provided a model of behavior for English citizenry in welcoming their monarch and therefore he wants to describe the reception they provided. Churchyard's vision of himself as a roving literary reporter is made apparent in his comment to Gerrard that he writes "for those people that dwell farre off the Court, that they may see with what maiestie a Prince raigneth" (A3v).

The second item mentioned in the title, his "farewell" poem to Sir Humphrey Gilbert, also serves the purpose of providing the English people with news of the departure of Gilbert on his voyage to Newfoundland.⁸ Churchyard was, of course, simultaneously seeking patronage with his poetic efforts, and he used the occasion to promise Gilbert another poem upon his safe arrival back in England. Presumably, Churchyard intended to give an elaborate account of Gilbert's journey, for he informs the navigators that the forthcoming "welcome home" will be in prose:

Well, noble Pilgrims, as in Verse
 I write this for your sake,
 In Prose at your return,
 looke for a greater prayse,
 A Booke that to the loftie Skyes,
 your rare renowne shall rayse. (K2v-3r)

Although the title page to A Discourse mentions only two items, it contains a third piece which further demonstrates Churchyard's concern with the immediacy of the material about which he writes. At the end of his poem to Gilbert, another poem addressed to an English navigator appears. The full title of the poem describes the events leading up to Churchyard's decision to include it, although its title did not appear on the book's title page. The full title appears instead as an elaborate heading to the text near the end of the book: "A welcome home to Master Martin Frobusher, and all those gentlemen and Souldiers, that haue bene with himm this last iourney, in the Countrey called (Meta incognita) whiche welcome was written since this Booke was put to the printing, and ioyned to the same Booke for a true testimony of Churchyardes good will, for the furtherance of Mayster Frobushers fame." In 1576, Frobisher had sailed to the Canadian frontier and had returned with a cargo of ore that appeared to contain rich quantities of gold.⁹ Churchyard had duly reported the events of that sea voyage in A Prayse, and Reporte of Maister M. Forboishers Voyage to Meta Incognita, printed in May of 1578. Frobisher had subsequently undertaken a second journey, and had returned in September of 1578, just after Churchyard's book on Elizabeth's progress and on Gilbert's voyage had been printed. In order to capitalize on the newsworthiness of

Frobisher's return, Churchyard hurriedly wrote his "welcome home" poem and arranged to have it appended to A Discourse before the book was released for sale. The contents of the poem reveal its hurried composition--it is very general in nature, consisting primarily of praise for the courage of Frobisher and his sea companions and containing very little detail on actual events of their voyage. This provides a convenient excuse for Churchyard to produce a more complete account in the near future. He hints at this possibility at the end of the poem when he reminds Frobisher of his encomiums to him:

In this thy prayse (and other Bookes)
 I speake but right of thee.
 A booke I made, at they Farewell,
 in prose (where ere it is)
 Another for they Welcome home,
 thou shalte haue affter this,
 If this mislike thee any whitte. (Jlv)

It is characteristic of Churchyard to make promises for more books than he could produce, and his promise of more material on Frobisher's voyage is a case in point. In other instances, however, he does eventually produce the promised books. For example, A Lementable, and Pitifull Description of the Wofull Warres in Flaunders, which also appeared in 1578, is dedicated to Sir Francis Walsingham, and Churchyard promises him a longer, more elaborate treatment of the subject if this preliminary work is well

received. He even provides Walsingham with the working title of his intended book:

If this be well accepted (as I doubt not but it shall be) to set forth another worke, called, the calamitie of France, the bloody broyles of Germany, the persecution of Spayne, the misfortune of Portingall, the troubles of Scotlande, the miserie of Ireland, and the blessed state of England. (A3v-A4r)

Just as he had promised, Churchyard completed his book and printed it in the following year under the slightly altered title The Miseries of Flaunders, Calamitie of France, Misfortune of Portugall, Unquietnes of Ireland, Troubles of Scotlande, And the Blessed State of Englande.

Similary, he promises in his address to the readers of A Scourge for Rebels, printed in 1584, a sequel called A Rebuke to Rebellion. This item finally appeared in 1598, again under a slightly altered title, A Wished Reformation of Wicked Rebellion.

III

Another notable feature of these early works is the way they demonstrate Churchyard's efforts at attaining patronage from aristocratic sources while simultaneously striving to cater to the interests of common English citizens. He almost always addresses his works to one of Elizabeth's court advisors or to other well-known, generally wealthy, Englishmen, but he rarely fails to define his wider audience

as well. He is usually careful to separate his addresses to prospective patrons from those to his general readers. In doing so, he provides some valuable insight into the cross-over audience for his poetry. For instance, in an elaborate envoi to A Lementable, and Pitifull Description of the Wofull Warres in Flaunders, he gives a spirited defense of the plain style of poetry and of the need for a poetry accessible to a broad range of readers. Churchyard often apologizes for his lack of training in Classical rhetoric and for the absence of "great learning" in his works. Yet he accepts his limitations and works instead to cultivate, in both senses of the word, an unlearned audience. In the envoi, he advises his book to seek readers who want and need "plainness" in their poetry. He then catalogs some types of readers he expects his book to encounter and advises the book on the virtues and shortcomings of each:

If Courte embrace thee for my sake,
to Countrey then in post,
Be sure then neyther thy bare words,
nor my poore worke is lost.
Where Souldiours are, aduance they selfe,
for though some faults they spye,
Their martiall minds will make them cast
on thee a freindly eye.
Among Diuiness and Scholemen oft,
come not, but for a change,
For at thy lewde and rubbish phrase,
the learned will look strange,
To men of Law do freellie goe,
for they good fellows are,
And can with toyes sometimes well ease,
the weight of Countreys care.
With Merchant men make thine abode,
who loves to heare of Peace. (K1v-K2r)

Though Churchyard's address to his book reveals his own class and professional prejudices, his assessment of the ideal audience for his poetry is unusually detailed and gives a good indication of the type of readers who made up a "popular" reading audience.¹⁰

Having identified the potential readers of his book, he engages again in some final promotional lines before ending his envoi. He reassures his book that it will not have to make the arduous journey of going public by itself:

Thou shalt have mates to follow thee,
and help thee if thou fall.
I haue wide scope at will to walke,
yea Penne and Muse at call,
And other Bookes that I must needes
committe to Worldes report.
He is thrice blest that well doth worke,
our time is heere but short. (K2r)

One of the works that accompanied A Lamentable, and Pitifull Description into the world was the long-promised second part of Churchyard's Chippes, but its publication history presents something of a bibliographical puzzle. That Churchyard intended the second part of his Chippes to be printed is clear from his reference to it, cited above, in the 1578 edition of A Prayse, and Report of Maister M. Forboishers Voyage to Meta Incognita. Apparently, the second part of Churchyard's Chippes was ready to be published in 1579, but some mysterious complications developed in the selection of the title for the sequel to the first part. In a dedication to The Most True Reporte of

James FitzMorrice Death, printed in 1579, Churchyard is still promising his readers that they will see the work, but he now informs them that it will have a different title: "Farewell good Reader, till my booke long promised be Printed, that presently is comyng out, and hath changed the name of Chippes, and is called Churchyardes Choice" (A7v) The reason for Churchyard's change of mind about the title remains unexplained. The mystery does not end there, however, for Churchyardes Choise did appear as promised in 1579, but it too suffered difficulties in title selection. A canceled title page (Figure 17) is affixed to some copies of the printing, but this title page was later printed without the phrase "Churchyardes Choise" as part of the title (Figure 18).¹¹ In this instance, however, Churchyard attempts to explain the book's new title, A Generall Rehearsall of Warres, Wherein in Ffive Hundred Seuerall Seruices of Land and Sea. And Ioyned to the Same Some Tragedies and Epitaphes. However, the explanation does little to clear up the mystery behind the alteration in the title page. His account of the events leading up to the change are given in A Plaine . . . Reporte of . . . the Takynge of Macklin, printed in 1580. Churchyard hurries over the details related to the printing of Churchyard's Choice and focuses the reader's attention instead on yet another forthcoming work:

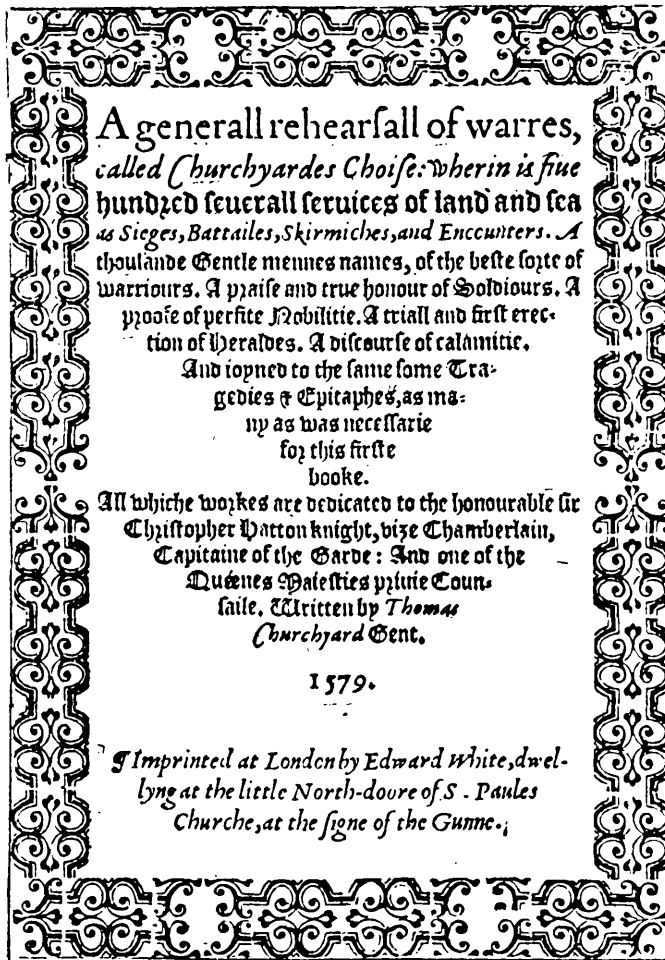


FIGURE 17. Cancelled title page to A Generall Rehearsall of Warres (Churchyardes Choise). Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

A generall rehearfall of warres,
 wherein is five hundred severall services of land
 and sea: as sieges, battailles, skirmishes, and
 encounters. A thousand gentle memes names, of the best
 sort of warriors. A praise and true honour of Soldiours: A
 prooffe of perfect Nobilitie. A triall and first erection of He-
 raldes: A discourse of calamitie. And ioynd to the same some
 Tragedies and Epitaphes, as many as was necessa-
 rie for this first booke. All which woorkes are
 dedicated to the right honourable sir Chri-
 stopher Hatton knight, vize Cham-
 berlain, Capitein of the gard: &
 one of the Quenes maie-
 sties psonall counsaill.
 Written
 by
 Thomas Churchyard
 Gentleman.



*Imprinted at London by Edward White,
 dwelling at the little North doore of
 Pauls Church, at the signe
 of the Gunne.*

FIGURE 18. Reissued title page to A Generall Rehearsall of Warres. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

I bid you farewell, myndyng hereafter to Shewe other services that are forgotten in my booke of Choice, that was once ouer hastely Printed, and must be runne ouer againe, bothe for the fame of some therein left out, and the troth of some matters I was wrong instructed of. And to kepe the people in some good likyng of me and my woorkes. I am presently setting out a discourse of the late yeartquake, not touched of any writer in Englishe here tofore. . . . I bid you adue, and goe aboute the Printyng of my booke presently promised. (D3r-v)

The exact nature of the misinformation that the initial printing of Choise contained is not cleared up by the poet's explanation, and the mystery of why the phrase "Churchyardes Choise" was deleted from the reprinted title page remains unsolved.

It is important, however, to note Churchyard's concern about the need to maintain his readers' "likyng of me and my woorkes." This concern for his reputation among his readers carries over to several aspects of his printed works. For example, it is demonstrated in the distinctions discussed above that he makes between the proper uses of poetry as opposed to prose, a feature of many earlier works. It also extends to the way that Churchyard structured a book's contents for his readers. A Generall Rehearsall of Warres provides a good illustration of his practices in this matter. At the close of the book, after describing a particular battle in some detail, he explains that he must

abbreviate his account at this point in order to maintain his reader's interest:

There wer after this siege some other services, but none for that so greate: nor none of them I mynde to treat as yet, for that I have bent my studie, to pleasure the Readers of my booke, with other fancies, and a varietie of matter. The change of matter, and maner of writyng thereof, I hope shall rather bring delite, then breed wearinesse. For that whiche doeth presently followe, is sette out purposely with a nombre of deuises to occupie tyme withall, and pleasure them that hath any good disposition towards the worke.
(Ulr)

In addition to attempting to make his books pleasurable to read, Churchyard was careful to make them easy to recognize for a potential reader. Following Churchyardes Chippes in 1575 and Churchyardes Choise in 1579, there appeared a continual series of the eponymous and alliterative titles. Two such books were printed in 1580. The title page of one of them carries the lengthy full title, A Light Bondell of Liuly Discourses Called Churchyardes Charge, Presented as a Newe Yeres Gifte to the Right Honourable, the Earle of Surrie, in Which Bondell of Verses Is Sutch Varietie of Matter, and Seuerall Inuentions, That Maie Bee as Delitefull to the Readers, As It Was a Charge and Labour to the Writer, Sette Forthe for a Peece of Pastime, by Thomas Churchyarde Gent (Figure 19).

Although Churchyard's own references to his books make it clear that he expected them to be known by their



FIGURE 19. Title page to A Light Bondell of Liuly Discourses Called Churchyardes Charge. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

eponymous, alliterated short titles, he liked to make use of lengthy titles, such as the one he gives on the title page of Churchyardes Charge, in an effort to capture the reader's attention. The full title of Churchyardes Charge thus serves several purposes: it announces that the book is a New Year's gift given to an English aristocrat, it describes the book's full contents, it defines the impression Churchyard hopes the book will make on the reader, and it allows him to display his wit by employing a pun that brings the reader back to the book's short title.

He uses the same technique of title punning in the other book issued in 1580, A Pleasaunte Laborinth Called Churchyardes Chance (Figure 20). In this instance, the pun is developed not on the title page but in the dedicatory letter addressed to Sir Thomas Bromley. In his letter, Churchyard plays heavily on the title word and in the process provides some insight into his attitudes toward his life as a writer:

My chance is to be in court well knowen, and mutche made of, though smally considered or aduanunced. My Chaunce is to liue awhile and write Epitaphes, Sonets, and sedules on many a worthie personage: whiles my life and footesteps, drawes the bodie to his long home, and leades the restlesse daies to the quiet graue. And so as Chance hath fallen out, and allotted me by a bond of causes (through the originall & ground of all goodnesse) the pleasure of penne and the pain of studie, euen so in like maner I gladly plaie out my part on the stage in this toillesome, and tragicall pilgrimage, where nothyng easeth our labours so mutche, as the sweete contentation of minde. (a3r-v)



FIGURE 20. Title page to A Pleasaunte Laborinth Called Churchyardes Chance. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

Of all his books, Churchyardes Chance contains more textual features promoting the poet and his work than any other. It contains an array of devices, both written and visual, that serve to illustrate how he developed specific trademarks that characterized his books. Among the most striking of these is Churchyard's coat of arms (Figure 21). Churchyardes Chance represents one of the earliest uses of the poet's coat of arms as an authorial identification device. The broken lance, the closed helmet (appropriate for the rank of gentleman), the lion, and the verbal and visual play on the poet's "arms" all help to advertise his military service to his country, while the garland hanging from the lance symbolizes his parallel career as a poet. In addition to its initial appearance in Chance, the coat of arms is used in four other Churchyard works: Churchyardes Charge, A Scourge for Rebels, An Epitaphe of Sir Phillip Sidney, and The Worthines of Wales.

Another type of promotional device that Churchyard first uses in his Chance, and later goes on to develop more fully, is a list of previous publications. Although John Skelton had set a precedent of sorts when he gave an extensive bibliography of his own works in the 1523 printing of A Garland of Laurell, Churchyard employs the bibliography explicitly as a standing advertisement.

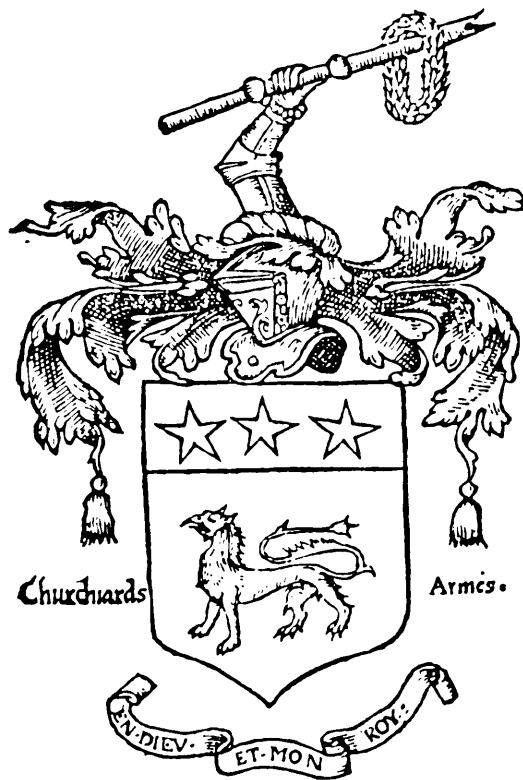


FIGURE 21. Churchyard's coat of arms from Churchyardes
Chance. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

The poems that make up Churchyardes Chance are all epitaphes, one of the poet's favorite literary forms. He had composed a number of these poems throughout his career and was eager to make known to his readers the names of the epitaphes he had written and published, so he simply provides a straightforward listing of them in the early part of his book. In the process, he reveals the dangers of entrusting manuscripts to private readers before the poem had been put in printed form. The list of epitaph titles included in Churchyardes Chance is headed "Epitaphes alreadye printed, or out of my handes." Following the list of 18 titles is a comment which tells the reader that Churchyard had written "many other gentilmen and gentilwomens Epitaphes, that presently I neither can remember, nor get into my handes againe" (B4r).

Churchyardes Chance ends with a lengthy advertising blurb that describes the poet's long-term publishing plans. In the passage, Churchyard's readers are promised a two-volume set of his collected works:

Here endeth the book called Churchyardes Chance, and beginneth an other book named his Charge: and so in one volume shall followe, his Choice, his Chippes, and all the rest of his bookes that here tofore hath bin sette out, and written by Churchyarde, sauynge a book of Meta incognita, and some other small volumes, which can not be bound in quarto, yet hereafter (by Gods grace) shalbe sette out in a large volume. Where twoo thousaude [sic] wonders shalbe treated of, with a rehearsall of warres and seruices, dooen in this our present age: which booke shalbe called

Churchyardes Challenge, dedicated to the noble Earle of Oxforde. All whiche woorkes (God willyng) shall come forthe with as mutche speede as possible can be made: requiryng the readers thereof, in consideration of the Authours greate studie and paines, to yeeld hym sutche good reporte, as his good will deserueth. (K4r)

God was evidently not willing to let the printings of these collections go forth as fast as Churchyard probably would have liked. The quarto volume containing Chippes, Choice, Chance, and Charge never appeared, but Churchyardes Challenge (Figure 22) did, although not until 1593. Among its contents are, as promised, several items that collectively provide "a rehearsall of warres and seruices, doen in this present age." In its promotional aspects, the book has much in common with Churchyardes Chance. It includes another advertisement for yet more forthcoming works, but this time the ad is more prominent; it appears in relatively large type at the end of the address to the reader (Figure 23).

The advertisement provides another example of Churchyard's tendency to overestimate his powers of literary productivity. When the first part of The Worthiness of Wales appeared in 1587, Churchyard had made no mention of the need for a sequel. For some reason, he decided that one was necessary, and therefore made mention of it in the advertisement that appeared in Churchyardes Challenge. Despite his good intentions, however, the continuation was



CHVRCHYARDS Challenge.



LONDON
Printed by *John Wolfe.*
1593.

FIGURE 22. Title page to Churchyardes Challenge. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

To the Reader.

Not boasting thereof as matter worthy memory, but claiming a better regarde then er any would giue me, I stand to the praise or dispraise of all I haue done, maruelling much that in my life time any one would take from me the honest laudation I deserue. I strine no further in that point, but committ to God and good people the indifferency and iustnes of my cause, and the best is (which shall beare it selfe) the wise of the worlde and worthiest of knowledge and capacitie, are the only Iudges shall yeeld me my rights: the rest are but bearers and lookers on, whose voices may make a great noise, but giues so uncertaine a sound, they can doo no great harme, because of nature and condition they neuer doo no great good. Now my pleading time is past, my booke must appeare in that bare fashion as I haue formed the matter, I hope it shall not walke so nakedly abroade, but shalbe able to abide the coldenes of ill will, and the extreame heate of hatefull mens disposition. God the giuer of goodnes, guide my verses so well that they neuer happen into their hands that loues me not, and make my prose and plainenes of speech be as welcome to the Reader, as it was well mens of the writer. So with double and treble blessing, Farwell.

FINIS.

My next booke shalbe the last booke of the Worthines of Wales.

And my last booke called my *Ultimum Vale*, shalbe (if it please God) twelue long tales for Christmas, dedicated to twelue honorable Lords.

Heere

FIGURE 23. Advertisement from Churchyardes Challenge. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

never printed. It seems that Ultimum Vale was a product of Churchyard's hope of garnering multiple patronage, but no title bearing any resemblance to Ultimum Vale was ever printed.

Churchyard's difficulties in having his contributions to the Mirror for Magistrates attributed to him has already been discussed, but there are several other indications in Churchyardes Challenge that he was either accused of plagiarism (a charge to which he seemed particularly sensitive) or that his works were wrongly attributed to another writer. In two different places in his Challenge--in the dedicatory letter and again in his address to the reader--Churchyard insists on receiving credit for writing the works that make up his extensive literary output. In the dedicatory letter, he says that he is setting "forth while I am liuing a great number of my works in this booke named my Challenge, that after my death shalbe witnesses they were mine owne dooings" (A2v). He elaborates on the point in his address "To the worthiest sorte of People, that gently can reade, and iustly can iudge." He offers up the items in Churchyard's Challenge, the poet tells his readers,

for three or foure causes, the one to keep the reputation of a writer, the second to please my freendes with the reading of new inuentions, and thirdly to desire my foes to giue me true reporte of those workes I haue made, and last of all to affirme that euery thing in this booke of Challenge is mine owne dooing, which iustlye no man can deny. (A3v)

The problem provides Churchyard with a rationale for printing his complete bibliography, a feature that takes up over two full pages of text. Aside from its considerable value to students of Churchyard, the list also gives some insight into the problems of private circulation.

Churchyard separates his list into two parts: first, "The bookes that I can call to memorie alreadie Printed" and second, works that were "gotten from me of some such noble freends as I am loath to offend." In other words,

Churchyard is in the awkward position of not being able to ask for the poems back, which seems to cause him a good deal of consternation. One item he especially regrets having given up and can no longer retrieve is one of his best: he describes it as "a sumptuous shew in Shrouetide," that "was in as good verse as euer I made: an honorable knight dwelling in the black Fiers, can witnes the same, because I read it vnto him" (**r). Another was given as a gift to "a great Lord of this land," but the lord must have not considered it to have been particularly interesting, for Churchyard adds, with a note of disappointment, that the recipient had reported to him that "it was lost" (**v). He had bad luck again with "a book of the oath of a Iudge." This item, Churchyard reports, was "delivered to a Stationer, who sent it to the L. cheefe Baron that last died" (**r). The implication is that Churchyard expected

the stationer to see to it that the work was printed, but that the item was lost when it was loaned out to the now-deceased lord. Finally, the poet ends his list by mentioning "An infinite number of other Songes and Sonets, giuen where they cannot be recouered, nor purchase any fauour when they are craued" (**v).

To the very end of his long life, Churchyard continued to produce his books with the trademarks he had established early in his literary career. In 1595, he published A Mysicall Consort of Heauenly Harmonie Compounded Out of Manie Parts of Musicke Called Chvrchyards Charitie (Figure 24), which contains his verse paraphrase of Sidney's Apology for Poetry. In the following year came A Pleasant Discourse of Court and Wars: With a Replication to Them Both, and a Commendation of All Those That Truly Serue Prince and Countrie. Written by Thomas Churchyard and Called His Cherrishing (Figure 25). Finally, in 1604, the year of his death, his last work, an epitaph for the Archbishop of Canterbury, appeared under the title of Churchyards Good Will (Figure 26).

IV

Despite the fact that Churchyard used the print medium to advertise his work and to establish reader recognition for his books, his efforts for the most part went

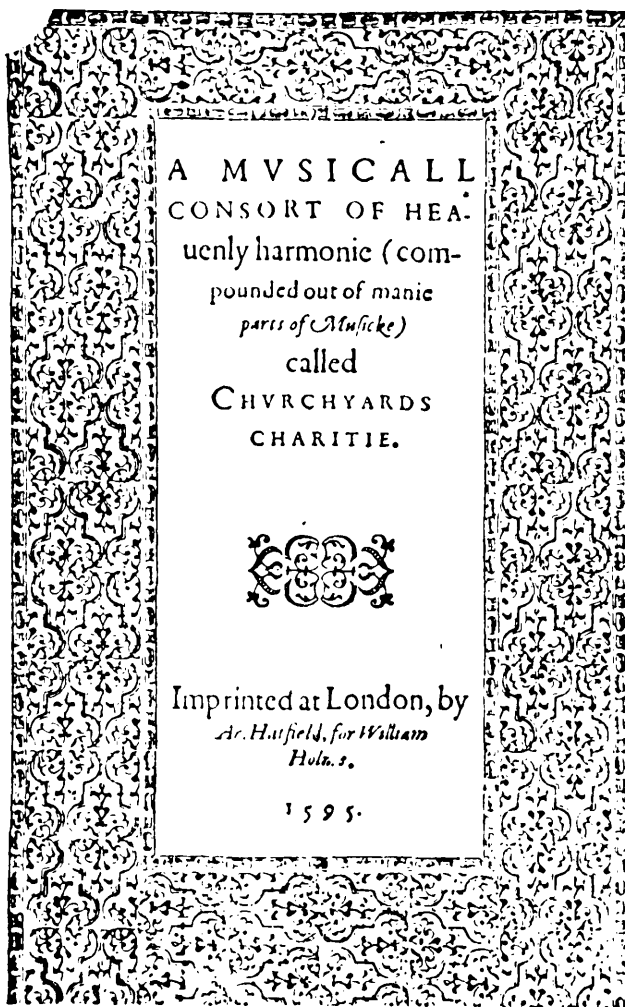


FIGURE 24. Title page to A Mvsicall Consort of Heavenly Harmonie Compounded Out of Manie Parts of Musicke Called Chvrchyards Charitie. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

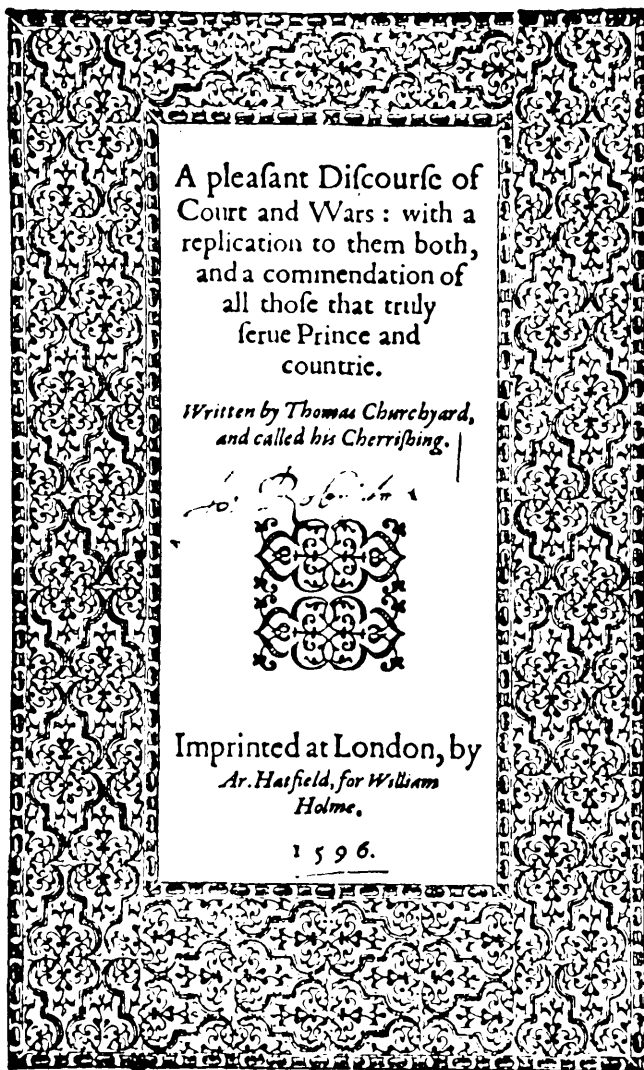


FIGURE 25. Title page to A Pleasant Discourse of Court and Wars: With a Replication to Them Both, and a Commendation of All Those That Truly Serue Prince and Countrie. Written by Thomas Churchyard and Called His Cherrishing. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

Churchyards good will. [7.]
 Sad and heauy Ver
 ses, in the nature of an Epitaph, for
the losse of the Archbishop of
 Canterbury, lately deceased, Primate
 and Metropolitan of all
 England.

Written by Thomas Churchyard,
Esquire.



Imprinted at London by Simon Stafford, dwell-
 ling in Hosier lane, neere Smith-
 field. 1604.

FIGURE 26. Title page to Churchyards Good Will. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

unrewarded. The end result was very close to the prediction made by Michael Drayton, who commented that had Churchyard and one of his contemporaries, George Gascoigne, "Liv'd but a little longer, they had seene / Their workes before them to have buried been" (qtd. in Dictionary of National Biography 345). But very early in his career, Churchyard had recognized his limitations and seems to have come to grips with the prospect that he would never achieve the literary fame he so ardently desired. In a poem printed first in the 1575 edition of Churchyardes Chippes, he goes into great detail about his prospects for success and about how readers should respond to his poetry. In a long envoi to "Churchyardes Dreame," the poet engages in some perceptive self-criticism on his role as a Renaissance writer. The passage is void of the bitterness and indignation that occasionally surfaces in his writing; in the course of the passage, he seems to come to accept as a predestined condition his modest place among English poets. He asks his readers to "take in worth / Sutch fruit as my baer tree brings forth" (176). With open admiration, he summons up memories of his favorite poets and recognizes his limitations when he compares his verse to theirs: "How shuld I hit in Chausers vayn, / Or toutche the typ of Surries brayn, / Or dip my pen in Patrarkes stiell, / Sens conning lak I all the whiell?" (177). He vows that if ever

he were granted the opportunity "To drink a draught of that swete well, / That springeth from Pernasoes hill," he would compose poetry of such quality that "evry lyen with pen I wraet, / Shuld wear garland lawreaet." If he were granted his wish, Churchyard says, his poetry would

make men think
 If ever poets pen and ynke,
 Or well cowtcht liens did praies attayn,
 My vers shuld evry tong constrain
 To give me lawd. (177-78)

But Churchyard's temperament had been shaped by his experience of neglect; he says that he is prepared to endure his obscurity because of his inherent limitations. He says he must write poetry springing from his personal experiences:

I neuer knue what Muesis ment;
 No gift of pen the gods me sent,
 But sutch as in wied world I fownd,
 And digged up in stony grownd,
 Whear I do tomble up but stones. (178)

He is faced, it seems, with an insurmountable dilemma--he is driven to write poetry but he does not have the intellectual tools necessary to accomplish the high ideals to which the best poets aspire. It was always in Churchyard's nature to respond to difficulties in his life with courage, and he resolves to go forward with his chosen career as a writer. He extends the agrarian metaphor introduced above to describe his limitations. Speaking of his desire to have advice from famous poets of the past, he says:

Thogh they alyve wear at my call,
 And I could not attain at all
 No part of their deep secret skill,
 I shuld be but a hobblar still.
 Yet hobbull forth I must needs nowe,
 For if I should let goe the plowe,
 And bakward loke how I have don,
 Than all wear mard I had begon:
 For as the fawts to mend I soght,
 I might in sutch dispair be broght,
 That I shuld fling the pen asyed. (178)

But Churchyard knows himself too well to believe that he could ever really give up writing poetry. Instead, he resigns himself to his fate, vowing to continue writing, hoping that his "writars skill may riepper be," refusing the urge to achieve some measure of fame by imitating the work of others, and asking only thanks, not praise, from his readers:

I seeke no prayse; but thank I crave
 For my goodwill: and for I have
 In verse set forth this dream at full,
 In deed I did no fethers pull
 From other byrds, to patch this pluem;
 But as in hed I had a ruem,
 Or fancie better might be naemd,
 So all this dream here have I fraemd,
 Accordyng as in thought it fell,
 Whearfore, I pray you, take it well. (179)

Near the end of his career, Churchyard felt his creative powers diminishing rapidly, and like Yeats in "The Circus Animal's Desertion," he provides a moving testimony to his realization of that fact. His comments are given in "A Few Voluntary Verses to the General Readers," which appeared in A Handful of Gladsome Verses Presented to Her

Queen's Majestie, printed in 1592. Much of the poem serves as his apologia for his career:

When youth was fresh, and florisht as a flowre
 The wits were quicke, and ready to conceive
 When age did frowne, and browes began to lowre
 My skill grue scant, the muses did me leaue
 Than tract of time, in head did cobwebs weaue
 So rusty grew, the reason of the braine
 And euer since, I lost my Poets vaine.

What though ripe wit, be now but bare and blunt
 And fine deuice, of head is farre to seeke
 And age can not, doe that which youth was wont
 And pen scarce makes, a verse in halfe a weeke
 And all my workes, not worth a little leeke
 Yet what I doe, but bad or worthy praise
 I neuer robb, no writer in my daies.

It is mine owne, I bring to Printers Presse
 I haue by happe, a Hatchet in my hand
 To hew the wood, (let it be more or lesse)
 In what strange forme, I list to let it stand
 Though some be chips, let all be iustly scand
 Ne chips ne choice, nor nothing els I knew
 But was well ment, and may abide the vew.

A Booke in Presse, that I my challenge name
 Shall tell you more, of workes that I haue done
 But blame me not, (since each man strives for
 fame)

To holde on right, the course wherin I runne
 I ought to weare, the cloth my fingers spunne
 I will so lowd, for bookes and verses crie
 That sure no bird, shall with my feathers flie.

(A3r-v)

Aside from the unusual psychological realism with which Churchyard infuses these stanzas, his main point represents clearly his attitude toward printing--its permanency proves authorship. His own books and verses, by the very fact of their being in print, help to prevent other "birds" from claiming his works as their own; by putting his books in

print, he has, in effect, clipped their wings, and his name as part of the title guarantees that the poems are his.

The vividly realistic self-portrait that Churchyard sets forth in extended fashion in "Churchyardes Dreame" stands in stark contrast to the confident stances developed by his predecessors in English poetry, Skelton and Heywood. The desire to attain fame escaped Churchyard just as it escaped almost all the poets writing in the 1560s and 1570s. Despite his limitations as a practicing poet, however, Churchyard deserves our attention today for his efforts in using print to develop a number of publishing practices that became common features in the publication of books in the later Renaissance and even into our own day.

Notes

¹ Brief accounts of Churchyard's life are given by the Dictionary of National Biography, Adnitt, and Goldwyn.

² Churchyardes Chippes has been reprinted by Collier. All quotations from poems in Churchyardes Chippes are cited by page number from that printing.

³ Many of Churchyard's epitaphs were collected in two works, A Feast Full of Sad Cheere and A Reuying of the Dead.

⁴ Geimer (307) notes that Churchyard had trouble collecting his pension and may not have received any of it until 1597.

⁵ Rollins also mentions briefly but does not take seriously the suggestion made by Collier in his 1867 reprinting of The Firste Parte of Churchyardes Chippes that Churchyard edited the 1557 edition of the Miscellany.

⁶ Churchyard also wrote the "Tragedy of Cardinal Wolsey" that first appeared in the 1587 edition of The Mirror.

⁷ See, for example, STC 5266, 5239, 5244, and 5247.

⁸ See the entry on Gilbert in the Dictionary of National Biography.

⁹ See the Frobisher entry in the Dictionary of National Biography.

¹⁰ A similar catalog of potential readers and a critical assessment of their attitudes toward books is given in "The Author to His Booke" appended to "A Praise of Poetry," included in A Muscicall Consort of Heauenly Harmonie Called Churchyardes Charitie, printed in 1595:

Go now plaine booke, where thou maist welcom find,
Walke throw the world, till frinds do thee embrace:
Let foes alone, obey thy masters mind,
For fear nor threat, hide not a faultlesse face.
Win courts good will, the countries loue is gaind,
With wise men stay, from froward wits beware:
At plow and cart, plaine speech is not disdaind:
Sit downe with those, that feeds on hungrie fare,
For they haue time, to note what thou dost saie,
Let gallants go, they will but giue a gibe:

Or take thee vp, and fling thee straight awaie,
Touch not smooth hands, that vse to take a bribe,
They better like, full bags than busie bookes,
Shun from the sight, of glorious peacocks proud:
Their onlie pomp, stands all on statelie lookes,
They glowm and skoull, as tweare a raynie cloude.
(Blr)

11 Despite the deletion of the phrase "Churchyard's
Choice" from the reissued title page, the phrase remains as
part of the running head at the top of the text's pages.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN TAYLOR, THE WATER POET

I

John Taylor's career as a popular poet is characterized by an industriousness, ingenuity, and irreverence that is perhaps unparalleled in Renaissance literature. His industriousness can be measured in part by the 63 items he included in his 1630 printing of All the Workes of John Taylor the Water-Poet, a handsome folio collection of many items he had printed individually between 1612 and 1630.¹ His productivity continued throughout the rest of his long life; by the year of his death in 1653, he had published another 125 items. He began his publishing career in 1612, when he found his income from his trade as a Thames River ferryman on the Thames River diminishing as a result of the increased use of coaches for transportation. Faced with this financial insecurity and convinced that he had a natural talent as a poet, he fashioned a new career for himself by proclaiming himself the King's Water-Poet, taking his appellation from his job as a ferryman.² He eventually

gave up his trade as a sculler, but he never ceased to glorify himself as a waterman-poet in his printed works.

Even though Taylor's claims about the dissemination of his literary output are probably exaggerated, his publications must still have been among the most widely circulated in England. At the beginning of Taylor's Travels and Circular Perambulations, a travel book printed in 1636, he makes the following statement about the numbers of his books circulating in and around London:

I am sure there hath beene within these 30. yeares more than 200 Impressions of Books in my Name; For though I have not written above 80. yet some of them hath been printed 10. or 12. times over, 1500. or 2000 every time. Amongst which number of Pamphlets, I am sure, that (first and last) I have given freely for nothing (never expecting any thing but thanks) above 30000. Bookes, (besides those that I have beene Rewarded for:).

(Qtd. by Wooden 18-19)

Taylor was in a position to know since he himself paid to have many of his books printed, and he often acted as his own distributor and salesman. He made full and ingenious use of subscription publication to fund the printing of his works,³ and would write on almost any subject in order to produce a pamphlet. Among the topics treated in his works are needles and clean linen, watermen and beggars, whores and thieves, seafights and walking tours.

Taylor's place in the English literary system is perhaps more important than generally recognized. He is an important innovator in the area of English travel

literature, and his prose style provides some interesting insights into the development of journalistic writing (Wooden). The wide-ranging subject matter of Taylor's works and the attitudes expressed in it give us a valuable guide to many Jacobean social, cultural, and literary interests (Waage). In addition, he is of great importance in the study of seventeenth-century printing practices used by authors to establish their popularity and gain widespread audiences for their work.

For Taylor, poetry was a celebration of wit and imagination. Both qualities play prominent roles in his poetry, in the textual features he employs in his printed books, and in the ways he contrived to earn at least part of his living from the output of his pen. He saw no conflict between the literary life and the work-a-day world; in fact, he sought to bring the two together as natural companions. Much of his appeal as a writer must have involved the way he perceived poetry as a natural activity that was inclusive rather than exclusive in its uses.

Taylor's use of textual devices is both varied and fascinating, and is especially important since he consistently employed a wide variety of techniques throughout his long career as a writer. He not only employed textual features in serious and subtle ways to promote his printed wares, but he frequently parodied these

features, both as a characteristic of his own work and as a mockery of other rival writers. He was not afraid to name the names of his literary rivals, engage in literary flytings, and challenge them to public competitions that tested their skills as poets. The works that he issued up to the 1630 demonstrate his thorough knowledge and accomplished use of virtually every textual device that had been employed up to that time. These textual techniques are aimed directly at his reading audience; his books use them in such highly self-conscious ways that Renaissance readers may well have sought out his books just to see what John Taylor was up to next.

II

Taylor embarked on his new career as a poet in 1612, and the three books he issued in that year demonstrate that he intended to make full use of the exigencies of print to catapult himself into the public eye. The death of Prince Henry in 1612 provided Taylor with an appropriate occasion to publish one of his first works, Great Britaine, All in Blacke. For the Incomparable Losse of Henry, Our Late and Worthy Prince. The death of a public figure had always been an event that guaranteed all types of poets an occasion for composing a poem that would provide at least temporary publicity. In the instance of Prince Henry's death, at

least 17 poets composed elegies for the passing of James's son. Taylor must have been among the very first to get his poem printed, or at least to have planned for its printing, since it was entered in the Stationers' Register on the day following young Henry's death (Miller 228). The poem is filled with the literary commonplaces required of such elegies, but since its publication marks the beginning of Taylor's long career, it is worthwhile to note the techniques of printing that Taylor employs in his elegy. The most notable feature of the printing demonstrates Taylor's early recognition that title pages could be used to communicate symbolically with the reader. The book's title effectively conveys the poem's subject, but Taylor complements the title with a title page to match: he uses a black background to symbolize the passing of the English prince (Figure 27).

At least two other later printings of elegies by Taylor employed a similar technique. One of them, The Muses Mourning: or Funerall Sonnets on the Death of John Moray Esquire, printed in 1615, is especially noteworthy. On the verso of each page of the small octavo appears a heavy black square, printed xylographically, that is, from woodcuts. Opposite each verso leaf is an elegiac sonnet for Moray (Figure 28). Thus, the verso of each leaf provides a symbolic link to the linguistic message carried by each

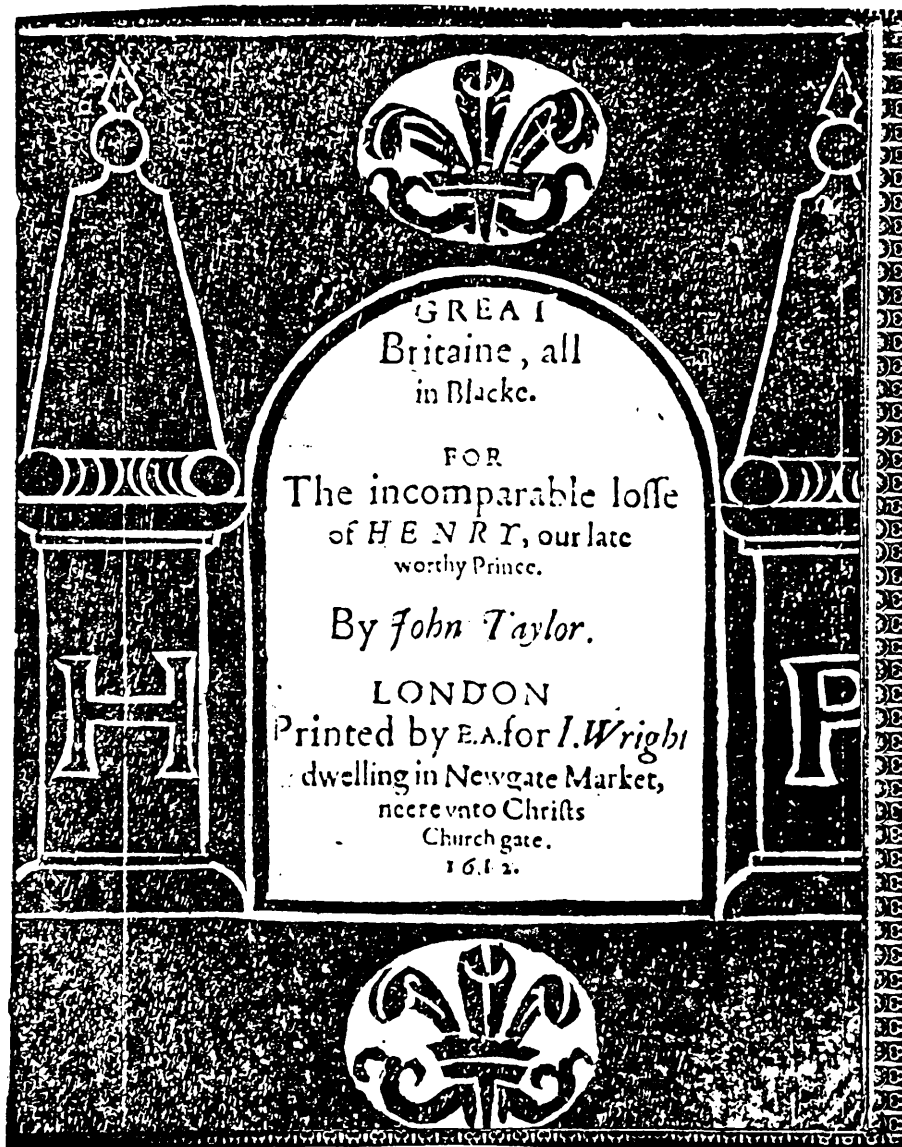


FIGURE 27. Title page to Great Britaine, All in Blacke. For the Incomparable Losse of Henry, Our Late and Worthy Prince. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

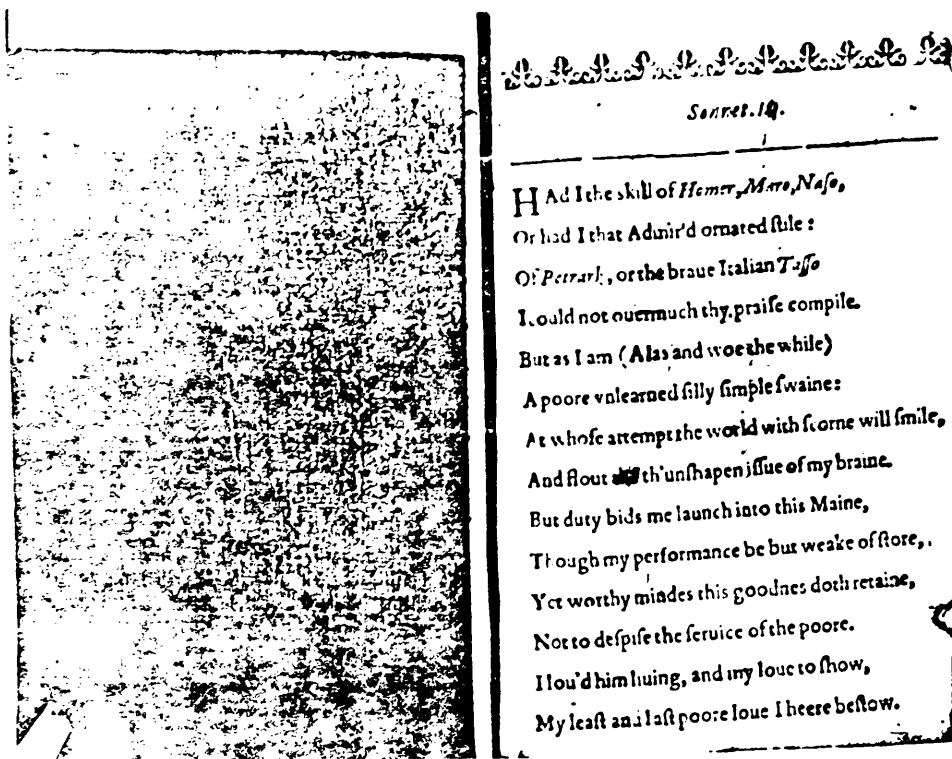


FIGURE 28. Facing pages from The Muses Mourning: or Funerall Sonnets on the Death of John Moray Esquire. Courtesy of The British Library.

sonnet printed on the recto of each leaf, neatly integrating form and content throughout the printed text.

The third instance in which Taylor uses the black title page to announce the subject matter of the book is A Living Sadnes, in Duty Consecrated to the Immortall Memory of Our Late Sovereigne James, printed in 1625.

Although black backgrounds for title pages had been used previously in English printing, Taylor's use of it in these three instances demonstrates that even at the beginning of his career he was aware of the potential of textual features to communicate to the reader important information about a book's contents. Of course, it was also abundantly clear to Taylor that the same principal could be applied to title pages that communicated images and messages about the author of a work, and almost from the outset of his publishing career he began using title page woodcuts that provided striking images of himself as a poet and that communicated to the reader his intended role as a literary figure in England.

The two other works printed in 1612 show how Taylor employed such title pages to make his image known in the literary marketplace. The earliest of the two printings, The Sculler introduces a complex series of techniques that Taylor continues to use throughout his career. The biographical significance of the title is clear; his work as

a ferryman and an expert on matters related to water is thus made clear from the outset.⁴ The poems themselves are filled with allusions to his background, and more importantly, his profession forms the basis for his literary image. His role as a waterman is alluded to in almost every printed work. For example, the title page of The Sculler (Figure 29) gives graphic evidence of how Taylor set out to exploit his unique position as England's Water-Poet. Both the title page illustration, or "portrait," of Taylor and the book's contents publicly announce and celebrate his dual professions as waterman and poet. In publicly acknowledging his working-class background in his earliest publications, Taylor parts company with those Renaissance poets who used poetry in an attempt to escape their past rather than build on it.⁵ Taylor makes no apology for his past; in fact, he defends it at the very beginning of The Sculler:

Good gentle Reader, if I doe transgresse,
 I know you know, that I did ne're professe,
 Vntill this time in Print to be a Poet:
 And now to exercise my wits I show it.
 View but the intrals of this little booke,
 And thou wilt say that I some paines haue tooke:
 Paines mixt with pleasure, pleasure ioyn'd with
 pain
 Produc'd this issue of my laboring braine.
 But now me thinkes I heare some enuious throat,
 Say I should deale no further then my Boat:
 And ply my Fare, and leaue my Epigram,
 Minding, ne Sutor vltra crepidam.
 To such I answere, Fortune giue her gifts.
 Some downe she throwes, and some to honour lifts:
 'Mongst whom from me she hath with-held her store
 And giues me leaue to sweat it at my Oare.
 And though with labour I my liuing purse,

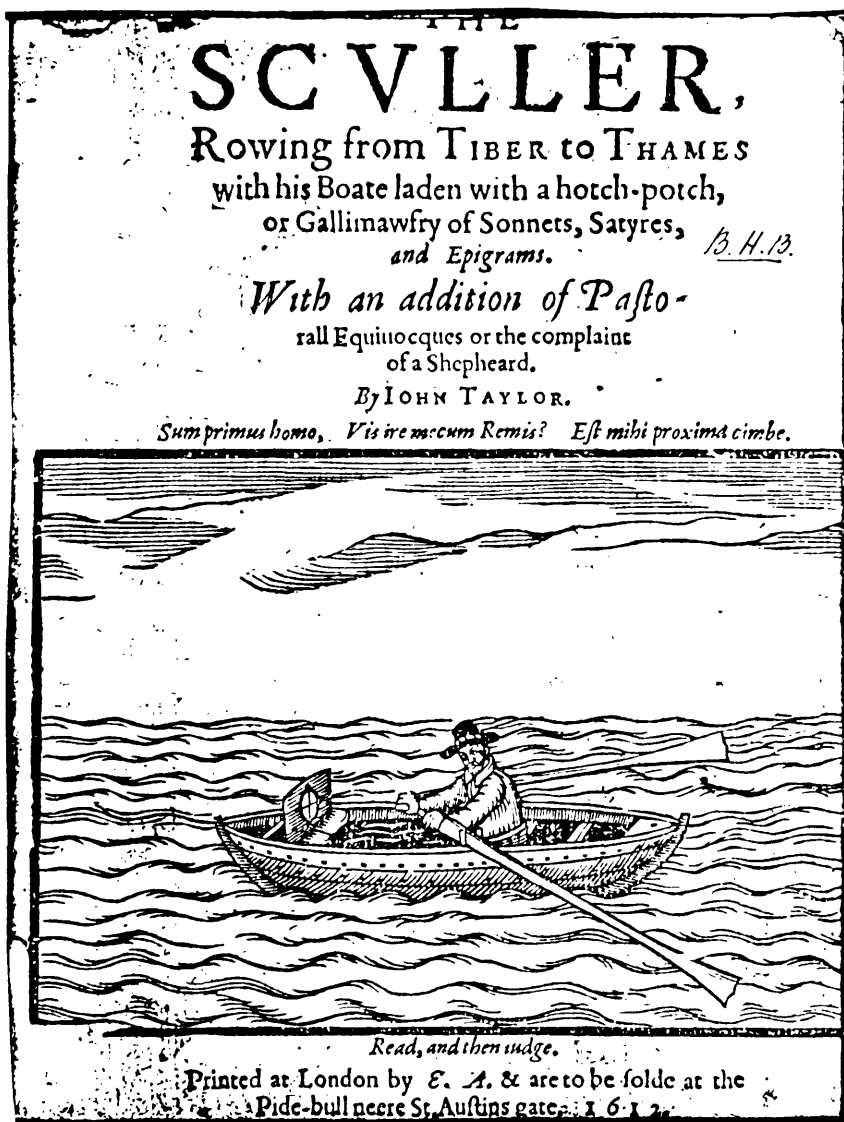


FIGURE 29. Title page to The Sculler. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

Yet doe I thinke my lines no lot the worse,
 For Gold is gold, though buried vnder mosse,
 And drosse in golden vessels is but drosse. (499)

By making a conscious decision to integrate his life with his poetry, to infuse his working-class background into his verse rather than separate it from the literature he writes, he becomes one of England's first self-styled "natural" poets, and, as a member of the working class, he is in a particularly good position to become a spokesman for and educator of an audience not familiar with Classical literature but nonetheless interested in reading English poetry.

His task was not an easy one. In A Cast Over the Water, published in 1614, he makes reference to the difficulty he faces in trying to balance his work as a ferryman with his avocation of poetry. In an epilogue to the work, Taylor explains the reason the book had to be so hastily written: "I would haue thee well to vnderstand, / I businesse haue by water and by land, / My seruice and occasions me incites / To write by snatches, and by spurts a nights" (325).

Another important aspect of The Sculler is the way Taylor uses the poems in it to communicate his attitudes toward several features of the English literary system. Perhaps because of his low social status, Taylor seems from the beginning to have been skeptical of the patronage system

as a valid way to nurture English literature. Although he occasionally sought patronage by writing epicedia and other poetry celebrating English aristocrats, he is in general very indifferent to the rewards of patronage, and he worked hard to develop methods that made him independent of its vagaries. In early works such as The Sculler, he seems confident in his ability to carve out a broad reading audience and live entirely off the income from his combined occupations as waterman and poet. If necessary, he is willing, like his predecessor Churchyard, to commit himself to a life of poverty in order to pursue his dual vocations as poet and boatsman. He constantly repeats his commitment to the literary life throughout his long career; but he generally handles the problem with a matter-of-factness that lends a tone of dignity rather than self-pity to his statements. In The Sculler he communicates his attitudes in a poem entitled "An Inkhorn Disputation, or Mungrell conference, betwixt a Lawyer and a Poet." The poem consists of lengthy exchanges between a lawyer and a poet in which each demonstrates his command of the vocabulary of his respective profession. "An Inkhorn Disputation" makes Taylor's knowledge of his poetic craft quite clear, but more importantly, it defines the poet's work as beneficent rather than parasitic, as Taylor implies that the work of the lawyer is. At the conclusion of the "disputation" the

lawyer gives up on his efforts to communicate with the verbose poet:

The Lawyer saw the Poet had such store,
Of pickeld words, said hold; wee'le talke no more.
For thou by mee, or I shall not by thee,
By prating neuer edified bee.
And for Conclusion, let us both part friends,
And for our profits this shall bee our ends.
Wee Lawyers liue vpon the times Abuses,
Whil'st Poets starue, by waiting on the
Muses. (513)

As evidence of his commitment to independence and of his refusal to demean himself by flattering potential patrons, Taylor uses dedications to mock those poets who do use such means to fund their writing. This tactic allows him to create dedications that serve as entertainment for the reader. It also portrays him as a self-sufficient, self-confident poet, one who refuses to flatter the wealthy in order to gain financial favor. Thus, the dedication in The Sculler parodies the kind of dedications that most Jacobean readers would have been accustomed to seeing. Because it appears in one of Taylor's first printed books, it is especially important, since it seems to establish a creed by which he will be forced to operate in the following years. He will seek support not from the wealthy, Taylor maintains, but instead from the general public:

Dedicated To neither Monarch, nor Miser, Keaser
nor Caitiffe, Pallatine or Plebeian; but to great
Mounsier Multitude, alias, All, or euey One; Iohn
Taylor sends his Scull-boats lading, to be
censured as please their Wisedomes to screw their
Lunatike opinions. Most Mighty, Catholike, (or

Vniuersall) Mounsier Multitude, (whose many millions of Hydraes heads, Argus eyes, and Briareus hands,) (are if you please) to iudge of my Water-Muses trauailes, to looke with hundreds of aspects on the prospect of my Sculler, or to lend a few of your many hands, to helpe to tugge me a shore, at the Hauen of your goodwils, which if you doe, it is more then my worthelesse imbecillitie doeth eyther expect or merit. But if you will not assist me, I will attend the next high tide, and scramble vp into Pauls Churchyard, though I be fast a ground for my labour. Ile grable for Gudgeons or fish for Flounders in the Rereward of our iminent temporizing Humorists, sharpe Satyrists, or Aenigmaticall Epigramatists. . . . Meane time, my Boat (like a Barbers shop) is readie for all commers, bee they of what Religion they will, paying their Fare. (497)

Enough readers must have paid the fare for reading The Sculler to deplete the initial printing. The book was reprinted in 1614, with Taylor describing it on the title page as a "Boat laden with a Hotch-potch, or Galliomawfrey of Sonnets, Satyres, and Epigrams." However, Taylor altered the title on the second printing to emphasize even more strongly his water-poet persona: he calls the second edition Taylors Water-Worke: or the Scullers Travels and again uses the first edition title-page illustration that depicts him rowing across a river.

A final important feature that appears in The Sculler is a 14-line poem addressed to Thomas Coriat. Coriats Crudities, an account of Coriat's travels abroad, had appeared in 1611 in an ostentatious volume filled with learnedness and affectation, including a series of commendatory poems by more than 50 different authors

praising Coriat and his book. That Taylor was highly attuned to the literary uses and abuses of print is attested to by his comments in The Sculler on Coriat and his book. Taylor evidently received reports that Coriat had insulted his background, and this gave Taylor the opportunity respond in kind:

What matters for the place I first came from
 I am no Duncelcomb, Coxelcomb, Odcomb Tom
 Nor am I like a wool-pack, cram'd with Greek,
 Venus in Venice minded to goe seek;
 And at my backe returne to write a Volume,
 In memory of my wits Gargantua Columel.
 The choysest wits would neuer so adore me;
 Nor like so many Lackies run before me,
 But honest Tom, I enuy not thy state,
 There's nothing in thee worthy of my hate;
 Yet I confesse thou hast an excellent wit:
 But that an idle braine doth harbour it.
 Foole thou it at the Court, I on the Thames,
 So farewell Odcomb Tom, God blesse King James.
 (499)

Since he himself had thus far refused to seek the security of patronage, Taylor makes it clear that he has little use for those who stoop to the kind of flattery in which Coriat was engaged. The poem may well have been calculated to generate a response that would give Taylor much-needed publicity in the competitive London publishing scene. If so, it was a success. Coriat responded heatedly, as Taylor had hoped. This gave Taylor the opportunity to engage in an even lengthier literary flyting project, and he used Coriat as its focus.

He wasted no time in producing the follow-up to Coriat's response, for later in that same year, 1612, Taylor had his third work printed, Laugh, and Be Fat: A Commentary vpon the Odcombyan Banquet. The beginning of Laugh, and Be Fat recounts the history of the quarrel between Coriat and Taylor. The entire book is devoted to the mockery of Taylor's literary arch-enemy; it includes a scathing character sketch of the hapless Coriat. One section of Laugh, and Be Fat is entitled "The frontispice of Master Coriats Booke very learnedly descanted vpon, by Master Laurence Whitakers and Master Benjamin Ionson." Whitaker and Jonson had been among the poets to recommend Coriat's book, and Taylor's parodic 68-line poem goes into exaggerated detail on the elaborate title page of Coriats Crudities, a title page that comprised a series of engraved panels, each of which represented an event in Coriat's journey recounted in his book. Although Taylor's poem ruthlessly mocks Coriat's title page, the poem may well have led Taylor to consider more seriously the value of the elaborate title pages such as the one that appeared with Coriats Crudities. As Taylor's own career progressed, the elaborateness of his own title pages increased, and, as we shall see, his emblematic parody of Coriat's title page that he included in Laugh, and Be Fat may have given him the idea

to include serious emblematic readings of the title pages of his own books.

The remainder of Laugh, and be Fat consists of an extended series of mock presentation poems like those included in Coriat's Crudities. Taylor parodies the use of the Latinized names given to the contributors of verses in the front matter of Coriat's book, and twists the meaning of the originals commendatory poems into scathing insults. He follows this section with a series of pompous orations intended to mock Coriat's stilted prose style. A single sentence from the second oration will serve to illustrate the nature of Taylor's parody:

Thrice valorous followers of a four time thrice
treble more valiant Leader, if I had the tongue of
Hermes the Prolocutor to the gods, or as many
fingers as hundred-handed Briareus; if surging
Neptune were converted into inke, or the rugged
ragged face of our ancient mother Tellus were
paper, yet could not the verball volubility, or
elocution of my voyce, nor the agility, dexterity,
or facility of my hands, nor the spacious,
vnmeasurable, numberlesse white innocent paper; no
none of all these could either speake, write, or
by any other meanes declare, or make a true
explanation of the reuerence I beare to your
Lordship, and the deep heart-gnawing contrition,
that lyes congealed or conglutinated to my heart.
(241)⁶

Not content to let the issue rest with his full-scale parody of Coriat's book in Laugh, and Be Fat, Taylor used the flyting to further his own opportunities for publication. In the following year, 1613, Taylor issued two more items that roundly abused Coriat. Odcombs Complaint:

or, Coriats Fvnerall Epicediym: or Death-Song, vpon His Late Reported Drowning was a pamphlet that continued Taylor's playful parody of English verse forms. In addition to Taylor's amusing mock-elegy for his presumably-drowned enemy, the poet includes such features as "Epitaph in the Barmooda tongue, which must be pronounced with the accent of the grunting of a hogge," which was meant to satirize Coriat's habits of advertising his extensive knowledge of Classical and exotic languages. That Taylor had planned a sequel to Odcombs Complaint is clear from his next work, also printed in 1613. Taylor resurrects the recently-drowned Coriat for one more round of insult. The Eighth Wonder of the World: or Coriats Escape from His Sypposed Drowning finally ends Taylors self-created literary flyting. The Eighth Wonder provides the best synopsis of the whole literary conflict and reveals the effectiveness of Taylor's attempts to gain publicity at Coriat's expense. In a poem that serves as a foreward to the book, Taylor recounts the history of the quarrel:

A Pamphlet printed was, The Sculler nam'd
Wherein Sir Thomas much my writing blam'd;
Because an Epigram therein was written,
In which he said, he was nipt, gald and bitten.
He frets, he fumes, he rages and exclaims,
And vows to rouze me from the River Thames.
Well, I to make him some amends for that,
Did write a Booke was cald, Laugh and be fat:
In which he said I wrong'd him ten timmes more,
And made him madder then he was before.
Then did he storme, and chafe, and sweare, and
ban,

The episode with Coriat was not the last of Taylor's self-made flyting episodes, however. Taylor's concept of poetry extended to public performance and public competition among rival poets. This is evidenced by Taylor's challenge to William Fennor, a poet who also claimed to be a "natural poet" (Notestein 172), to a contest of wits to be held before the staging of a play at the Hope Theater on October 7, 1614. This episode in his career resulted in the publication of three works, two by Taylor and one by his rival poet William Fennor.⁷ Taylor's Revenge was printed soon after the scheduled public contest that was to demonstrate Taylor's superiority to Fennor in matters of natural poetic wit. The introduction to Taylor's Revenge gives the details of the outcome and the source of Taylor's antagonism toward Fennor:

I, Iohn Taylor Watterman, did agree with William Fennor, (who arrogantly and falsely entitles himselfe the Kings Maiesties Riming Poet) to answer me at a triall of Wit, on the seuenth of October last 1614 on the Hope stage on the Bank-side, and the said Fennor receiued of mee ten shillings in earnest of his comming to meet me, whereupon I caused 1000 bills to be Printed, and diuulg'd my name 1000 ways and more, giuing my Friends and diuers of my acquaintance notice of this Bear-garden banquet of dainty Conceits; and when the day came that the Play should haue been performed, the house being fill'd with a great Audience, who had all spent their monies extraordinarily: then this Companion for an Asse, ran away and left mee for a Foole, amongst thousands of critcall Censureres; where I was ill thought of by my friends, scorned by my foes, and in conclusion, in a greater puzzell then the blinde Beare in the midst of all her whip-broth:

Besides the summe of twenty pounds in money, I
 lost my Reputation amongst many, and gaïnd
 disgrace in stead of my better expectations.
 (305)

Taylor's embarrassment was understandable, but he turned his ill-fortune to good cause by documenting his disgust in the more permanent form of print. Taylor's Revenge, or, The Rimer William Fennor, Firked, Ferrited, and Finely Fetcht over the Coales does precisely what the title suggests. Taylor had literally suffered physical assault when the scheduled event was cancelled; the audience was so disappointed when Taylor announced that Fennor had not appeared that they threw stones and bottles at the hapless poet.

The root cause of Taylor's dislike for Fennor seems to have been Fennor's claim of being the King James Riming-Poet. Taylor himself had claimed a similar title, His Majesties Water-Poet, and he clearly took offense at Fennor intruding on his literary territory.

Fennor responded to Taylor's Revenge with Fennors Defence; and following its appearance, Taylor wasted no time in issuing the second of his diatribes against his enemy. This time, Taylor continues to develop his waterman-poet image by entitling the work A Cast Over the Water (Figure 30). With the publication of this work, the controversy seems to have died down, but from the episode Taylor must surely have garnered a widespread reputation as a witty,

A
CAST OVER
THE WATER,

BY

John Taylor.

Given *Gratis* to WILLIAM
FENNOR, *the Rimer*, from
London to the Kings
Bench.

Or a Replication to *Fennors* answer.

With Admonitions, and friendly Exhortations
in Prose and Verse, perswading the said FENNOR
to Penitence, that he may hang with the clear
conscience at Saint *Thomas* of
Waterings.

Here may you see a fellow brass'd and baffled,
And (like a lade) is spurgal'd, swicht, and snaffled.

Printed at London for *William Butler*, dwelling in
the Bulwarke neere the Tower, and are to be sold
by *Edward Marchant*, in Pauls Church-
yard. 1615.

FIGURE 30. Title page to A Cast Over the Water. Courtesy of the British Library.

unique, and ambitious poet, despite the heavy price he paid in terms of his initial embarrassment.

Taylor's manufactured flytings with both Coriat and Fennor serve to illustrate how aware the poet was of the potential for publicity that could be generated by the innovative use of the press for disseminating information about himself as an aspiring poet. The 1,000 handbills he printed and posted is only one of several examples of schemes he developed for making himself known to the general population of London. Though he reviled Coriat's own brand of stilted and pompous travel literature, he evidently recognized the potential market for the sale of such material. It was not long before Taylor began travelling himself and reporting his adventures in verse and prose for an audience eager for such literary diversion. As a "natural" poet, it would be expected that he would write in a plain, straightforward style, and so he did. He seems to have recognized that there was a wide audience made up of readers who sought pleasure in reading material written in an easily accessible style, and he set out to produce literature for them, almost always issuing his poems in the cheap and popular octavo and duodecimo formats.

As Taylor's career developed, he employed the techniques that several of his fellow poets, past and present, had used to establish their names on the London

literary scene. He used a long series of eponymous titles in the tradition of Churchyard; of his books printed between 1612 and 1653, 15 include his surname in their titles.

Like Churchyard, too, he made a habit of advertising past and future works in his publications. After his Workes appeared in 1630, two subsequent works, The Complaint of Christmas, printed in 1631, and A Common Whore, printed in 1635, included an advertisement for the 1630 folio publication. He frequently advertises his works-in-progress by giving advance notice of forthcoming books, for example, in Taylor on Thame Isis, A Cast over the Water, and Taylor's Travels.

Mention has been made above of Taylor's parody of Coriat's Crudities, and I have suggested that despite Taylor's mockery of Coriat's use of textual devices, the parodist may have appropriated some of Coriat's ideas for his own title pages. A good example of this is the title page to A Shilling or, The Trauailles of Twelve-pence, printed in 1621 (Figures 31 and 32). In addition to using the attention-getting pun of the title, Taylor provides an a poem that explains the emblematic title page. The title page is especially provocative because the emblematic reading of the illustration contains an elaborate joke that incorporates the poet's symbolic tools of the rower's trade with the narrative taking place in the woodcut. The

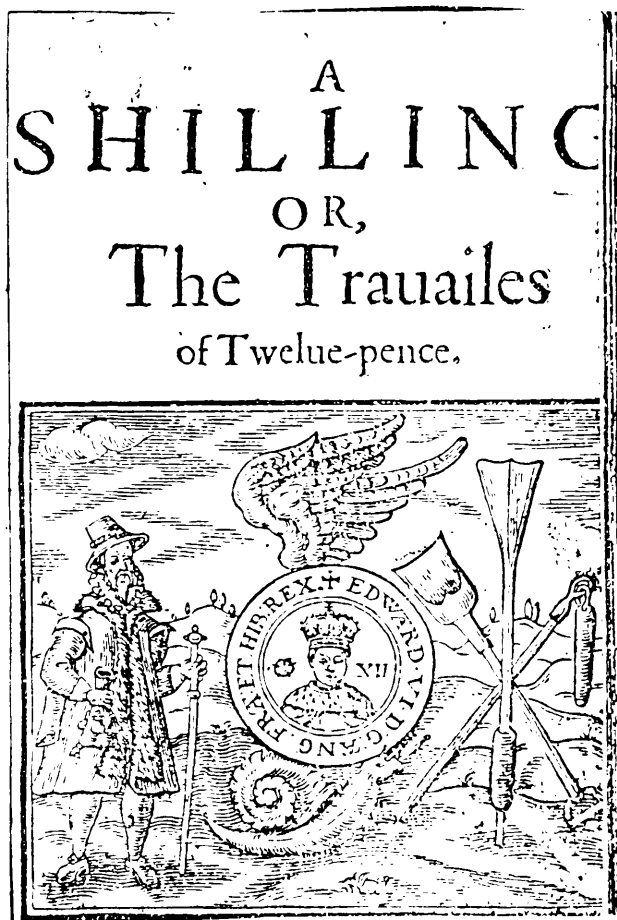
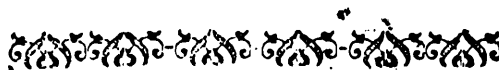


FIGURE 31. Title page to A Shilling or, The Trauailes of Twelue-pence. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.



Those that will change this new coyn'd English *shilling*,
 And giue's two *Tillions*, or three *Groates*, most willing;
 Shall finde (though 'twas not Coyned in the *Mint*)
 That there's no counterfeitted mettall in't.
 I Coyn'd it, and the Coyning I'll maintaine
 It is vnclip'd. and weight vnto a graine;
 To *Mint* and *flampe*, my *brass* and *Pen* agreed,
 I Coyn'd, and feare no hanging for the deed.

The meaning of the Picture.

Here, Twelve-pence *scattered* upon a *Snaille*,
 To meete the *Oare*, the *Shouell* and the *Flaile*:
 But to the *Furrow* gowne all in *posse* he *flings*
 Through th' *Ayre*, o're *Earth* and *Sea*, with *Faulcons wings*,
 Which *Emblem* truly to the world implies,
 That *Money* to the *Mizers* *Coffers* flies,
 Whil'st vnto those that *paines* and *labour* take
 It doth a *creeping*, *slow*, and *dull* pace make.
 But let it *creepe*, *slow*, or *swiftly* run:
 Amidst this *scrambling* *Age*, I will haue *some* *fun*
 For if it come not to the *Oare*, nor *Pen*,
 I'll neuer *studdy*, *write*, or *Reuise* againe.

JOHN TAYLOR.



FIGURE 32. "The Meaning of the Picture" from A Shilling or, The Trauailles of Twelue-pence. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

declaration that Taylor makes in "The Meaning of the Picture" again advertises his dual professions as compatible rather than mutually exclusive. A seventeenth-century book-buyer would probably at least respond to the title page of the book as a curiosity and would probably be sufficiently engaged by the custom-designed woodcut to invest the time necessary to read Taylor's interpretation of the emblematic woodcut. This would, of course, guarantee Taylor at least a momentary audience for his work and would certainly impress his name, his persona, and his wit on the prospective book-buyer.

Another of Taylor's works demonstrates even more clearly how Taylor used the fortunes and misfortunes of others to further his own literary career. In 1621, George Wither, who had already suffered imprisonment for publishing satires critical of English political leaders, issued another controversial work, Wither's Motto, Nec Habeo, nec Careo, nec Curo. This publication soon won Withers some additional notoriety and imprisonment, and Taylor used the occasion to issue his own response to Wither. In that same year, 1621, Taylor wrote and printed his own motto, Taylor's Motto, Et Habeo, et Careo, Et Curo (Figure 33), replete with an elaborate engraving on the title page of his work that plays on the various features of Wither's title-page emblem. Like Wither in Wither's Motto, Taylor includes "The Emblem



FIGURE 33. Title page to Taylor's Motto. Et Habeo, et Careo, Et Curo. Courtesy of The Huntington Library.

Explained" to provide his readers with a fully developed linguistic explanation of the authorial representation symbolized in the engraving. The accompanying poem also provides a key to Taylor's more positive perspective on the human condition.

III

The basis of much of Taylor's antagonism toward the authors he parodies is their tendency to parade their learning and their attempts to aggrandize themselves by obscuring their meaning rather than making it clear. He felt that literature belonged to everyone, not just the privileged and learned. The best example of his attitude as it is developed textually is Laugh, and Be Fat, Taylor's parody of Coriats Crudities. Taylor was no pedant, and he was genuinely disturbed by the frequent ostentatious displays of learning in many of the books that had been printed since the establishment of the printing press in England in 1475. His objection to overly learned works stemmed in part from the attitude he frequently expresses in his poetry: literature ought to be a "natural" activity; it ought to record and celebrate life in the native language of those who read it.

Taylor shapes his entire literary position around this premise. His own talent for writing poetry, he tells us in

Taylor's Motto, was a gift given to him in a strange visitation. He earned a simple living from his occupation as a waterman, Taylor says, until one evening when he was summoned to shore by the nine poetic muses:

The watry Element most plentifull,
 Supplide me daily with the Oare and Scull,
 And what the water yeelded, I with mirth,
 Did spend vpon the Element of earth,
 Vntill at last a strange Poetique veine,
 As strange a way possest my working braine:
 It chanc'd one euening, on a Reedy banke,
 The Muses sate together in a ranke:
 Whilst in my boat I did by water wander,
 Repeating lines of Hero and Leander,
 The Triple three took great delight in that,
 Call'd me a shore, and caus'd me sit and chat,
 And in the end, when all our talke was done,
 They gaue to me a draught of Helicon,
 Which prou'd to me a blessing and a curse,
 To fill my pate with verse, and empt my purse.
 (217)

Taylor refuses to turn his back on his simple past. He expresses his sentimental attachment to England and the English language without embarrassment or apology. As a self-proclaimed natural poet, a poet of the people, he was especially concerned with establishing common and even colloquial English as a fully acceptable idiom for poetry. His own poetry is filled with a common vocabulary and dealt with common subjects so that it was accessible to almost any English citizen with a modest reading ability. He disliked inkhorn terms intensely and attacked them on numerous occasions. His fullest statement on the matter is given in one of his earliest printed works, The Nipping or Snipping

of Abuses, published in 1614. The Nipping contains a lengthy poem, "The Authours Description of a Poet and Poesie, with an Apology in Defence of Naturall English Poetry," which explains his position. He points out that the poets most admired in antiquity and even in more recent times--Virgil, Ovid, Du Bartas, Homer, Petrarch, Tasso--all wrote in their native languages. Taylor accepts the value of poetic tradition exemplified by great authors, but he is skeptical of the need for English poets to imitate the linguistic qualities of poetry written in other languages when the English language is capable of expressing ideas in equally clear and elegant ways. If poets in other lands succeeded in composing memorable verse in their native language, Taylor wonders,

Why may not then an English man, I pray;
 In his owne language write as erst did they?
 Yet must we suit our phrases to their shapes,
 And in their imitations be their Apes.
 Whilst Muses haunt the fruitfull forked hill,
 The world shall reverence their vnmached skill.
 And for inuention, fiction, method, measure,
 From them must Poets seeke to seeke that treasure.
 But yet I think a man may vse that tongue
 His Country vses, and doe them no wrong.
 Then I whose Artlesse studies are but weake,
 Who neuer could, nor will but English speake,
 Do heere maintaine, if words be rightly plac'd,
 A Poets skill, with no tongue more is grac'd.
 It runnes so smooth, so sweetly it doth flow,
 From it such heauenly harmony doth grow,
 That it the vnderstanders sences moues
 With admiration, to expresse their loues.
 No musicke vnder heauen is more diuine,
 Then is a well-writ, and a well-read line. (386)

To make his position more entertaining, Taylor turned to satire and parody and negative example in some of his works. There is no better example than his publication of Sir Gregory Nonsense, His News from No Place in 1622. From its title page to its epilogue addressed to the principal offenders, learned writers, Sir Gregory parodies almost every feature of the kind of books that Taylor so disliked. The subtitle, "Written on purpose, with much study to no end, plentifully stored with want of wit, learning, Iudgement, Rime and Reason, and may seeme very fitly for the vnderstanding of Nobody," gives some sense of the parody that pervades the entire work. Even the date of publication is ridiculed; it appears on the title page as 1700 despite the actual printing date of 1622.⁸ The text of Sir Gregory Nonsense consistently ridicules the ostentatious display of learning exhibited in many Renaissance texts. Taylor begins with a parody of dedications. He dedicates Sir Gregory to the "most Honorificabilitudinaitatibus" Mr. Trim Tram Senceles. He follows his nonsensical dedication with an equally nonsensical address to the reader, in this instance addressed, appropriately enough, to Nobody. The opening sentence of the address is more than sufficient to demonstrate Taylor's modus operandi:

Vpon a Christmas Euen, somewhat nigh Easter, anon after Whitsuntide, walking in a coach from London to Lambeth by water, I ouertooke a Man that met me in the morning before Sun set, the wind being in

Capricorne, the Signe Southwest, with silence I demanded many questions of him and he with much pensiuenesse did answer me merrily to the full, with such ample and empty replications, that both our vnderstandings being equally satisfied, we contentiously agreed to finsih and prosecute the narratio of the Vnknowne Knight Sir Gregory Nonsense. (160)

Taylor mocks the standard apology for printers errors by accusing his printer of inserting material that will give the reader reason to believe that there is actually some meaning attached to the work:

"If the Printer hath placed any line, letter or sillable, whereby this large volume may be made guilty to be vnderstood by any man, I would haue the Reader not to impute the fault to the Author, for it was far from his purpose to write to any purpose. (160)

As might be expected, the "large volume" referred to in Taylor's apology is an octavo printing of only a few pages.

He follows his address to his readers with a long listing of "The names of such Authors Alphabetically recited, as are simply mentioned in this Worke." Sir Gregory's "news" is, of course, as nonsensical as the preceding front matter, but Taylor's mockery of the learned writers of his day is scathing. At the end of Sir Gregory Nonsense, Taylor adds a brief poem, "Some Sence at last to the Learned," that addresses directly those writers who are the butt of his joke:

You that in Greeke and Latine learned are,
And of the ancient Hebrew haue a share,
You that most rarely oftentimes haue sung
In the French, Spanish, or Italian tongue,

Here I in English haue employed my pen,
 To be read by the learnedst Englishmen,
 Wherein the meanest Scholler plaine may see,
 I vnderstand their tongues, as they doe me. (165)

The serious criticism carried by the humor of Taylor's parody is, of course, an extension of his concern about the low status of English as a literary language. Taylor was democratic in his views of literature; he was among the early champions of a literature accessible to all English citizens who could read, and he set out to demonstrate in his own works how such a literature was possible.

John Taylor was determined to provide English readers with the kind of verse that he describes in the passage quoted from "The Authours Description of a Poet and Poesie, with an Apology in Defence of Naturall English Poetry." He was so determined to do so, in fact, that he often printed his works at his own cost distributed them free of charge to all takers.

With his income as a waterman becoming less and less dependable, he could scarcely afford to continue this practice for long. But Taylor was imaginative as well as industrious, and he devised an ingenious way to finance the publication of his works. His first step was to arrange for the printing of a handbill advertising a forthcoming journey or adventure. The handbills, much like a modern-day petitions, had space at the bottom for the signatures of interested parties who, by signing, indicated a willingness

to purchase the publication that resulted from Taylor's journey. Before departing on his adventure, he would post the sheets at various taverns and other locations throughout London, and return to collect them after a sufficient number of subscribers had expressed an interest in reading Taylor's description of his journey. With the guarantee of purchases in hand, he could then set out on his journey, write of his adventures upon his return, pay for the cost of printing the manuscript, and deliver the publication to his subscribers in order to recoup his expenses and, hopefully, reap a profit.

He financed the publication of several pamphlets in this manner; among them Taylor's Penniless Pilgrimage, printed in 1618.⁹ For this journey, he promised his subscribers that he would travel by foot to Scotland "not carrying any Money to or fro, neither Begging, Borrowing, or Asking Meate Drinke or Lodging," as the title page to the pamphlet explains. He collected signatures from a sufficient number of subscribers to undertake his adventure and wrote and published the results immediately upon his return. However, he discovered after he delivered the work to those who had signed the handbill that not all were trustworthy, and a number of them refused to pay the promised fee for the publication. It was not the last time he encountered such problems; he experienced similar

difficulties after travelling to Germany and to Bohemia. Undaunted, he turned his bad debtors to good use, though, by publishing a work that served to advertise their delinquency. Entitled The Scourge of Basenesse: or, The Old Lerry, with a New Kicksey, and a New-Cum Twang, with the Old Winsey, his retributive pamphlet was printed 1619. He explains to his readers why he has gone to the trouble to use this method to collect his outstanding debts, and he threatens the offenders with further punishments if their money is not forthcoming:

I haue published this Pamphlet, to let my rich debtors vnderstand, that as often as I meet them, I doe looke that they should pay mee; and although I am shamefaste in not asking my due, yet I would not haue them shamelesse in detaining it from me, because the summes are but small, and very easie for them (in generall) to pay, and would doe me a particular good to receiue. . . . Therre is a second Edition of my bookes of Trauels comming foorth, wherein I will Satyrize, Cauterize, and Stigmatize all the whole kennell of cures that dare maliciously snarle against manifest, apparant, and well knowne truths. In the meane space, you that are my debtors, if you please to pay me, you shall therein put your selues out of a bad number amongst which you yet are placed: if you will not pay mee, take this bone to gnaw vpon, That I doe hope to bee euer better furnished with money, then you shall be with honestie. (196)

In Kicksey Winsey, Taylor categorizes his debtors into several categories: Those that would pay if they could; those that are hard for me to finde, and being found were better lost; those that will and doe daily pay me in drinke

and smoake; those that are dead; those that are fled; and so forth.

The title page of Kicksey Winsey (Figure 34) illustrates Taylor's skillful use of the first page of a publication to communicate in an entertaining way the subject matter of his text. It provides a smooth transition between the beginning of the book and the text proper, in which Taylor lambastes his delinquent debtors.

By 1630, John Taylor had established himself as a writer of enough note to warrant the publication of a handsome folio edition of his complete poems. The book is notable for its dual title pages (Figures 35 and 36). The initial title page is custom-engraved by Thomas Cockson. Even though such title pages were not uncommon by this date, its emblematic use of the images associated with Taylor's literary persona is an extremely creative and effective use of the medium to communicate self-representation. The familiar row boat at the top introduces Taylor's waterman persona, and the use of oars and canvas sail for the panel that provides the title is an especially imaginative, attractive, and subtle reminder of the poet's former occupation. The shells, fish, and sea cables that decorate other parts of the title page also reinforce that point, and the oval portrait at the bottom of the page completes the attractive engraving.

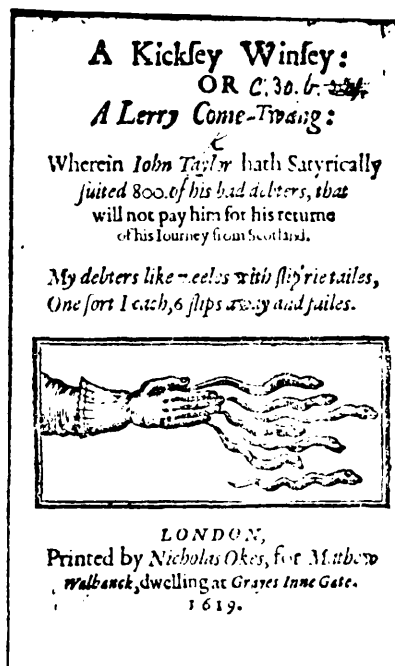


FIGURE 34. Title page to The Scourge of Basennesse: or, The Old Lerry, with a New Kicksey, and a New-Cum Twang, with the Old Winsey. Courtesy of The British Library.

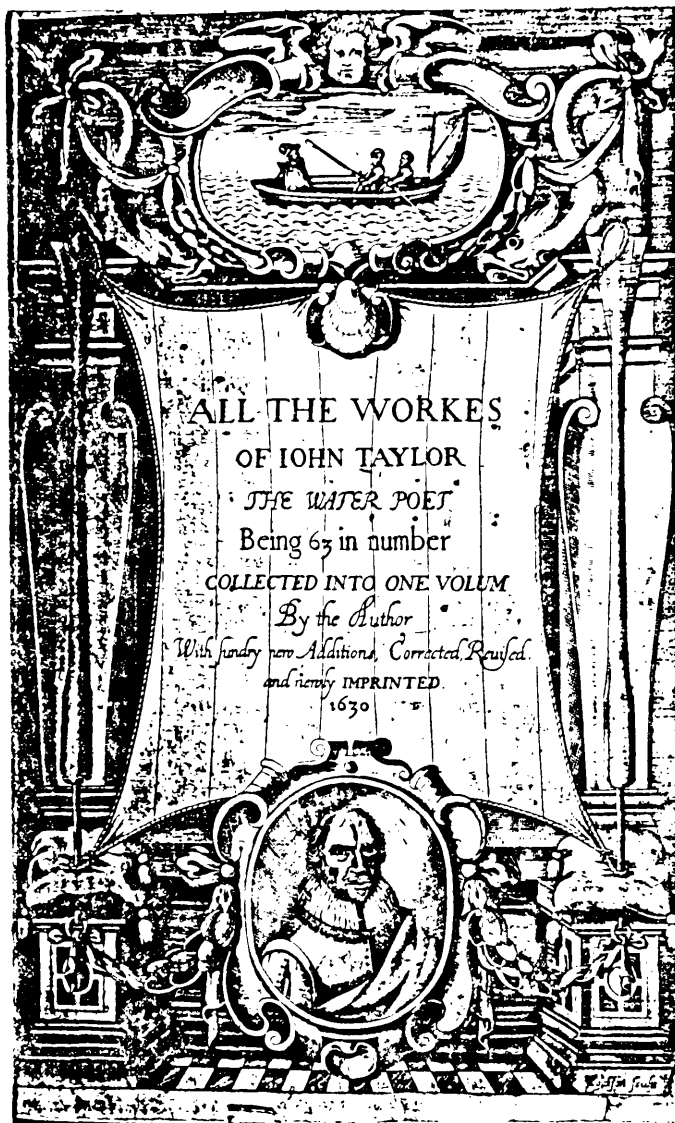


FIGURE 35. Engraved title page to All the Workes of John Taylor the Water-Poet, Beeing Sixty and Three in Number, With Sundry New Additions, Corrected, Revised and Newly Imprinted. Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

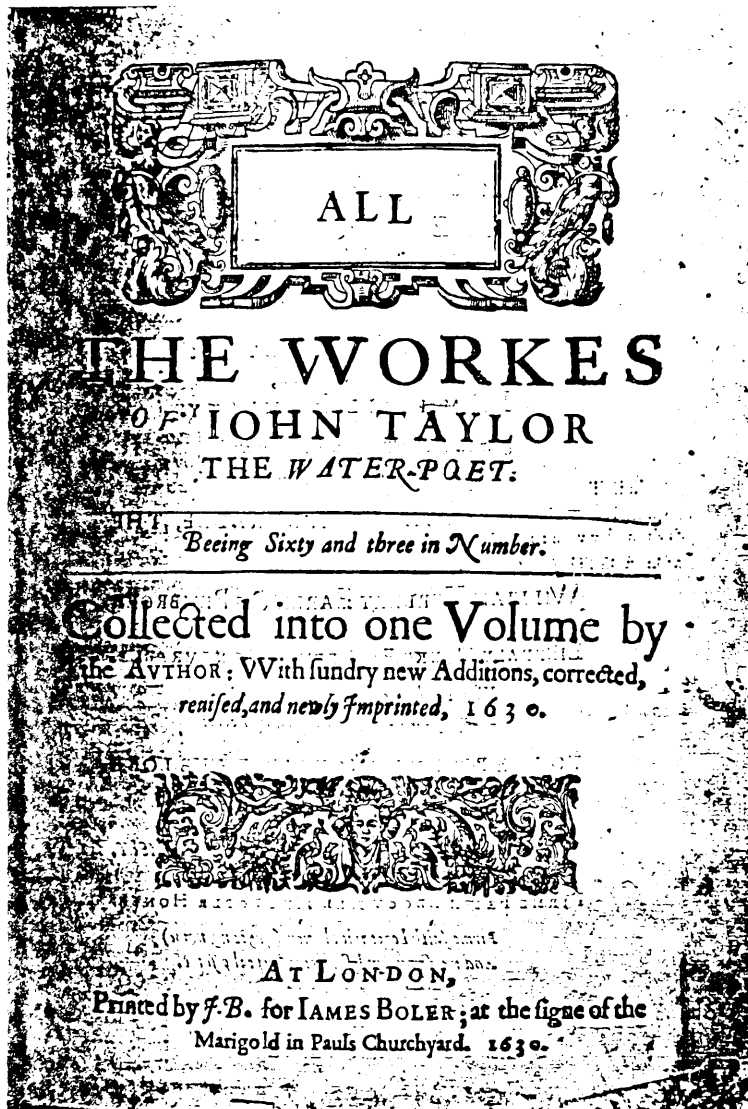


FIGURE 36. Printed title page to Taylor's *Workes*.
Courtesy of The Newberry Library, Chicago.

Taylor's popularity as a poet seems to have continued throughout his lifetime. After his Workes were printed in 1630, he continued to publish verse that covered a wide array of subject matter. Taylor seems especially conscious in his works--both in the textual features and in the poems themselves--to reveal his identity rather than hide it, and perhaps it was his attitudes and the way that he effectively communicated them that won him a reading audience of sufficient size to warrant the continued printing of his poetry until his death in 1653. He had become such a popular author by the time of the Civil War that a number of authors attached his name to their works in order to gain broader circulation for their political and religious pamphlets. Although he may be one of many forgotten poets of the seventeenth century to most modern readers, Taylor's printed books provide a valuable illustration of how a poet writing in the early seventeenth century made conscious use of the print medium to create a memorable and successful image of himself for a wide range of readers.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Taylor are from the Spenser Society reprint of All the Workes (subsequently referred to as Workes), and are cited by page number. The possibility of pre-1630 "nonce" collections of Taylor's publications is discussed by Freeman.

² The Dictionary of National Biography and Notestein provide the only biographical sketches of Taylor's life. Notestein's short biography is based on anecdotes taken from autobiographical material appearing in Taylor's publications.

³ Clapp traces the history of subscription publishing in England and gives Taylor credit for being an early innovator in the practice (216-18).

⁴ The DNB (432) notes that Taylor acted as producer for the water pageant staged on the Thames for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth as well as other water productions staged in honor of English dignitaries. His expertise was also used during his service with the English navy at the turn of the century (DNB 431).

⁵ Sheavyn (210-38) provides a convenient list entitled "An Analysis of the Social Status of 200 Renaissance Poets." A few English poets, Thomas Tusser, for example, used their working-class background for subject matter in their poetry. Most of them, Tusser included, were not heavily concerned with self-representation in printings of their poetry, however.

⁶ References to ink, paper, and print and their uses and abuses are common in Taylor's poems. Taken together, the references provide further evidence of his sensitivity to the constructive and destructive potential of the print medium. Another example appears in Workes (305-306).

⁷ Taylor included Fennor's publication, Fennors Defence, in the 1630 printing of his own Workes.

⁸ The SIC notes the appearance of the 1700 date on some copies. Some copies have the date cropped from the title page.

⁹ Sheavyn (129) notes that Taylor's journey was viewed by many as a parody Jonson's own trip into Scotland. In The Penniless Pilgrimage, Taylor recounts meeting Jonson briefly in Scotland and disclaims any intent to mock him.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

I

Although the English literary system underwent major changes after the printing press was established in England in 1475, the changes occurred very slowly. Each of the poets discussed above represents in some important way a stage in the development of a literary system that eventually became expansive enough to provide a place for poets of every persuasion. Print was, of course, only one of the features of the literary system that allowed this to happen. A complex array of interrelated factors influenced its development: censorship, patronage, technology, education, economics. Previous studies have focussed on these factors, in isolation or in combination, in an attempt to enlarge our understanding of the forces controlling the production of literature in Renaissance England. Another way of viewing the literary system, however, is to consider its purposes. The literary system existed for the benefit of three groups--the state, its authors, and its readers. At times the interests of these three groups clashed; at

other times conditions blended to shape a literature that rewarded all three groups simultaneously. The state depended on its authors to promote its values; authors depended on readers for rewards, both financial and honorific; and readers depended on authors to provide literature that was of value and interest to them.

The authors treated in this study were especially conscious of these connections between literature and society; and they were among the most innovative in using the printing press as a tool for self-representation, self-promotion, self-assertion, and the other kinds of activities that poets found useful in making their claims for the validity of their presence in the literary system. By focussing on the fusion of their authorial intentions with the printed form in which their texts appeared, we can perhaps gain a greater understanding of the ways that Renaissance authors conceived of themselves, both as public and private figures, and of the ways that their readers in turn learned to perceive the value of the poet in the Renaissance period.

II

After Caxton set up his press in 1475, it took almost 50 years before a living English poet made effective use of the print medium to stake a claim to the title of England's

national or laureate poet. Although later generations of poets reshaped and reinterpreted the concept of laureation, Skelton was the first to put into practice the idea that the living poet could use print to create an identity that featured him as the spokesman for the national interests of his readers. In asserting his claim to the title of poet laureate while he lived, he ran the risk of alienating those who viewed literature from a strictly moral perspective; and, as we have seen, his poems were occasionally criticized for cheapening or trivializing literature. Yet ironically Skelton strengthened the place of poetry in consciousness of his readers; he sought to associate himself with a kind of poetry that could be enjoyed in its own right without a great deal of moral justification. He was the first English poet to write poetry that celebrated poetry, and to represent himself as a living link in England's literary heritage. His definition of poetry was inclusive rather than exclusive; he promoted poetry for its entertainment, educational, and cultural values. John Skelton's claim to importance in literary history not only lies in his break with the past in matters of poetic themes and conventions but also in his attempt to awaken English men and women to the importance of the poet in Renaissance culture. His concept of self-representation was of necessity crude in the first few decades of the sixteenth century, but he

nevertheless provided a precedent and model for later generations of more accomplished poets, such as Spenser, Jonson, and Milton.

Skelton worked hard to win popularity in his own lifetime, and if we can judge from the frequency of printings of his work during his life and after his death in 1529, he succeeded in doing so under conditions much more difficult than those faced by subsequent generations of writers. His attitudes toward and methods of self-representation provide a valuable introduction to a feature of Renaissance life and literature that has begun to receive increasingly frequent attention (Greenblatt, Helgerson).

A significant portion of the reading audience that emerged in England between 1475 and 1575 was quite probably made up of men and women whose ability to read was newly acquired. John Heywood's literary persona seems to be shaped around this group of readers. His nondramatic works rely heavily on the folk wisdom encapsulated in the proverb, and he shaped material already familiar to his audience from an oral tradition into the more complex and demanding form of the English epigram. His idea of issuing his epigrams serially in groups of 100 established him as one the first English writers to define himself by the poetic genre in which he wrote. His books are filled with readers aids and

instructions on "right reading." His personality emerges clearly from his poetry; he speaks directly to his readers about his concern with the process of writing and the important responsibilities the reader has when engaged in the process of reading. Even in a work as profusely illustrated with authorial representations as The Spider and the Flie, Heywood gives us the sense that he is not concerned so much with self-glorification as with his intent to serve his readers as a tutor and guide in the rigorous process of reading serious literature. For the most part he wrote in a form accessible to a wide range of readers, but his poetry nevertheless made the intellectual demands inherent in the paradox or elaborate pun that defines the essential character of the epigrammatic form. In his choice of subject matter and in his efforts to establish a close relationship with his readers, Heywood might be regarded as an early innovator in using print to educate a new generation of English readers to the demands and responsibilities of reading poetry.

By the time Thomas Churchyard's career as a poet had reached full development in the 1570s, reading seems to have been an activity sufficiently common among English men and women that a writer could consider generating at least part of his income directly from the output of his pen. Although Churchyard sought patronage to support his activities as an

author, he produced material that was clearly intended for a wide range of readers, material that was commercial in that it was meant to be purchased primarily for its informational and entertainment value. In the tradition established by Skelton, Churchyard used contemporary events as the subject matter for much of his poetry, specializing in the military and political events that had been part of his own nonliterary activities. By describing his own experiences in reporting such events, Churchyard became one of first English writers to popularize the concept of literary journalism. An extension of this practice led to the writing of several autobiographical poems that provide us with an unusually full record of a writer's efforts to create a place for himself in a literary system taking shape during the reign of Elizabeth. Finally, Churchyard's ability to sustain a life-long career as a journalistic writer using poetry as his primary mode of composition reveals the how broadly poetry had come to be accepted as a means of communication. In representing himself as an important member of the literary community, Churchyard sought to dignify the poet while at the same time keeping his poetry accessible to a broad audience. Thanks to the printed works of poets such as Churchyard, Renaissance readers learned to be inclusive rather exclusive in their conception of poetry and its uses, an attitude that took

firm shape in the Renaissance but which has subsequently disappeared in our own age.

By the time of Churchyard's death in 1604, the literary system had become a complex institution crowded with writers of all sorts. The variety of ways that these writers used print to establish their names and works in the literary marketplace are nowhere better demonstrated than in the long series of publications generated from John Taylor's pen. Taylor used virtually all the features of the literary system within which he worked to shape a successful career that had its roots in his imaginative and creative use of the print medium to transform his lowly status as a Thames River boatsman into a popular and easily recognizable literary image: the King's Water Poet. It is fair to say that without the gradual growth and sophistication of both the products of the printing press and of the audience which created the demand for printed material, Taylor's career as a writer would never have been possible. For example, one major feature of his literary image was that of parodist. Without a sophisticated literary system and an equally sophisticated audience adept enough to appreciate the humor of his parody, Taylor could never have mocked the excesses of the poets and the printed works that he chose as the objects of his satire.

His dependence upon parody for his success was not total, however; he also used his imagination to create other opportunities for advancing his career as an English poet. He was among the early pioneers in the area of subscription publication, and he used print to create controversy that brought him the publicity so necessary to establish his name prominently in the crowded field of writers vying for attention in his day. He had a serious side too. His pride in his working-class background manifested itself most fully in his defense of "natural" poetry. He used print to create an image of himself as a writer who championed poetry that was written in plain English for readers from all backgrounds. Taylor's use of print as a medium to express a set of literary values in both words and image extended from the very beginning of his career in 1612 to its end in 1653. The techniques he used were the logical extension of ideas developed in the printed works of a long line of poets from the first appearance of printed books in England to the middle of the seventeenth century.

III

To use as case studies the careers of four English poets as different as John Skelton, John Heywood, Thomas Churchyard, and John Taylor is to run the risk of overlooking important features of the process of self-

representation developed by a number of other Renaissance authors. But since it was impossible to be exhaustive in investigating the history of the uses of the printed book for the purposes of authorial self-representation in Renaissance England, it seemed most logical to begin the process of collecting data and examples from poets especially sensitive to the possibilities of using print to represent themselves and their poetic aspirations to their readers. As other authors are investigated, perhaps a fully developed framework from which to build an approach to studying the relationships among readers, writers, and the literary system which contains and shapes them will evolve.

In the meantime the limitations of the study are in many ways unavoidable. By analyzing the work of only four nondramatic Renaissance poets of minor stature in twentieth-century literary studies, I have run the obvious risk of overlooking important contributions to the development of the literary system by nondramatic poets of greater merit and more note. But the exhaustive critical studies of the canonical poets has been carried out at the expense of poets whose inferior literary skills are balanced by their devotion to educating Renaissance readers to the cultural rewards offered by the poet and his work. In a study of this type, it seemed valuable to look at the printed work of those poets who, despite the limitations of their literary

skills, were nevertheless frequently read during their lifetimes. They can provide a different perspective precisely because they spoke to English readers from a position of popularity rather than elitism that characterizes the work of many Renaissance writers. If poetry meant something more to Renaissance readers than it does to twentieth-century readers, the reasons may lie in the fact that Renaissance poets of all kinds were better able to communicate those values by incorporating their attitudes into literature read by all types of readers. Although there are other poets who make self-representation an important function of their literary position, the four poets treated here do so with such insistence that they deserve closer analysis than other more marginal examples.

I have also omitted any discussion of that other glory Renaissance poetry, dramatic literature. The discourse of literary fame was carried on in that forum too, of course, and the separation between the goals of the nondramatic poet and of the dramatist is seldom far apart. But the function of the printing press in the development of authorial attitudes and representation is much more powerful among nondramatic poets than it is among the dramatic poets. The dramatists' representations often occurred as stage productions rather than in printed form, and because the acting companies rather than the dramatist usually exercised

direct control over the publication of plays, the literary system allowed only limited authorial control over the printing of drama. A brief survey of title pages to the printed drama makes the absence of self-representation readily apparent; playwrights represented themselves and their values in the printed text but not in the extratextual features of the book.

The final major omission involves the printing of prose works. Doubtless, there are a number of Renaissance prose writers who used the printed texts of their works to communicate authorial attitudes and values. But poetry was traditionally viewed as an art form superior in value to prose. Defenses of poetry and poets as cultural contributors are quite common; the same cannot be said of prose and prose writers. A thorough study of developments in authorial self-representation in printings of prose works might yield some interesting new perspectives on the place of prose in the Renaissance literary system, but it was not practical to include material on that subject here.

IV

To study the history of print and the involvement of authors and readers in the development of literary systems carries with it implications extending to a number of other areas of literary and historical study. Among the most

obvious is book history. Inextricably linked with the history of books is the history of reading. One valuable way of tracing changes in cultural values and perspectives might be based on the shift in authorial function in the printed work. For example, in a culture dependent upon manuscript circulation of literature, there was little opportunity for authorial self-representation outside of the linguistic messages communicated by the words of the text. An author was very limited in the ways he could establish his identity as a literary artist, and for that reason the subject matter of the work itself rather than its author may have been of primary importance in the preprint era. But as we have seen, the printed book radically altered the literary system, and through the agency of printing a writer who so desired could claim an importance for himself that in many ways superseded the importance of the book's subject matter. One of the earliest and best examples of this shift in emphasis is John Skelton's Garlande of Laurell, printed in 1523. After a period of time, readers came to expect certain styles or subject matter from certain authors, and they perhaps grew accustomed to thinking of a book in terms of its author rather than in terms of its content. Our own twentieth-century literary system carries that legacy with it; it seems perfectly natural for many modern readers to seek out books by a particular author without having any

preconceived notion of the book's subject. This change of attitude toward books and the reading of them, with its many implications in modes of cultural thought, may in fact be a result of the effects of print, which allowed authors to claim cultural importance for themselves in ways not possible in the preprint era.

The study of reading habits is also a topic of great moment in these matters, for the way people read in some ways determines the way they think. For example, the change from oral transmission of literature to silent reading seems to coincide with the appearance of the printed book; but of course, the process was a slow and gradual one, and the extent and the effects of the change are still unresolved issues. Authorial representation and authorial addresses to the reader can provide us with valuable clues to the attitudes of authors toward their audience as readers. As has been noted, Caxton's prefaces to the books he printed reveals valuable information about the make-up of the reading audience he anticipated for certain books, and as the books of living authors began to be more frequently printed, those authors too began to designate audiences and modes of reading they anticipated for their works. Authorial addresses are often made to "those who read or hear this work," and by tracing the gradual disappearance of such formulaic statements made by authors to their

prospective readers, we can perhaps pinpoint more precisely when, after the appearance of the printed books, readers began to read to themselves rather than to one another. One might also reconstruct changes in reading habits by correlating authorial statements that appear in books with certain subject matters or that appear in certain genres of literature.

Such methods might also be used to make clearer distinctions in our attempts to define and classify the tastes of certain reading audiences. Renaissance literature has frequently been classified as "courtly," "popular," "middle-class," and "aristocratic," to name only a few such categories. Often these classifications are based on the a priori assumption that certain readers read only certain types of books. Some of the material reviewed in this study calls these divisions of audiences and literature into serious question. John Skelton, for example, can be viewed as an author actively seeking a "cross-over" audience. He produced material suitable for several different readerships simultaneously; in fact, he represented himself as such a writer in his printed books, and he fashioned much of his literary career precisely around that image.

Some authors did have the luxury of being able to designate narrow audiences for their work; but for the many writers who sought to support themselves in some modest way

from their writing, such a policy was not practical. The four poets whose careers are covered in this work sought readers from all social strata. They could not afford to be exclusive, and they tried to represent themselves as democratic in their vision of literature and its uses.

Wolfgang Iser, one of the pioneers of reader response criticism, long ago noted the need to consider the effects of the book upon the conscious and subconscious of the reader:

Central to the reading of every literary work is the interaction between its structure and its recipient. This is why the phenomenological theory of art has emphatically drawn attention to the fact that the study of a literary work should concern not only the actual text but also, and in equal measure, the actions involved in responding to that text. (106)

The study of the interrelationships between author and reader has engaged a number of literary theoreticians recently. But seldom have their studies included a thorough search for meaning as it operates through the extratextual features of the book itself apart from its linguistic features and structure. The psychology of the reader in the act of reading begins operating not with the first word encountered in the text but rather with the act of opening the book. Its cover, title page, front matter, and other extratextual features all play a vital role in the reader's attitude toward the author and his work. This study has attempted to reconstruct some of the ways that authors who

were particularly interested in shaping their readers' responses to their literary works combined extratextual features of the printed book with its linguistic messages. Such material needs to be considered more carefully as we reconstruct large literary systems at the cultural level and small ones at the level of the individual reader. It is clear that Renaissance authors conceived of the literary work as a whole; they recognized that the printed book was an artifact that made an impression not only by the linguistic meaning its words communicated but by the extratextual messages that the author included to represent his own values and attitudes toward his role as a writer and the literature he produced.

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