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“Vnder Coloure I Dyuers Bokes Dyde Make”: “Obscure Allegory” in the Dream Poems of Stephen Hawes¹

Laurie Atkinson

Stephen Hawes is a poet deeply affected by the conflicting imperatives of the Tudor courtly cultures of secrecy and display. This article studies his response to that regime through a remarkable poetics of “obscure allegory” that places a premium on the concealment rather than the revelation of truth, with a focus on Hawes’s final, dream-framed poem, *The Conforte of Louers*. Hawes incorporates the allegorical mode of the Burgundian *Rhétoriqueurs* into a native literary tradition of complaint and dream poetry that facilitates a more enigmatic role for the poet. His writings do not seem to have attracted much interest at Henry VII’s court, nor was he able to retain his position in the royal Chamber after the accession of Henry VIII; yet Hawes’s verse did receive unusual attention from the printer Wynkyn de Worde. The last section of this article considers how the obscurity with which Hawes simultaneously invited and deflected the gaze of his detractors came to encourage the foregrounding of his work in de Worde’s London prints.

Stephen Hawes (c. 1470-75-c. 1529) is a poet who by his own admission likes to keep secrets. We know very little of his life beyond his position as a groom in the Chamber of Henry VII, less still of the circumstances for the composition of his works, for which there are no complete

¹ The research for this article was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Northern Bridge (grant number AH/L503927/1).

manuscript witnesses.² Five of Hawes's works are known to us: the short *Conuercyon of Swerers* (written before April 1509), which attacks the flagrant oath-taking stereotypical of the court; *A Joyfull Medytacyon to All Englonde on the Coronacyon of Our Moost Naturall Souerayne Lorde Kynge Henry the Eyght* (after April 1509); and three love allegories framed as dreams: *The Example of Vertu* (1503/04), *The Passe Tyme of Pleasure* (1505/06), and the enigmatic *Conforte of Louers* (1510/11).³ Hawes, when he is considered at all by literary critics, is generally regarded as a transitional figure. Like his almost exact contemporary John Skelton, he inherits the forms and idiom of the vernacular court literature of the preceding century. However, where Skelton has been seen as intelligently alive to these "conflicting energies embodied in his work" (Spearing 225), even the most generous critics of Hawes judge him rather to be "a 'potential poet,' one whose conceptions are not generally matched by his execution" and who remains "resolutely parochial at a time when more astute and gifted writers were already sniffing the winds of change" (Edwards, *Hawes* 103, 107).⁴ Hawes's work deserves critical reappraisal on at least three counts: for the literary historian, his writing has interest as a strategic, if apparently unsuccessful, engagement with the systems of power and patronage distinctive to an important moment in English history; more productively, Hawes's work also presents a relatively radical conception of the role of the poet and the function of poetry in the public sphere, a conception in which poetry and allegory have become almost indistinguishable and the imperative of the text is less to edify or to enlighten an audience than to persuade them of its obscurity; finally, if Hawes's "obscure allegory" (Spearing 252) secured him little advantage beyond unmolested anonymity at the early Tudor court, his impulse towards obscurity did prove highly amenable to the printer Wynkyn de Worde (d. c. 1534) and points to an increased tendency

² Extracts from *The Passe Tyme of Pleasure*, *The Conforte of Louers*, and *The Conuercyon of Swerers* appear in Glasgow University Library, Hunterian MS 230; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson C. 813; and London, British Library, MS Harley 4294 (see Edwards, *Hawes* 90-91). Titles of English works are taken from their *ESTC (English Short Title Catalogue)* titles or, where more concise, or if no English title is provided, their *ESTC* variant titles. Titles are capitalised and abbreviations silently expanded.

³ Though not strictly a dream-framed poem of the type of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* or *Parliament of Fowls*, the deliberate verbal and thematic echoes of earlier dream poetry in the *Passe Tyme*'s framing narrative have led me to describe it as a dream poem. The work can perhaps be more accurately described as a first-person allegory with (multiple) *chanson d'aventure*-type openings.

⁴ For the standard formulations of this view, see Lewis (279-87); Hawes, *Stephen Hawes* (xxiii-xlvii); Miskimin (166); and Spearing (224-77).

amongst London printers to attempt to provide some generic associations between their varied literary output. In this article, I will briefly review the cultures of secrecy and display current at the early Tudor court within which Hawes was writing. I will then examine at length the poetics of “obscure allegory” with which Hawes invites yet deflects the surveillance of his poetry, before considering the appropriation of the poet’s name and works as part of de Worde’s print marketing strategy.

The little reliable biographical information that we have for Hawes can be summed up by the colophons included in de Worde’s near-contemporary editions of his five known works. He is described as “Stephen hawes one of the gromes of the most honorable chambre of our souerayne lorde kynge Henry the seueth” (*Passe Tyme* A2v) or, on the title page of the *Conforte*, written perhaps eighteen months after Henry’s death in 1509, “somtyme grome” of the Chamber and presumably seeking employment (see Figure 1).⁵ The receipt of a mourning allowance on the occasion of the funeral of Elizabeth of York in February 1503 confirms Hawes as a member of Henry VII’s retinue by that time (DNB 25:188), though the exact nature of his duties as a groom of the Chamber remains unclear. In England, by the second half of the fifteenth century, the *camera regis* or chamber of the king had developed into “a kind of household within the household, [. . .] a privileged elite around which the social life of the court revolved” (Green, *Poets and Princepleasers* 37). Under Henry VII, the Secret or Privy Chamber was formally separated from the apartments of the Great and the Presence Chambers and given its own staff, an important move towards what David Starkey has described as the “politics of intimacy” that characterised English government for much of the sixteenth century (71). Whether Hawes was a member of the Privy Chamber or only the less exclusive “chambre of the kynge” is not specified by de Worde. John Bale’s claim in his *Scriptorum illustrium* (1557) that Hawes was called *ad aulam* (“to the court”) of Henry VII but soon advanced *ad interiorem cameram, & ad secretum cubiculum tandem, sola virtutis commendatione* (“to the inner chamber, and finally to the secret chamber, solely on the commendation of his virtue,” 632) is without substantiation. We can be

⁵ Compare the colophons to the *Example* (A3), the *Conueryon* (A8), and a *Joyfull Medytyation* (A4v). Hereafter, all references to Hawes’s minor works are to Hawes, *Stephen Hawes*, and all references to the *Passe Tyme* are to Mead, with my own emendations from the print witnesses.

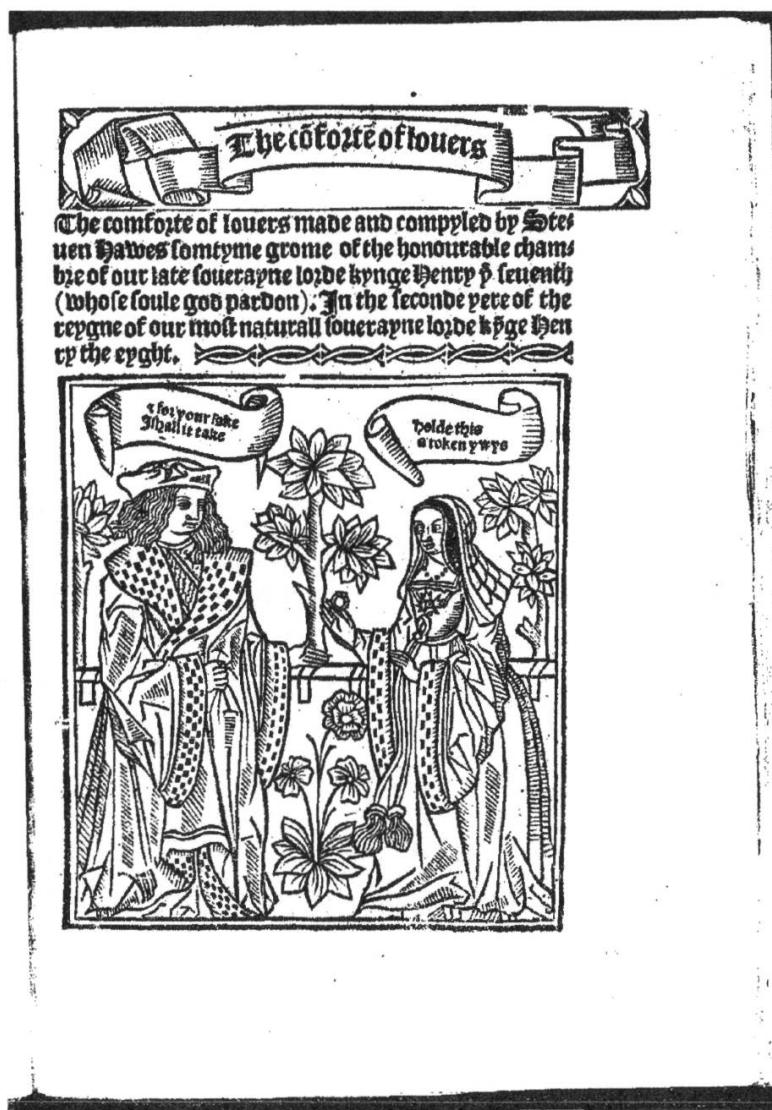


Figure 1. Stephen Hawes. *The Conforte of Louers*. [London]: Wynkyn de Worde, [1515] (STC 12942.5), title page. British Library C.57.i.52. Image produced by ProQuest as part of *Early English Books Online* (EEBO). Image published with permission of ProQuest and the British Library.

confident that Hawes would have enjoyed a proximity though probably not an intimacy with the king that would have been rare for a man without aristocratic standing. At the very least, his works bear out a familiarity with the malicious gossip and jostling for position at court that is powerfully rendered in the figure of Drede in Skelton's *Bowge of Courte* (1498) and is the subject of criticism in Alexander Barclay's *Eclogues I-III* (composed between April 1509 and c. 1513). Not until the reign of Henry VIII would "writing" and "imprinting" be placed under formal judicial scrutiny, most notoriously under the 1534 Treasons Act (*Statutes 508-09* [26 Hen. VIII, c. 13]) and subsequent parliamentary

controls on religious discourse (see Clegg 3-4, 6). Yet Hawes, witness to the acts of attainder, bonds and recognisances, and increased surveillance of Westminster and provincial government during the final decade of Henry VII’s reign (see Mackie 164-71, 193-207), would have appreciated the exigency of the careful self-censorship of his poetic persona at court.

Hawes may have found himself temporarily near the centre of Henry VII’s increasingly closed day-to-day government; never, however, does he seem to have been confident of his place within the early Tudor literary establishment. If, as A. S. G. Edwards suggests, Hawes’s role at court was likely “connected with his poetic activities” (*Hawes* 3), we nevertheless have almost no evidence for the formal patronage of his works. In January 1506, a payment of ten shillings was made to Hawes from the King’s Book of Payments “for a ballet that he gave to the kings grace in reward” (DNB 25:188).⁶ The didactic *Conueryon* and epideictic *Ioyfull Medytacyon* may have been written with similar remuneration in mind, yet Hawes never attained the coveted poet-laureate status of writers such as Bernard André, Pietro Carmeliano, or for a time Skelton. Gordon Kipling has identified the Frenchman André, and the Burgundian aureate style that he helped to bring into currency at Henry VII’s court, as a particular foil for Hawes (*Triumph* 16-23).⁷ The “tradition of learned chivalry” (13) associated with the Burgundian and French courts of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries found its Tudor literary manifestation in works such as André’s metaphorical *Douze triomphes de Henry VII* (1497), Skelton’s prose *Speculum principis* (1501), and, less directly, his dream-framed *Chapelet of Laurell*, begun around 1495. This Burgundian tradition, which linked learning with virtue as the essence of nobility and advanced

⁶ This, incidentally, is the last record of payment made to Hawes. He is not included among the officers who received a mourning allowance for Henry VII’s funeral in May 1509.

⁷ I follow Kipling (and in turn Huizinga) in foregrounding the dominant influence of “Burgundian forms of life, thought, and art” (*Triumph* 2) on the culture of early Tudor England, whilst downplaying the influence of the classical humanism of men like Desiderius Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, and their circles. Kipling’s account frequently lays emphasis on the mediation of classical humanism through Lowlands’ traditions of scholarship and poetry. One apposite example is André’s *Vita Henrici Septimi*, a Latin history begun in 1500 and abandoned in 1502 after the death of Prince Arthur, that in its royal patronage and highly eulogistic style is far closer to the court chronicles of Georges Chastellian, Jean Molinet, and Jean Lemaire de Belges than the contemporary *Anglica historia* (c. 1505-1513) of the Italian historian Polydore Vergil (Kipling, *Triumph* 19-21).

historiographers and rhetoricians who depicted these qualities – more or less arbitrarily – in their patrons, served the aesthetic as well as the political ambitions of the young Tudor dynasty. Green, discussing the aureate poet laureates and related *oratores regii* or “orators of the king” patronised at Henry VII’s court, observes that “poetry, even vernacular poetry, had come to be seen as part of the ostentatious public front which the court wished to display to the world” (*Poets and Princepleasers* 177). Kipling has grouped writers like Hawes and Barclay as “mediocre poets” whose attempts to emulate the encomiastic allegories of the Burgundian *Rhétoriqueurs* resulted only in “uninspired English imitation” of little literary significance or acclaim (*Triumph* 11).⁸

To judge Hawes’s poetry as lacking inspiration is not entirely unjustified; it is inaccurate, however, to suggest that Hawes, facing a competition for literary patronage in which he did not have the poetic resources to compete, was so devoid of ingenuity as to content himself with inadequate reproductions of continental texts. Lacking the humanist credentials of the poet laureate and the polished Latinate rhetoric befitting an “orator of the king,” Hawes incorporates the allegorical mode of the *Rhétoriqueurs* into a native literary tradition of complaint and dream poetry that facilitates a more enigmatic role for the poet. The “public front” of Hawes’s poetry is hardly ostentatious nor ever fully on display – he dare not let it, he tells us, for “To [s]ayne the trouthe” (*Conforte* 81) is to risk misrepresentation. Hawes’s account, in the *Conforte*, of self-preservation amidst the machinations of his enemies at court is only partly ingenuous; his dream poems are as much affected by a perceived literary hegemony as by a fear of persecution. Seeking an authoritative position for his veiled writings amidst a literary culture of display, Hawes envisages a counter-poetics of the obscure that is without exact precedent in late medieval English or French verse.

A snapshot of Hawes’s conception of the role of the poet and the function of poetry can be seen in “The Proheyme” to his final dream poem, *The Conforte of Louers*. The proem begins with an apparently commonplace description of the allegorical mode favoured by the poets of antiquity, and the pleasure but also the profit to be derived from such veiled writings by contemporary readers:

⁸ Kipling draws attention to Barclay’s “Towre of Virtue and Honour” in *Eclogue IV* (c. 1513), after Jean Lemaire de Belges’ *Temple d’honneur et de vertus* (1503), and Hawes’s *Example* and *Passe Tyme*, which he identifies especially with the personification allegories of Olivier de la Marche (*Triumph* 22-25).

The gentyll poetes / vnder cloudy fygures
 Do touche a trouth / and cloke it subtylly
 Harde is to construe poetycall scryptures
 They are so fayned / & made sentencyously
 For som do wrtye of loue by fables pruely
 Some do endyte / vpon good moralyte
 Of chyualrous actes / done in antyqute

Whose fables and storyes ben pastymes pleasaunt
 To lordes and ladyes / as is theyr lykynge
 Dyuers to moralyte / ben oft attendaunt
 And many delyte to rede of louynge
 Youth loueth aduenture / pleasure and lykynge
 Aege foloweth polycy / sadnesse and prudence
 Thus they do dyffre / eche in experyence. (1-14)

The proem then moves into a conventional modesty *topos*, followed by a final eulogy for Hawes’s English predecessors and the “bokes moche profitable” which he hopes to emulate:

I lytell or nought / experte in this scyence
 Compyle suche bokes / to deuoyde ydlenes
 Besechynge the reders / with all my delygence
 Where as I offende / for to correct doubtles
 Submyttinge me to theyr grete gentylnes
 As none hystoryagraffe / nor poete laureate
 But gladly wolde folowe / the makynge of Lydgate

Fyrst noble Gower / moralytees dyde endyte
 And after hym Cauncers / grete bokes delectable
 Lyke a good phylosophre / meruaylously dyde wryte
 After them Lydgate / the monke commendable
 Made many wonderfull bokes moche profytable
 But syth the[y] are deed / & theyr bodyes layde in chest
 I pray to god to gyue theyr soules good rest. (15-28)

The passage gives us a flavour of the deliberate poetic stance that Hawes adopts in his works: he writes allegorically – “vnder fygures” – for an implied aristocratic audience of “lordes and ladyes” who derive pleasure from his “fables” but are also “attendaunt” to various aspects of their diverse “moralyte.” Hawes disclaims the titles of “hystoryagraffe” and “poete laureate” so prized by his contemporaries. He instead situates his work in a tradition of morally edifying English writ-

ing in which the “wonderfull bokes” of his “mayster” John Lydgate (c. 1370-c. 1451) are given unusual pre-eminence.⁹

Hawes’s especial praise of Lydgate in the *Conforte*, as in each of his works, reveals the importance to Hawes of the monk of Bury, poet to the Lancastrian aristocracy, “as a model for what a poet and his poetry should be” (Edwards, *Hawes* 18), but also points to the very different conceptions of figurative writing espoused by Hawes and his claimed English master. Central to the group of terms which embody Lydgate’s critical ideals for poetry in important passages such as the prologue to *Troy Book* (written 1412-1420) and his eulogy for Chaucer in *The Siege of Thebes* (Prol. 40-57; written 1420-1422) is *enluminen*, “to shed light upon (something), to illuminate; [.] to describe or depict (in a certain style), esp. to adorn or embellish (with figures of speech or poetry)” (*MED*, defs 1a and 3a; see Ebin 19-24).¹⁰ Lydgate, Lois Ebin observes, “envision[s] the poet as an illuminator who uses the power of language to shed light on the poet’s matter and make it more significant and effective” (19). Hawes, by contrast, places a premium on the concealment rather than the illumination of the poet’s matter. He routinely alludes to the *trouth* that he – like the poets of the ancients through to the English literary triumvirate – is able to *touche* in his writing, but emphasises the poet’s ability to *obscure* rather than to *enluminen*.

This difference in Hawes, perennial to all his works, derives from a peculiar reformulation of what the business of writing poetry actually entails. The metaphor for poetic composition that appears in the *Conforte*’s opening lines is repeated, with variation, no less than thirteen times in his works.¹¹ Poets are described as employing *connynge*, *rhetoryke*, *eloquence*, or *colours* in order to make *fayned fables*, *tales*, or *fycyon*s. They *cloke* or *shroude* the *trouth* or *sentence* of their often *fatall scryptures* under *figures*, *termes*, *myst*, or *cloudes*.¹² This conception of *litterae* or *verba* (“the

⁹ Compare Hawes’s deferential praise of Lydgate at *Example*, 26, 2116-20; *Passe Tyme* 26-35, 1163-76, 1338-407, 5810-16; *Conuercyon* 22-28; and *Ioyfull Medytacyon* 8-14.

¹⁰ Middle English terms are italicised throughout and follow the typical orthography of the author in question.

¹¹ See *Example* 902-04; *Conuercyon* 11-14; *Passe Tyme* 26-35, 705-06, 708-14, 719-21, 869-75, 932-34, 942-43, 985-87, 1273-74, 1352-56; and *Conforte* 1-2.

¹² With the exception of the description in the *Passe Tyme* of the second part of the art of rhetoric, “dysposycyon.” Here, the operation of figurative writing is described as illuminating rather than obscuring *trouth*: “The fatall problemes / of olde antyquyte | Cloked with myst / and with cloudes derke | Ordred with reason / and hye auctoryte | The trouthe dyde shewe / of all theyr couert werke” (869-72); and poets are described as promoting social and political harmony: “The whiche [i.e., poets] dystyllled / aromatyke

letters" or "words") as the attractive or protective covering for a text's *res* or *sententia* ("matter" or 'meaning') – its *veritas* ("truth") – goes back to Paul, Augustine, and the influence of Neoplatonism (see 2 Corinthians 3:6; and Augustine III.ix-xii). The exposition of "figurative exegesis" in Book III of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* is foundational for the medieval commentary tradition that in turn informed the writers of Latin and vernacular *fabulae* – allegorical narratives – into the early Renaissance and beyond (see Harrison 687-91; and Tambling 19-25).

An English analogue for Hawes's formulation can be seen in the opening of Skelton's allegorical dream poem, *The Bowge of Courte*. There, a dreamer recalls the activities of "poetes olde,"

whyche, full craftely,
Under as coverte termes as coude be,
Can touche a troughe and cloke it subtelly
Wyth fresshe utteraunce full sentencyously (9-12)

The language of poetic artifice and secrecy has parallels in the proem to the *Conforte*; yet Skelton – unlike Hawes – never goes so far as to suggest that poets' "coverte termes" are intended ultimately to obscure. In the following stanza, a personified "Ignorance" disillusioned the dreamer of his poetic pretensions, "For to illumyne, she said, I was to dulle" (*Bowge* 20) – and *illumyne* here takes on the double meaning of the ornamentation of the poet's heightened style but also the potential of that style to enlighten his readers. Elsewhere, in *Phyllyp Sparowe*, written between 1485 and 1505, Skelton's Jane Scrope praises Chaucer as "that famus clerke" whose "termes were *not darke*, / But plesaunt, easy and playne" (800-02; emphasis added). The attitude in the same passage towards Lydgate's sometimes obfuscating style is more ambivalent: he "Wryteth after an hyer rate," remarks Jane, so that often "It is dyffuse to fynde / The sentence of his mynde" (804-07).

For Hawes, however, such diffuseness is apparently the hallmark of good poetry. In the prologue to the *Passe Tyme*, he praises Lydgate for his

faynyng with termes eloquent
Whose fatall fyccyons / are yet permanent
Grounded on reason / with clowdy fygures

lycour | Clensynge our syght / with ordre purfyed | Whose famous draughtes / so exemplifyed | Sette vs in ordre / grace and gouernaunce | To lyue dyrectly / without encombraunce" (892-96).

He cloked the trouthe / of all his scryptures. (32-35)

Hawes despairs that “The lyght of trouthe / I lacke the connynge to cloke” (36), but, undeterred, resolves that

Yet as I maye / I shall blowe out a fume
 To hyde my mynde / vnderneth a fable
 By conuert colour / well and probable. (40-42)

For Hawes, observes Edwards, “poetry should ideally be ‘fables’ [...] particularly those which are ‘pleasaunt and couerte’” (*Hawes* 36). By this reasoning, *verba* has not simply become the substitute for *res* – a tendency in late medieval allegorical writing that Skelton has been seen to criticise in the *Bowge* (see Cooney). Instead, what Hawes seems to be arguing for is “the validity and importance of a form of allegorical poetry in which meaning is concealed beneath the ‘cloudy figures’ of its surface, meaning which remains accessible only to intelligent, thoughtful readers” (Edwards, *Hawes* 36-37). Implicit here is the double justification for Hawes’s “obscure allegory.” To be secretive, it seems, is to demand closer attention; yet to be ultimately indecipherable offers the perfect hermeneutic reprieve. Hawes asserts the value of the *trouth* that he touches, whilst deflecting the scrutiny which such *faynyng* invites. Obscure *verba*, he assures his audience, are the prerequisite for credible *sententiae*; covert terms are the surest evidence of sententious matter beneath, even if the reader lacks the *expertyce* or “understanding” (*MED*, def. 4) to perceive it clearly.

If this is how Hawes articulates and justifies the veiled figurative writing that is appropriate to the poet, it remains to be seen how his “obscure allegory” functions in practice. The tendency towards obscurity in Hawes is to some extent the inevitable consequence of the mixed mode in which he writes. In the *Example* and the *Passe Tyme*, a De-guilevillean allegorical quest is somewhat clumsily augmented with motifs from the didactic *speculum mundi* and chivalric romance; in the later *Conforte*, Hawes effects a no less bewildering conflation of political prophecy and love complaint (see Nievergelt 74-96). The critical response to Hawes’s dream poems has ranged from confusion to disgust: he grasps “stumblingly and half consciously” towards “a new kind of poem” (Lewis 279) but ultimately produces only “a puzzling forced marriage of contradictory ideologies” (Nievergelt 82). Hawes’s exploitation of the allegorical dream as a vehicle for personal expression is central to this notion of the “new kind of poem” envisaged but never fully realised in his work. The attribution to Hawes, particularly in the *Con-*

forte, of a nascent autobiographical impulse that seems to anticipate a "Renaissance" interest in individuality and inwardness has in fact only reinforced his critical reputation as a "potential" poet.¹³ For scholarship on Hawes to progress, it is necessary to acknowledge that, for Hawes at least, the conception of poetry as obscurely allegorical was more than just "pleasingly absurd" (Spearing 252). He, as well as his printer de Worde, must have seen in his poetry some political or commercial expediency that made writing and printing it worthwhile. His *moralyte* may be hackneyed and his moments of self-reference ultimately opaque; yet such an effect is perhaps not so undesirable for a poet peddling platitudes and literary *topoi*. Reading cynically, one might observe that Hawes's poems remain attractive only so long as their readers are persuaded that the allegory conceals a political or moral truth that they are unable to uncover entirely. Yet Hawes's dream poetry is a remarkable illustration of what can be done with obscurity when it is earnestly expressed. In what follows, I turn to the work in which Hawes is ostensibly at his most candid, yet also his most obscure: his final dream poem, *The Conforte of Louers*.

In structure, the *Conforte* follows the typical pattern of the dream-framed love complaint. Following the proem, the poet-narrator recalls stepping out one midsummer's day, "Whan fayre was phebus [...] Amyddes of gemyny" (29-20), and musing alone "in a medowe grene" (36) for the unrequited love of his lady. He falls asleep and is transported to a fair garden where "a lady of goodly age" (76) asks the cause of his affliction. The dreamer complains to her of a love that he has not dared speak of for fear of mysterious adversaries; he has concealed his "trouthe" in "dyuers bokes [...] vnder coloure" of poetry (93-95) but his writings too have been subject to the "mysse contruyng" (187) of his enemies. Here, the secrecy and reserve that is integral to what John Stevens has described as the late medieval "game of love" (154-202) takes on a political dimension. The dreamer asserts his fealty to his lady, for "My herte was trewe vnto my ladyes blood" (*Conforte* 174). He has perceived the "falshode" and the "subtylte" (169) of his enemies and suspects that "My ladyes fader they dyde lytell loue" (168). Having thus declared his *trouth* to the old lady, the dreamer is led to a golden tower where he discovers three mirrors that show his past, present, and future. He receives from them a golden flower set with an emerald, and a sword and shield signifying the chivalric virtues

¹³ See Hawes, *Stephen Hawes* xlvi; Edwards, *Hawes* 87-88; Fox, *Politics and Literature* 56-72; Burrow 795-97; and Meyer-Lee 178-90)

“preprudence” (512) and “perceueraunce” (520). Renewing his complaint, at length the dreamer overhears the voice of his beloved; the poem’s final two hundred lines take the form of a dialogue between two speakers named Amour and Pucell in the headings of de Worde’s edition. The dream ends with Amour’s consent to submit to the judgement of Venus and Fortune, but not before Pucell has made the startling assertion that she has seen and read Hawes’s earlier work, *The Passe Tyme of Pleasure*:

Of late I sawe aboke of your makynge
 Called the pastyme of pleasure / whiche is wond[rous]
 For I thyn[k]e and you had not ben in louynge
 Ye coude neuer haue made it so sentencyous
 I redde there all your passage daungerous
 Wherfore I wene for the fayre ladyes sake
 That ye dyd loue / ye dyde that boke so make. (785-91)

This remarkable moment of self-reference, the only such instance of direct auto-citation in Hawes’s work, will be returned to below. At present, it is necessary only to recognise that, although in action and sentiment the *Conforte* is little more than a patchwork of the time-worn tropes of *fin’amor*, Hawes is able nevertheless to draw attention to his poetry by means of pseudo-autobiographical reference with a potentially illicit erotic subtext – the “passage daungerous” that might refer simply to the poet’s writings but also to his life.

The little critical attention that has been paid to the *Conforte* has been chiefly concerned with decoding just such a subtext (see esp. Fox, “Stephen Hawes” 3-21, *Politics and Literature* 56-72; and Edwards, *Hawes* 80-81). The dreamer – who describes himself as “a louer” (*Conforte* 131) but also as the maker of “dyuers bokes” – has been recognised as Hawes. More ambitious are those attempts to identify the poem’s Pucell with the princess Mary Tudor, the younger sister of Henry VIII. Pucell is twice aligned in the *Conforte* with “the reed and whyte” of the Tudor dynasty to whom the dreamer pledges his “trouth” (189, 193); the dreamer earlier states his loyalty to “My ladyes fader” (see above); and Pucell’s revelation that she has been “promest / to a myghty lorde” (861) corroborates with Mary’s betrothal to Charles, duke of Burgundy, in 1507. Mary Tudor is the subject of Hawes’s specific praise in a *Joyfull Medytacyon* (176-82); and in the *Passe Tyme* – named by Pucell as one of the “wond[rous]” books made by the dreamer for his lady’s sake – another lover, “Graunde Amour,” pursues an aristocratic and equally elusive “Bell Pucell.” However, beyond these vague allusions, this Hawes-

Mary love affair is largely the product of modern speculation. A more likely explanation for the *Conforte*'s political-erotic overtones is, as Spearing suggests, that, "as often happens with the poetry of the early Tudor court, the language of love may be a way of expressing political allegiance" (256). Supporting this reading is the evidence for the promotion of a loyalty cult centred on Mary Tudor in the final years of Henry VII's reign (see Hasler 131-33). In around 1507, de Worde printed verse accounts of two tournaments framed in allegorical tableau, *The Iustes of the Moneth of Maye* and *The Iustes and Tourney of [the] Moneth of June*, now bound together in a unique copy in the Pepysian Library, Magdalene College, Cambridge (STC 3542; see Kipling, "Queen"). The first tournament, held at Greenwich Palace in spring 1506, was precipitated by the visit of the Burgundian Prince Philip to England following his shipwreck off the Dorset coast. A surviving tournament challenge takes the form of a letter sent to the Princess Mary by Lady May (British Library Harley MS 69, fols 2v-3v). The second tournament, held at Kennington Palace in 1507, is similarly witnessed by an invitation sent by the Queen of May which established "both an allegorical cast of characters and a romantic *mise-en-scène* for the essentially dramatic show" (Kipling, *Triumph* 133; see College of Arms MS R36, fol. 12v, transcribed in Green, "A Joust"). It is to this "broader cultural symbolism" (Hasler 132) of the May-Mary cult that we may attribute the allegorical love affair depicted in the *Conforte*. The emblems and pageantry of the Tudor dynasty provide a political point of reference for Hawes's dream poems; yet they do not restrict their meaning to it. The same can be said of the *Conforte*'s as yet unidentified allusions to the "Aboue .xx. woulues" (163) that beset the dreamer, the three "p"s (140) from which he begs relief, and the much discussed "phyppe" from which he claims to have suffered (890-96).¹⁴ This is figurative writing with an array of pseudo-autobiographical interpretative possibilities; it remains irreproachable – and more importantly, relevant – by refusing to commit to any *trouth* except its own inherent truthfulness.

Nowhere is Hawes's use of pseudo-autobiographical reference more overt, yet ultimately reflexive, than in the moment of auto-citation early in the Amour-Pucell dialogue: "Of late I sawe a boke of your makynge |

¹⁴ This last stanza is a possible rebuff against Skelton's disparagement of Hawes in *Phylly Sparowe* (the "addicyon" to which, written sometime after 1509, contains unflattering echoes of the *Passe Tyme*). It may also contain a reference to Skelton's *Agenst Gernesche* (written c. 1514), in which a "Gorbelyd Godfrey," resembling the *Passe Tyme*'s obscene dwarf Godfrey Gobelieve, perhaps stands for Hawes himself. See Gordon; Hawes, *Stephen Hawes* (160-62); and Edwards, *Hawes* 81-82.

Called the pastyme of pleasure / whiche is wond[rous]" (785-86). This is the first time not only in the *Conforte* but anywhere in Hawes's poetry that the author or his works are cited by name (i.e., outside of de Worde's colophons). Embedded references to an author's earlier works are commonplace in medieval first-person narrative. The passage in the *Conforte* is immediately reminiscent of Alceste's catalogue of Chaucer's works in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* (F.412-30; written c. 1386-1388) and Skelton's meticulous auto-citation through the personified "Occupacioun" in *The Chapelet of Laurell* (1170-260). Other English analogues include the Man of Law's grumble of Chaucer's copious writings in the introduction to his Tale (II.46-89), Chaucer's Retraction to *The Canterbury Tales*, and Thomas Hoccleve's *Dialogue with a Friend* (written 1419-1421), in which the friend reproves "Thomas" for his writing against women "in thepistle of Cupyde" (754), whilst earlier in the dialogue, "Thomas" reads to his friend the *Complaint* which he has ostensibly finished writing only moments earlier.

In dream poems, moments of auto-citation such as these are made particularly compelling by the latent, but rarely explicitly stated, analogy between the poet-dreamer and the historical author of the dream poem. Usually, that dreamer is identified as the author of the works cited, but not as their protagonist. In the *Conforte*, however, the situation is subtly different. Pucell describes Amour as the lover of the *Passe Tyme* but also the maker of that book; indeed, it seems obvious to Pucell "That ye dyd loue / ye dyde that boke so make" (791). The subject of the *Passe Tyme* is described as "your passage daungerous" (789; emphasis added), surely a deliberate conflation of the illicit written "passages" for which the dreamer of the *Conforte* claims to have been persecuted, but also the heroic "passage" of the *Passe Tyme*'s "Graunde Amour" in his quest for La Bell Pucell.¹⁵ According to Pucell, the *trouth* of the veiled narrative of the *Passe Tyme* is to be found in the characters and situations of the *Conforte*; the *Passe Tyme* is presented as an allegory for the suffering in love – the real thing this time – reported by Amour. Of course, the love *daunger* of the *Conforte* is in fact no less or more fictional than that of the *Passe Tyme*. The *Conforte* depicts an Amour and Pucell who are the analogues as opposed to the referents of the Graunde Amour and La Bell Pucell of the *Passe Tyme*. Neither poem is the secret confession of a historical "Steuen Hawes somtyme grome"; they are examples of a re-rehearsed, and in print re-duplicated allegorical mode so crowded with Amours

¹⁵ Hawes's usage convincingly predates the *OED*'s earliest citation of "passage, n." with the sense "A section of a speech, text, play, etc." (def. 13a), Robert Wedderburn's *Complaynt of Scotland* (iv. 23) written c. 1550.

and Pucells as to render any one human subject beyond retrieval. In both works, the names of the dreamer and his books fluctuate in their range of reference: sometimes – as in Pucell’s allusion – they seem to denote a historical author or a recognisable work with a material existence outside of the allegory; yet just as often – as in the “pastymes pleasaunt” of the proem to the *Conforte* – they appear to bear reference only to their analogue in other texts, sometimes by name, sometimes by little more than a verbal echo. Hawes’s narratives have all the appearance of allegory cloaked “vnder cloudy figures”; yet to discover their secrets outside of the text, or even the obscure relationship between texts, is to find oneself going round in circles.

The final section of this article will consider how the obscure allegory of Hawes’s dream poems was peculiarly suited to at least one Tudor printer’s conception of how secular English poetry could be collected and marketed within the early London book trade. Edwards has observed de Worde’s unusual concern for Hawes’s verse; he is the only contemporary poet whose work was initially published in its entirety by a single printer, and there is evidence for their collaboration in the preparation of Hawes’s texts (see “Poet and Printer,” *Hawes* 88-90, and “From Manuscript to Print” 145-48). De Worde first printed the *Example* in perhaps 1506 (STC 12945).¹⁶ In or around 1509, he printed the *Conuercyon* twice (STC 12943 and STC 12943.5) as well as the *Joyfull Medytacyon* (STC 12953); an imperfect copy of the *Passe Tyme* (STC 12948) and a single leaf of a second edition of the *Example* (STC 12946) also survive from that year.¹⁷ The *Conforte* was printed only once by de Worde in 1515 (STC 12942.5). He again printed the *Passe Tyme* in 1517 (STC 12949) and the *Example*, with considerable textual emendations, in 1530 (STC 12947).¹⁸

One might speculate, as Edwards has suggested, that de Worde’s printing of the court poet Hawes was an attempt to ingratiate himself with the implied aristocratic audience addressed in his works (see “From Manuscript to Print” 145). Alternatively, but equally unlikely given our limited evidence for the appreciation of Hawes’s writing at court, de

¹⁶ Dated 1509 by Edwards (*Hawes* 119). Hereafter, the corresponding STC number will be given at the first citation of each book discussed.

¹⁷ The *Conuercyon* was also printed by John Skot for John Butler in 1530 (STC 12944) and by William Copland for Robert Toye in 1551 (STC 12944.5). Edwards dates de Worde’s second edition of the *Example* c. 1520 (*Hawes* 119).

¹⁸ The *Passe Tyme* was later printed by John Wayland in 1554 (STC 12950) and twice by William Copland in 1555, once for Richard Tottel (STC 12951) and once for John Waley (STC 12952).

Worde may have been encouraged in his efforts by admirers of Hawes's work from within the court circle. It has been proposed that Henry VII's mother, the known bibliophile Lady Margaret Beaufort, may have facilitated de Worde's publication of Hawes's verse (Blake 134-35; Edwards, "From Manuscript to Print" 145, and *Hawes* 6-7). De Worde advertises his association with Margaret in the colophons to a number of books printed around the year of her death, 1509 (see Edwards and Meale 101, n. 23); in the colophon to the *Conuercyon*, de Worde describes himself as "prynter vnto ye moost excellent pryncesse my lady the kynges graundame" (A8); and in an earlier work, the *Example*, Hawes had praised Margaret as the king's "moder so good and gracyous" in a eulogy for the Tudor dynasty (2060-80, at 2061). However, given that the works which Margaret is known to have commissioned from de Worde are almost exclusively devotional, her active role in the promotion of any of Hawes's works other than the admonitory *Conuercyon* seems doubtful (Powell 227, 230-31).¹⁹ It is more likely that de Worde promoted Hawes on his own initiative, and that Hawes's court credentials were important to the printer as a marker of a particular kind of fashionable court poetry rather than as a claim to royal or aristocratic authorisation for his books.²⁰ It is my contention that an initial collaboration between Hawes and de Worde presented the printer with an opportunity to establish a market *outside* of the court for secular books of a nevertheless aristocratic subject matter and provenance. Reprising the aesthetic of recent tournaments and pageantry, yet professing a *trouth* that is rarefied by its alterity, Hawes's poetry allowed metropolitan readers to imaginatively participate in the *pastymes* and

¹⁹ The works which Margaret "was directly responsible for commissioning [from de Worde] in these last years [1508-09]" (Powell 227) are John Fisher's *This Treatise Concernyng the Fruyfull Saynges of Davyd the Kynge and Prophete* (STC 10902-03) and his funeral sermon for Henry VII (STC 10900-01); *Ye Lyf of Saynt Vrsula after ye Cronycles of Englonde* (STC 24541.3); and Henry Watson's translation of Sebastian Brandt's *Narrenschiff* (published 1494), *The Shyppe of Fooles* (STC 3547).

²⁰ Compare Edwards and Meale's comments on de Worde's use of heraldic woodcuts in the marketing of his 1496 *Boke of Saint Albans* (STC 3309), his 1515 *The Descrypcyon of Englonde* (STC 10000.5), his 1516 *Nova legenda Anglie* (STC 4601), and the 1516 three-volume edition of Sir Anthony Fitzherbert's [*La grande abridgement*] (STC 10954; printed by de Worde in cooperation with John Rastell and probably Richard Pynson): "[i]n de Worde's case it hardly seems that the cuts were used as a mark of endorsement, but that they provided a visual accompaniment to texts with a nationalistic bias, principally as a means of making his books a more attractive prospect" (112).

moralyte – in effect, the *experiance* – of an idealised court.²¹ Long after the historical Hawes has disappeared from view, de Worde exploits his “cloudy fygures” and enigmatic persona in an effort to promote a certain type of English poetry – chivalric, erotic, and recognisably illustrated – that can direct London’s readers when deciding which of the printer’s books to buy next.

De Worde continued to print Hawes’s works long after our final documentary record for the poet in 1506 and well beyond the date of composition for his last extant work, the *Conforte*, in around 1510. Hawes evidently had an enduring usefulness for de Worde; he reprinted his works at intervals of around ten years between circa 1509 and 1530, a period during which he also returned to the printing of popular and continental romances (Blake 135).²² It is significant that de Worde consistently printed Hawes’s name with his works. Gillespie, in *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, has written compellingly on the appropriation of the concept of the medieval author – for which Chaucer and Lydgate are the set type – as an effective principle for organising and promoting diverse textual material within burgeoning print markets. In the case of a living author, Hawes, however, de Worde seems to have been more interested in familiarising his readers with a certain type of English poetry than with a particular English poet. Hawes’s name appears on the title page or in the colophon of each of de Worde’s editions; yet in over two decades of publication, he provides his readers with only one further biographical detail: Hawes’s position as a groom in the royal Chamber. The next references to Hawes are posthumous; both appear in de Worde editions and were written by writers associated with his press. The printer-poet Robert Copland, in his prefatory verses to the 1530 edition of *The Assemblie of Foules* ([Chaucer’s *Parliament of Fowls*] STC 5092), somewhat incredibly names “yonge Hawes” alongside Lydgate as one of the deceased “heyres” (9) of Chaucer and a writer of “Olde morall bokes” (27). Perhaps a year earlier (Edwards, “Allusion”), in the prologue to *The Contraverse bytwene a Louer and a Jaye* (STC 10838.7), the poet Thomas Feylde includes the following eulogy for Hawes:

²¹ See Barron on the convergence of aristocratic and mercantile participation in early Tudor England’s increasingly idealised culture of knighthood and chivalry (239-41).

²² In an important reappraisal of the early publication of romance, Meale questions the usefulness of the term “popular” when considering de Worde’s commercial motivations, emphasising instead the elements of arbitrariness and chance in early printers’ selections of literary texts, and the consistent effort of de Worde in particular “to maximize his readership at all social levels” (288, 298).

Thoughe laureate poetes in olde antyquyte
 Fayned fables vnder clowdy sentence
 yet some intytuled fruytfull moralyte
 Some of loue wrote grete cyrcumstaunce
 Some of cheualrous actes made remembraunce
 Some as good phylosophres naturally endyted
 Thus wysely and wyttely theyr tyme they spended.
 [. . .]

Yonge Steuen Hawse whose soule god pardon
 Treated of loue so clerkely and well
 To rede his werkes is myne affeccyon
 whiche he compyled for Labell pusell
 Remembryng storyes fruytfull and delectable
 I lytell or nought experte in poetry
 Oflamentable loue hathe made a dytty. (1-7, 22-28)

Feylde's prologue is almost certainly derived from the proem to the *Conforte*. Like Copland, the younger poet includes Hawes amongst the English "poet laureates" (Henry VII's humanist favourites are forgotten here) whose morality and industry are worthy of emulation.²³ That both writers describe Hawes as "yonge" is suggestive of the position that the poet had come to occupy in the bibliographic imagination. With little but dream-framed allegory from which to reconstruct his biography, Hawes the poet has been conflated with the persona of his poems; he is the youthful dreamer Amour who compiles courtly pastimes for La Bell Pucell.

It is this highly schematic nature of Hawes's poetry and personae that perhaps held the greatest appeal for de Worde. Hawes's allegorical dream poems supplied the printer with a catalogue of emblems and allegorical characters with which he could suggest analogies across his publications. It comes as little surprise, then, that the most striking aspect of de Worde's promotion of Hawes's poetry is the careful illustration of his books. De Worde produced two series of woodcuts for the *Example* and the *Passe Tyme*, an attempt to establish a coherence between secular image and text that "seems without precedent in early sixteenth century English printing" (Edwards, "Poet and Printer" 83). The 1506? and 1530 editions of the *Example* have the same ten woodcut illustra-

²³ See Edwards, "From Manuscript to Print"; and Edwards and Meale (119-20) on the evidence for the existence of "a de Worde poetic coterie whose activities have a degree of interconnectedness and whose works were sometimes given a degree of attention untypical of his general lack of engagement with his publications" (119).

tions (Hodnett 1255-64); Hodnett 1257 is repeated, while Hodnett 1255 is duplicated on the title page of the 1506? edition and Hodnett 1260 on that of 1530. All of these woodcuts appear to have been produced explicitly for the *Example*, although six also appear in later de Worde publications, amongst them the romances *The Knyght of the Swanne* (STC 7571, reprinted by de Worde c. 1522 [STC 7571.5]), *Syr Degore* (STC 6470), and *Ye Hystorye of Olyuer of Castylle, and of the Fayre Helayne* (STC 18808).²⁴ Twenty of the twenty-four woodcuts in de Worde’s 1517 edition of the *Passe Tyme* (Hodnett 412, 1007-18, 1089-90, 1108-09, 1241, and 1244) also make their first appearance in that text;²⁵ Hodnett 1007 and 1109 are repeated and Hodnett 1258 (first used in the *Example*) appears three times.²⁶ Only seven of these woodcuts newly produced for the *Passe Tyme* appear in any other publication by de Worde: further romances dating from c. 1510 to 1520 and, in the case of Hodnett 1009, which depicts a courtier and a lady holding a ring in her right hand, four editions including the title page of the *Conforte* (see Figure 1) and the title

²⁴ A full description of the later use of the *Example* and *Passe Tyme* woodcuts is given below: Hodnett 1258 also appears in de Worde’s 1508? *The Gospelles of Dystaunes* (STC 12091), his 1512 [*The Knyght of the Swanne*] (see above), and his 1509 and 1517 editions of the *Passe Tyme*; Hodnett 1259 appears in the 1509 and 1517 *Passe Tyme*; Hodnett 1260 appears in de Worde’s c. 1517 *The Boke of Good Maners* (STC 15399); Hodnett 1263 appears in his 1512-13 *Syr Degore* (see above); Hodnett 1264 appears in his 1508? *Gesta Romanorum* (STC 21286.3), his 1509 *The Fyftene Joyes of Maryage* (STC 15258), the *Knyght of the Swanne*, his 1518 *Olyuer and Helayne* (see above), and his c. 1530 *The Payne and Sorowe of Euyll Maryage*, (STC 19119). Two of the *Example* woodcuts also appear in later editions not printed by de Worde: Hodnett 1256 in Thomas Berthelet’s 1529? *The Temple of Glas* (STC 17034), and Hodnett 1257 in Pynson’s 1513? *The Dystruccyon of Iherusalem by Vaspazyan and Tytus* (STC 14517) and his 1513 *The Hystorye, Sege and Dystruccyon of Troy* ([*Troy Book*] STC 5579).

²⁵ Hodnett 962 appears in Pynson’s 1506 *The Kalender of Shepherdes* (STC 22408) and de Worde’s 1507 *The Boke Named the Royall* (STC 21430); Hodnett 987 appears in the *Kalender* and de Worde’s 1509? *A Treatysse agaynst Pestelence and of ye Infirmitis* (STC 24235); Hodnett 1258 and 1259 first appear in the *Example* (see n. 24). Of the twenty new woodcuts, four (Hodnett 1007-08, 1090, and 1244) are lacking in the imperfect copy of the 1509 *Passe Tyme*, though as Edwards observes, “since the text is defective at all the points where they should have occurred there is no reason to assume that the 1509 edition lacked them” (“Poet and Printer” 83, n. 7).

²⁶ Hodnett 1109, which depicts a group of men and women sailing in a ship, also appears in de Worde’s 1511 [*The Noble History of King Ponthus*] (STC 20108), *Olyuer and Helayne*, his 1528 *Kynge Rycharde cuer du lyon* (STC 21008), and his 1533? edition of William Walter’s *The Spectacle of Louers* (STC 25008).

page and penultimate leaf of the 1517 *Troilus and Criseyde* (STC 5095; see Lerer).²⁷

The particularities of a number of the *Example* and especially the *Passe Tyme* woodcuts are discussed at length by Edwards: a mounted Fame enveloped in flames before Graunde Amour (Hodnett 1008; cf. *Passe Tyme* 155-61), the triple-headed Doctrine and her seven daughters (Hodnett 1007), and the battle of Graunde Amour with a steel-breasted, talon-wielding giant (Hodnett 1015; cf. *Passe Tyme* 5096-109) suggest “a remarkable concern on de Worde’s part to ensure that Hawes’s poem was in general clearly complemented by its woodcuts” and are taken by Edwards as evidence for the collaboration between the poet and printer (“Poet and Printer” 83-86, at 85). However, should we look to the editions in which the *Example* and *Passe Tyme* woodcuts are reproduced – romances, histories, and love poetry associated with Chaucer and Lydgate – we see the emergence of a visually recognisable and thematically related body of English, courtly, often fabulous texts between which de Worde wishes to advertise generic associations.

Such associations have a practical application in a bibliographic culture of manuscript booklets and nonce volumes. Gillespie has posited that de Worde, like William Caxton before him, printed folio and later quarto editions of English texts that invited collection in *Sammelbände* (or may even have been sold bound as such) because of their visual and functional analogies (*Print Culture* 67-117, “*Sammelbände*”). “*Sammelbände*, like manuscript booklets, allowed for a dynamic aspect in the early trade in printed books” (Gillespie, *Print Culture* 67); de Worde was able to accommodate the idiosyncratic compiling tendencies of his buyers, yet by promoting his publications as generically related, he and printers like him had also found a powerful mechanism for selling more books. Gillespie’s star example of a de Worde *Sammelband* is the volume that was sold at the auction of the duke of Roxburghe’s library in 1812, formerly in the collection of one Dr Farmer, and now dispersed across the British Library, the Library of Congress, and the Huntington Library (110-12). This “single-volume assembly of lyric verse, visions, courtly love poems,

²⁷ Hodnett 1009 also appears in de Worde’s 1510? *The: Iiii: Leues of the Trueloue* (STC 15345), the *Conforte*, his 1517 *Troilus* (see above), and his 1520? *Undo Your Dore* (STC 23111.5); Hodnett 1011 appears in the *Gospelles of Dystaunes*; Hodnett 1012 appears in de Worde’s 1525? *The Example of Eryll Tongues* (STC 10608); Hodnett 1089 appears in the *Knyght of the Swanne* and *Troilus*; Hodnett 1090 appears in *Troilus* and *Olyuer of Castylle*; Hodnett 1241 appears in de Worde’s 1506? [*The History of the Excellent Knight Generides*] (STC 11721.5; only a fragment survives; reprinted by de Worde in 1518? [STC 11721.7]), *King Ponthus*, and *Syr Degore*; Hodnett 1244 appears in *King Ponthus*.

and misogynist tracts” contained no works by Hawes when described in 1812 (112), yet the poet’s presence haunts the volume in a number of the editions therein. The volume’s frontispiece, that of the 1517 *Troilus*, is shared by the title page of the *Conforte*; the third item, William Nevill’s *The Castell of Pleasure*, printed in perhaps 1530 (STC 18475), is textually related to the *Passe Tyme* (Edwards, “*Castell*”); the two dream poems, *The Temple of Glas* (STC 17033.7) and *The Complaynte of a Louers Lyfe* (STC 17014.7), printed in perhaps 1506 and 1531, respectively, are by Hawes’s master Lydgate;²⁸ and the last item in the volume is Feylde’s *Louer and a Jaye* with its eulogy for “yonge Steuen Hawse.” It can hardly be the case that the compiler of the Farmer *Sammelband* was guided in their selection by a taste for Hawes’ *reliquae* but that they chose to include no poems by the poet himself. Rather, Hawes’s poetry represents one of numerous points of reference in an array of generic associations made available to de Worde’s readers. The genre that I am describing (and here the slipperiness of the term is in full view) cannot be reduced to any finite set of literary features – *Troilus and Criseyde* is the closest we might come to an urtext. Like any genre, it is the accumulated effect of its myriad manifestations; and like Hawes’s obscure allegory, the only way that it may assert its validity – its *trouth* – is by turning back reference on itself.

It is oddly appropriate that a poet preoccupied by the obscurity of his writings should have enjoyed a brief legacy as a metonym for a deliberately undefined body of literature. For Hawes, the unique faculty of the poet is not the *trouth* that he might *touche* in his writings, but rather that writing itself, which is “made sentencyously” even if conveying only the most banal *sententiae*. The appearance of obscurity – that the text is a “poetycall scripture” whose secrets only the initiated might perceive – may be the necessary corollary of a writer seeking an alternative to the “ostentatious public front” of the *orator regis*. Obscurity shields the writer from the “mysse contruyng” of his readers; alternatively, it shields the text from the equally disastrous implication that its hidden truths are essentially contrived. Ironically, Hawes’s strategies of obscurity seem to have been more successful with London’s reading public than with the court. De Worde’s use of Hawes can be seen as an extension of the “classificatory” aspect of the author function as famously described by Michel Foucault. As a function of discourse, Hawes the author “can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others” (Foucault 1481), in this case, allegorical, erotic, romance-type

²⁸ Lydgate’s *Complaynte*, like the *Passe Tyme*, is not strictly a dream poem (see n. 3 above) but it is structurally and thematically indebted to Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*.

texts that advertise their English antecedents yet have a distinctly Burgundian flavour. As we have seen, the attribution of a text to a named author is not the only or even the pre-eminent means by which de Worde's readers were able to group his editions. The array of classificatory functions available in his books – the name of the author, the situation of texts in an English literary tradition, and the verbal and visual reminiscences between them – rely not on the evocation of a particularised, even if ultimately fictional, author, but rather on the accretion – or simply a momentary intuition – of what I have been calling “genre.”²⁹ Put another way, de Worde names Hawes not so that his readers may identify the author of the *Passe Tyme*, the *Conforte*, and so on with a known member of the king's entourage and so begin to demystify his *trouth*; rather, Hawes's name invites readers to recognise these works, and works like them, as secular, English productions that conform to the *Rhétoriqueur*-inflected tastes of the court – allusive, secretive, and obscurely allegorical, but ultimately comprehensible as an addition to their de Worde *Sammelband*.

²⁹ Foucault, in expanding his discussion to the role of authors as the “initiators of discursive practices,” acknowledges that the “author function” applies not just to individual works, but also to larger discourses (1485-87). However, the classificatory functions made available by de Worde serve less “to make possible a certain number of analogies that could be adopted by future texts” (1486) than to point to analogies between existing texts that need not be attributed to the same author.

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