

## KATHRYN PERRY

### **“I do it onely for the Printers sake:” Commercial Imperatives and Epigrams in the Early Seventeenth Century**

A browse through the *Short-Title Catalogue* reveals an odd group of texts which advertise their connections with animals, by title, animal personae or dominant metaphor, but which rapidly discard those connections, or handle them in a half-hearted or barely competent way. These are all hastily, and often badly written ephemeral texts, in which gratuitous animal references seem to be part of the paraphernalia designed to attract prospective buyers. Generically, these texts are quite varied, ranging from mock-almanacs to anti-Martin Marprelate tracts. This article takes as its focus from amongst these texts five collections of epigrams by two authors, William Goddard and Henry Parrot, which mostly date from the 1610s.<sup>1</sup> Its method is to analyse how they are presented as commodities to be purchased from London booksellers' stalls, marketed by their title-pages, prefatory material and a browse of their contents. Apart from the animal references, there is little to distinguish these collections of epigrams from others of the period by authors such as Thomas Bastard and Henry Fitzgeffrey.<sup>2</sup> An essential component of the marketing of these books of epigrams is the construction of potential readers. Epigrammatists in the

1610s go to great lengths to entice desirable readers, that is, successful members of the urban elite, and to reject undesirables—the uneducated, the upstarts, the vulgar. Addresses to readers in collections of epigrams betray signs of the anxieties of their authors, negotiating between commercial pressures and their own social aspirations. These authors do not, however, aspire to anonymity in the public sphere of print: their aim is to attract the right readers, and the right kind of public exposure. The actual readers of the five collections of epigrams to be examined have left no traces. However, other evidence—the material forms of the books themselves, the rhetorical manoeuvrings of their authors, and the conclusions of social historians—suggest that the epigrammatists’ efforts to determine the readerships of their books were doomed to failure.<sup>3</sup>

Early modern culture, oral and written, was saturated in references to animal personae and metaphors which criss-crossed hierarchies of class and education. Animal fables, for example, could be used as means to instruct the young and subordinate, doctrinally (via sermons) or grammatically (via Latin primers); they could also be put to sophisticated political purposes, as Annabel Patterson has demonstrated in *Fables of Power*.<sup>4</sup> In the latter case, the supposed simplicity or “lowness” of the animal vehicle is often remarked upon; it simultaneously attracts and deflects penetrating readings. In his *Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, written in the Tower, Sir Thomas More puts the tale of the Ass and his over-scrupulous conscience into the mouth of Mother Mawd: the doubly humble form of the tale—an animal fable told by a woman servant—is protective colouring, discouraging unfriendly readers from taking it seriously; at the same time, More draws attention to the hidden gravity of the tale, which is clearly a commentary on his own predicament:

She was wont... to tell vs that were children many childish tales but as *plinius* sayth that there is no boke lightely so bad, but that some good thyng a man may pyk out therof so thinke I that there is almost no tale so folysh, but that yet in one mater or other, to some purpose it may hap to serue.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in *Mother Hubberds Tale* of the Fox and the Ape, Spenser insists on the “base” style and “meane” matter of the tale.<sup>6</sup> Despite his disclaimers, there seems to have been a general assumption that the satire applied to Lord Burghley, Queen Elizabeth’s chief minister. Spenser’s protestations of innocence and triviality were not believed by officialdom, as a letter written soon after the publication of *Mother Hubberds Tale* in 1591 confirms: “thowghe [the tale] be a iest, yett is itt taken in suche earnest, that the booke is by Superior awthoritie called in.”<sup>7</sup> The notoriety of *Mother Hubberds Tale* and its successors like Michael Drayton’s *The Owle* (1604), help to account for the attraction of animal references. Readers were alert to encoded meanings in such texts, particularly the possibility that they might gibe at “the greatest personages of all estates and callings vnder the fables of sauage beasts.”<sup>8</sup>

Not all texts with talking animals were read as encoded political commentaries; of these, some were designed for socially distinct readerships. At the lower end of this social spectrum, for example, is *Maroccus Extaticus, or Bankes Bay Horse in a Trance* (1595) in which the famous performing horse Morocco speaks to his owner Banks, exposing abuses of concern to citizens, like dishonest tradesmen and exploitative landlords. At the upper end of the social spectrum are whimsical insect fables, originating in court and gentry circles, like Richard Carew’s *A Herrings Tayle: Contayning a Poeticall Fiction of the Hardie Snayle* (1598), a mock epic about the adventures of a snail, written in impenetrable alexandrines, or Tailboys Dymoke’s *Caltha Poetarum* (published under a pseudonym in 1599), an erotic fantasy about a bumble-bee and a marigold.<sup>9</sup>

Readerships for specific texts and genres tend to change over time, sometimes sliding down the social scale, and texts with animals which drew on their popular associations were particularly vulnerable to social slippage. The beast epic *Reynard the Fox* illustrates this movement; it was originally translated and published by Caxton and used by Spenser as a major source for *Mother Hubberds Tale*.<sup>10</sup> The *Reynard*, set in a king's court, was always a comic, irreverent text, with potential as a vehicle for political allegory. It was reprinted many times in its original form, until a "modernised" version was published in 1620. The original black-letter typeface—associated by this date with the native literary tradition and with lower-middling readers—was preserved, with the addition of marginal notes in roman typeface. The marginalia translates the text into an alternative social and ideological context: the king's court is interpreted as the magistrate's court, and the tale of a rogue baron, Reynard, challenging a feudal king becomes a moralising lesson about civic responsibility and conformity. This edition proved popular, and was re-issued several times.<sup>11</sup> The late seventeenth century saw the production of sequels to the original Reynard narrative, which demonstrate its plummeting in social status. In the 1684 *Shifts of Reynardine*, the anonymous author writes an astonishingly patronising epistle to the reader:

Yet, because such Books as these are more frequently read by Persons of mean Vnderstanding, than by Men of sound Judgement; I have good Reason to expect, either less Censure, or more Praise than I deserve.<sup>12</sup>

This brief survey suggests that tensions between high and low, and between the frivolous and the weighty, were always present in any deployment of animal personae and metaphors. The case of *Reynard the Fox* illustrates the beginnings of significant social slippage in the use of literary animals, and an awareness of the

increasing gap between popular animals, attracting readers at the lower end of the print market, and the sophisticated animals of *Mother Hubberds Tale*. This gap can be mapped onto the tension between the elite and the popular manifested in collections of epigrams, both as commodities and as examples of a literary form.

It seems appropriate at this stage to look at the economic and social factors influencing the production of collections of epigrams, and at the practice of epigram writing in general. The first issue is the material form most books of epigrams took, and how that determined the ways in which they were described. Possible forms for printed texts ranged from the throwaway broadside to the monumental folio, but the first appearance of most recreational literature (plays, prose fiction or verse) was likely to be in quarto, unbound. An unbound quarto presented a handling and filing problem, outlined by T. A. Birrell: it was unsuitable for the pocket, but would not stand up on a bookshelf. After it was read, it lay around; the top and bottom leaves got dirty, the string tying it up broke, and it disintegrated. It was “a self-destructing artefact,” surviving quartos tending to be those which were bound up together.<sup>13</sup> Pocket-book sizes (octavo and duodecimo) seem to have had a different kind of material existence; it is likely that longer pocket-books were bound from the outset. Henry Fitzgeffrey, in his octavo *Satyres and Satyricall Epigrams* (1617), implies that this was so, and presents a case for the desirability of the pocket-book. In the “Post-script to his Book-binder,” he says he owes the stationer a good turn for not having published the book in quarto, because the smaller size is of little practical use as waste-paper: “rather contriue mee to the *Smallest size*, / Least I bee eaten vnder *Pippin-pyes*,” or used to wrap drugs in an apothecary's, or to dry tobacco, or as toilet-paper—all common functions for waste-paper.<sup>14</sup>

Physically, there was nothing much to distinguish a quarto of epigrams lying on the bookseller's stall from a quarto of chivalric romance, or prose fiction, apart from the social indicator of its type-face. The standard term for such a quarto, irrespective of its subject, was pamphlet, which describes the format of the printed object, something between a broadside and a book, rather than its content.<sup>15</sup> Some authors used the term disparagingly—Thomas Bastard, in 1598, distinguishes his epigrams from pamphlets and ballads, while Peter Woodhouse in 1605 cheerfully acknowledges his witty verse satire, *The Flea*, as a pamphlet.<sup>16</sup> Modern practice has tended, retrospectively, to create distinct categories of ephemeral recreational literature: generally using “pamphlet” to describe prose pamphlets by writers like Nashe, Greene or Dekker, and “chapbook,” a term coined in the nineteenth century, to describe a chapman's wares. In fact, such categories tended to be jumbled; at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was possible to envisage a book of epigrams ending up in a chapman's pack. This was the last thing an urban epigrammatist wanted; Henry Parrot ends his address to the bookseller in *The Mastive* with the plea:

Last, that it comes not brought in Pedlars packs,  
To common Fayres, of Countrey, Tow[ne], or Cittie:  
Solde at a Booth mongst Pinnes and Almanacks.<sup>17</sup>

Chartier rightly affirms that “by its form and by its text, the book became a sign of distinction and a bearer of cultural identity.”<sup>18</sup> However, on first sight, it was not apparent exactly what cultural identity an early seventeenth-century quarto might bear.

The printed book was a joint production, determined by the author, stationer (commonly publisher and bookseller by this period) and printer. Terminology and relationships varied; Parrot, for example, addresses a verse to the bookseller, but it

begins, “Printer or Stationer, or what ere thou prooue.”<sup>19</sup> The most powerful person in this tripartite relationship was the stationer, who effectively owned the manuscript, once it was in his possession, and who determined the presentation and marketing of the book.<sup>20</sup> George Wither, admittedly an unreliable commentator as a result of his bitter disputes with the Stationers’ Company, specifies the nature of the bad bookseller's control, and priorities:

If he get any written Cobby into his powre, likely to be vendible, whether the Author be willing or no, he will publish it; And it shall be contriued and named alsoe, according to his owne pleasure: which is the reason, so many good Bookes come forth imperfect, and with foolish titles. Nay, he oftentimes giues bookes such names as in his opinion will make them saleable, when there is litle or nothing in the whole volume sutable to such a Tytle.<sup>21</sup>

Although Marjorie Plant, in her study of the economics of the book trade, says flatly that “the author had no bargaining power whatever,” it is fair to assume that the balance of power in each transaction varied according to the individuals involved.<sup>22</sup> Ponsonby negotiating with Fulke Greville over the 1591 publication of Sidney’s *Arcadia*, was presumably more conciliatory than stationers dealing with unknown penurious epigrammatists. Such authors came cheap: among the two hundred and fifty odd epigrams of *Chrestoleros*, Bastard often alludes to his want of money, and petitions the printer for more. He refers to the printer buying his epigrams “at pence a peece,” for a book which would sell for sixpence (the price for most pamphlets of average length).<sup>23</sup> On my calculations, Bastard earned something over a pound for *Chrestoleros*, at a time when Henslowe was paying five to six pounds for a play. Since Bastard announces baldly in another epigram “I want an hundred pounds,” he had a significant problem.<sup>24</sup>

The printed book may have been a joint production, but was not always the result of amicable collaboration. Some books are sites on which contests amongst the

author, printer and stationer are played out. The printer, typically, complains about the author's absence from the press, and failure to correct errors, while the author complains about the stationer's appropriation of his manuscript, "private *Notes*" put on "public *view*," and overbearing demands.<sup>25</sup> The author's often disingenuous complaints are less interesting than the fact that the stationer chooses to include them in the final edition, not merely tacked onto the beginning or the end of the book, but sometimes buried in the middle. One explanation is the fore-grounding of the author-function—the author's name and public persona—in the presentation of printed books; it is ironic that, despite the author's weak position in relation to the stationer, print culture inflated the author-function.<sup>26</sup> It is possible that the stationer sometimes attempted a kind of double-bluff, including abuse of himself as a gesture designed to reassure readers that the author and text are superior to the democratising culture of print.

The epigrams under discussion were produced at a period when, as Arthur Marotti argues, manuscript and print systems interpenetrated.<sup>27</sup> One reason for the persistence of manuscript circulation in the seventeenth century was its opposition to the demotic force of print. Those who participated in this culture felt part of a social and intellectual elite; those who opted for print were often self-conscious about their choice.<sup>28</sup> In its relationship to readers, manuscript culture differed from print culture not only because it permitted readers to change texts in the process of transmission, but because manuscripts were launched within a community of known, or readily anticipated, readers.<sup>29</sup> Within this system, authors could have fairly clear expectations of their initial readers—that is, before the manuscript escaped into a wider, unauthorised circle of readers, and perhaps eventually into print. In the print marketplace, authors could not, despite their insistence on constructing desirable and



undesirable readers in epistles to them, choose their purchasers and readers.

Woodhouse's pragmatism on this issue seemed to elude most authors:

I will neither call thee gentle nor vngentle reader, for I knowe not thy disposition: neither will I terme thee learned nor vnlearned, for I was not acquainted with thy education.<sup>30</sup>

There is no reason to suppose that author-constructed readers of print, whether “Gentlemen, and those that are gentle,” or “persons of mean Understanding,” bear much resemblance to actual readers.<sup>31</sup> The purchaser-reader is under no obligation to buy the identity fashioned by the author, and may be instead a fantasist, aspirational reader, or a reader indulging in lower-class tastes, or a complacent reader pleased at the hostility the author shows to “wrong” readers, classing himself (however inaccurately) as a “right” reader. In Richard Helgerson's words, “print makes readers kings.”<sup>32</sup>

Polarising different kinds of readers is a characteristic tactic in epistles to readers, in texts of all sorts. At its simplest, this consists of the contemptuous rejection of readers who have not reached the desired level of literacy; Middleton, for example, concludes his epistle to *Father Hubburds Tales* with the endorsement, “Yours, / If you read without spelling or hacking”(that is, hesitating).<sup>33</sup> The polarisation of readers into the “wiser” or “learned” versus the “simpler” or “vulgar;” the “better sort” versus the “ruder” or “meaner,” was widespread, a manifestation of what Keith Wrightson has described as “the language of sorts,” a vocabulary of informal social description. Up to the middle of the seventeenth century, the language of sorts was, according to Wrightson, an “essentially dichotomous perception of society,” which differentiated between the favoured group and those excluded from it.<sup>34</sup> It was a language, therefore, full of the potential for conflict. The term “middling

sort,” which introduced a new element into this bi-polar language, was not in common use until the 1640s; Wrightson argues that, prior to this period, contemporaries were certainly well aware of the existence of a middle range of people, but that “the anxieties and hostilities attending social and cultural polarization cast the ‘middle sort’ into conceptual shadow.”<sup>35</sup> This was despite the fact that, because of London’s rapid growth and change, many urban dwellers lived in the middle, in that conceptual shadow where the distinctions between the citizen and the gentleman were often blurred: the sons of citizens or yeomen could become gentlemen through education in the universities or the Inns of Court; younger sons of landed gentlemen might become apprentices.<sup>36</sup> In the lives of many of the authors of the period—Spenser, Shakespeare, Jonson, Drayton, Nashe—such movements up and down the social scale were played out.

An acute awareness of social status is characteristic of the content, and practice, of formal verse satire and of its poor relation the epigram in the 1590s.<sup>37</sup> Epigrams were often associated and published with satires—for example, in Guilpin's collection *Skialetheia* in 1598—and occasionally adopted their railing tone. The epigram flourished initially in coterie—at court, where it was practised by Sir John Harington and his imitators, and at the Inns of Court, whose adversarial culture provided the ideal training for barbed literary utterances or “paper bullets.”<sup>38</sup> Some of the authors who exploited the form after the 1590s had little or no connection with the Inns, but continued, in print, the fiction of youthful *sprezzatura* and gentlemanly negligence associated with the earlier epigrammatists. In *The Gull's Hornbook* (1609), Dekker mocks the upstart who affects this pose:

If you be a poet, and come into the ordinary (though it can be no glory to be an ordinary poet), order yourself thus... after a turn or two in the room, take occasion, pulling out your gloves, to have some epigram, or satire, or sonnet

fastened in one of them, that may, as it were unwittingly to you, offer itself to the gentleman.<sup>39</sup>

Parrot speaks to the reader in the voice of Dekker's gull when he stresses his casual approach to creativity: "in briefe, I would be thought as guiltlesse of blaming, as I was carelesse of the lines composing."<sup>40</sup> The epigram, marked by its elite origins and classical antecedents, was perceived to be distinguished by its ability to make a witty point or terse comment, as Dekker's and Parrot's comments suggest, rather than tell a story. Jonson, in conversation with Drummond, disparaged Harington's epigrams as mere "narrations," rather than true epigrams. Bastard goes further, labelling the taste for stories as archaic and uneducated; he contrasts his epigrams, full of "matter," with pamphlets and ballads full of "whole legends of the rustie store, / Of stories and whole volumes voyde of sense."<sup>41</sup>

Manley sees the epigram as peculiarly vulnerable to downward social mobility, because of its tendency to slide away from its classical beginnings into association with primarily oral, popular forms like jests and proverbs.<sup>42</sup> The epigram (often read with the assumption that it referred to recognisable individuals or current events) was perceived as ephemeral, with a throwaway topicality. Weever compared epigrams to almanacs, serving only for the year in which they were made, and out of date by the time they appeared.<sup>43</sup> The pressures on epigrammatists—built-in obsolescence, the need to demonstrate gentlemanly flair, the tightrope-walk between the elite and the popular—were imposed in an increasingly crowded market, which peaked in the 1610s, when there were roughly three times as many published collections of epigrams as in the preceding and following decades.

Jonson, whose *Epigrams* appeared first in his folio *Workes* in 1616, is widely credited with reversing the rapid decline of the form. Far from being casual or

ephemeral, Jonson proclaims that his epigrams are “the ripest of my studies,” permanently memorable, urbane, rather than malicious, and morally responsible, rather than scurrilous.<sup>44</sup> The collection forms a key part of Jonson’s Folio, that major event in the history of the “bibliographic ego,” as Joseph Loewenstein describes it.<sup>45</sup> However, Jonson’s epigrams are the exception that proves the rule. The collection was first entered on the Stationer’s Register in 1612 by a printer who died soon after, and was obviously intended to be published as a quarto, as the first three epigrams, “To the Reader,” “To my Booke” and “To my Booke-seller,” make clear. In these verses, Jonson makes defensive and anxious gestures similar to those of his contemporaries.

In the epigram “To My Booke-seller,” Jonson follows what amounted to a minor convention—a repudiation of any kind of advertising. This took the form of petitioning the bookseller to display the book only on his stall:

But craue  
For the lucks sake, it thus much fauour haue,  
To lye vpon thy stall, till it be sought;  
Not offer’d, as it made sute to be bought.<sup>46</sup>

The epigrammatists have a horror of their title-pages being posted on walls, or distributed to the public, because of their fear of the contaminating gaze of common people. Parrot, for example, begs on his book’s behalf “that on Posts, by th’Eares it stand not fixt, / For euery dull-Mechanicke to beholde.”<sup>47</sup> In preference to what Jonson calls the “vile arts” of publicity, the epigrammatists claim they would rather their books failed to sell, and were remaindered as waste paper. As Marotti points out, his use of this histrionic gesture indicates that Jonson could not be referring to the folio, but to the planned 1612 quarto which, if it had been published, probably would have had a similar fate to other such quartos.<sup>48</sup>

Whether it was advertised or not, a collection of epigrams lying on a stall needed to be distinguished from others for it to sell in an over-crowded market and, despite their disclaimers, authors with names of less celebrity than Jonson's, in collaboration with their stationers, needed devices to attract attention. One of those devices was the fore-grounding of animal references—in the title, in the title-page illustration, or as a conceit in the formation of the author's persona or the epigrams themselves. There were two epigrammatists in particular—William Goddard and Henry Parrot—whose collections exploited this practice.

Goddard, a one-time member of the Inner Temple and a soldier stationed in the Netherlands, was enthusiastic about animal metaphors and allegories. The full title of his first collection, published around 1599, is *A Mastif Whelp with Other Ruff-Island-Lik Currs Fetcht from amongst the Antipedes. Which Bite and Barke at the Fantasticall Humorists and Abusers of the Time*, illustrated with a mastiff springing to the attack. The title positions this book in the tradition of the rough, biting, snarling satirist, as opposed to the older tradition of the honest, plain-speaking revealer of abuses. Goddard boasts, in the epistle to the reader, of the savagery of his mastiff, who hunts down the most intimidating opponents. The dog device is also used as a structural principle: the first series of verses is followed by the supposedly milder series, "Dogges from the Antipedes," dealing with what Goddard thinks of interest to women—fashion and gossip.<sup>49</sup>

Parrot's 1615 collection attaches itself to Goddard's earlier book, being entitled *The Mastive, or Young-Whelp of the Olde-Dogge* and showing the mastiff on the title-page in the same stance as *A Mastif Whelp*. That this title was not simply foisted on the book by the stationer is demonstrated by the signed epistle to the reader, which adopts the snarling tone suitable to a dog, and elaborates on the dog

reference—Parrot’s critics are “barbarous or fowle-mouthed *Mungrells*” who will be left to the “lashing *Dogge-whipper*.”<sup>50</sup> Parrot and his stationer may have been influenced in the choice of the dog image because of the impact of a book published earlier in the same year—Joseph Swetnam’s *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward and Unconstant Women*, in which he represents himself as Cerberus. Animal epithets are common in invective and satire, but Swetnam may have regretted his choice, since the responses to him, by Rachel Speght and “Constantia Munda,” mockingly imagined him as muzzled, or a mad dog returning to his vomit.<sup>51</sup>

In the same year, 1615, Goddard published his second collection of epigrams, *A Neaste of Waspes*. The wasps are the one hundred and two epigrams which Goddard commands to seek out and sting his targets, perpetuating the misanthropic, biting tendencies of *A Mastif Whelp*. Fitzgeffrey approved of Goddard’s wasp conceit and the resulting epigrams, many of which use animal metaphors, or brief animal fables, focusing on the court.<sup>52</sup> The significance of some of these epigrams is clearly political, focusing on the favourite Robert Carr, the “dunghill Carr” or Jackdaw.<sup>53</sup>

Goddard’s animal references—particularly the politically motivated ones—have a logic and coherence that is missing from Bastard’s half-hearted animal epigrams in *Chrestoleros*. Bastard writes of viewing the caged lions in the Tower, of the imitativeness of apes, and of Banks’s horse, and immediately follows these verses with an epigram to the reader:

Some will perhaps condemne my foolish veyne,  
 For that of Dogs, Lyons, and Apes I speake.  
 But if they knewe the cause they would refrayne.  
 I do it onely for the Printers sake.  
 The simple must haue something for their humour,  
 And hauing somthing they my booke will buy.  
 Then gayneth he by whome I am no looser.  
 So is he satisfide, and they and I.  
 Some will giue sixe pence for a witty touch,

And some to see an Ape will giue as much.<sup>54</sup>

Many of the anxieties of the epigrammatist are encapsulated here—the ambivalent cultural status of textual animals, commercial pressure from the stationer or printer, and the divided readership imagined by the author, since he is not addressing the “simple” reader who has just read the previous three epigrams, but a superior reader and confidant.

Bastard may have been reluctant to use spurious animal references to attract readers, but Parrot was not. His first collection of epigrams was *The Mous-Trap* in 1606, illustrated on the title-page with a mouse approaching the bait in a remarkably elaborate trap. Included in the prefatory material is a verse “To the Curious:” the scenario is the bookshop, where the prospective reader pauses to pick up this very book. Parrot imagines his ideal reader and the desired moment of engagement with the new book: “And why the Mouse-trap, quoth my Caualyer? / and looking further (saies) *What haue we heere?*”<sup>55</sup> This “Caualyer” is the prototype of the would-be gallant described by Dekker, who spends his morning browsing amongst the bookstalls in Paul’s churchyard.<sup>56</sup> The bait which entices this reader to buy is complex— “And why the Mouse-trap?” can be answered in several ways. In the first place, “The Mouse-trap” is the name of the play with which Hamlet plans to trap Claudius. There are indications that Parrot himself was an actor at one time; the reference to *Hamlet* exploits the play’s recent success and, possibly, Parrot’s theatrical connections. The appeal of *The Mous-Trap* as an animal metaphor is suggested in the rest of the prefatory material. This book, Parrot explains, is neither philosophy, nor learned poetry, but “home-spun russet” which “suteth some that weare it.”<sup>57</sup> The affectation of simplicity and plainness becomes a game in the epistle

“To the plaine-dealing Reader;” Parrot adopts the pose of the native, plain-speaking satirist and assumes a reader prepared to play this game:

I could haue said *Right Courteous, woorthy, and respected Reader*, but that you knowe were to insinuate; which in a preface of so plaine consequence I hold most friuolous and vnecessary.<sup>58</sup>

The dedication also has an oblique reference to another way of reading animals:

Alasse you see tis but the silly Mouse, I onely aime at, for any greater or more venomous vermine, I leaue them altogether to the cunning *Rat-catcher*, (my little trap being much too weake and vnable to hold them.)<sup>59</sup>

The targets of Parrot's epigrams—the mice—are merely social (prodigals, fashion-victims, prostitutes), not the more important political rats trapped by ambitious satires like Spenser's *Mother Hubberds Tale*, with which, nonetheless, Parrot seeks to establish distant kinship.

*The Mous-Trap*'s presentation is transparently opportunistic—there are no references to mice or traps after the first few pages. The tactics of Parrot's next collection of epigrams to foreground animals are rather different. This book is *Laquei Ridiculosi, or Springes for Woodcocks* (1613)—an octavo, in this case, of four hundred and thirty-nine epigrams, many of them recycled from the earlier collection. Its title-page uses the same devices as *The Mous-Trap*: “Springes for Woodcocks” is also a quotation from *Hamlet*, in this case, illustrated with unlikely-looking woodcocks in sprung traps.<sup>60</sup> It is possible that this title-page represents the stationer's, rather than the author's, decision to repeat a formula which successfully sold *The Mous-Trap*. In his prefatory material Parrot makes several references to his anger that these “idle toyes” have been printed without his permission.<sup>61</sup> The stationer in this case was not the same as the stationer for *The Mous-Trap*; it may be that



*Springs for Woodcocks* is a genuine case of Wither's claim that stationers would market books under foolish, saleable titles, regardless of their author's feelings, and that the prefatory material represents Parrot's effort to dignify his lost text. To do so, he includes five verses and epistles, in Latin and in English. The Latin epistle is to the reader Parrot treats as his respected equal, "Lectori benigno, Scienti, & ignoto" (the kind, learned and unknown reader); the English epistle veers between submission towards "Courteous, Generous, and Scolasticke Readers" and hostility towards "illiterat and home-spun-Peasants." There is no affectation of attractive plainness here: Parrot declares aggressively, "I write not to the rusticke Rabblement."<sup>62</sup>

The categorisation by Bastard and Parrot of readers as "simple" and "Peasants," or "Caualyers" and "Scolasticke" is clearly inadequate for the purposes of social profiling. Fitzgeffrey, however, whose epigrams are very similar to Parrot's and Goddard's, but who does not use animal references, describes possible purchasers and buyers in detail. His desired reader is, predictably, a landed gentleman:

Ye, ye, *Braue Gallants: Patrons* of liuely mirth:  
Ye, the young hopefull *Land-Lords* of the Earth:  
The youth of youth: That read most liberally,  
More out of *Pastime* then *necessity*.<sup>63</sup>

Undesirable readers are peasants, mechanics, illiterate gulls, and, more interestingly, broken-down soldiers, shabby courtiers, and impoverished younger brothers. These latter categories are rejected not so much because of their class, but because of their personal failure. Jonson takes a similar approach, though his elitism is intellectual rather than social: he instructs the reader to take care to understand his book; he contemptuously rejects as readers "some clarke-like seruing-man / Who scarce can spell th'hard names: whose knight lesse can."<sup>64</sup> The solution to unpalatable readers proposed by Fitzgeffrey is an impossible dream, but one perhaps shared by the other

epigrammatists: he envisages the stationer refusing to sell his book to undesirables, saying “*Hands off: It is not for your turne.*”<sup>65</sup> The key to author anxiety about anonymous, uncontrollable readers of the printed book may lie in the commercial transaction itself—a transaction mediated through the stationer, in what was in the process of becoming a mass market, engineered by the technology of print.

If Fitzgeffrey expresses the secret dream of the pedestrian epigrammatists of the 1610s, he also, maliciously, represents their nightmare. Railing at the intolerable number of books pouring off the presses, he includes the epigrams of Parrot, Freeman and John Davies of Hereford amongst those lower-caste quartos from which they tried so hard to distinguish themselves, and imagines them all ending up at a country fair or similar place:

What poste pin'd *Poets* that on each base *Theame*,  
 With Inuocations vexes *Apollo's* name.  
*Springes for Woodcockes: Doctor Merriman:*  
*Rub and a good Cast: Taylor the Ferriman.*  
*Fennor, with his Vnisounding Eare word;*  
*The vnreasonable Epigramatist of Hereford:*  
*Rowland with his Knaues a murniuall;*  
*Not worth the calling for, a fire burne em all:*  
 And number numberlesse that march (vntolde)  
 Mongst *Almanacks* and *Pippins*, to be solde.<sup>66</sup>

A few copies of the books I have discussed in this study have survived (the British Library copy of the unsatisfactory *Springes for Woodcocks*, for example, is part of the precious core of the building, the King's Library). What became of the rest has not emerged; there is no way of knowing whether they were read by mechanics or by cavaliers, or by both. However, this article may have suggested ways in which they were presented in the marketplace, and how early seventeenth-century stationers and authors, however reluctantly, tried to shift product.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> William Goddard, *A Mastif Whelp with Other Ruff-Island-Lik Currs Fetcht from amongst the Antipedes. Which Bite and Barke at the Fantasticall Humorists and Abusers of the Time* (London, 1599); William Goddard, *A Neaste of Waspes Latelie Found out and Discovered in the Low-Countreys* (Dort, 1615; facs. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921); Henry Parrot, *The Mous-Trap* (London, 1606); Henry Parrot, *Laquei Ridiculosi, or Springes for Woodcocks* (London, 1613); Henry Parrot, *The Mastive, or Young-Whelp of the Olde-Dogge* (London, 1615).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Bastard, *Chrestoleros. Seven Bookes of Epigrames* (London, 1598); Henry Fitzgeffrey, *Satyres and Satyricall Epigrams* (London, 1617).

<sup>3</sup> The notion of a clear divide between manuscript and print cultures, and the desire of authors who imagined themselves part of the elite to remain anonymous in print, was suggested by the formulation “the stigma of print,” and prevailed for many years. See J. W. Saunders, “The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry,” *Essays in Criticism* 1(1951), 139-64. A more complex analysis of the relationships between early modern stationers, printers, authors, and readers in the marketplace, and how these entities are constructed in print, has been the focus of increasing critical and scholarly attention in recent years. See, for example, Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1999); Cecile M. Jagodzinski, *Privacy and Print: Reading and Writing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Fables of Power: Aesopian Writing and Political History* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1991).

<sup>5</sup> Sir Thomas More, *A Dialogue of Comfort against Tribulation*, in *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, eds. Louis L. Martz and Frank Manley, 13 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), 12.114.

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- <sup>6</sup> Edmund Spenser, *Mother Hubberds Tale*, in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, eds. William A. Oram and others (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 336.
- <sup>7</sup> Richard S. Peterson, "Laurel Crown and Ape's Tail: New Light on Spenser's Career from Sir Thomas Tresham," *Spenser Studies* 12 (1998), 14, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> Peter de la Primaudaye, *The Second Part of the French Academie*, trans. T. B. (London, 1594), Ff2<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>9</sup> John Dando and Harrie Runt, *Marocccus Extaticus, or Bankes Bay Horse in a Trance*, ed. E. F. Rimbault (London, 1843); Richard Carew, *A Herrings Tayle: Contayning a Poeticall Fiction of Divers Matters Worthie the Reading* (London, 1598); Thomas Cutwode [pseud.], *Caltha Poetarum, or The Bumble Bee* (London, 1599).
- <sup>10</sup> *The History of Reynard the Fox: Translated from the Dutch Original by William Caxton*, ed. N. F. Blake, EETS O. S. 263 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- <sup>11</sup> *The Most Delectable History of Reynard the Fox. Newly Corrected and Purged from All Grossnesse, in Phrase and Matter* (London, 1620); Charles C. Mish, "Black Letter as a Social Discriminant in the Seventeenth Century," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 68 (1953), 627-30.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Shifts of Reynardine, the Son of Reynard the Fox, or A Pleasant History of his Life and Death* (London, 1684), A2<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>13</sup> T. A. Birrell, "The Influence of Seventeenth-Century Publishers on the Presentation of English Literature," in Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes, eds., with Hans Jansen, *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Modern English* (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1985), 166. The closest modern equivalents are back copies of the *London Review of Books* or the *Times Literary Supplement*: publishers know they are destined to be piled up in yellowing heaps until they are thrown out, so offer readers expensive binders in which to preserve them.
- <sup>14</sup> Fitzgeffrey, G4; Marotti, 286-90, discusses the size and binding of books; Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Methuen, 1981), 48-50, discusses chapbooks recycled as waste-paper.
- <sup>15</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, "pamphlet;" Halasz, 3, 14.

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- <sup>16</sup> Bastard, Lib.6, Ep.28; Peter Woodhouse, *Democritus his Dreame, or The Contentions betweene the Elephant and the Flea (1605)*, ed. A. B. Grosart, Occasional Issues of Unique and Very Rare Books, 4 (Manchester, 1881), 5.
- <sup>17</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, A4<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>18</sup> Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 181.
- <sup>19</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, A4<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>20</sup> Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1974), 66-75; Birrell; Halasz, 23-27, 39-41.
- <sup>21</sup> George Wither, *The Schollers Purgatory* (London, 1624; facs. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1977), 121-22.
- <sup>22</sup> Plant, 73.
- <sup>23</sup> Bastard, Lib.6, Ep.28; Francis Johnson, "Notes on English Retail Book-prices, 1550-1640," *The Library*, 5<sup>th</sup> series, 5 (1950), 91-93.
- <sup>24</sup> H. S. Bennett, *English Books and Readers, 1603 to 1640: Being a Study in the History of the Book Trade in the Reigns of James I and Charles I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 228; Bastard, Lib.2, Ep.26.
- <sup>25</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, I4; Fitzgeffrey, E6<sup>v</sup>; Parrot, *Laquei*, A3-A4, A6-A7.
- <sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1.121.
- <sup>27</sup> Marotti, 326-27.
- <sup>28</sup> Saunders; Marotti, 34-35.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-37.
- <sup>30</sup> Woodhouse, 5.
- <sup>31</sup> John Taylor, *The Water-Cormorant his Complaint* (London, 1622), A3; *Shifts of Reynardine*, 50.
- <sup>32</sup> Richard Helgerson, "Milton Reads the King's Book: Print, Performance, and the Making of a Bourgeois Idol," *Criticism* 29(1987), 6.
- <sup>33</sup> Thomas Middleton, *Father Hubburds Tales*, in *The Works of Thomas Middleton*, ed. A. H. Bullen, 8 vols. (London, 1886), 8.54.

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- <sup>34</sup> Keith Wrightson, “ ‘Sorts of People’ in Tudor and Stuart England,” in Jonathan Barry and Christopher Brooks, eds., *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society, and Politics in England, 1550 – 1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 34.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.
- <sup>36</sup> Lawrence Manley, *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 422; Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare’s London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 49-52.
- <sup>37</sup> Manley, 372-74, 410.
- <sup>38</sup> Everard Guilpin, *Skialethia, or A Shadowe of Truth, in Certaine Epigrams and Satyres*, ed. D. Allen Carroll (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1974); John Wilcox, “Informal Publication of Late Sixteenth-Century Verse Satire,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 13 (1949-50), 195-97; Manley, 428; William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 2.3.228, in *The Complete Works*, eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
- <sup>39</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Gull’s Hornbook*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London: De La Mare Press, 1904), 43.
- <sup>40</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, A3<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>41</sup> Ben Jonson, *Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*, in *Ben Jonson: The Man and his Work*, eds. C. H. Herford, Percy and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925-1952), 1.133; Bastard, Lib.6, Ep.28.
- <sup>42</sup> Manley, 411.
- <sup>43</sup> John Weever, *Epigrammes in the Oldest Cut and Newest Fashion*, ed. R. B. McKerrow (London, 1911), 13.
- <sup>44</sup> Manley, 411, 430; Jonson, *Works*, 8: 25.
- <sup>45</sup> Joseph Loewenstein, “The Script in the Marketplace,” *Representations* 12 (1985), 101.
- <sup>46</sup> Jonson, *Epigrammes*, in *Works*, 8.27-28.
- <sup>47</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, A4<sup>v</sup>; see also Saunders, 154-55, 159.
- <sup>48</sup> Jonson, *Works*, 8.28; Marotti, 242.
- <sup>49</sup> Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1959), 50-62; Goddard, *Mastif Whelp*, A<sup>v</sup>-A2, G4.
- <sup>50</sup> Parrot, *Mastive*, A3-A3<sup>v</sup>.

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- <sup>51</sup> Joseph Swetnam, *The Araignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (London, 1615); Rachel Speght, *A Mouzell for Melastomus, the Cynical Bayter of, and Foule Mouthed Barker against, Evahs Sex* (London, 1617); Constantia Munda, *The Worming of a Mad Dogge, or A Soppe for Cerebus the Jaylor of Hell* (London, 1617).
- <sup>52</sup> Goddard, *Waspes*, A3<sup>v</sup>; Fitzgeffrey, D8.
- <sup>53</sup> Goddard, *Waspes*, F4, E3<sup>v</sup>-E4.
- <sup>54</sup> Bastard, Lib.3, Ep.8.
- <sup>55</sup> Parrot, *Mous-Trap*, A2<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>56</sup> Dekker, 66.
- <sup>57</sup> Parrot, *Mous-Trap*, A2<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>58</sup> Ibid., A2.
- <sup>59</sup> Ibid., A3.
- <sup>60</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.3.115, in *Works*.
- <sup>61</sup> Parrot, *Laquei*, A6<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>62</sup> Ibid., A3-A4, A6, A8.
- <sup>63</sup> Fitzgeffrey, G6.
- <sup>64</sup> Jonson, "To my Booke-seller," in *Works*, 8.28.
- <sup>65</sup> Fitzgeffrey, G6<sup>v</sup>.
- <sup>66</sup> Ibid., A8<sup>v</sup>.