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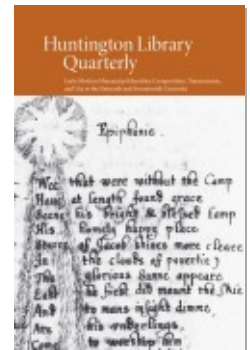
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Poetic Exchanges and Scribal Agency in Early Modern Manuscript Culture

Jessica Edmondson

ABSTRACT Scholarship on manuscript culture often privileges textual fluidity and scribal agency. However, a casual attitude toward texts and authorship was not universal in manuscript transmission. This essay focuses on BL, Harley MS 7392(2), which is representative of the type of miscellany compiled and circulated in learned institutions where poetry was highly valued and exchanging it helped to cultivate communal identities. The copying habits and attribution practices of its compiler reveal a concern for the integrity of the text and an interest in the question of authorship. This essay argues that, at times, copyists attempted to preserve more “fixed” forms that accorded with the wishes of authors, a feature that has been associated with print culture. **KEYWORDS:** authorship in manuscripts; manuscript verse miscellanies; scribal agency; manuscript networks in England; Humfrey Coningsby

Unlike the professional scribe, the amateur collector was under no obligation to preserve the purity of the text: he could copy as carelessly and amend as freely as he pleased.¹

The manuscript system was far less author-centered than print culture and not at all interested in correcting, perfecting, or fixing texts in authorially sanctioned forms.²

☞ **IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD**, manuscript was a favored medium for the reception of contemporary verse.³ As Henry Woudhuysen points out, “for most enthusiasts of poetry manuscript provided the only way of making a representative

1. Agnes Latham, *The Poems of Sir Walter Raleigh*, rev. ed. (London, 1962), 88.

2. Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1995), 135.

3. *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, comp. Peter Beal et al., 4 vols. (London, 1980–97), superseded in 2013 by the online and updated *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700* (CELM),

collection of important poets and their works.”⁴ The vibrancy of literary manuscript culture contributed significantly to its preservation as a whole after the advent of print: as Woudhuysen explains, “It would be foolish to underestimate the role poetry played in the survival, and what in time became a regeneration, of the manuscript culture.”⁵ The miscellany that was “basic to medieval literary circulation” was still a primary vehicle for English vernacular poetry, and its habitually varied content and tendency to include a large number of anonymous poems reflected and shaped literary mind-sets, informing notions of authorship, genre, poetic form, and social purpose.⁶ There is some indication from contemporary literature that enthusiasts for poetry who took on the responsibilities for collecting, copying, and anthologizing contemporary verse perceived their work as valuable and worthwhile. In George Gascoigne’s fictional frame for the pseudo-anthology *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres bounde vp in one small Poesie* (1573), the compiler “Master G. T.” comments:

I haue thought good (I say) to present you with this written booke,
wherein you shall find a number of *Sonets*, layes, letters, Ballades,
Rondlets, verlayes and verses, the workes of your friend and myne
Master *F. I.* and diuers others, the which [...] I had with long trauayle
confusedly gathered together.⁷

G. T. describes the business of verse compilation as arduous (done “with long trauayle”) and admits that his collection was formed in an ad hoc manner (“confusedly gathered together”) so that it was now, as he goes on to say, “*Opere precium* [worthwhile], to reduce them into some good order.” G. T.’s idea of imposing order on this incongruous collection involves, in the case of “Maister F. I.,” compiling a narrative longer than the verse it was written to accompany and, in the anthology of poems dubbed the “The deuises of sundrie Gentlemen,” adding lengthy explanatory headings. But G. T.’s “long trauayle” prior to this onerous task must in part be intended to

has facilitated research in this field. The classic study is Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*; for other influential treatments of the subject, see Harold Love’s *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1993); Steven W. May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and Their Contexts* (Columbia, Mo., 1991); H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford, 1996); Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore, 1999); Marcy L. North, *The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England* (Chicago, 2003); Mary Hobbs, *Early Seventeenth-Century Verse Miscellany Manuscripts* (Aldershot, U.K., 1992); and Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2000).

4. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 154.

5. *Ibid.*, 153.

6. Seth Lerer, “Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology,” *PMLA* 118 (2003): 1251–67 at 1253.

7. George Gascoigne, “The letter of G. T. to his very friend H. W. concerning this worke,” in *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres* (London, 1573), 202–5. In transcriptions from early modern texts, original punctuation and spelling (including *i/j*, *u/v*) have been retained, although the *y-thorn* has been silently rendered as “th”; contractions and abbreviations have been expanded, with the letters supplied indicated with italics.

allude to the effort expended in procuring manuscript exemplars and the labor involved in reproducing handwritten copies before returning the originals to their owners. G. T. lends the collection to H. W. with some trepidation, charging him not to show the manuscript volume to anybody else (an act that would “prouoke all the aucthors to be offended”) and to “safely redeliuer [. . .] the originall copie” to him. H. W.’s subsequent publication of the “written Booke” is a violation of trust that he excuses for the benefit of a wider audience (“common commoditie” as opposed to “nedelesse singularity”).⁸ For H. W. the risk of a few grumbles from the authors is balanced out by the anticipated accolades from a wider literary community: “if the aucthors onely repyne, and the number of other learned mindes be thankfull: I may then boast to haue gained a bushell of good will, in exchange for one pynt of peeuish choler.”⁹

Transferring private collections into print for the alleged benefit of the wider literary community, which we see in Gascoigne’s pseudo-anthology, was not restricted to the world of fiction, however. The collection published as *The Phoenix Nest* in 1593 acknowledges the important role of the compiler, stating in a prominent position on the title page that the collection was “Set foorth by R. S. of the Inner Temple *Gentleman*.” Similarly, Richard Jones comments in the prefatory note “To the Gentlemen Readers” in the verse collection *Brittons Bowre of Delights* (1591) that “I am (onely) the Printer” but congratulates himself on putting together a “wel compiled” selection of English verse, “(all in my poore censure) wittie, pleasant, & commendable.”¹⁰ These allusions suggest an awareness of the wider significance of the “work” of collecting and anthologizing verse.

If compilers took pride in their collections and valued the texts they had endeavored to obtain and transcribe, many writers of lyric verse purportedly showed a more casual attitude toward their work, “seemingly indifferent to their poems’ circulation, readership, or preservation.”¹¹ The evidence from studies of the manuscript publication of verse certainly bears witness to the striking textual transformations that poems frequently underwent in transmission, for which Arthur Marotti’s concept of “social textuality” provides a useful paradigm.¹² Even when readers were not engaged in social editing, when making copies of poems for their own use they could limit or direct the way in which those texts were read and understood: the placement (grouping verses according to theme, author, or poetic form), the layout (including decorative elements and scripts), and additions such as headings and attributions were all dependent on an individual scribe’s taste and judgment. Furthermore, as Joshua Eckhardt has persuasively shown, even copies transcribed in manuscript volumes were

8. “H. W. to the Reader,” in Gascoigne, *A Hundreth sundrie Flowres*, 201.

9. *Ibid.*, 202.

10. In this context *compiled* means “composed”; but as Hyder Edward Rollins pointed out, “it is practically certain that Jones was compiler and editor as well, and that he made improvements in the texts,” *Brittons Bowre of Delights*, 1591, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1933), xiii.

11. Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1993), 31.

12. Marotti argues that “in the system of manuscript transmission, it was normal for lyrics to elicit revisions, corrections, supplements, and answers, for they were part of an ongoing social discourse”; *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*, 135.

still developing entities that could take on a new meaning as the collection itself evolved.¹³ The critical focus on the potentialities for scribal agency is thus the reasonable corollary to the evident “fluidity” of texts in manuscript, where each act of publication creates a new and unique context in which the poem is read and understood. However, the attention paid by critics to the rich culture of variance evident in manuscript has meant that less notice has been given to scribal practices that seem to show an interest in the “fixity” of texts and the identity of their authors. This essay will explore aspects of scribal agency that run counter to predominant perceptions about the inherent “looseness” of the scribal medium.¹⁴ Though the essay is primarily on one manuscript verse anthology, the comparison with copies of the same text in others will present a broader picture of some approaches to manuscript verse compilation that can be applied more generally.



Harley MS 7392(2), British Library (hereafter BL), is a verse anthology that was assembled by one primary copyist from multiple sources over a period of a few years, during the early to mid-1580s. L. G. Black first identified the compiler as Humfrey Coningsby of Neen Sollars, Shropshire, an armigerous gentleman who matriculated at Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1581.¹⁵ Coningsby's manuscript has subsequently received a great deal of critical attention for what it can reveal about the networks of literary exchange through which Sir Philip Sidney's poems circulated among his earliest readers and, focusing on the anonymous poems, for how the collection illustrates the “social” uses of verse.¹⁶ Selected contents from the manuscript have served as copy-text for modern editions of such individual poets as Sidney, Sir Edward Dyer, Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and Elizabeth I. Rather less attention, however, has been paid to what the volume can tell us about practices of preserving and transcribing poetry, despite the fact that this is one of only a few surviving Elizabethan verse anthologies in manuscript.¹⁷

13. Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford, 2009).

14. Adam Smyth, in his article “Textual Transmission, Reception and the Editing of Early Modern Texts,” also takes issue with the critical tendency to pit “loose manuscript” against “fixing print”; *Literature Compass* 1 (2004): 3.

15. L. G. Black, “Studies in Some Related Manuscript Poetic Miscellanies of the 1580s,” 2 vols. (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1971), 1:47–54.

16. Since Coningsby was one of Sidney's “earliest readers,” Woudhuysen devotes a section to the manuscript and the scribe's biography (*Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 278–86); Marotti gives a full description of the manuscript's contents, including the anonymous poems, in “Humphrey Coningsby and the Personal Anthologizing of Verse in Elizabethan England,” in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts*, IV, ed. Michael Denbo (Tempe, Ariz., 2008), 71–102. The manuscript is also treated extensively in Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric*, esp. 65–67, 139–41, 176–81.

17. Other examples include: (1) the Arundel Harington manuscript (MSS [Special Press] “Harrington MS. Temp. Eliz., The Duke of Norfolk, Arundel Castle); (2) Henry Stanford's anthology (MS Dd.5.75, Cambridge University Library); two verse collections compiled by students at St. John's

Woudhuysen has noted Coningsby's "unusual concern for the question of authorship among the poets of his own generation."¹⁸ This factor has not been explored in conjunction with the evidence of the habits of other scribes, which indicate a more widespread concern for textual "authority." Modern-day editors of Elizabethan verse miscellanies have observed the care with which some compilers copied their texts. Laurence Cummings remarks on John Finet, who assembled Bod., MS Rawl. poet. 85:

Usually he wrote carefully. He will delete a word and rewrite it because the first effort was unclear. This care becomes very noticeable in his copying of quantitative metrics. He will read his text as well as write, and, as a result, he seldom utters nonsense as some scribes did. . . . For example, I see Finet struggling with a text containing *Arcadia* poems that he could not read well. . . . But he ends with sense. Unfortunately, to achieve this he found himself on a few occasions altering other words in the line.¹⁹

In assessing the overall level of accuracy achieved by the compiler Henry Stanford, Steven W. May comments that "he seems to have followed his sources faithfully, leaving blanks in his own manuscript where he could not make out the reading."²⁰ In Hyder Rollins's estimation, the gentleman compiler of *The Phoenix Nest*, "R. S" (possibly Richard Stapylton), whose "guiding hand . . . carried the anthology from its inception to its actual publication," "did a thoroughly good job," and the purity of texts (derived from manuscript sources) suggest that he "read the proofs with care."²¹ Coningsby shows a comparable concern for textual accuracy; the marginal corrections throughout the manuscript indicate a habit of proofreading shortly after copying. This

College, Cambridge: (3) John Finet's manuscript, MS Rawl. poet. 85, Bodleian Library, Oxford (hereafter Bod.); (4) MS Z3.5.21, Marsh's Library, Dublin); and two anthologies copied by professional scribes: (5) a verse collection owned by Anne Cornwallis before 1610, MS V.a.89, Folger Shakespeare Library; and (6) BL, Harley MS 6910. On these manuscripts, see (1) Ruth Hughey, *The Arundel Harington Manuscript of Tudor Poetry*, 2 vols. (Columbus, 1960); (2) Steven W. May, *Henry Stanford's Anthology: An Edition of Cambridge University Library Manuscript Dd.5.75* (New York, 1988); (3) Laurence Anthony David Cummings, "John Finet's Miscellany" (PhD diss., Washington University, 1960); and Randall Louis Anderson, "'The Merit of a Manuscript Poem': The Case for Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet. 85," in *Print, Manuscript & Performance*, ed. Arthur F. Marotti and Michael D. Bristol (Columbus, Ohio, 2000), 127–71; (4) George Martin, "Marsh's Library MS Z3.5.21: An Edition of the English Poems" (master's thesis, University of Waterloo, 1971); (5) William H. Bond, "The Cornwallis-Lysons Manuscript and the Poems of John Bentley," in *Joseph Quincy Adams Memorial Studies*, ed. James G. McManaway, Giles E. Dawson, and Edwin E. Willoughby (Washington, D.C., 1948), 683–93; and Arthur F. Marotti, "The Cultural and Textual Importance of Folger MS V.a.89," in "Manuscripts and Their Makers in the English Renaissance," ed. Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo, special issue, *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 11 (2002): 70–92; (6) Katherine K. Gottschalk, "British Museum Manuscript Harley 6910: An Edition" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1974); and "Discoveries Concerning British Library MS Harley 6910," *Modern Philology* 77 (1979): 121–31. For manuscripts 2–6, see also Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 257–66.

18. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 281.

19. Cummings, "John Finet's Miscellany," 73.

20. May, *Henry Stanford's Anthology*, xxvii.

21. *The Phoenix Nest* 1593, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins (Cambridge, Mass., 1931), xvii, xxxi. For the manuscript compiler as editor, compare Michelle O'Callaghan's essay in this issue.

is seen in a poem by Richard Edwards ("The mountaynes highe, whose lofty toppes, Doth touch the haughty Skye"; fols. 46r–v) that the scribe examined closely after transcribing it.²² The poem was certainly copied after it had appeared in the printed verse anthology *The Paradyse of Daynty Deuises*, but it is the sole survivor of a distinct manuscript tradition of the lyric.²³ The scribe made three changes and was probably correcting from the same copy-text, as he carefully checked over his transcription, indicating his marginal emendations with an asterisk:²⁴

The force of *blowinge blaste;	*blustringe
.	
Thy *will I will obay,	*hest
.	
Nor finnes to cut the *silvered stremes	*silver

(Lines 3, 15, 18)

Coningsby's self-appointed role as editor is seen in the sustained close attention to points of grammar. Harold Love comments that "the transcriber no less than the compositor would be expected to impose his own practice with regard to spelling, punctuation and minor points of grammar, to modernize, and to correct solecisms and apparent errors."²⁵ One peculiarity is that Coningsby habitually removed the double negative. Sidney's "For Grammer sayes (to Grammer who sayes nay) / That in one speech two Negatives affirme" (*Astrophil and Stella* 63) is a playful recognition of this grammatical anomaly, but, as W. A. Ringler points out, in the sixteenth century the double negative was common English usage, and the rule only applies in Latin grammar.²⁶ Coningsby's objection to this accepted form reveals a personal quirk but also shows a high level of engagement with the texts being copied. In all the following examples the scribe corrected a double negative in the copy-text, either by silent alteration during copying (indicated below in bold), or afterward by adding an asterisk to key a marginal correction.

22. The style of script and ink tone indicate that the scribe made the corrections at the same time as the transcription.

23. *The Paradyse* was first printed in 1576 (P); the poem appears on sig. H1v and is included in every subsequent edition, consistently assigned to Edwards (*The Paradyse of Dainty Deuises* [1576–1606], ed. Hyder Edward Rollins [Cambridge, Mass., 1927], 230). P contains two readings that were corrected in subsequent editions: "waies" (line 7) was corrected in editions of *The Paradyse* from 1578 to "iawes" in agreement with the reading in Coningsby's text (hereafter Hy); and "Wherefore" (line 19) was changed to "Therefore" in editions printed from 1600 in agreement with Hy (*Paradyse*, ed. Rollins, 158). A few more unique variants unlikely to have derived from scribal misreadings and the differing order of lines indicate that Hy belongs to a distinct manuscript tradition of the poem.

24. The authority of the marginal readings is confirmed in the print copy (except in the second reading, where the print copy has a plural noun), but the variants cited in the note above make it unlikely that the scribe was correcting from print. In the same line where Coningsby corrected "will" to "hest," there is another probable error that was left uncorrected: "I am not mine, but thine *as now*" for "*I vowe*" in P (my italics).

25. Love, *Scribal Publication*, 120.

26. *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. William A. Ringler Jr. (Oxford, 1962), 196, 478; cf. E. A. Abbott, *A Shakespearian Grammar* (London, 1872), 295.

<i>Reading in Harley MS 7392(2)</i>	<i>Readings in other witnesses</i>	<i>Marginal note</i>	<i>Folio</i>
And for my ruyn, rve not	the only other witness reads “Nor of”		22v
It cannot be nor *neuer yet hath byn	two extant witnesses read “euer”; one witness reads “never”	*ever	23r
Of on thing yet beware, sighe *not, nor shead no Teare [an error: the asterisk should mark <i>nor</i>]	no other witnesses of this poem	*&	23r
Nor *never will: but with regard, & honor vse her name	“never” is the reading in Gorges’s autograph manuscript (BL, Egerton MS 3165, fol. 19r–v)	*ever	28r
Thy eares shall never heare, / Nor Eyes shall ever see	only other witness reads “neuer”		42r
Nor ever yet could heare the Muses Synge	two extant witnesses read “neuer”		76v

Coningsby was also alert to the scribal medium’s potential for textual corruption, and sometimes he altered his text where he considered a reading unreliable or suspect. As Love comments, “the scribe must have had a far more acute awareness of the limitations of his exemplar than the compositor. Texts decayed very rapidly in manuscript transmission.”²⁷ In Coningsby’s anthology, a song composed by Sidney for an accession day tilt entertainment (“Philisides, the Shepherd good & true,” fols. 48v–49r) contains the term “till horse,” used to describe the appropriate form of carriage for the ploughman runner at the tilt. The scribe first copied “till horse,” but then suggested another reading in the margin, the more familiar “mill horse”:

*mill And of his teeme the *till horse, must him beare.
(Line 24)

The reading “till horse” is supported by another witness that very possibly derived from Sidney’s autograph copy or at least a transcription not too many removes from the original: the Ottley manuscript.²⁸ The term “till horse” is not a recognized locution but makes sense in the context, namely the poem’s own narrative that “Menalcha” is

27. Love, *Scribal Publication*, 120.

28. An unbound booklet almost exclusively devoted to Sidney’s work owned by a member of the Ottley family of Pitchford Hall, Shropshire (Pitchford Hall [Ottley] English Literary MSS [uncatalogued] B1, National Library of Wales). This manuscript is discussed by Peter Beal, “Poems by Sir Philip Sidney: The Ottley Manuscript,” *The Library*, 5th ser., 33 (1978): 284–95, who argues that the first-person singular address in Ottley indicates that the copy was taken from (or written by) one of the participants in the entertainment (289). Ottley also contains a copy of Sidney’s “Nota” (describing his rules for writing English verse in classical meters) in first-person singular, “indicating that the Ottley copyist was using a manuscript closer to Sidney’s draft [than the only other extant text, found in the St. Johns copy of the *Old Arcadia*]”; see Jean Robertson, “A Note on ‘Poems by Sir Philip Sidney: The Ottley Manuscript,’” *Library* 6 (1980): 202–5 at 203. It is possible that the “I” in the linking sentence and the “Nota” is Sidney himself; see Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, 271.

setting forth with his horse to “sow & till the ground” (line 6). Coningsby’s editorial habits and his concern for the “correct” use of language, seen in his marginal alterations throughout the manuscript, makes it likely that he objected to Sidney’s neologism and altered the reading found in his copy-text. The careful transcription of texts, the evidence of proofreading, and the scribe’s close attention to language reveal a concern for accuracy. This process of editing falls exactly into the category of “correcting & restoring” that the publisher Thomas Newman carried out on the ill-written copy-texts upon which he based the edition of *Syr P. S. His Astrophel and Stella* printed in 1591; literary critics have associated the practice with print culture’s tendency to “fix texts.”²⁹



Scribes, in other words, did not always take the opportunity afforded by the medium to alter texts to suit their particular use. Using a poetic exchange between Dyer and Sidney, the next section shows how copyists sometimes attempted to preserve the state of poems as they were originally released into manuscript circulation. The two poems are transcribed below as they appear in Coningsby’s anthology:

Promethevs when first from heaven hye,
He broght downe Fyre, ere then on Earth not seene,
Fond of Delight a Satyre standinge bye,
Gave it a kysse, as it like Sweete had beene.

Feeling forthwith, the outward burning powre,
Wood with the Smart, with showtes & shrikinge shrill,
He sought his ease, in Ryver, Field, & Bowre,
But for the time, his grief went with him still.

So Silly I, wyth that vnwonted sighte,
In humane shape, an Aingell from above,
Fedinge mine eyes, thympression there did lighte,
That since I rest & runne, as pleseth Love.
The difference: the Satyres lypes my Harte,
He for a Time. I evermore have Smarte.
FYNIS. Dy.

A Satyre once did runne away for Dreade,
*that Of sound of Horne, *which he himself did blow,

29. “For my part, I haue beene very carefull in the Printing of it, and where as being spred abroad in written Coppies, it had gathered much corruption by ill Writers: I haue vsed their helpe and aduice in correcting & restoring it to his first dignitie, that I knowe were of skill and experience in those matters” (Thomas Newman’s prefatory epistle, “To the worshipfull and his very good Freende, Ma. Frauncis Flower,” sig. A2r–v).

Fearinge: and fearde thus from himself he fled.
Deminge strange evill, in that he did not know.

Such causes Feare, when Cowardes mindes do take,
It makes them fly, that *which* they faine wold have,
As this poore Beaste, *which* did his rest forsake,
Thinking not why, but how himself to save.

Even So might I, for doubtes *which* I conceive,
Of myne owne harte, mine owne good hap bewray,
And so might I for feare (of may be) leave,
The sweete pursuite of my desired pray.
Better I lyke thy Satyre (Deerest Dyer)
That burnte his lyps, to kisse faire shininge Fyer.
FYNIS. Sy.

The poems seem to have been disseminated as a pair and were copied as such in most of the surviving manuscript witnesses: two *Old Arcadia* manuscripts (Bod., MS e. Museo 37, fols. 237v–38r; Folger, MS H.b.1, fol. 22or), and four contemporary verse collections: Coningsby's anthology (fol. 25r–v), Anne Cornwallis's anthology (pp. 21, 23), the Ottley manuscript (fol. 4r), and Finet's anthology (fol. 8r–v). The copies of the exchange preserved in contemporary verse anthologies appear among groupings of both poets' work, suggesting that the authors shared the responsibility for releasing the linked poems into manuscript circulation.³⁰ Only one manuscript, an anthology copied by a professional scribe (BL, Harley MS 6910), contains Dyer's text alone (fol. 154v), in a grouping of Dyer's poems, possibly indicating that his poem circulated independently before Sidney wrote the response. The first four lines of Sidney's answer poem were set to music by John Ward as a song in four parts,³¹ but there is no evidence that the poem circulated independently in manuscript; it is therefore reasonable to suggest that after Sidney wrote the response the poems were fixed in circulation as a unit. The inclusion of the poems in the posthumous collection of Sidney's work, among the "Certaine sonets . . . Neuer before printed" appended to *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia* (1598, sig. 2R5r–v) and in the two manuscript copies of the *Old Arcadia* mentioned above, would suggest a wish on Sidney's part to preserve the poems as a unit.³²

Dyer's poem takes the classical myth of the satyr who kissed the fire brought down from heaven by Prometheus as a metaphor for his own burning passion, caused

30. The companion poems appear in a Dyer grouping in Coningsby's manuscript; Ottley is a collection of predominantly Sidney poems; and in Finet's manuscript the poems appear in a mixed Sidney/Dyer grouping (four poems by Dyer come before and three poems by Sidney follow).

31. It is no. 7, in *The First Set of English Madrigals* (1613), sig. B4r.

32. For Sidney's high estimation of Dyer's literary reputation, see Katherine Duncan-Jones, *Sir Philip Sidney Courtier Poet* (London, 1991), 105.

by the sight of his heavenly mistress.³³ Sidney's response mirrors the verse form of Dyer's poem (Surreyan sonnet), but treats a different story of a satyr, subverting the usual iconography of Pan as the symbol of unexplained terror or panic, to make him cowardly flee the sound of his own horn. In the penultimate line, Sidney addresses his friend in a direct reference to the earlier poem: "Better I lyke thy Satyre (Deerest Dyer) / That burnte his lyps, to kisse faire shininge Fyer."

In four of the surviving manuscript witnesses, the embedded reference to Dyer in Sidney's answer poem seems to have been understood by their copyists.³⁴ Earlier in the manuscript Coningsby had also recognized Dyer's pun on his own name embedded in the text of his narrative poem "He that his mirthe hath loste": "DY-ERe thow lette his name be knowne / Whose folly shewes to muche" (fol. 15r); and in Finet's copy of the same poem (fol. 12v), Dyer's punning self-reference is also signposted with the majuscule "D" and bracketing: "(Dy er)." Both scribes further assigned the poem to Dyer in the subscriptions ("fynys quod DYER" and "E. dier"). Such biographical interpolations were not always evident to readers, however, as is clear from the treatment of the same line in the Cornwallis manuscript, where the reading "better I like the Satyres dearest dyre" reveals that the copyist (in this case, crucially, a professional scribe) did not pick up on the reference to Dyer and consequently altered the text to produce a sensible reading.³⁵

In *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*—which according to Ringler derived from a manuscript copy-text that was "probably supplied by the Countess" and therefore has some claim to authority—Dyer's poem appears directly before Sidney's answer poem; it is attributed to Dyer in the heading "E. D.," and the embedded reference in Sidney's poem is signposted by capitalizing the poet's surname: "deerest Dyer."³⁶ These three aspects of the companion set (the order of the poems, the clear distinction of respective authorship, and the recognition of the embedded reference to Dyer) provide a framework in which the poem was understood. When Coningsby, Finet, and the Ottley scribe copied the linked texts into their manuscript verse collections, they were careful to preserve those elements of presentation that conveyed meaning. Ottley's attribution of authorship to Dyer (subscribed "E. D.") signals an interloper in a collection almost entirely devoted to Sidney, but the answer poem (subscribed "P. S.") is the only text attributed to Sidney in the manuscript, out of forty-eight poems, including twenty-four from the *Old Arcadia* and seventeen of the *Certain Son-*

33. The tale is found in Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* [How one may take profite of his enemyes], translated by Thomas Elyot in 1531: "But Satyrus the fyrst tyme that he sawe fyer, whan he wolde haue taken it & kyssed it: ho, quod Prometheus, thou roughe knaue, if thou not hede, it wil make thy lypes smert: for it burneth, if it be touched" (p. 3).

34. The surname is capitalized in Finet's manuscript, Ottley, and the Folger manuscript of the *Old Arcadia*; Coningsby added brackets for extra emphasis: "(Deerest Dyer)."

35. In the Cornwallis manuscript, Dyer's poem appears on a recto (p. 21) and Sidney's answer poem on the following recto (p. 23); both texts are attributed to their respective authors: signed "Dier" and "S. p. Sydney." But two intervening poems may have been later additions: an eight-line unattributed verse, "Content aboue from god is sente" is placed adjacent to Dyer's poem, on the same page, and on the verso is another poem attributed to "Dier," "Wher one woulde be ther not to be."

36. *Poems of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. Ringler, 535.

nets. The Ottley scribe thus followed the form of presentation found in the majority of extant witnesses and marked out the two poems as a set, an exchange between these two important poet friends. The companion poems must have possessed a high level of cultural cachet: Dyer and Sidney were two poets whose names were often linked together as standards of literary excellence for a generation. In 1582, for instance, Thomas Watson cites Sidney and Dyer as exemplary readers, from whom a favorable response to his work (*The Hekatompathia*) would be the ultimate accolade:

Go I pray timidly, little book [...] you might find your way to the desks of Sidney or of Dyer, where twin bowers open to the Muses. Then say that you, a little stranger, belong to a poor client [...]. Thereupon each will peruse you favorably with a serene countenance, and each will overlook your blemishes.³⁷

Geffrey Whitney's emblem to "Edwarde Dier Esquier," "pennae gloria perennis" (The everlasting glory of the pen), similarly divides the honor of most distinguished poet of the day: "The laurell leafe for you, for him, the goulden pen; / The honours that the Muses giue, vnto the rarest men."³⁸ Though Whitney had originally intended the "honours" to be given to Sidney alone, the coupling of these two poets' names was not out of place; Dyer's literary reputation was on a par with Sidney's during the latter's lifetime, before his major works had been more widely disseminated. The early manuscript readers' interest in the identities of the poets, as attested by Coningsby, Finet, and the Ottley scribe, and the care taken to preserve important aspects of presentation that conveyed meaning, provide valuable information about the status and function of those texts as exemplars of the most current and coveted poetry available.



Critics interested in the material conditions of production and its impact on authorship have argued that early modern authors and readers treated texts as communal constructs or as part of an ongoing conversation to which anybody could contribute. As Wendy Wall observes, "numerous writers mention their carelessness in scattering their scribbled poems to friends; these writers were seemingly indifferent to their poems' circulation, readership, or preservation"; her views complement those of Marotti, when he notes that "lyric poetry was basically a genre for gentleman-amateurs who regarded their literary 'toys' as ephemeral works, . . . trifles to be transmitted in manuscript within a limited social world and not . . . literary monuments."³⁹ This

37. Thomas Watson's "Protrepiticon" (exhortation) to his "little book" (sig. *2r) is translated from the Latin by S. K. Heninger Jr. in *The Hekatompathia or Passionate Century of Love (1582) by Thomas Watson; A Facsimile Reproduction* (Gainesville, Fla., 1964), xiv–xv.

38. Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leiden, 1586); see Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, introd. John Manning (Aldershot, U.K., 1989), 2, 196.

39. Wall, *Imprint of Gender*, 31–34; Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet* (Madison, Wisc., 1986), 3.

potential for textual “malleability” is seen both in modes of composition (where authors continued to introduce revisions into their own work, appropriate lines from other poets’ work, or borrow a familiar opening as the starting point for a new composition) and transmission (where readers freely altered texts to suit their own purposes). This blurring of the collaborative and imitative practices of poets and the polishing and personalizing of texts by readers (some of whom were poets in their own right, as seen in the Arundel Harington manuscript) has led to the view that textual authority—both in the sense of the preservation of the properties of the text as written and the “authority” of a name attached to a work that would mediate its reception—was a minor concern for early modern authors and readers alike. However, as we have seen, this position is qualified by the care with which many anthologizers copied their texts and, where known, preserved evidence of authorship. The following section uses a hybrid poem transcribed into Coningsby’s manuscript (fol. 51r) to show how practices that took advantage of the potential “malleability” of manuscript texts could at times coexist with an interest in authorship and textual integrity:

In Pescod time when hownd to horne, gives eare while Bucke is kild,
 And little boyes with pipes of Corne, sit keeping beastes in field,
 I went to gather Strawberies tho when wodes & groves wer faire,
 And parchte my face with Pheboes soe, by walking in the ayre;
 I lay me down all by a streame, & bankes all over head,
 And ther I found the straungest Dreame, *that* ever yonge man had.

Me thought I saw ech Christmas game, both revells all & summe,
 And each thinge els that man cold name, or might by fancy cumme,
 The substance of the thing I saw, in Silence passe it shall,
 Because I lacke the skill to Draw, the order of them all;
 But Venus shall not scape my pen, whose maidens in disdayne,
 Sit feeding on the hartes of men, whom Cupides bow hath slayne.

And that blinde Boy sat all in blood, be bathed to the Eares,
 And like a conquerour ther he stood, and scorned lovers teares.
 I have more hartes *quod* he at call, then Cesar could commaund,
 And like the dead [*sic*] I make them fall, *that* overcrosse the lawnd.
 I do increase their wandring wites, till that I dim their sight,
 Tis I that do bereve them of, their Ioy & cheef delight.

Thus did I se this bragging Boy, advaunce himself even then,
 Deriding at the wanton toyes, of folyshe loving men.
 Which when I saw, for anger then my panting breast did beate,
 To se how he sate tauntinge them, vpon his royall seate.
 O then I wishte I had byn free, & cured were my wound.
 Me thought I could display his armes, & coward dedes expound.

But I perforce must stay my muse, full sore against my harte,
 For that I am a Subiecte wight, & launced with his Darte.
 But if that I atchieve the forte, *which* I have toke in charge,
 My Hand & Head, with quivering quill, shall blaze his name at large.

FINIS.

L ox:

This twenty-eight line poem is attributed to “L[ord] ox[ford],” Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford, but external evidence reveals that the first sixteen lines had been appropriated from a sixty-two-line poem by Thomas Churchyard. Churchyard published the poem in 1580 in his collection of verse *A pleasaunte Laborinth called Churchyardes Chance* (sigs. D1r–D2r).⁴⁰ Much later, in 1597, a musical setting (without the words but signposted by the rubric “In pescod time”) appeared in Anthony Holborne’s *The Cittharn Schoole* (sig. C1v). According to John Ward, Churchyard probably composed the poem to the popular folk tune “The Hunt’s up,” which explains “the ease with which the words can be fitted to the notes”; such was the contemporary popularity of Churchyard’s poem that this same tune subsequently became known as “In Pescod Time.”⁴¹ Oxford was a longstanding patron of Churchyard’s and may have seen the poem in manuscript: a contemporary manuscript copy (unattributed and omitting lines 30–35) is found in Finet’s anthology (fols. 51r–53r) and represents a manuscript tradition of the poem distinct from that in *Churchyardes Chance*.⁴² The combining of borrowed and original material was a familiar practice, often used when translating from Continental models, where borrowed lines were freely mixed with enough original composition to give it relevance to the immediate context and audience. Watson offers readers an insight into this method of composition in the explanatory headnote to one of his “passions” in *The Hekatompathia* (sonnet 22):

The substance of this passion is taken out of *Seraphine* sonetto 127 [. . .].
 But the Author hath in this translation inuerted the order of some verses
 of *Seraphine*, and added the two last of himselfe to make the rest to seeme
 the more pathetical. (sig. C3v)

40. Churchyard’s statement in the “Epistle Dedicatorie” to *Churchyardes Chance* clearly states his sole authorship of the volume: “I presente vnto your handes this newe yere, some of mine old labors & studies, Printed al bound in one newe volume, for sutche as pleases to buye them” (sig. a4v).

41. John M. Ward, “The Hunt’s Up,” *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* 106 (1979–80): 1–25 at 3; Ward (pp. 12–13) lists three more sixteenth-century settings (for keyboard, cittern, and bass viol) under the name “(In) Peascod Time.”

42. Sixteen lines belonging to Churchyard in the hybrid poem in Coningsby’s manuscript share a number of variants with the copy in Finet’s anthology (against the print copy) and indicate a distinct manuscript tradition for the poem. In a postscript to *Churchyardes Chance*, the author mentions his intention to dedicate a forthcoming volume “called *Churchyardes Challenge*” to “the noble Earle of Oxforde” (sig. K4v). For Churchyard’s clientage under Oxford, see Steven W. May, “The Poems of Edward De Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford and of Robert Devereux, Second Earl of Essex,” *Studies in Philology* 77 (1980): 1–132 at 82.

Similarly Arthur Gorges takes the French poet Pierre Ronsard as his source for the first and last sestet of the lyric “Woolde I were changde into that golden Showre,” but an intervening stanza is his own substitution, where he takes the opportunity to introduce biographical content.⁴³

The unique twelve-line continuation of “In Pescod time” in Coningsby’s anthology marks a shift in style that, together with the sudden loss of the regular internal rhyme (used consistently in Churchyard’s poem), indicates a different writer. The new version not only creates a more succinct poem that dispenses with Churchyard’s outmoded use of moralizing personifications, but also reworks the text in a radical way. In Churchyard’s original, the allegorical figures “honest-Meanyng,” and “good Sporte” join forces with “Witt,” so that men “can treade on Cupides breast, and marche on Venus face.” In the new version the narrator, preserving courtly love sentiments of service, declares himself “a Subiecte wight.” Oxford’s appropriation of his client’s poem can be viewed as the product of a literary exchange or friendly competition, a response to an existing poem that suggests how it could have been written differently (or better).⁴⁴ A similar kind of interchange can be found with Watson, another of Oxford’s poet-clients, who was encouraged to print his sonnet cycle *The Hekatompathia* after his patron “had willinglie vouchsafed the acceptance of this worke, and at conuenient leasures fauourable perused it, being as yet but in written hand.”⁴⁵ It may be no coincidence that Oxford in his “When werthe thow borne Desire” adapted the same Italian sonnet (Pamfilo Sassi’s “Quando nascesti, Amor?”) translated by Watson in his *Hekatompathia* as “When werthe thou borne sweet Loue?” (sonnet 22, sig. C3v). Both poets referred to the Italian original, but similarities in the ordering of lines and diction, as Oxford’s editor points out, suggest “some connection between Oxford’s and Watson’s translations.”⁴⁶

Oxford thus seems to have collaborated and shared compositions and sources with his poet-clients, and Churchyard may well have sanctioned his patron’s playful reworking of “In Pescod time.” J. W. Saunders noted that the scribal medium facilitated collaborative working practices between poets, describing the resulting compositions as the “product of active association of friends.”⁴⁷ Oxford’s early viewing of Watson’s sonnet cycle and his encouraging words about publishing have already been mentioned, and he may have been at the center of a circle of poets—including Churchyard and John Lyly (another of his poet-clients)—sharing and responding to each other’s

43. *The Poems of Sir Arthur Gorges*, ed. Helen Estabrook Sandison (Oxford, 1953), 201.

44. May first suggested that there might have been “some sort of competition or collaboration between patron and protégé” in the production of the poem (“Poems of Edward De Vere,” 83).

45. From the dedication, “To the Right Honorable my very good Lord Edward de Vere, Earle of Oxenford.” The imprint in the *Hekatompathia* is undated, but it is generally thought to have appeared in the year of its entry into the Stationers’ Register (where it was entered on March 27, 1582); cf. *English and Scottish Sonnet Sequences of the Renaissance*, ed. Holger M. Klein, 2 vols. (Hildesheim, 1984), 1:31, 21n.

46. May, “Poems of Edward De Vere,” 74.

47. J. W. Saunders, “From Manuscript to Print: A Note on the Circulation of Poetic MSS in the Sixteenth Century,” *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society* 6 (1951): 507–28 at 512.

work in manuscript.⁴⁸ The point I am making here is that the products of collaboration and borrowing among poets associated with each other and facilitated by the scribal medium did not necessarily derive from a sense of “communal” ownership of texts. Critical discussions have on the whole associated “malleability” with a widespread lack of interest in authorship. However, when poets worked in this way the parameters were strictly set; in the case of Oxford’s appropriation of Churchyard’s work, his position as patron and social superior may have allowed him to take greater liberties with another poet’s work than usual, but in transmission authorship was still an important factor in the lyric’s reception by its readers. Coningsby was an active collector of Oxford’s work, and three out of the five poems classed as canonical by Oxford’s editor found in his collection are named as Oxford’s.⁴⁹ When it comes to “In Pescod time,” the copyist’s interest lies with the adapter, despite the fact that Churchyard is responsible for more lines; but the hybrid lyric is not perceived as an “an ongoing social discourse” (to use Marotti’s phrase);⁵⁰ the poem was adapted by Oxford before it was released into transmission and his “authorship” is an important marker that mediates its reception.



The scholarly attention to the fluidity of texts in manuscript transmission and assertions of scribal agency that blur the boundaries between author and copyist has meant that the evidence for opposing conceptions of authorship and textual authority has often gone unnoticed. Nevertheless, verse miscellanies—as we shall see in this final section—sometimes show signs of both malleability and fixity, respect for textual integrity and a willingness to take liberties with it.

“Dy, dy, desire, and bidde Delighte adew” is an anonymous poem that was never printed. Nevertheless it enjoyed widespread circulation in manuscript, surviving in seven contemporary copies, and it was closely imitated in a lyric entitled “A Counterloue,” beginning “Declare O minde, from fond desires excluded” and printed in *The Phoenix Nest* (sigs. L4v–M1r). Three copies have forty lines: Coningsby’s anthology (fols. 28v–29r), Finet’s anthology (fols. 49v–50r), and the Marsh’s manuscript (fol. 23r–v). One copy has a forty-eight-line version: a Stuart collection compiled by an Inns of Court student (BL, Harley MS 3910, fol. 24v); and three copies have a version with sixty-four lines: the Elizabethan verse anthology BL, Harley MS 6910 (fols. 165–66r),

48. Saunders cites (ibid., 517) the letter from Lyly to Watson printed in *The Hekatompathia*, where Lyly (like the Earl of Oxford) is responding to a “preview” of Watson’s sonnet collection in manuscript.

49. May, “Poems of Edward De Vere” (nos. 8, 11, 12, 13 and 15). Coningsby’s habit of retrospective editing of the names attached to entries in the anthology indicates that information about authorship was not always available at the time of transcription. The two unattributed canonical poems by Oxford (nos. 8 and 15) appear in a block of courtier verse (fols. 65v–71r) where retrospective attributions were added for poems by Dyer and Raleigh, making it likely that he did not purposely omit the attributions to the poems by Oxford. Crucially one of the canonical poems is signed as a “Ball[et],” indicating a musical source, which might explain the text’s anonymity in transmission.

50. See above, n. 12.

Edward Hoby's manuscript book of mixed content (BL, Add. MS 38823, fol. 57r–v), and Edward Pudsey's commonplace book (Bod., MS Eng. poet. d.3, fol. 2r). The high level of correspondence between the texts' forty shared lines shows the care taken by these various scribes to create accurate transcriptions, but one scribe also engaged in some "social editing," albeit in a place distinct from the faithful copy made earlier. Further into the manuscript (fol. 36r) Pudsey created a hybrid poem; he borrowed the first four lines from the anonymous poem and appended them to the first four lines of Sidney's *Certain Sonnets* 32, "Leave me ô Love, which reachest but to dust," a poem that he had also copied earlier in the manuscript, on the first folio:

Leaue me O Loue that reachest but to dust
and thou my minde aspire to higher things
growe rich in that which neuer taketh rust
what euer fads but fading pleasure brings
die die desire and bid delight adew
fancy is frail afections make thee fond
Loue is a child blind naked fangled new
suit but a slaue to seruile purpose bound.

Pudsey's copy of the lines presents only one minor variant from the text of the same poems he had copied in full elsewhere in the manuscript: a plural noun in place of a singular ("afections make" for "affection makes"). The anonymous manuscript poem had originally circulated along the same channels of transmission as Sidney's verse, and the poem was added to collections formed by the earliest readers of his verse in manuscript.⁵¹ This later reader evidently found the sentiment in the two poems compatible.

Pudsey's differing approach to the same set of texts is replicated in an example of scribal appropriation found in Coningsby's anthology. Among the jottings on the first leaf of the manuscript is a rhyming couplet, which takes a line verbatim from a poem by Dyer ("Devyde my Tymes, and Rate my wretched Howres") and adapts another line from the same poem:

Repentaunt thoughtes, for overpassed Mayes,
Consume my youth, before myne aged Dayes.
H. C. R.D.T.F.O.F.#.

The appropriation does not interfere with the original text, which is copied in full later in the manuscript and duly attributed to "Dier" (fols. 69v–70r); however, the scribe's initials and motto (perhaps the popular contemporary posie "Rather Death Then False Of Faith") attached to the couplet convey a sense of ownership of the appropriated

51. Viz. Coningsby's and Finet's anthologies, Marsh's, and Harley MS 6910.

lines.⁵² Nonetheless, as with the example of Pudsey's hybrid poem, the original text is left intact.

Readers did not passively receive texts; each time a poem was copied into a personal manuscript volume it was given a new context in the company of a novel and (usually) unique combination of texts. Access to copy-texts was often closely bound up with friendship networks, which imbued those texts with personal relevance. Coningsby was conscientious about recording the author responsible for the rewrite of "In Pescod time"; what appears to be a cavalier treatment of an existing text is the product of a literary collaboration: a text fixed before it entered into the stream of transmission. As a reader of the poetry of Sidney and Dyer in manuscript, Coningsby was also concerned to preserve the integrity of those authors' texts and alert to the possibilities of textual corruption. Misreadings of a transcribed source text were unavoidable in a medium that relied on legible hands, from scribes who were on the whole amateur practitioners. But a casual attitude toward texts and authorship was not a prerequisite of manuscript transmission. The copyists of manuscript verse in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century certainly engaged in practices that compromised or effaced authorial agency, but these practices could coexist with a concern for textual "authority" and an interest in those individual poets responsible for writing the verse that these collectors so actively sought.

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52. The posy is found in BL, Harley MS 6910, fol. 162v, and cited in Joan Evans, *English Posies and Posy Rings* (Oxford, 1931), 90.