

Thomas Milles' Modified Books

We might assume—simplistically, but not implausibly—that the process of producing an early modern book involved two distinct stages: an author wrote a text which then passed to a (probably noisy, smelly, chaotic) print shop where sheets were printed and then some time later, at a binders, bound as a book. But of course this tidy separation of text-writing and book-production often breaks down when we start to examine particular books and particular authors. It breaks down in part because many writers worked and even lived in print shops: prolific playwright Henry Chettle signed himself ‘your old compositor’, and worked as a printer, corrector and literary patcher of texts, while Thomas Nashe, the wittiest writer of his age, lodged with John Danter, a printer with a dubious reputation and the man behind the first printed Shakespeare play, *Titus Andronicus* (1594).¹ And that writing / producing opposition also crumbles when we realise that many authors reworked their books after they had been printed: the influence of these authors did not stop once their manuscript text was written. One particular rare book in New College Library can help demonstrate this version of authorship.

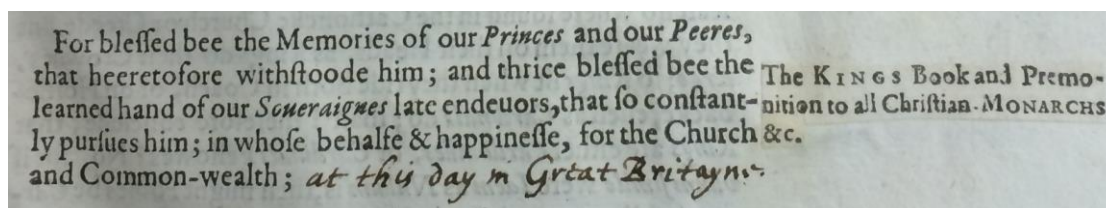
Thomas Milles (1550?–1626?) was a customs official, intelligence agent, and antiquary, born in Ashford, Kent, and a prolific author of at least twelve printed books between 1599 and 1617 on antiquarianism, religious controversy, and economic policy, including his best-known work, *The custumers apology* (1599).² Milles’ publications combined an advocacy of early mercantilism and of the importance of free trade, with a fierce anti-Catholicism. We see this combination in his *The misterie of iniquitie* (1611), subtitled, rather characteristically for Milles, as ‘Plainely layd open by a lay-Christian, no profest diuine, out of truth in humanity, and rules of naturall reason. Whereby the world may see, read and vnderstand, the proud and vaine comparison of a cerdinalles red-hat, and a kings golden crowne. Alwayes prouided, in reading, read all, or read nothing at all’.³ What is bibliographically striking about this text is the way Milles has reworked his own printed book, in part through handwritten marginal annotations, including new text, underlinings and pointing manicules (features not unusual in early modern books, although authorial annotations are less common), and also through numerous pasted-in printed slip insertions. These insertions often take the form of printed slips that, once glued in place, provide marginal glosses explaining or expanding on the central text. Thus, for example, the observation that ‘Papists go to Hell’ prompts a printed paste-in in the margin explaining ‘This is meant onely by the obstinate and wilfull, but not by Superstitious Papists, whose Consciencs seduced by the Witch crafte of Rome, may be releued by theyr hearty Repentance’.⁴ Other paste-in slips provide references to textual sources to support Milles’ polemic, or clarify the purpose of the central text (‘Adoption is heere set downe, but to show Reason in Humanity, how and when MAN first comes to feel and understand his own Happinesse . . .’), or provide a rousing culmination of his free trade arguments: the end of the text has a final paste-in passage declaring ‘It is the Disorder of our TRAFFICKE at this day, that makes our RELIGION and IUSTICE, contest so together’. Some passages in Milles’ text show three distinct stages of production, as a printed central text is augmented both by Milles’ own handwritten additions, and by his glued-in printed marginal slips, as this section from sig. I2 displays:

¹ John Jowett, ‘Henry Chettle: “Your old Compositor”’, in *Text* 15 (2003), pp. 141–61, and Harold Jenkins, *The Life and Work of Henry Chettle* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1934), pp. 1–29.

² John Whyman, ‘Milles, Thomas (c.1550–1626?)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

³ New College Oxford, BT3.83.13(1). Ten copies of this book are known to survive today.

⁴ Milles, *The misterie of iniquitie*, sig. C.



Heather Wolfe and William Sherman have recently provided a thorough overview of Milles' habits of pasting in additions to his own printed texts.⁵ It is tempting to figure Milles as a kind of eccentric, a bibliographical outlier, but he in fact sits in a seventeenth-century culture that was at ease with the idea that books might be modified after their printing, and that authors might do more to their books than merely write them. Perhaps the most compelling parallel to Milles in terms of post-production slip-insertions is Margaret Cavendish.⁶ To most if not all copies of her 1668 *Plays Never Before Printed*, for example, Cavendish made approximately 22 post-publication alterations in a careful italic hand, often mimicking the appearance of print,⁷ and also pasted in up to six thin slips of paper next to particular scenes or songs, bearing the note 'Written by my Lord Duke'.⁸ Cavendish probably had sheets of this note of attribution printed at different times (the 'W' of 'Written' is sometimes but not always a 'VV'), and then cut and glued each slip: we know that this was Milles' method, since a copy of *The misterie of iniquitie* now in the Folger Shakespeare Library contains 'pre-printed but as yet undistributed slip-insertions' of the sort that both Milles and Cavendish deployed in their respective augmented books.⁹ Milles seems to have augmented his printed publications in this way in order to convert printed texts into bespoke publications, designed for a coterie, or semi-coterie readership of the kind normally associated with manuscript circulation: indeed, Milles' books seem not generally to have been for sale but were rather intended for influence

⁵ William H. Sherman and Heather Wolfe, 'The Department of Hybrid Books: Thomas Milles Between Manuscript and Print', in *The Renaissance Collage: Towards a New History of Reading*, special edition of *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, ed. Juliet Fleming, William H. Sherman, and Adam Smyth, 45 (2015), pp. 457–86.

⁶ Jeffrey Masten, 'Material Cavendish: Paper, Performance, "Social Virginity"', in *Modern Language Quarterly* 65 (2004), pp. 49–68; Heather Wolfe and Georgina Ziegler, 'A newly uncovered presentation copy by Margaret Cavendish', in *The Collation* (26 January 2012), <http://collation.folger.edu/2012/01/a-newly-uncovered-presentation-copy-by-margaret-cavendish>; James Fitzmaurice, 'Margaret Cavendish on Her Own Writing: Evidence from Revision and Handmade Correction', in *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 85 (1991), pp. 297–307.

⁷ Cavendish's post-print hand revisions are evident in many copies of her *Orations* (1662), *Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (1663), *Grounds of Natural Philosophy* (1668), and *The Description of a New World Called the Blazing-World* (1668), although it is *CCXI Sociable Letters* (1664), *The life of . . . William Cavendish* (1667), and *Plays Never Before Printed* (1668) that are most thoroughly marked. Fitzmaurice, 'Margaret Cavendish', p. 307, suggests that the consistency of Cavendish's corrections to these three titles indicates that these works were of particular importance to her. For a discussion of Cavendish 'as thoughtful reviser of her own works', effecting 'a thoroughgoing reconception of her style', see Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 60–80 (p. 62).

⁸ In *Plays Never Before Printed* (1668) at British Library [hereafter BL] 79 I.15, there are paste-ins with 'Written by my Lord Duke' glued in at *Scenes*, p. 146 (before Scene XXIX) and p. 152 (before Scene XXVII); *The Bridals*, p. 13 (before 'Epithalamium'); and *The Convent of Pleasure*, pp. 38 (before 'You've won the prize'), 39 (before 'The Jolly Wassel now do bring'), and 47 (before 'O Gentlemen, that I never had been born', the line opening scene 5.2, so perhaps indicating William's authorship of the whole scene). The paste-ins in other copies of this book are close but not identical and the exact number of handwritten revisions also varies: BL 79.I.15 and BL G.19053 (2) have 22; BL C. 102.K.18 has 21; Bodleian Vet.A3.c.113 has 16. The latter Bodleian copy does not include pasted-in slips.

⁹ Sherman and Wolfe, 'The Department of Hybrid Books', p. 465. Folger STC 17934 copy 2.

government policy. Milles sometimes addressed named readers through the handwritten and printed paste-ins—extant copies of *The misterie of iniquitie* include additions referencing the Lord Chancellor, Lord Ellesmere, and William Twisden MP¹⁰—as Milles turned his books in the direction of particular readers.

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¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 464–65.