



# Gender and Position-Taking in Henrician Verse

Tradition, Translation,  
and Transcription

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Rebecca M. Quoss-Moore

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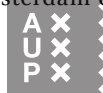


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*Tradition, Translation, and Transcription*

*Rebecca M. Quoss-Moore*

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As I hope this work establishes, I believe all writing is, fundamentally, a collaborative and cooperative project. I owe something to every scholar cited here, to dozens if not hundreds of unnamed scholars whose work has shaped our field and my thinking, and, very materially, to everyone who has contributed to resources like Early English Books Online, the Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript, and the immeasurable gift of Interlibrary Loan. As in the texts we study, so in our scholarship: we are all writing together, and I am grateful to be part of this project.

# Introduction

**Abstract:** This introduction outlines the core goals of the project, which returns to the Henrician texts that underpinned much New Historicist work and re-reads these through the intervening scholarship on women's writing, manuscript and print cultures, and revisions and challenges to that New Historicist framework. The project re-reads women into the Henrician canon to further illuminate the forces of canon formation that contributed to those women's erasure and to restore more accurate depictions of a shared social system of verse position-taking. This restoration enables an exploration of how collections like Tottel's—and their later influence—contributed to a misapprehension of single authorship, an initial diminution of Henrician verse's political significance, and a damagingly inaccurate masculinizing of literary history.

**Keywords:** Henrician translation; early modern women's writing; Tudor verse transcription; Devonshire Manuscript; gendered canon formation; courtly love lyric

1536 was something of a landmark year for political scandal in England even considering the tumultuous history of the court of Henry VIII. One queen lost her head, another took her place, and Henry Fitzroy, the King's only acknowledged son, died suddenly, within months of setting up house with his new wife. This context was nearly fatal for Margaret Douglas, niece to Henry VIII, who chose a particularly ill-omened time to contract an unapproved marriage to another of the King's relatives, Thomas Howard.<sup>1</sup> Given the unstable state of the dynasty, Henry reacted viciously to his niece's transgression, imprisoning both Douglas and Howard. Howard fell

<sup>1</sup> Howard was the brother of the Duke of Norfolk and uncle to the recently executed Anne Boleyn; to Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey; and to Mary Fitzroy, wife of the recently-departed Henry Fitzroy. See Heale, *Devonshire*; Irish, 'Gender and Politics'; and the *Oxford DNB*.

under an act of attainder that simultaneously established as treason the act of which he was accused: marriage to a member of the King's family without the King's consent. Though contemporary observers suspected that the King intended clemency, his intentions were mooted by Howard's death in the Tower from ague.

Certainly, the outline of events has all the elements of a storybook tragedy: young lovers imprisoned by an embittered king who twists the law to suit his temper. What sets this tragedy apart, though, is the role these particular young lovers had in the production of poetry at court. Douglas and Howard were major contributors to, if not the creators of, the Devonshire Manuscript.<sup>2</sup> Helen Baron and Elizabeth Heale are among the scholars who suggest that Howard was, in fact, the original owner and circulator of the manuscript, which perhaps passed to Douglas upon his death.<sup>3</sup> In that manuscript, a distinctive hand transcribes, along with verse epistles between the lovers, reconstructed versions of works both by Chaucer and misattributed to him by the 1532 Thynne edition of his works, as well as translations from Alain Chartier's *La Belle Dame sans Merci*. The placement of the verses and their content, as Baron, Heale, and Paul G. Remley all suggest, strongly reflect a connection to the verse epistles widely agreed upon as a product of the Douglas-Howard affair.<sup>4</sup> Within this context, the changes made by the writer or writers, both in translation and transcription, become particularly striking. Through these verses, we can examine fruitfully clear examples of the uses Henry's courtiers made of transcription, translation, and tradition as systems for coding and preserving sociopolitical position-taking.

At times, the changes made in the transcriptions are fairly isolated. In a selection from *The Remedy of Love*, a text attributed to Chaucer in the 1532 Thynne, the Devonshire transcriber changes a single line that significantly alters the theme of the piece. In the Thynne edition, the speaker postulates that if the entire world were turned to writing materials, still 'The cursydnesse yet and disceyte of women / Coude not be shewed by the meane of penne'.<sup>5</sup> The transcription in the Devonshire, though, reads as follows:

yff all the erthe were parchment scrybable  
spedy for the hande /<sup>6</sup> and all maner wode

2 MS BL Add. 17492.

3 Heale, ed., *Devonshire*, and Baron, 'Fitzroy's Hand'.

4 Remley, 'Mary Shelton'.

5 Thynne, ed., *Workes of Geffray Chaucer*, fol. ccc.lxvi (v).

6 I adopt the slashes used midline as a common typographical interpretation for a similar mark in the manuscript. While my transcriptions are confirmed by my own work with the

were hewed and proporcyoned to pennes able  
 al water ynke / in damme or in flode  
 euery man beyng a parfyte scribe & goode  
 The *faythfulnes* yet and *prays*e of women  
 cowde not be shewyd by the meane off penne<sup>7</sup>

As most critics who have worked with this section of the Devonshire, including Heale and Bradley J. Irish, have remarked, the effect of the change of the penultimate line is striking—altering the complaint from a misogynist tradition to align instead with the medieval tradition of the defense of women. Further, as Irish goes on to discuss, ‘the line shows [the writer] clearly read with enough active interest to imagine the radical altering of textual meaning’.<sup>8</sup> The strategies this reader/writer uses reflect how Henry’s courtiers, as a group, read and write: with an eye towards the adaptability of texts and voices to accommodate new ideas and to memorialize new situations. Indeed, the exact situation of this poem, as for others in the manuscript, renders the question of the precise writer less important. Whether the writer is, as Heale would suggest, Howard himself, or, as Remley argues, Mary Shelton—another active contributor to the manuscript, and one whose work with the text lasted several years longer than Howard’s—the defense of women gains poignancy from its situation near the epistle verses exchanged between Howard and Douglas. The writer chooses to place this transcription alongside those prison exchanges, orienting the reader to understand the context of the defense of women as also a defense of the woman involved in those verses, whether as writer, transcriber, or subject.

The transcription of translated lines from *La Bella Dame sans Merci* which directly follows the above transcription may seem to depart suddenly in an entirely other direction, but again the context of the lines becomes key to a useful interpretation. The lines open with an apparent condemnation of a disdainful lover:

manuscript in 2015, they are always indebted to the excellent work of the contributors to the *Social Edition*, a collaborative digital project that provides facsimiles and transcriptions of the entire manuscript and thorough references to the distinguishing features of each hand.

My transcript conventions preserve original spelling, expand contractions as indicated by italics, and indicate lines struck through in the original as accurately as possible. ^...^ is used to indicate writing included above the rest of a line, though not necessarily superscript, while [...] is used to indicate uncertain transcription.

7 MS BL Add. 17492, 90r, ‘yff all the erthe’, italics mine.

8 Irish, ‘Gender and Politics’, 103.



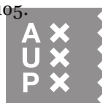
O marble herte / and yet more ^harde^ perde  
 wych mercy may not perce for no labor  
 more stronge to bowe than ys a myghty tree  
 what ~~avanay~~ avayleth yow to shewe so great rygor  
 pleasyth ^yt^ yow more to se me dye thys hour  
 before yowr [~~yowr~~] eyen for yowr dysporte and play  
 than for to shewe some comferte and socour  
 to respyte death / wych chaseth me alway<sup>9</sup>

In their original context, these lines seem a more appropriate match for the unaltered version of *The Remedy*. However, given their placement in the manuscript and the apparent date of transcription, Irish suggests the applicability of these verses to Henry VIII, rather than as a sudden departure in tone from defense of women to marked misogyny.<sup>10</sup> This analysis is entirely logical in the context of a court system that often understood such love lyrics as political critiques, and the piece's divorce from its original title emphasizes the applicability of the appeal to the cruel mistress as instead an appeal to a despotic tyrant. In this approach, the 'death' which chases the speaker, and the 'comferte and socour' for which the speaker pleads, lose their metaphorical sense. Instead, the speaker addresses a figure who holds their courtiers' lives at pleasure as well as, in this case, their hearts. The King controls the outcome of the love match, encompassing the metaphor of the original love lyric, and controls his subject's life, making the hyperbole of the translated poem instead immediate and literal. This sense of the address is emphasized by the context within which the translation is placed—both historically and within the manuscript.

These selections highlight the importance of the basic structures through which I aim to interpret the poetry of Henry's court. First, though nearly acting as a translation, the lines from Chartier nonetheless update *La Belle Dame* within a markedly different framework. Second, the placement of each transcription suggests the contextual importance that contemporary writers ascribed to verse, as well as the interpretive freedoms with which they felt comfortable. Finally, the works together function within the traditions of courtly love, of medieval defenses of women, and of verse as an outlet for political position-taking. I appropriate the term 'position-taking' from

9 MS BL Add. 17492, 90r, 'O marble herte'.

10 Irish, 'Gender and Politics', 105.



Bourdieu for this analysis,<sup>11</sup> as a way of adapting Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' to offer a term that more thoroughly integrates the concepts of communal verse production and its inherently social and negotiated nature. The poets and their poems reference and take part in the systems they critique, and they depend on their audience's understanding of those systems to create meaning.

I intend this initial engagement with verse position-taking in the Devonshire to demonstrate the core structure and goals of this work. First, and most simply, I want to return to the Henrician texts that underpinned so much New Historicist work and re-read these through the intervening scholarship on women's writing, on the relationship between manuscript and print cultures, and on revisions and challenges to that New Historicist framework. As part of that new critical framework—and particularly crucially—I want to re-read women into the Henrician canon. That re-reading functions in two directions: to further illuminate the forces of canon formation that contributed to those women's erasure and to restore more accurate depictions of courtly writing and reading networks. To offer one application as a sort of definition by example: when we restore Margaret Douglas, Mary Shelton, and Mary Fitzroy to their place in manuscript circulation and creation, we can see that 'women's writing' was integral to the production that gave us those works we now call Thomas Wyatt's or Henry Howard's. Simultaneously, then, this means that such production *was not* women's writing—or, more precisely, that women's writing and men's writing are not two separate things. We can better reconstruct the system, and so we can interrogate new interpretations of its products: particularly, we can better understand how those products participated in a shared social system of position-taking. When we turn to the transfer to public, print culture, we better see how collections like Tottel's—and their influence on the modern canon—contributed to a misapprehension of single authorship, an initial diminution of Henrician verse's political significance, and a damagingly

11 Bourdieu's term also integrates the extent to which position-takings are relative and defined by the social spaces within which they occur (and the options understood as available within those spaces, by both producer and consumer):

The space of literary or artistic position-takings, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field [...] is inseparable from the space of literary or artistic positions defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. (*Field of Cultural Production*, 3)



inaccurate masculinizing of literary history that persisted even as that verse's political significance was restored.

David Norbrook emphasizes the importance of starting from the precept that early modern artists were aware of, and resistant to, the problems of too much or too strict a structure; in response, 'they developed elaborate strategies to try to preserve a degree of independence for their writing'.<sup>12</sup> Repression is often the ground for creativity; drawing on Foucault, Butler articulates clearly the essential claim that 'the culturally contradictory enterprise of the mechanism of repression is prohibitive and generative at once'.<sup>13</sup> The response of the aristocratic court poets to repressive measures was shaped by their understanding of their social roles. In keeping with humanist tradition, educated nobles 'believed themselves to be educated for public service, believed that they could persuade princes, in Church and state, to reform'.<sup>14</sup> As a result, learned aristocrats 'used their writings, and the various forms of license that their culture allowed them [...] to influence government policy through the medium of eloquence'.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Henry's early approach to government and privileging of humanist education had only reinforced these social tropes, and 'the habit of speaking boldly on issues of principle and practice and the capacity to [...] apply biblical and classical examples to illuminate contemporary politics were ingrained in elite English culture'.<sup>16</sup> The legislation of the 1530s suddenly made different claims. The abstract conflict of humanist thought crystallized in a real conflict between self-interest and social interest. Suddenly, law restricted the ability of the court poets to shape social change and offer critique, at the time that social codes and long-engrained practice seemed most to demand that they exercise precisely those abilities. While men's roles in public life may offer allowances for the previous framing of this tension as an especial concern of courtly men, the Devonshire Manuscript shows that court women considered critique a key element of their identities as courtiers, as well. In restoring women's manuscript production to its central role in court verse work, we can realign our own understanding of position-taking verse systems at the Henrician court and better understand the successes and failures of the court poets who worked within these systems.

12 Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, 5.

13 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 126.

14 Brigden, *New Worlds*, 4.

15 Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 15.

16 Walker, 23.



As we will see in Chapter One, Henry VIII himself was one of the most sophisticated practitioners of this kind of manipulation. However, as he gained power, he moved out of the more coded strategies of verse production; simultaneously, courtiers deployed his own methods against him. Royal energies are frequently at odds with the efforts of disgruntled courtiers like Skelton and Douglas, but they also provide fuel for those energies. This negotiated intersection, of royal strategy and courtier strategy, frames these poets' efforts in a new, more comprehensive context. The conditions of repression imposed by the patron system and by royal authority create the conditions necessary for the artist to imagine a privileging of their work. This creation of a privileged creative space is designed to create a protectiveness of that space in the otherwise oppositional subject: the court poets' positions are also necessarily entwined with the social structure they critique. Such a perspective does not lessen the potential resistance or even subversion of a work; the poet claims that the divisions or circumstances that exist around the court are not 'natural', and the push for a return to the natural order necessarily calls to destabilize the artificial order which has taken its place. Through appeals to tradition, authority, and community, the courtly poets sought to establish their own counternarratives, not least through the creation of interpretive possibility in their verse. Each strategy considered here also establishes each author's work within a larger continuity; this continuity serves to give verses greater context, greater interpretive potential, and greater authority for their contemporary readers. The details of courtly context not only restore the important roles of courtly women, but also further allow us to analyze the energies of these poems as moments of political position-taking—whether resistant, critical, radical, or conservative.

The impact of these varied and often conflicting modes and goals must be recovered in a complex negotiation of simultaneously separating and relating political, personal, and poetic strategies as understood and used by the Henrician court poet. Poetic position-taking in Henrician England is cultural and political position-taking, partially because of the inherent link between poetry and the established social structure; this is political work both of a highly particular and of several broad types. Specifically, this cultural positioning exists within and because of a structure that necessarily mixes the personal, cultural, and political: the court poet's home and primary household is often also the seat of cultural and political power. Generally, though, the complications of this social-structural position for the poet create very diverse responses, determined by each poet's goals, but then filtered through their strategies, social position, and audience.



Translation, transcription, and poetic tradition then emerge as methods that not only allow the poets to distance themselves from their content, but also even explicitly alert the audience to particularly controversial potential interpretations. After all, the sophisticated audience for court poetry already understood the separation between poem and poet; if poets sometimes felt the need to emphasize or widen that separation, they alerted the audience to some difference in the content of such poems.

Such authors aimed to cloak their dissent with some reasonable deniability, using genre, the distancing claim of 'translation', and doubled language to protect poetry of protest. The atmosphere of court necessitates this cloaking. The charged atmosphere in which these authors lived has been thoroughly explored by literary scholars and historians alike, but, integrating the considerations of position-taking as highly contextual, my work aims to examine that atmosphere as a tool used by writers, rather than solely as a limiting or provoking factor. Courtly milieu serves, in its way, as a context for the courtiers in the same way that translation, transcription, and tradition, variously, serve as context for their works: lending legitimacy, offering a vocabulary evocative of the genre, and cloaking, protecting. Behavioral codes and verse coding intersect. Working in the highly prescriptive social 'language' of court courtesy and custom, Henrician courtiers learned to use courtly behavior to protect themselves; they were also able to use these codes of behavior at times to justify, defend, or hide intentions that ran counter to Henry's own.

In this re-examination of courtly verse coding, and particularly in my concern with the re-inscription of women's verse work, I hope to offer some responses to particular calls for reconsiderations of manuscript culture and practice. Victoria E. Burke has articulated the need for 'close attention to material characteristics, including handwriting and layout, as well as to content, [which] can sometimes reveal patterns in these apparently random collections'.<sup>17</sup> Speaking to a different element of manuscript production, Jason Powell calls for 'a balanced sensitivity to the possible uses for anonymity [...] alongside a discussion of likely authorship [to represent] the richness of this manuscript, its social environments, and the community of authors, compilers, and scribes who participated in its production'.<sup>18</sup> And Deborah Solomon speaks particularly directly to my concerns, here, in writing

If we agree that context affects content, that every textual version in the messy history of textual transmission, every 'misreading', as McKenzie

17 Burke, 'Materiality and Form', 219.

18 Powell, 'Marginalia', 12.



would say, represents a cultural artifact rich in significance, why not read the Devonshire MS for its potential literary value rather than simply mine it for information? [...] While we have long delighted in the effect linguistic forms have on our interpretation of the lyric, we have yet to do justice to the effect material forms have on our experience of poems.<sup>19</sup>

In engaging the Devonshire, I have focused on answering these calls for greater attention to the work of anonymity, of placement and patterns, and of the significance of linguistic, textual, and structural choices. While I work both backward and forward from that 1536 moment to consider the sources and the later manifestations and alterations of the themes I identify here, the Devonshire was where I first understood these strategies as a coded system of sociopolitical position-taking—and first became concerned with re-inscribing the ways women wrote in this system to more fully understand Henrician poetic production.

When I reference this verse coding system, I do not mean an exact and precise code—manuscript reality is necessarily messier than that. We are, though, familiar and comfortable with the idea that love poetry of the early modern period frequently offered coded commentary on political and social events. The influence of Stephen Greenblatt's *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* is inescapable, and I join some of those fundamental claims to Jeff Dolven's work on re-fashioning to consider the alteration of poetry as one form of poetic representation or creation of self and self-interest.<sup>20</sup> I want to continue our work to update those frameworks for understanding political verse with our enriched approaches to manuscript studies, with a greater consideration of materiality and form as active poetic work, and with a more equitable consideration of gendered forces in verse production. Arthur F. Marotti's foundational 'Love Is Not Love' further established our understanding of many of these works as poetry which coded men's ambition and grievances; the updated considerations outlined here allow us to demasculinize that understanding. The foundational work from Greenblatt and Marotti also establishes our sense of 'coding' as a useful term for verse analysis: the verse is both part of a social 'code', in the sense of a system of behaviors that reflects one's cultural position and embeddedness, and part of a system of 'coding' positions, in the sense of obfuscating through a system that is translatable by those with the correct knowledge. Marotti had himself, as echoed in Burke and Solomon, pushed for further engagement with the material

19 Solomon, 'Representations', 682. Solomon also cites D. F. McKenzie in this argument.

20 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; Dolven, 'Reading Wyatt'.



specificity of manuscripts and with materiality's impacts on both social worlds of production and social coding;<sup>21</sup> women's work in the Devonshire and in courtly writing more generally is one key piece of that material specificity. In reconsidering the composition of those social worlds—and so of the groups that used such social coding—we gain an access point for restoring women's places in these scribal communities.

Manuscript studies has long understood the importance of communal production in these manuscript miscellanies. Alongside Harold Love,<sup>22</sup> Mary Hobbs makes some of the most influential arguments for understanding manuscripts as whole documents—that is, for considering how the pieces all come together to influence readers' experiences, a consideration I unite to Burke's emphasis on patterns and materiality and to Powell's arguments about anonymity. H.R. Woudhuysen, similarly concerned with the concept of scribal community, builds from Love and Hobbs and especially considers questions of how manuscripts reach the intended audience and of the broader complications of manuscript production;<sup>23</sup> these considerations undergird my arguments, throughout, about the availability of wide ranges of interpretations and about the work writers and editors offer to control or, in some cases, promote the possibility of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or obfuscation. Peter Beal anchors similar concerns around audience in a particular consideration of the unique nature of each manuscript, encouraging us to consider the implications of the intersection of replication and singularity,<sup>24</sup> a point I particularly apply when considering the changes a verse undergoes between manuscript and print versions. And Steven W. May's consideration of manuscript production traces some points especially salient to the works under consideration, here, as he links work with scribal communities to these kinds of transfer from manuscript forms to print—and to Tottel's, specifically.<sup>25</sup>

These works on manuscript studies influence my primary approach to the works under consideration, here, where I unite material concerns in the Devonshire—including precise spelling choices, space on the page, and placement—with the communal concerns of this group of courtiers. Particularly, I follow Solomon's call to reconsider the work of textual

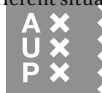
21 Marotti, "Love Is Not Love".

22 Love, *Scribal Production*; Hobbs, *Verse Miscellany Manuscripts*.

23 Woudhuysen, *Circulation of Manuscripts*.

24 Beal, *In Praise of Scribes*.

25 May, 'Popularizing Courtly Poetry'. Our approaches differ in that May, broadly, sees most alterations as just mistakes and misreadings; I think at least in the Devonshire and its closest ilk and, to move the case to a different situation, Tottel's, this is not necessarily the case.



transmissions and the interpretive potentials of apparent misreadings.<sup>26</sup> The structural categories, here, of tradition, translation, and transcription, are each essentially about the transmissions of verse, images, ideas, or approaches. The choices writers make in those transmissions are their primary method of textual production. That is, if poetry is a form of self-fashioning *and* position-taking in the Henrician court, and if most poetry in manuscripts has a stronger relationship to transcription or translation than to modern ideas of 'original' composition, it then makes sense that the scribal community adopts norms and methods for systems of production that make the translated or transcribed verse work for their larger products. More precisely, given these constitutive relationships, we need to read every aspect of the manuscript as a form of self-fashioning and position-taking, and specifically as part of a system of position-taking to which women and men made equal contributions.

Outlining some of the functions of that adaptive compositional work in the Devonshire offers new perspectives on the position-taking and -making functions of other courtly verse. Raymond G. Siemens's and Peter C. Herman's arguments on Henry's early poetic work helped me to understand later courtiers' strategies as specifically a response to the King, pitched very intentionally to his own early work.<sup>27</sup> The long history of criticism understanding Skelton's and Wyatt's work as subversive or resistant—including, beyond Greenblatt and Marotti, critics like David R. Carlson, Jane Griffiths, W. Scott Blanchard, and Powell—takes on new dimensions when we join those understandings to this specific manuscript genealogy, highlighting this work as communally informed rather than reflective of more individualized political or aesthetic positioning.<sup>28</sup> The transfer of those communal products through different publics can be accessed through comparative work by Jonathan Gibson and by Solomon,<sup>29</sup> as well as through the work on Tottel's by May, Megan Heffernan, and Christopher J. Warner, all of which suggest the efficacy of considering the manuscript work of the Devonshire and the print decisions in Tottel's alongside one another.<sup>30</sup> This

26 Solomon, 'Representations'.

27 Herman and Siemens, 'Poetry of Politics'; Herman, *Royal Poetrie*; and Siemens, 'Henry VIII as Writer'.

28 Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; Marotti, 'Love Is Not Love' and *English Renaissance Lyric*; Carlson, 'Revels and Erudition' and 'Henrician Courtier'; Griffiths, *Poetic Authority*; Blanchard, 'Voice of the Mob'; and Powell, 'Plainness and Dissimulation'.

29 Gibson, 'Miscellanies', and Solomon, 'Representations'.

30 May, 'Popularizing Courtly Poetry'; Heffernan, *Making the Miscellany*; and Warner, *Making and Marketing*.



consideration allows us to access the ways writers work to reach different audiences and how audiences do or do not read particular types of coding and verse work. These critics establish that verse by, for example, Wyatt or Surrey, does different work in different places; we can use that distinction to more clearly map the work being done on the manuscript page and the transfer or loss of different position-taking strategies between forms.

In outlining those strategies, I have drawn extensively on the vibrant conversation about the Devonshire itself. The many contributors to the *Social Edition* have created a rich repository of critical lenses, historical and biographical information, and details of material and mechanical considerations. Something of Heale's, Remley's, and Irish's influence has already been indicated by the opening analyses, but Christopher Shirley's work, particularly, also informs some of my directions here in consideration of gender.<sup>31</sup> Beginning the work with the Devonshire emphasizes one of the key opportunities for further contextualization. Much of the extant work on Henrician poetry emphasizes methods of interpreting poetry as *masculine* courtly performance. In foundational work like Greenblatt's, there is often extensive engagement with the idea of masculinity grating against submission, duplicity, and so on. However, the Devonshire shows us these themes are actually quite present in women's work, as well.

Studies of women's manuscript work, particularly those by Margaret J. M. Ezell, Burke and Gibson, and Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson, have made invaluable contributions to the field. These influential works on women's manuscripts, though, largely pick up in the mid-sixteenth century or intentionally (and importantly) focus on work outside of courtly contexts.<sup>32</sup> I focus, here, on courtier poets. These are poets who, regardless of gender, consider themselves as possessing a certain amount of political power, and their relationships to power are quite different from those of the authors featured in much of the excellent work on women's manuscript production in other, more localized contexts.<sup>33</sup> Ezell evinces a concern with reconsidering

31 *A Social Edition*; Heale, *Devonshire*, 'Love Lyric', and 'Female Voices'; Remley, 'Mary Shelton'; Irish, 'Gender and Politics'; and Shirley 'Reading Gender'.

32 Ezell's *Social Authorship* focuses on the extension of manuscript cultures into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Burke and Gibson's *Manuscript Writing* includes Heale's 'Female Voices', as well as work on Katherine Parr and Elizabeth (Gibson, 'Katherine Parr'), but the other chapters of the collection primarily consider later women's manuscripts. While Stevenson and Davidson's *Women Poets* does include entries that date between 1520 and 1550, these entries make up, at most, less than 10 percent of the anthology, where a priority is instead greater representation of women poets throughout the British Isles.

33 White also engages considerations of social networks of women's writing, but her focus around women's manuscript transmissions, specifically, is primarily concerned with local networks

whether manuscript culture was feminine—her argument outlines the ways in which that alignment is used in a patronizing sense.<sup>34</sup> The corollary that applies to my work, here, is that the Henrician manuscript has *not* been yet fully considered as a space of women's work.<sup>35</sup> When the manuscript is the highest form, it is treated on masculine terms; once the manuscript site is de-privileged, it becomes feminized. This process of recursive redefinition occurs both historically—print privileges itself and privileges male visibility over women's access<sup>36</sup>—and critically, as Ezell points out when she summarizes previous characterizations of Elizabethan and Jacobean manuscript writing as “aristocratic”, dilettante literature, insignificant in terms of literary history because the texts formed no school.<sup>37</sup> This rather depressingly predictable arc has a corrective at one end of the period in Ezell's reconsideration; I hope to offer an additional entry into the balance for these earlier decades.

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This work is divided into three sections, each addressing one of the three strategies of versified position-taking that I have used for our system of categorization. The work begins with a section on what may initially seem to be a more, or even overly, general theme in Henrician works: tradition. The first chapter here deals with the tradition of the courtly love lyric, beginning with Henry's own verse. Henry worked almost exclusively in original compositions, many of which were likely meant to be set to music. This analysis follows Siemens's and Herman's established critique of Henry's self-assertion through verse in the first decade of his reign,<sup>38</sup> but also draws

outside of the court ('Women Writers'). Her work on Katherine Parr, though, foregrounds a similar sense of the distinct strategies used by women with marked political power and underpins the approach to Parr in my fourth chapter ('Literary Collaboration' and 'Royal Iconography').

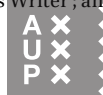
34 Ezell, *Social Authorship*, especially 21–44.

35 Heale, for example, characterizes women's involvement in the Devonshire as 'both more frustratingly uncertain than many modern critics [...] would like, and at the same time more extensive and central than is often recognized' ('Female Voices', 9).

36 Heale considers one consequence of this shift when she outlines that '[a]s the early Tudor balet moved from manuscript to print, so it became an almost exclusively male-voiced genre with the female-voiced poems of passion and retaliation largely silenced. In moving into print, the role of women as crucial to the culture and the production of courtly verse disappeared from sight' (26).

37 Ezell, *Social Authorship*, 36.

38 See Herman, *Royal Poetrie*; Herman, ed., *Reading Monarchs*; Herman, ed., *Rethinking the Henrician*; Siemens, 'Henry VIII as Writer'; and Siemens, ed., *Lyrics*.



on analysis of Henry's centralization of power as a radical act. Henry's attempts at centralization created reactive, conservative responses from his courtiers, who then themselves created spaces for new acquisitions of power. Henry and his courtiers wanted the ability to assign power while also wanting to preserve their own power on traditional terms, and drawing on traditional forms and themes to justify their assignments of power helped bolster such claims.

The second chapter engages with the manipulation of particular historic traditions when addressing Henry's reign. Surrey, of course, famously uses the figures of both David and Sardanapalus to critique Henry's policies, but Surrey is far from isolated in using kings of classical antiquity as allegorical stand-ins for a reigning king. Wyatt's work provides an earlier example of such interpretation, as do the King's own material choices in self-presentation. Henry's choices underline the political verse-making process that takes place when courtiers manipulate his choices of royal precedent so that those precedents become critiques rather than validation or valorization. Essentially, the engagement with tradition seems to work best as a method for the negotiation of power through verse. Courtiers felt that their assumption of power was normal and right, just as Henry felt about his own monarchical powers. Both groups, though, were simultaneously aware of and resistant to the need to put their most radical claims to power in codes that both protected such claims and robbed them of at least some force. Tradition, in this section, is considered as functioning in verse production on similar terms to translation or transcription—as a composing *choice* that actively modifies extant material to reflect participation in a shared system of position-taking.

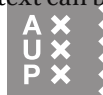
The second section deals with the related uses of translation. In the third chapter, the focus is on translation of Petrarch and other poets in the courtly love lyric tradition, bridging the intersection of translation and engagement with tradition as position-taking strategies. Though Wyatt and Surrey are the most well-known actors in this genre, the chapter also looks at works preserved in the Devonshire Manuscript. As the chapter emphasizes, the value of translation had been understood for centuries, by its many separate acolytes, as adaptable to engage different messages, rather than as a strict transference of the original meaning from one tongue to another. Further, Henrician poets borrowed from their Continental predecessors an appreciation and understanding of the ability of the courtly love lyric to convey political frustration. By joining translation to similar coding techniques, we can highlight some consistent systems of political response and resistance at play across poetic genres, while the joint analysis



also highlights the ways that coding works differently in translations than through other outlets, with more clarity in its critiques and so more risk.

The fourth chapter then shifts attention to translation from classical and ancient sources, engaging translations like Surrey's *Aeneid* and Wyatt's *Psalms* and considering Katherine Parr's uses of biblical and political authority. Parr's work offers a bridge into an examination of the use of translated work by young women in the last years of Henry VIII and in the brief reign of his son Edward, specifically translations from verse into prose by Elizabeth I and Jane Lumley. These works are considered, together, as translations of texts that had already been assigned cultural importance and authority, thus increasing the interpretive cultural framework. Surrey and Wyatt work in verse translations and appear to align their speaking voices with the relatively isolated and individualized leader-subjects of their works. While both poets draw on the communal position-taking practices of translation, they also both engage the potential of more individualized authorities. The question of authority underpins the subsequent engagement with Parr's work as a hybridized intersection of the coded strategies of verse position-taking, the alternative interpretive frameworks suggested by prose and print, and the negotiation of meaning between monarchical authorization and courtly, communal position-taking. Considering Parr's work alongside that of Wyatt and Surrey contextualizes Elizabeth's and Jane Lumley's decisions to work away from the verse versions they translate into prose. All three women offer visions of rhetorical authority for their narrators or primary characters, but these visions also appeal both to communal experiences and to established, higher, and masculinized figures of authority. The section on translation emphasizes the interpretive frameworks audiences were expected to bring to their reading and offers us practical demonstrations of how power—inflected by gender, status, and age—is played out on the page.

The final section moves into a consideration of the strategies of transcription, where play on the page is the core concern. This section opens with the fifth chapter of the work, devoted to the practice of transcription as practiced in circulated manuscripts of the time. Transcription, as shown in the opening analysis here, often involved studied revision on a scale ranging from particular pronouns to entire stanzas, offering an entirely different effect from that of an original piece. Like the practice of translation, transcription was understood as a method through which courtiers could reimagine a text, making works more immediately resonant with their world. Compared to translation, transcription allowed for both greater flexibility and greater deniability. The imaginative engagement with the text is of a different sort, because the text can be more explicitly rearranged or broken



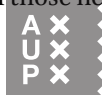


apart to join with other texts. This chapter examines the products of the Devonshire manuscript as a collaborative project where transcription unites with multiple authorship.

The final chapter continues the consideration of transcription, but shifts into a focus on dialogue within manuscript creation. The focus of the chapter is the exchange between Margaret Douglas and Thomas Howard during their imprisonment in the Tower and the process by which that exchange came to be preserved in the Devonshire. The chapter also, though, looks at the ways that other sections of the manuscript preserve exchanges and conversations, wherein writers respond to and riff on one another's works. The widespread use of such strategies emphasizes the particular literacies involved in the use of poetry at court; those particular literacies must be established for position-taking verse to circulate successfully via context-dependent codes. The established context of and comparison to translation and tradition allows for greater insight into exactly what transcription offered its authors that other outlets did not, while also structuring a framework for considering how and why these three strategies intersected in courtiers' versified position-taking.

In the communally created space of manuscript verse—and in the print versions of that verse that then arose—reader interpretation is understood as integral to the project. Because part of the argument throughout this manuscript engages the reasons for multiple versions of texts—or, more precisely, what is indicated by how a text is written for each particular audience—I have focused on Henrician texts for which some work is already available in terms of textual history. This is particularly true of my work with Tottel's and with the Devonshire, but applies throughout, as in the engagement with the Thynne Chaucer, with a young Elizabeth's translation work, and with Surrey's *Aeneid*. In order to craft an argument about the position-taking work these verses did at court, I engage, for the most part, texts where a great deal of analytical, interpretive, and historicizing work has already been crafted, combining considerations of the politicized nature of Henrician verse with work on manuscripts that frame the book as a material cultural product. I attempt to avoid any claims of a totalizing argument by considering difference as much as alignment. I hope that the project traces some part of the shifts texts undergo as they move between manuscript and print and indicates something of what those shifts reveal about the specific functions of the Henrician courtly manuscript.

The outlets through which the King and his courtiers attempted to preserve and privilege their positions often opened up new opportunities, and the humanist atmosphere of the court created subjects (in both senses) eager to take advantage of those new chances and changes. Taken together,



these analyses should establish not only that verse was used by men and women at court for coded position-taking, but that courtier-poets at all levels were trained to recognize and use this poetic coding. Moreover, that recognition should allow for new readings of Henrician verse that emphasize the interpretive range available to these courtly reading and writing communities and, crucially, restore a more extensive network of production and reception in which women took on many roles. This demasculinizes our approach to Henrician verse not only through a more equitable consideration of gender's functions in that social world, but also in de-emphasizing individualized self-fashioning or authorial intent in favor of an engagement with communal production and shared sociopolitical engagement. The availability of a wide range of interpretations is essential to the coded energy and potential of the verses considered here; the risk of misunderstanding is inherent in all communal position-taking projects, as creators and audiences work together to move between available meanings. While I hope to have produced an exploration of how these systems fit together, it is important that this system is *not* holistic. I have tried to offer some key moments of departure from this unifying model—that these systems were *available* to courtly verse producers does not mean they were universally used by or useful to them. The creation in this system is not of *a* code, but of systems for coding and recognizing position-taking; the poet does not create *a* self, a singular poetic voice. Rather, the communal systems offer a site for the intersection of reader and writer, of transcriber and composer, and of King and courtier in a space that questions, creates, and troubles power in the Henrician court.

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