



CREaTE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Please cite this publication as follows:

Williams, C. B. (2017) "This and the rest Maisters we all may mende": reconstructing the practices and anxieties of a manuscript miscellany's reader-compiler. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 80 (2). pp. 277-292. ISSN 0018-7895.

Link to official URL (if available):

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/hlq.2017.0016>

This version is made available in accordance with publishers' policies. All material made available by CReaTE is protected by intellectual property law, including copyright law. Any use made of the contents should comply with the relevant law.

Contact: create.library@canterbury.ac.uk



“This and the rest Maisters we all may mende”: Reconstructing the Practices and Anxieties of a Manuscript Miscellany’s Reader-Compiler

Claire Bryony Williams

ABSTRACT This essay takes MS Dyce 44, National Art Library (V&A) as a case study to reconstruct the personal tastes and scribal habits of a manuscript miscellany’s main copyist and compiler. Claire Bryony Williams uses evidence from the literary contents, copying stints, textual collations, and physical format of the manuscript to reveal its maker’s intellectual preoccupations and investment of time and money in the project, as well as to explore the print and manuscript sources, and dramatic and musical interactions, that informed the collection. The essay concludes with an examination of the compiler’s attempts to control other readers’ access to and interpretations of erotic material through cipher and backward writing and the use of Latin tags to mediate morally dubious texts, as well as the way in which two subsequent readers responded to the miscellany through adding poems. **KEYWORDS:** manuscript verse miscellanies; strategies for manuscript compilation; copying stints; Henry Constable; Thomas Nashe

❧ **RECOVERING HOW BOOKS WERE READ** has become a Holy Grail for historians of the early modern book, and, as a consequence, scholars routinely scour printed texts for written traces of their early readers. Underlinings, manicules, or even marginal jottings in printed books, however, offer no certain proof that the text was read in its entirety, let alone *how* it was read. By contrast, we can be sure that manuscripts’ copyists have read each word of their copied texts, poor though those readings of the source texts may sometimes be. Texts copied by the hand of nonprofessional miscellany-makers are evidence not only of reading but also of reading experiences that have made a sufficient impression (positive or negative) upon individuals that they privilege that text by committing it to the page. In studying a manuscript miscellany, we encounter a reader moved to take on the roles of copyist, compiler, and (sometimes) composer.

Pp. 277–292. ©2017 by Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. ISSN 0018-7895 | E-ISSN 1544-399X. All rights reserved. For permission to photocopy or reproduce article content, consult the University of Pennsylvania Press Rights and Permissions website, <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/about/permissions.html>.

This essay examines how we can reconstruct early modern reader-compilers' intellectual interests and biases, their scribal habits, and their sense of an anticipated readership. It sets out the research questions and methods we might apply to manuscript miscellanies in order to link the literary and codicological study of these documents with ongoing dialogue and research about the nature of early modern readers and reading. It focuses primarily on the practices of the main copyist in the seventeenth-century miscellany MS Dyce 44, National Art Library with comparative references to contemporary manuscript miscellanies. Dyce 44, formerly known as the Todd manuscript, has been housed in the National Art Library in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London since 1869, after it was bequeathed by its last private owner, the textual scholar and art collector Alexander Dyce. The miscellany is a small octavo of 117 extant leaves (although lacking at least two more leaves) and measuring 141 × 92 mm. The paper requirements for the manuscript, fifteen or sixteen sheets, would have cost less than 3d., which would not have represented a costly luxury to a man of modest social standing.¹ The cost would have been rather higher if the miscellany were started in a pre-bound pocketbook rather than retrospectively assembled from loose sheets. From the uniform neatness of the texts copied therein, it seems likely that the collection was bound after composition: in such a small pre-bound volume we would expect to see paleographical irregularity where the copyist was writing into the camber of the internal margin; the absence of this phenomenon suggests that the pages were sewn together after copying was complete.² Thus the financial investment behind the miscellany represents a reader's minor indulgence—but not, in material terms, an extravagance—in forming a portable extension of the reader's library and a collection point for texts of interest to be preserved from borrowed printed and manuscript texts.

☞ The Contents of Dyce 44

Dyce 44 is best known as the most extensive source for secular sonnets of the poet, polemicist, and Roman Catholic convert Henry Constable (fols. 12r–43r). The miscellany's most celebrated text is the only known enciphered copy of Thomas Nashe's "The Choise of Valentines" (fols. 2r–4r), the second entry in the volume. The first entry, a mock-sermon in praise of thieving, sets the satirical, irreverent tone of the collection and, perhaps, combined with the encoded appearance of Nashe's text, protects some of its more profane content from discovery. A casual observer glancing at a few words on the first leaf might notice references to scripture without realizing that this is a mock rather than a sincere sermon. It seems reasonable to conclude that the project of "mak-

1. See Heather Wolfe, "Item: for a Paper Book Bought at London for the Steward': Paper Circulation in Early Modern England" (paper, Renaissance Society of America Conference, Washington, D.C., March 22–24, 2012), which radically revised general assumptions about the prohibitive cost of paper in this period, showing that twenty-four to twenty-five sheets of paper cost just 4d.

2. It is possible that the papers in Dyce 44 remained unbound and that their owner may have read them as loose sheets in varying orders. However, the dimensions of the papers are so small that their very survival could constitute evidence that they were bound together relatively soon after the bulk of the compilation was established.

ing” Dyce 44 was initially undertaken largely in order to preserve copies of the opening works: the sermon, the “Choise,” and Constable’s sonnets, along with a unique erotic dream poem and the bawdy song “Down lay the shepherd swain so sober and demure.”³ If this is so, the miscellany follows the collecting pattern described by Marcy North as common to manuscript miscellanies from the 1620s to the 1640s, with “the most fashionable verse . . . clustered . . . near the beginning of the manuscript . . . [as] collectors tended to begin their miscellanies when they had collected a significant number of poems.”⁴

This collection was mainly compiled by “Hand A,” who is responsible for 301 of the 308 texts. The subject sections of Dyce 44 are not organized under headings like a commonplace book, such as MS V.a.103.1, Folger Shakespeare Library (which lists, among other running titles, “Love Sonnets” and “Serious Poems”; amusingly, the latter remained blank). Nor does Dyce 44 contain comments on the ordering of the texts, as found in MS 243/4, Rosenbach Library, Philadelphia, whose compiler considered the ensemble nature of his collection to such an extent that he composed a narrative and arranged his poems as monologues within that narrative structure. We may assume that, because the papers contained in Dyce 44 were bound retrospectively, the compilation grew as copy-texts became available. After copying the texts, Hand A did not number them to facilitate the internal navigation of the collection (as did the copyist in MS U26, St. John’s College, Cambridge). Perhaps Hand A did not feel that the type of search and retrieval solutions used by other seventeenth-century compilers were necessary or indeed consistent with the purpose and spirit of this collection;⁵ in Dyce 44 there are no sententiae, no texts of professional or spiritual guidance, no practical household recipes that would need to be accessed quickly. At urgent moments when lives or souls were at peril, the contents of Dyce 44 would not have provided a remedy. It is instead a miscellany of recreation and memorialization.

Hand A is likely that of a former student of Cambridge University with Middle Temple links and connections in the south of England. Provenance research on Dyce 44 revealed that it passed into the hands of William Bristow, a bookseller and printer in Canterbury, Kent, from the Brockman family’s library in or before 1800, when Bristow gave the manuscript to Henry John Todd.⁶ Since 1570 the Brockmans’ main estate had been Beachborough in Newington-next-Hythe, less than twenty miles from Canterbury.⁷ Assuming that Dyce 44 was a family paper, rather than an antiquarian

3. Throughout this essay, “unique” is used to indicate that a poem is the only known extant copy; of course, patchy survival rates mean that there may have been other copies, now lost. For a discussion of rare and unique poems, see Arthur Marotti’s essay in this issue.

4. Marcy L. North, “Amateur Compilers, Scribal Labour, and the Contents of Early Modern Poetic Miscellanies,” in “Manuscript Miscellanies c. 1450–1700,” ed. Richard Beadle and Colin Burrow, special issue, *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 16 (2011): 82–111 at 96.

5. See Angus Vine’s discussion of Folger, MS V.a.339 in this issue.

6. See the provenance notes of Todd and Dyce, respectively on the front pastedown and the front endpaper of Dyce 44.

7. Patrick Brockman et al., Brockman Family History website, accessed October 22, 2010, <http://brockmanofkent.net/index2.html> (site discontinued). See also the entry under “Brockman” in *The Visitation of Kent Taken in the Years 1619–1621*, ed. Robert Hovenden (London, 1898), 72.

acquisition, Henry Brockman (1573–1630) is the most plausible candidate for the compiler of Dyce 44, owing to his dates and his Cambridge and Middle Temple connections, which correspond with the miscellany's contents. Cambridge is mentioned six times in the manuscript; and the presence of poetry by Constable and Nashe (both Johnians), combined with a unique epitaph on a contemporary of Brockman's, John Hooke, also a Johnian, who died in 1602, strengthens the case for the compiler's links with St. John's College.⁸ Henry Brockman matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge (the college adjacent to St. John's) in 1587, overlapping with Nashe's time at St. John's and seven years after Constable had left the college.⁹ In addition, the contents of Dyce 44 testify to Inns of Court links: it is one of the earliest miscellanies to witness the non-coterie manuscript circulation of John Donne's poems;¹⁰ it also preserves manuscript witnesses of two rare poems by Sir John Davies and a unique poem on the playwright John Marston, both Middle Templars.¹¹ At the Inns of Court parliament on November 26, 1591, it was announced that Henry Brockman would be bound to William Plumer and Thomas Brodnax (Brockman's cousin) and admitted to the Middle Temple with a fine of 50s.¹² Brockman subsequently entered the Middle Temple on January 30, 1592; he was thus a contemporary of Donne's confidant, the courtier Henry Goodere (entered April 23, 1589); the poet and politician Benjamin Rudyerd (entered April 18, 1590); and Marston (entered August 2, 1592).¹³ If Hand A is Henry Brockman, then Dyce 44 is the collection not of an adolescent but of a family man in his twenties, who continued the collection until he was at least forty-three¹⁴ and who was drawn to the poetry of his formative years: just over half of the dateable texts in Dyce 44, twenty-six out of fifty-one, were composed before 1600.¹⁵

8. For full details of the case for Henry Brockman as Hand A, see Claire Bryony Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 2 vols. (doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2012), 1:14–19.

9. John Venn and J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* (Cambridge, 1922), 1:228 (s.v. "Brookeman"); for Nashe's and Constable's dates at Cambridge, see *ODNB*, s.v. "Constable, Henry (1562–1613)," by Ceri Sullivan, last modified September 2013, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/6103; and s.v. "Nashe, Thomas," by Charles Nicholl, last modified January 2008, doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/19790.

10. Consultation with Gary Stringer (private correspondence, September 5, 2012) reveals that the *Donne Variorum*'s ongoing work on the *Songs and Sonnets* has found that there is "no possibility that either of these poems in [Dyce 44] derives from print" (the poems in question are "Busy old fool, unruly sun" and "Tis true, tis day what though it be") and that both texts are related to the "Skipworth MS," Add. MS 25707, British Library (hereafter BL) and the "Edward Smyth MS," Add. MS 29, Cambridge University Library.

11. The Davies poems are "I love thee not for sacred chastity" (fol. 57r) and "This paper may contain my thoughts in part" (fol. 117r). The poem "John Marston bad his friends unto a play" appears on fol. 116r.

12. Charles Henry Hopwood, *Middle Temple Records*, vol. 1, 1501–1603 (London, 1904), 325–26.

13. H. A. C. Sturgess, *Register of Admissions to the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple*, vol. 1, *Fifteenth Century to 1781* (London, 1949), 63, 59, 60, 64.

14. When the Carr–Howard libels were first circulating in 1616, Henry Brockman would have been forty-three.

15. For a discussion of the texts dating to 1568/9–1599, see Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 2:375.

 Interests and Sympathies Exhibited by Hand A

While a poetry miscellany cannot be read autobiographically, the selection and arrangement of texts can suggest the sympathies and interests of the individual who made this collection. (For the reasons cited above, I refer to Hand A as “he.”) After the twenty-seven Constable sonnets uniquely preserved in Dyce 44, the satires, “Fy fy mad world is this the way to rise” (fols. 46r–49v) and “Fy fy foul mouth is this the way to rise” (fols. 50r–56r), are arguably two of the miscellany’s most significant unique texts. These satires provide a wealth of insights into contemporary attitudes toward the Church of England, Roman Catholicism, and Puritanism in 1600, at a moment when the royal succession and the future of the Church were of immediate concern. The inclusion of the first satire, with its anti-Catholic sentiments, does not necessarily suggest that Hand A was in sympathy with the piece, for it seems likely that if he were, he would have given it the “last word”; instead he followed it with “Fy fy foul mouth” (a 376-line answer poem that refutes “Fy fy mad world”). Rather, it is the second of these religious satires, written from the perspective of a member of the Church of England with a mistrust of Puritans and some sympathies for Catholic leanings in the Anglican Communion, that seems to provide the most telling insight available in Dyce 44 into the compiler’s own confessional views. This interpretation is supported by analysis of confessional poetry across the collection: Hand A copies almost twice as many anti-Puritan (eleven) as anti-Catholic (six) texts. It is also noteworthy that, while there are no defenses of Puritanism in Dyce 44, Hand A records epigrams by Sir John Harington and Thomas Bastard, which evince potent nostalgia for the pre-Reformation Church.¹⁶

An anti-Scots song, along with a unique libel against James I’s Privy Council and the six Carr–Howard libels, suggest that the compiler also felt a degree of disenchantment with the new king’s reign.¹⁷ While Dyce 44 contains thirty-five libels, only five of them (14 percent) are identifiably Elizabethan.¹⁸ Thus the balance of praise to criticism shifts as more recent poems are copied into the miscellany. It is striking that, although Elizabeth I is remembered in a laudatory epitaph,¹⁹ a more recent royal death is not mourned in Dyce 44. Hand A had access to and copied a poem from George Wither’s *Prince Henries Obsequies* (1612), which contains more than forty elegies on the prince. He only copied one epitaph from the volume, however, and that was not for Henry, but

16. “A certain priest once riding on the way” (fol. 79v); “A time uncertain when a certain preacher” (fol. 72r); “Some some that some which colleges did found” (fol. 80r).

17. “Well met Jockie whither away” (fols. 88v–89r); “Seventh Henry’s Council was of great renown” (fol. 82v); “From Katherine’s dock was launched a pink” (fol. 97r), “ICUR good Monsieur Carr” (fol. 97r), “There was an old lad rid in an old pad” (fols. 97v–98r), “Poor pilot thou art like to lose thy pink” (fol. 98v), “From Robert’s coach to Robin’s car” (fol. 98v), “Here lies one that once was poor” (fol. 99r).

18. Libels written pre-1604 include: “Here lies that noble Councillor” (fol. 60r) and “Here lies buried worm’s meat” (fol. 71r), against Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester (d. 1588); “It is a question now in heraldry” (fol. 79r) and “If any ask why Tarquin meant to marry” (fol. 79r), on the Baker/Fletcher marriage (1595); and “Admire all weakness wrongeth right” (fol. 81), the libel written in 1599 against the enemies of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex.

19. “She was and is what else can more be said” (fol. 70v).

for another young man who died in the same year as the prince: Sir William Sidney of Penshurst Place, Kent. Could this be a piece of local loyalism in a Kentish county collection?²⁰ Various elegies for Henry circulated widely in Jacobean and Caroline miscellanies, but given the compiler's seeming Erastianism and taste for anti-Puritan satire, he may not have felt the death of the fervently Protestant prince keenly, as did the Puritans. This said, there is no suggestion in Dyce 44 that Hand A was seditious toward James's government; there is nothing treasonable and too pervasive a sense of wry amusement in the literary censure collected here. These criticisms of the Stuart court can instead be read as the low-level malcontent of a middle-aged man, nostalgic for the England of his student days in the 1580s and 1590s.

The appearance in the miscellany of Nashe's "Choise," Davies's anti-Petrarchan wooing poems, and the mock love songs sometimes attributed to John Hoskyns and Lady Mary Jacobs suggest that the compiler had little taste for high-Elizabethan Petrarchan writing on unrequited love.²¹ Of course, Hand A copied sixty-five sonnets by Constable. Nevertheless, despite having sustained access to the 1591 edition of Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, he did not copy a single poem from the most celebrated sonnet sequence of the day, although the highly derivative uniquely surviving erotic dream poem "It was the time when chirping birds begin" (fols. 7r–9r) may be an homage to Sidneian amatory verse, possibly composed by Hand A himself.²² There may have been reasons for copying the Constable texts besides the desire to possess love sonnets: their rarity; the lending of the copy-text by someone significant to the compiler; personal interest in Constable; their evocation of an earlier phase of the compiler's reading tastes, when their subject, Lady Penelope Rich, was the golden beauty of her generation. However, the cognitive dissonance of preserving texts that offer such conflicting views of courtly love makes better sense when Dyce 44 is considered as the collection of a man whose tastes have altered over time. The compilation of the ribald 1590s texts and unique elegies from the first and second decades of the seventeenth century recall Justice Shallow's lament in *2 Henry IV*: "Jesu, Jesu, the mad days that I have spent! And to see how many of my old acquaintance are dead" (3.2.32–33). The libels, prose anecdotes, and satirical epigrams privilege cynical views about humankind and, while exceptions are made for individuals remembered in sincere elegies and epitaphs, even these (presumably) constituted for their copyist further evidence of goodness passing away. In Dyce 44 there is a sense of something rotten in the state: its pages are peopled with usurers, sexually obliging, pox-ridden women, and unkindly caricatured Puritans. The recurring concerns about financial misdeeds—usury and over-taxation—are surely more the preoccupations of a middle-aged man of property than a student with some antiquarian verse tastes.

20. "Here under lies a Sidney and what then" (fol. 73r).

21. The Davies poems are: "I love thee not for sacred chastity" (fol. 57r); "Faith wench I cannot court thy piercing eEyes" (fol. 57r–v); "Sweet wench I love thee yet I will not sue" (fol. 57v); the Hoskyns–Jacobs poems are "O love [whose] power and might" (fol. 84v) and "Your letter I received" (fol. 85r).

22. "Sixty-five" because the leaf between fols. 36r and 37r (which bore two sonnets) was removed at an unknown date. For proof of Hand A's access to *Astrophil and Stella* and for the authorship of "It was the time," see Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 2:48–49.

Hand A's Scribal Practice

The physical form of Dyce 44 can also tell us about the compiler's reading and copying habits. Hand A is responsible for 301 of the 308 texts in the miscellany, a contribution amounting to approximately 37,000 words. Peter Beal has estimated that a professional scribe would have taken about sixty to seventy hours to copy a text of 75,000 words, which would mean that the text copied by Hand A in Dyce 44 would take about thirty-two hours for a scrivener.²³ From the irregularities in spacing and variations in duct, or the manner of writing, as well as the episodic nature of the entries, Hand A appears to be an amateur copyist (and owner of the manuscript) rather than a professional scribe making a presentation copy; thus his copying rate would likely have been slower than Beal's estimated work rate. Furthermore, textual evidence of copying stints, blanks left between some genre-grouped sections, and evidence of dating offered by the texts themselves all suggest that the miscellany was composed over a number of months or years rather than across the course of, say, a labor-intensive week. While considerable care has been taken in the minute letter formations and careful textual spacing, this miscellany appears to be an oft-revisited and somewhat incidental reader's repository rather than a scrupulously planned, short-term transcription project.

The analysis of copying stints, which can offer clues to the formation of a document, is problematic. Presented with as much writing in one hand as we have in Dyce 44, we can amass detailed data on changes in ink color, duct, and the comparative neatness and size of the handwriting, but none of this evidence can provide definite information about timescale because we cannot tell how long a break our copyist took between transcription sessions. Nevertheless, looking without reading, we can see the multiplicity of his written encounters with the manuscript and the nature of the meaningful divisions between transcribed works. By looking at where Hand A left blank sections (some remain blank; others are filled by later hands), we can see that these divisions are the hinterlands between intended thematically or generically organized sections in the miscellany. True, there is evidence of occasional retrospective gap-filling: on fols. 69v–70r two bawdy epigrams are fitted into a blank half-page between two sincere verse epitaphs; the epigrams are written in the same session as one another in lighter ink, in a more loosely formed, hurried hand than the elegies on either side, but the content of the two epigrams does not speak to or about the elegies. However, overall the study of divisions in Dyce 44 provides evidence for ten distinct groups of texts in the miscellany. The first three sections are the longest; the remaining seven sections cover fewer than five leaves apiece. The first section (fols. 1r–11r) comprises eight texts; analysis yields evidence of five different copying stints within that section. The longest stint here is Nash's "Choise," consistently copied in darker ink and smaller handwriting than the texts around it. Hand A appears to have copied this 161-line poem at one sitting but had apparently spent long enough with the copy-text to adapt and encipher his own copy of it. Even for one well-acquainted with copying in cipher,

23. Peter Beal, *In Praise of Scribes: Manuscripts and Their Makers in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford, 1998), 40.

this practice would surely have at least doubled the copying time. Hand A's difficulty in setting it down suggests that he was unlikely to have used cipher regularly (as would a diplomat, for example); his deletions and alterations of letters also strongly suggest that he is translating directly onto the page rather than copying from a draft that he had prepared previously.²⁴

In the third and longest section in Dyce 44—forty-four and a half leaves—there is evidence of more than forty changes in ink and handwriting style; on some leaves, there are signs of three different stints as a couple of epigrams are added at a time, piecemeal. While writing this third section, Hand A seems also to have filled in earlier sections, blurring a sense of genre division by engaging in an ongoing acquisitive process (as we shall see later). By contrast to that blurring process, the six Carr-Howard libels on the 1615–16 Sir Thomas Overbury murder trial appear in the fifth section, within the last twenty leaves of Dyce 44; those six libels are written across just two and a half leaves in the same color ink and with unvarying pressure and duct; they thus appear to have been transcribed in one stint. Textual collations of these popular poems reveal a breadth and frequency of errors typical of extensive manuscript-to-manuscript transmission.²⁵ This concentrated stint is quite possibly the result of the compiler copying from a borrowed manuscript containing texts concerned with the scandal. A still stronger case for limited manuscript access can be made for the longest sustained section in Dyce 44: Constable's sonnets (the second section). Here there are no obvious changes in ink color, layout, or handwriting style across a thirty-two-and-a-half leaf section; these sonnets were copied into Dyce 44 in a more focused manner than any other texts in the miscellany. To refer back to Beal's rate of professional copying, the 8,500 words that constitute the sixty-three sonnets, with their prose introduction and conclusion, would have taken just under seven and a half hours for a professional to copy. Did the main compiler transcribe the Constable sonnets in the knowledge that he would only have access to the copy-text of these poems for a short period of time, on loan from a friend perhaps, and that he needed to enter them in a more sustained manner than was his wont? It is plausible. The extravagant spacing of Constable's sonnets is also suggestive because it deviates from Hand A's default pattern of using the space on the page efficiently for extended works; elsewhere he fits between twenty-five and thirty lines of writing per page, for instance, for the mock-sermon or a lengthy poem like "Fy fy foul mouth is this the way to rise" (fols. 50r–56r). Generally, he maintains regular, fairly generous upper and left-hand margins with a smaller lower margin, but in the Constable section each sonnet has a page to itself and about a third of the page beneath each sonnet remains blank; none of these blanks were filled later. This spacing may not be wholly motivated by reverence for the sonnets; it could also suggest a shortage of time in which to work out a more spatially efficient layout for the sonnets.

24. For analysis of the cipher errors, see Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 2:9–11.

25. See *ibid.*, 2:318–25.

Analysis of copying stints in manuscript miscellanies can, then, not only reveal the nature of early modern readers' sustained or episodic relationship with their personal papers but (when combined with evidence from textual collation) also illuminate traces of the transitory relationships between one manuscript and other (lost) manuscripts circulated within a network of like-minded readers. Studying a miscellany like Dyce 44 brings into clearer relief the extent of literary loss from this period; the manuscript contains 140 unique texts out of a total of 308, according to comparison with poetry indices, full-text searches of EEBO-TCP, and presentation to a range of expert scholars. These unmatched texts are thus termed "unique," at least until corresponding copies can be located. This figure of 140 apparently unique texts means that 45 percent of Dyce 44's contents are serendipitously preserved. These texts fall primarily within Arthur Marotti's categories of (1) satiric epigrams and epitaphs on individuals (some of whom were likely associates from Cambridge or the Inns of Court); (2) bawdy epigrams and confessional satires; (3) amatory verse and elegies and epitaphs written about esteemed named individuals; (4) translations from Latin and answer poems to English verses.²⁶ A number of poems within this unusually high proportion of unique survivals may be Hand A's own compositions.²⁷ However, many would have circulated more widely. If these are what have been preserved, how much more has been lost?

Dyce 44 is also an unusual case study in terms of the copyist's interactions with his texts. In the case of those poems that survive in multiple witnesses and can be textually analyzed through collation, Hand A's unique readings may indicate that he copied with an eye to "improving" some of his texts, as he clarifies punch lines in jests.²⁸ Steven W. May notes that "intentional, creative alteration of copy was aberrant and rare. Social editing was quite a marginal practice among Renaissance scribes."²⁹ However, the striking recurrence of independent lines of descent for texts in Dyce 44 (Hand A's versions are very often distinct from any other copies) may be caused by Hand A "mending" some of the erroneous or opaque readings that he encountered; such mending would obscure textual relations between Dyce 44 and its copy-texts because stemmatic collation does not anticipate willful adaptation on the part of readers/copyists. Partly because of this "amending" habit, Hand A does not appear to be the most accurate early modern witness to copied texts. When copying from an identified print source he erred from his copy-text at a rate of 0.0145.³⁰ (This equates to almost 1.5 words for every hundred words copied, i.e., approximately one error in

26. See Marotti's essay in this issue.

27. See Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 1:41.

28. See "Sextus upon a spleen did rashly swear" (fol. 80v), line 4.

29. Steven W. May, "Renaissance Manuscript Anthologies: Editing the Social Editors," in *Manuscripts and Their Makers in the English Renaissance*, ed. Peter Beal and Grace Ioppolo (London, 2002), 203–16 at 209.

30. Hand A's accuracy rate was calculated from collations of texts in Dyce 44 copied from Thomas Bastard's 1598 edition of *Chrestoleros*. Titles were not included in this count. For my workings, see Williams, "An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44," 2:370.

every ten to twelve lines of iambic pentameter poetry.)³¹ The types of “errors”—semantic tweaks—made by this copyist are neither spurious misreadings of words, nor cloth-eared ametrical insertions or omissions.³²

Hand A's Interactions with Print and Oral Cultures

Collations of poems in Dyce 44 yield compelling evidence that texts were copied from eight different identifiable printed books: the 1591 edition of *Astrophil and Stella* (STC 22536);³³ Thomas Bastard's *Chrestoleros* (1598; STC 1559); *Epigrammes and Elegies* (1598; STC 17414), by Sir John Davies and Christopher Marlowe, as well as *Ouid's Elegies* (1603; STC 18931); John Cooke's *Epigrammes. Served out in 52. severall Dishes* (1604; STC 5672); John Taylor's *The Sculler* (1612; STC 23791); and, from the same year, *The Passionate Pilgrim* (STC 22343); and, as noted above, George Wither's *Prince Henries Obsequies* (STC 25915).³⁴ Hand A's copying practice from these printed books speaks of leisurely reading, re-reading, and selecting different poems from the same volume during different copying sessions. There is also evidence of poetic adaptation of a text to fit it into a limited portion of space available in the manuscript. (This occurs in the cropping of one of Samuel Daniel's sonnets to just its final sestet).³⁵ Epigrams by Bastard and Taylor, copied directly from print, appear in disparate clusters of texts separated by other poems within the fragmented third section (discussed above). Hand A must have had sustained access to and revisited the printed texts from which the Bastard and Taylor poems derive; if he copied Constable because his access to the source text was circumscribed, why might he copy poems to which he had unfettered access? The answer may lie in the dimensions of Dyce 44: since it was smaller than either of the printed books, adding these, presumably particularly favored, Bastard and Taylor poems to the miscellany rendered them more portable and thus more accessible for private or public readings outside the library.

While some reconstruction of the compiler's print library is possible, Dyce 44 is not just a witness to solitary reading habits but also a testament to its compiler's sociability. Hand A copies numerous jests and anecdotes of the type that circulated at Inns of Court suppers. “Jesting was characteristic of table talk,” Michelle O'Callaghan notes, and—as a species of symposiatic literature—was “concerned with the permissible expression of collective pleasures and passions as well as social and political tensions—

31. This error rate is almost identical to Henry Stanford's in MS Dd.5.75, Cambridge University Library (0.015) and twice as bad as that of the scribe of BL, Harley MS 6910 (0.007); May, “Renaissance Manuscript Anthologies,” 208.

32. This error rate is based solely on transcription from a printed source. Hand A may have had paleographic difficulties in reading some of his manuscript sources; in such cases his error rate would presumably have been higher.

33. Neither of the two poems copied from this text by Hand A are by Sidney. The poems from *Astrophil and Stella* are “If floods of tears could cleanse my follies past” and the final sestet of Samuel Daniel's sonnet “To heare the impost of a faith not faining,” and they appear in Dyce 44 on fol. 107v.

34. For full details of the evidence of the use of these editions, see Williams, “An Edition of National Art Library (Great Britain) MS. Dyce 44,” 1:38.

35. The final sestet of “To heare the impost of a faith not faining” appears on fol. 107v: “Alas poor soul I live exil'd from mirth.”

the latter frequently managed through the jest and laughter.”³⁶ While Hand A may have been privately amused by the jests in Dyce 44, it seems not unreasonable to assume that, rather than merely copying them for later solitary perusal and enjoyment, he would also have shared them with friends and perhaps family members. The manuscript also records his interest in other leisure pursuits. Although he has not included the musical settings, he has copied twelve songs; this suggests that he enjoyed singing or at least listening to others sing.³⁷ Hand A also seems to have been familiar with the theater (as would be expected of an Innsman in 1590s London): Dyce 44 contains excerpts from at least two plays, including Pandarina’s conduct guide to her niece Lamia, a courtesan, in act 1, scene 5 of George Gascoigne’s play *The Glasse of Gouvernement* (STC 11643a), and the imagined verse dialogue between Cardinal Thomas Wolsey and William Somer, the court fool under Henry VIII and Edward VI, from Samuel Rowley’s 1605 history play *When you see me, You know me* (STC 21417). There are explicit references to three further plays: Walter Hawkesworth’s Latin play *Leander*, first acted in 1598 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge; George Ruggle’s farcical play *Ignoramus* (1615); and an unnamed play by Marston, probably *Histriomatrix* (1599), as the epigram’s joke hinges on a rather crushing reference to an unconvincing portrayal of the devil. Dyce 44 also presents epigrams composed about two different actors: John Singer, a member of the Lord Admiral’s Men who played at the Rose theater until 1600, and an unnamed actor with Puritan sympathies.³⁸ From the drinking song, the Maying song, the epitaph on four regulars at Inns of Court taverns, and the unique mock-heraldic blazon of the drunkard (possibly Hand A’s own composition), we sense that our main copyist also enjoyed sociable drinking and tavern songs.³⁹

Anticipating Future Readings

Given the sociable bent to Hand A’s collecting tastes, it is perhaps slightly surprising that, from the ink evidence, Dyce 44 appears to be a relatively private text. At least four additional early modern readers read and wrote on at least some portion of the miscellany (two—Hands “B” and “C”—copied additional poems; two others corrected texts). Entries by Hands B and C appear only on blanks left by Hand A at the end of textual groupings, a pattern that speaks of later gap-filling rather than an ongoing collaborative enterprise between Hand A and friends.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Hand A’s desire

36. Michelle O’Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early-Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007), 74.

37. Songs appear on fols. 5r–v; 6r–v; 9v; 10v–11r; 60r; 62v; 84v; 85v–87r; 88v–89r; 89v; 97v–98r.

38. Excerpts from plays appear on fols. 115r and 117r; references to plays are on fols. 47v, 98r, 116r. Epigrams on Elizabethan players appear on fols. 74v and 80v.

39. In order: “The Nag’s Head, Rose, the Dolphin and the Mitre,” fol. 64r; “Come come come do ye mask do ye mumme,” fols. 85v–87r; “Joan to the maypole away let us on,” fol. 89v; “In the first quarter 2 pottle pots,” fol. 101r.

40. At least one of the texts copied by Hand B—James I’s poem following his proclamation commanding nobles, knights, and gentry to leave London and return to the country: “You women that do London love so well” (fol. 91r)—is dateable to after 1622, which means that it postdates Hand A’s involvement in the manuscript.

to control access to sexually explicit texts (discussed below) shows that, while he probably would not have conceived the construction of this miscellany as a “publication event,” he did anticipate that others might see it.⁴¹ He was sufficiently unperturbed by the idea that they might read his Martial translations, the Carr–Howard libels, and the Constable sonnets not to encode those works, but he evidently did not want his more explicitly erotic texts to be immediately accessible. From the preoccupations within the collection, I would suggest that this instinct is probably governed more by a sense of the symposium’s decorum of “moderate pleasure” but not “riotous excesses” than by concern about the “immorality” of the works.⁴²

Although Constable’s sonnets form the most substantial part of the manuscript, making up a fifth of its total content and arguably representing a key motivation for the copyist to begin making this miscellany, Dyce 44 is very different in feel from manuscript miscellanies in the high Petrarchan tradition, such as BL, MS Harley 7392.⁴³ On first reading, Dyce 44 feels more “immoral” than many of its counterparts because its 183 irreverent texts (almost two-thirds of the collection), which generally present examples of bad living, and 100 laudatory texts, intermingle without moralistic prefatory material. Ian Frederick Moulton describes Dyce 44 as one of the few surviving early modern manuscript miscellanies “clearly organised as [a collection] of erotic writing.”⁴⁴ The presence of Nashe’s “Choise,” labeled by David Frantz as “the most overtly pornographic poem of the English Renaissance,” supports this argument.⁴⁵ However, this erotic writing forms part of a broader, irreverent, anti-courtly-love dialectic in Dyce 44, in which humor is arguably as significant as the erotic, if not more so. Of the 301 texts transcribed by Hand A, one hundred (a third) contain lascivious references, and sixty-seven of these are bawdy jests, often about cuckolding or venereal disease. The preoccupation with punning and wordplay unites texts across the genres: over half of the poems in Dyce 44 involve quips. The person who made this manuscript, we sense, is somebody who, had he attended Shakespeare’s plays, would have “got,” and enjoyed, the lewd subtexts.

Many miscellanies that share irreverent or bawdy texts with Dyce 44 also contain catechisms or humanistic advice directing the reader to conduct themselves morally. For example, Sir Francis Fane’s miscellany given to his son Henry (Folger, MS V.a.180) shares some mocking epitaphs with Dyce 44, but, unlike Dyce 44, incorporates familial advice on living morally. Dyce 44 registers an awareness of the place of humanist conduct guides in personal collections, but here the relation is recorded through negation, in the form of subverted precepts. Hand A seems to have been anxious about copying these cynical precepts because—although he normally omits titles,

41. For the term “publication event,” see Michelle O’Callaghan’s description in this issue of the professionally produced MS Rawl.poet.31, Bodleian Library.

42. O’Callaghan, *English Wits*, 74.

43. This manuscript is discussed in Jessica Edmondson’s essay in this issue.

44. Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early-Modern England* (Oxford, 2000), 44.

45. David O. Frantz, “‘Leud Priapians’ and Renaissance Pornography,” *Studies in English Literature* 12 (1972): 157–72 at 168.

even when collations show him to be copying from print sources containing titles—in this instance he provides a Latin heading for the section that follows: “*Præcepta quae scire liceat pudeat exercere* [Teachings which one may know, (but) be ashamed to practice]” (fol. 112r).

This disclaimer imposes distance between theory and practice; it is acceptable to know about and read immoral things, but that does not necessarily mean that one does them. Hand A's use of Latin here suggests that his comment is intended for a homosocial readership (men being far more likely than women to be literate in Latin). Similarly, Nashe's dedicatory sonnet excuses the “Choise” on the grounds that it is mere words; why blame a poem, Nashe asks, when “all men acte what I in speach declare”? Significantly, Dyce 44's copy of the poem is preceded by a Latin tag:

Lector abi si te sceleris contagio vexat
At tibi si mens sit sanctificata veni
 [Reader, depart if the contagion of vice troubles you
 On the other hand, if your mind be free from sin, come.]
 (Fol. 2r)

This address to the reader (a tag uniquely paired with the “Choise” here) implies, archly, that those whose minds are free of sin may read the “Choise” without moral danger. Duly warning us that we should judge for ourselves whether we should read on, the copyist preempts and attempts to evade the censure of future readers.

In addition to signposting problematic texts with warnings about their content, Hand A handles erotic poems differently (on a word-by-word basis) from other irreverent material in Dyce 44. He writes Nashe's “Choise” in substitution cipher and obscures two other texts by writing the letters of each of their constituent words backward. The poems in reverse writing are a song on a woman who was too free with her “hey nonny nonny” (rhyming slang for “cunny,” i.e., cunt) and an ode praising the penis beginning “It is a passing pleasant thing” (fols. 6r–v, 87v–88r). He also reverses the letters when writing “arse” in the mock-sermon in praise of thieves that opens the miscellany: “this is as true as the candle burnes in my esra” (fol. 1v). Elsewhere, the word *cunny* is replaced by parentheses in lines of verse whose rhyme, meter, and sense make apparent the missing expletive (fols. 74v, 81v). He also censors profanities relating to the body and sexual intercourse, but does not omit more archaic forms of blasphemy such as “zounds.” We, the readers, fill the blanks and translate the letters of omitted or encoded words whose disguised natures at once intrigue and warn us that we are seeking the publicly unacceptable. We are not passive readers of obscenity: we have to be active translators and extrapolators to access the sexually explicit in Dyce 44.

Hand A's Latin content-disclaimers, omissions, and encodings are indicative of his expectation that Dyce 44 would be read and judged by others. He even invites readers to go further and edit the following short poem, a textually problematic and unique verse satire:

This vanitie with many other moe
 Were stolne from me by a false hearted friend
 If ought heerin displease thee him beshroe
 Whoe made this knowne nor gaue me tyme to rende
 This and the rest Maisters we all may mende.

(Fol. 56v)

Redolent of Puck's epilogue in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (first printed 1600)—“Gentles do not reprehend. / If you pardon, we will mend”—the claim that a work was hurried into circulation by an overeager friend is typical of the humility topos. However, the “we” raises questions: does it refer to social editing within an authorially recognized circle of readers? It is possible that this excerpt is part of an epilogue from an untraced play, but this poem's appearance immediately after the “Satira Profana,” a controversial and textually problematic poem that was written in the same copying stint, does seem significant.

Other Reader-Copyists in Dyce 44

There is internal evidence in Dyce 44 that other contemporary readers accessed and altered its contents; two other hands have copied poems into blanks left in the manuscript. To make these additions, they would have had to flick through the pages to find space to write, even if they did not read the poems that they were passing. Hand B's subverted copying of Sidney's poem “If I could think how these my thoughts to leave” (fol. 90v) arguably responds to the irreverent elements of the texts that the manuscript already contained. While there are numerous variants across the Dyce 44 version of the poem, the most striking is in the last line. Hand B follows Hand A's practice of replacing expletives with parentheses. The gap is a monosyllabic profanity, prefaced by “an” (and thus starting with a vowel): presumably “arse.” Thus, after all Sidney's rhetorically balanced musings, an irreverent judgment is made upon the aristocratic poet: “Thinke me an [arse] and so I doe remaine.”

The single poem copied by Hand C (an italic hand) is a unique six-line lament written in the first person from a woman's perspective, treating her unhappy marriage:

Maria Istead:

It was my happ of late to marrie one
 but t'were ah as good for me if I had none
 If any aske whie wee cannot agree
 but still wee are at odds, as you^{doe} see
 the reason's this hee makes me as his curr
 But I nothinge lost. with him. I made a stire[.]

(Fol. 91r)

Is this a lone female voice in a frequently misogynistic miscellany? This is the only appearance in Dyce 44 of a non-noblewoman's full name, and it does suggest a bona

fide individual rather than the generic “Catas” or “Gellas” of the Martialian epigrams collected in the miscellany. “Istead” is a relatively unusual surname, apparently concentrated only in Sussex, Kent, and Surrey in the seventeenth century (Sussex and Surrey both border Kent, the county of the manuscript’s provenance): at least three women of marriageable age would have answered to the name of Mary Istead in those localities in the 1620s to 1630s: Mary Isted (née Sharlande), born 1602 in Framfield, Sussex, who married John Isted on December 10, 1621; Mary Isted, who married John’s brother Edward in about 1633; and Mary/Maria, the sister of John and Edward Isted, whose surname became Shephard after her marriage in 1636 (in which case the reversion to her maiden name in the poem could be read a minor act of protest in the face of this unhappy marriage).⁴⁶

The fact that this verse, written in a female voice, is inscribed in an italic hand (the script that women were taught) raises the possibility that Hand C might be a woman, perhaps even Marie Istead herself, writing into this collection of arguably misogynistic verses a lament about her own experience of an unhappy marriage to a member of the manuscript’s reading circle. However, the anagram of “Marie Istead” that appears in the final words of the poem (“I made a stire”)—a linguistic game hinted at by its underlining—surely trivializes the wife’s plight; the wordplay suggests that the verse is not a confessional piece but the handiwork of a third party, written in the voice of an actual woman who was considered to be shrewish by a social group sharing a joke at her expense. The last line thus explodes the pathos of the limping verse, with its contorted syntax and depiction of the woman as her husband’s “curi;” as it becomes clear that the poem is written in the first person not to evoke empathy but to provide the *I* needed for the anagram. Read this way, the poem suggests that Hand C read and interpreted Dyce 44 as a collection whose interests were congruent with this type of homo-social misogynistic joke. Hand A copied the widely circulated bawdy epitaphs on Penelope Rich, written in her voice, that sum up her entire mortal experience with a jest about her sex life: that now she must lie under one (tomb)stone while in life she was “not content” with two “stones” (testicles), referring to her long-term affair and second marriage to Charles Blount, eighth Lord Mountjoy, following her separation from Robert, third Lord Rich.⁴⁷ Hand C’s poem strikes a more distasteful note, however, because its allusion to domestic abuse was written not about a remote, satirized noblewoman but about someone probably known to its author.

Conclusion

Early modern manuscript miscellanies like Dyce 44 offer a precious window into the literary tastes, senses of humor, and religio-political persuasions of their compilers, allowing us better to perceive how reading, listening, and play-going informed

46. See “Edward ISTED (1584–?) and Margaret AVERY (1590–?),” Ancestors of Mandy Willard website, last modified April 10, 2012, http://www.mandywillard.co.uk/surnames/isted/edward_1584.htm.

47. “Vnder one stone she lies with much ado,” fol. 68v.

everyday life for an individual “common reader.” Ongoing editorial work and critical analysis of these miscellanies will make available sufficient textual, contextual, and physical evidence to deepen our understanding of the place of literary culture in the lives of different early modern readers. Thence from a host of individual, codicologically informed, literary case studies we can formulate answers about how individual poems and genres of texts were read and assimilated across a broad range of early modern readers.

CLAIRE BRYONY WILLIAMS is a Higher Education Adviser at Queen Mary University of London. She is co-editing Sir Thomas Browne’s manuscript notebooks, forthcoming in the Oxford University Press edition of Browne’s complete works. Her doctoral thesis is under contract with the Renaissance English Text Society. As well as publishing and teaching on early modern manuscripts, she has co-edited a *Handbook of Editing Early Modern Texts* (2017). Forthcoming publications will be under her marital name, Claire Loffman.