Introduction

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Tudor books and readers: materiality and the construction of meaning investigates connections between the physical construction of books and their reception by readers during the era of the Tudor monarchs (1485–1603).[1] By assessing the trajectory of book production, acquisition and reading across the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, contributions to this collection challenge the conventional fragmentation of an era by scholars who discover binary divisions when they identify watersheds in the 1530s, notably historians concerned with the impact of the English Reformation;[2] or in 1557, by bibliographers and historians of the book who rightly see the foundation of the Company of Stationers during the reign of Mary I as a major point of transition;[3] or 1558, at the death of Mary I and accession of Elizabeth I, where many literary historians have drawn an arbitrary line between the inaptly termed 'early Tudor' era, which encompasses the reigns of four

[1] Basic sources include *ODNB*, *OED* and *STC*. Cross-references among chapters in this book are indicated in parentheses by the surname of contributors.

[2] In *English Woodcuts: 1480–1535* (London: Oxford University Press for the Bibliographical Society, 1935), Edward Hodnett limits his census to woodcuts in books printed before 1535 not only because Wynkyn de Worde, Richard Pynson and many of their contemporaries had ceased operation by that date, but also on the basis of the dubious view that 'no printer working before or after that date issued any new illustrated books of consequence later' (vi). In actual fact, many woodcuts fell out of use when 'papist' books were banned during the 1530s. A cursory examination of entries in Ruth Samson Luborsky and Elizabeth Morley Ingram, *A guide to English illustrated books, 1536–1603*, 2 vols. (Tempe, AZ: Medieval of Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1998), a magisterial catalogue of illustrations in books printed up to the end of the Elizabethan age, disproves Hodnett's assertion that Tudor book illustration atrophies after 1535. See also John N. King, *English Reformation literature: the Tudor origins of the Protestant tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 462–4.

[3] E.g. H. S. Bennett, *English books and readers, 1475–1557, being a study in the history of the book trade from Caxton to the incorporation of the Stationers' Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952) and *English books and readers 1558–1603: being a study in the history of the book trade in the reign of Elizabeth I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); Lotte Hellinga and J. B. Trapp, eds., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain*, volume III: *1400–1557* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) (hereafter cited as *CHBB* 3); John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie, eds., *The Cambridge history of the book in Britain*, volume IV: *1557–1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) (hereafter cited as *CHBB* 4).

monarchs, and the 'Elizabethan' age, despite the fact that the latter's first and second decades are marked by continuity with pre-existing cultural norms;[4] or *circa* 1580, by literary critics whose attention to imported Italianate aspects of the 'golden age' of Spenser, Sidney, Marlowe and Shakespeare leads them to neglect the vitality and integrity of the pre-existing native tradition.[5] A more plausible scheme for periodization differentiates between the 'long Tudor period', which is the one that follows the dynastic fortunes of the house of Tudor, and the early (*c.* 1485–1530), middle (*c.* 1530–80), and late (*c.* 1580–1603) Tudor phases that it contains.[6]

By investigating the question of what came before and after these putative points of demarcation, chapters in this volume offer a more comprehensive account of Tudor book culture than any comparable volume. The contributors address continuity and change in book production and reading that are rooted in late medieval book culture characteristic of the end of the Yorkist era, on the one hand, but carry over to the genuinely early modern book culture in place when the death of Elizabeth I led to the extinction of the Tudor dynasty (24 March 1603), on the other hand. Although they are arranged in topical rather than chronological order, chapters within this volume chart developments between the foundation of England's first printing press by William Caxton and the posthumous marketing of folio editions of the works of Edmund Spenser, the epic poet of Tudor England, during the early years of the seventeenth century.

The inception of English printing represents a natural point of departure for our consideration of Tudor books and readers, even though it predated the origination of the Tudor dynasty following the Battle of Bosworth Field (22 August 1485). Even though debate swirls about claims that the advent of printing had a revolutionary impact on the production and sale of books and on practices related to reading,[7] it clearly encouraged the growth of literacy and dissemination of books on a scale more massive than previously possible.

[4] William A. Ringler, Jr, *Bibliography and index of English verse printed 1476–1558* (London and New York: Mansell, 1988) and *Bibliography and index of English verse in manuscript 1476–1558* (London and New York: Mansell, 1992); William A. Ringler, Jr, and Steven W. May, *Elizabethan poetry: a bibliography and first-line index of English verse, 1559–1603*, 3 vols. (New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004).

[5] C. S. Lewis, *English literature in the sixteenth century excluding drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), pp. 64–5.

[6] Michael Pincombe, 'Introduction: new lamps for old?' *Yearbook of English Studies* 38 (2008): 9.

[7] See Anthony Grafton, Elizabeth L. Eisenstein and Adrian Johns, 'AHR Forum: "How revolutionary was the print revolution?" "An unacknowledged revolution revisited", and "How to acknowledge a revolution"', *American Historical Review* 107 (2002): 84–128.

The craft of printing had a belated arrival in the British Isles when Caxton established his printing house at the sign of the Red Pale within the precincts of Westminster *circa* 1476. A full generation earlier, Johann Gutenberg had begun to print books at Mainz in the early 1450s. Production of his 42-line Bible (*c.* 1455) has attained iconic status, even though it is inappropriate to think of it as the earliest European book printed with movable type. The technology for printing books on the hand-operated press remained substantially the same for the next 300 years.[8] Printing spread rapidly from Mainz to other cities including Cologne, Basel, Rome and Venice. Having learned the trade of printing in Cologne, Caxton collaborated with Johannes Veldener in establishing the printing press at Bruges on which they produced the earliest extant book printed in the English language, Caxton's own translation of Raoul Le Fèvre's *Recuyell of the historyes of Troye* (1473/4). A unique engraved frontispiece in the copy preserved at the Henry E. Huntington Library portrays a kneeling figure presumably representative of Caxton handing a book to his patroness, Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy.[9] She was the sister of England's reigning monarch, Edward IV.

Returning to England soon after the publication of Le Fèvre's history of Troy, Caxton established his premises at Westminster, in close proximity to Whitehall Palace, which constituted an ideal location for the marketing of books to aristocrats and courtiers who circulated within the environs of the royal court. Nonetheless, he never received patronage from the Yorkist kings (Hellinga). Although the earliest known example of printing in England is an indulgence,[10] religious material represented a minor component of his production. This represents a departure from the prevailing practice of Tudor printing as a whole. To a considerable degree, Caxton catered to elite taste for translations of French romances and historical texts that were fashionable at the Burgundian court from which Caxton initially received patronage. Aristocratic fashion presumably determined his selection of works of English poetry, history, romance and other kinds of writing.

Folio format dominated fifteenth-century English printing, whereas sixteenth-century printers favoured smaller formats. Because the efficiency of folios made them more cost-effective than smaller formats in the printing

[8] I assume that Joseph Moxon's *Mechanick exercises on the whole art of printing* (1683–4) provides a reasonably accurate account of printing technology during the hand-press era.
[9] Call no. 62222.
[10] *William Caxton: an exhibition to commemorate the quincentenary of the introduction of printing into England* (London: British Library Publications, 1976), p. 38.

of texts of comparable lengths, it seems likely a shift in printing conventions or preferences, rather than economic considerations, led to this transition. One may not assume that quarto editions constitute 'cheap' print because printing a given text in quarto format may require as much or more paper than in folio (Dane and Gillespie). Additionally, publication in folio may result in highly cost-efficient books (Galbraith). It seems likely that the taste of Caxton's well-to-do clientele influenced his practice of employing folio format in the production of large, *de luxe* books. Contemporary English printers produced fewer folio editions and about twice as many quartos as Caxton.[11] A shrewd businessman, Caxton did not attempt to compete with the thriving continental trade in books in the Latin language. After all, the small and backward printing trade in thinly populated England was peripheral to the thriving book trade in populous urban centres on the Continent. The necessity of importing paper, which functioned as the chief determinant of the cost of books at a time when labour was cheap, drove up the price of domestic books relative to those printed overseas.[12]

Caxton filled a niche by publishing material that was otherwise unavailable, namely books in the English vernacular and some Latin books specific to England (e.g. books of hours of the use of Sarum). After all, demand for English books was virtually non-existent on the Continent. In adopting this insular trading strategy, he 'set the pattern for the printed book in England for several centuries'.[13] In addition to integrating the activities of printing, publishing, and retailing in the manner of entrepreneurs on the Continent, he also took on some printing jobs for others. Furthermore, he established a typographical standard that endured for more than a century by importing matrices for a French style of black-letter type fashionable in Flanders during his residence at Bruges. Although black letter fell out of use at major printing centres in Italy, France and Spain early in the sixteenth century, it remained the norm for English vernacular typography until the widespread shift to roman type at the end of the sixteenth century for most, but not all, categories of books.[14]

[11] David Carlson, 'Formats in English printing to 1557', *AEB: Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography* 2 (1988): 50–7.

[12] See Andrew Pettegree, 'Printing and the reformation: the English exception', in *The beginnings of English protestantism*, ed. Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 157–79.

[13] *Catalogue of books printed in the xvth century now in the British Library (BMC)*, Part 11 (England), ('t Goy-Houten, Netherlands: Hes & De Graaf Publishers, 2007), compiled by Lotte Hellinga, pp. 68–9.

[14] See Mark Bland, 'The appearance of the text in early modern England', *Text: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Textual Studies* 11 (1998): 91–154.

The printing trade had faltered before the advent of the Tudor dynasty in 1485 (Hellinga). Caxton's competitors failed to establish anything more than short-lived enterprises that died out within a few years. Lacking Caxton's commitment to the vernacular, they stressed publication of books in Latin. The City of London had not yet emerged into dominance as the centre of the English printing trade, but John Lettou established a printing house near Fleet Bridge from 1480 to 1483; he entered into partnership with William Machlinia in 1482. This business produced a small number of law books suitable for acquisition by lawyers and law students at the nearby Inns of the Court before Machlinia ceased operation by 1490. Theodoric Rood was active at Oxford from 1478 to 1486; he worked with a partner, Thomas Hart, from 1483. Also at a distance from London was the St Albans Schoolmaster Printer (fl. 1479–86), who specialized in Latin school books but also produced two extant vernacular books, including the *St Albans Chronicle* (1485). Operation of a printing press at this cathedral town was not without precedent, because scriptoria had operated in proximity to cathedrals and monasteries during the Middle Ages. It is worthy of note that this provincial printer felt it was unnecessary to standardize dialectical usages when he produced the *Book of Hawking, Hunting, Fishing and Blasing of Arms* (1486).

Caxton achieved the singular accomplishment of establishing a flourishing business that endured beyond his death in 1492. He benefited from Henry VII's decision to publish Parliamentary statutes of his reign in English rather than Law-French. Henry's mother, Margaret Beaufort, in turn patronized publication of devotional writing in English, a field also encouraged by monasteries at Sheen and Syon (Hellinga, Brooks). Caxton's successor, Wynkyn de Worde, embraced this shift and continued to use his master's type, woodcuts and printer's device. He also contributed to linguistic standardization by following his master's policy of bringing regional wording into conformity with London English. In publishing the second edition of the *Book of Hawking, Hunting, Fishing and Blasing of Arms*, for example, he or his employees consistently changed non-standard forms contained in the original printed by the Schoolmaster Printer a decade earlier.

De Worde made a momentous decision in 1500/1 when he moved from Westminster to Fleet Street. Some years later he also opened a retail shop at St Paul's Churchyard. Contemporary printers such as Richard Pynson and Julian Notary followed suit by establishing printing houses at close-by locations. The area bounded by Fleet Street, St Paul's Cathedral and Little Britain has demarcated the epicentre of the British book trade until

the present day. In departing from Caxton's aristocratic book list, de Worde emphasized books suitable to the more sizable and demographically stratified population of the City of London. In addition to grammar books, de Worde also published collections of popular poetry. Far more than Caxton, de Worde engaged in the publication of religious books. Patronage that he received from Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, seems to have encouraged him to adopt this shift in strategy (Hellinga). Pynson's shop at Temple Bar positioned him at an ideal location to sell the legal books in which he specialized to students and barristers at the nearby Inns of the Court.

The remainder of this brief survey will concentrate on the importance of religious publication because it dominated the trade in books following 1500.[15] Throughout the sixteenth century, English readers devoured edition after edition of religious books. The open sale of indulgences, books of hours, saints' lives, missals and other pre-Reformation books disappeared after England's schism from Rome, but the London book trade produced hymnals, sermons and liturgies during the sixteenth century. Of course, the permissibility of Roman Catholic as opposed to Protestant books oscillated during the different phases of the English Reformations. It is worthy of note that Thomas Berthelet, the King's Printer, published the first and only pre-1640 edition of the Vulgate Bible in 1535, as Thomas Cromwell prepared for the dissolution of the monasteries. The technical superiority and lower cost of continental editions of books in Latin, as previously noted, inhibited production in England of learned books in Latin and Greek.

Intertwined issues of religion and politics contributed to the prohibition of the publication and reading of Bibles in the vernacular during much of Henry VIII's reign. From the early fifteenth century, when Lollards advocated scriptural translation, authorities identified reading of the Bible in English with heresy. For this reason, William Tyndale went into exile in order to publish his epochal translation of the New Testament. Following his thwarted attempt to publish it in Cologne (1525) and successful effort at Worms (1526), he gravitated to Antwerp, where printers (notably Merten de Keyser) tended to employ octavo format in producing large numbers of English New Testaments printed in black letter. These compact books departed from the prevailing fashion among English printers of printing

[15] Edith L. Klotz, 'A subject analysis of English imprints for every tenth year from 1480 to 1640', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 1.4 (1938): 417–19. She bases her findings on A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, *A short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English books printed abroad, 1475–1640* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1926).

books in quarto format prior to the death of Henry VIII in 1547.[16] Highly portable and easy to smuggle into England, New Testaments published in English tended to be quite affordable. The publication of scores of editions of translations of the Bible, in part or whole, by Tyndale and his successors clearly exerted a powerful impact on Tudor readers.

It is a notable coincidence that the first complete translation of the English Bible, compiled by Miles Coverdale, was published in the same year as Berthelet's Vulgate version. Although the Coverdale Bible was patronized by Thomas Cromwell, vicegerent for religious affairs at the time of Henry VIII's revolutionary schism from the Church of Rome, it lacked official authorization. Not only did Cromwell preside over the dissolution of the monasteries, which led to widespread destruction and dispersal of monastic libraries, but he joined Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in furthering publication of England's first officially commissioned Bible translation in 1539. Known as the Great Bible because of its large size, its publication in oversize folio format corresponded to the official auspices of an imposing book intended for reading in churches by members of the public. The Second Royal Injunctions of Henry VIII (1538) refer to the Great Bible in ordering English parish churches to provide 'one book of the whole Bible of the largest volume, in English' in order that 'parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and read it'.[17]

It is important to note that the underdeveloped state of English printing led publishers to undertake to print the Coverdale Bible and Great Bible abroad. It is an irony of history that the printer of banned copies of Tyndale New Testaments – Merten de Keyser – produced the Coverdale version without acknowledgement. It was published during the same year that Tyndale was executed as a heretic at Vilvorde Castle in Brabant. The Great Bible also silently incorporated Tyndale's work. What made these later versions permissible is not the nature of their translation, which differs in no material respect from the Tyndale version, but rather the absence of theologically charged prefaces. Richard Grafton and Edward Whitchurch presumably secured the services of the Parisian printer François Regnault for production of the Great Bible because of the superiority of French typography, presswork and paper. (One may wonder, however, why Grafton and Whitchurch did not return to Antwerp, where in 1537

[16] Carlson, 'Formats in English printing', pp. 51–3. He comments on the 'often remarked trend towards smaller book-formats as printing in England developed' (50).

[17] A. G. Dickens and Dorothy Carr, eds., *The reformation in England to the accession of Elizabeth I* (London: Edward Arnold, 1967), p. 82.

Matthew Crom had already printed the first authorized version of the English Bible. John Rogers, an associate of Tyndale, compiled it under a pseudonym of 'Thomas Matthew', a name that has a suitably evangelical flavour.) Regardless of their rationale, the publishers completed the printing of the Great Bible in London after French authorities had blocked continuation of the project on grounds of heresy.

During the regime that governed England throughout the minority of Henry VIII's heir, Edward VI (1547–53), a torrent of Protestant books swamped recently banned Roman Catholic books. Spurred by patronage from the young king and prominent lords who dominated his government, militantly Protestant propaganda filled the vacuum left by iconoclastic attack on older religious books. At the level of numbers of editions, this reign marked the high-water mark of English book publication prior to 1579.[18] Cranmer and his associates relied on print in imposing a new order of worship in the vernacular. It required the publication of four interlocking books: namely the Great Bible; the Book of Homilies, a collection of sermons designed for reading by unlicensed preachers; the Book of Common Prayer, the second edition of which (1552) wholly supplanted the old Sarum rite; and the two-volume edition of Erasmus' *Paraphrases of the New Testament* (1548–9), which served as a study aid for clergy and laity. Octavo editions dominated the Edwardian book market, but their proliferation in great numbers provides an inadequate measure for gauging printing-house output. After all, assessment of the number of perfected sheets printed would represent a better measure of the total output of the London printing trade. Octavo format is not inherently inexpensive (Dane and Gillespie). Indeed, the brevity of many of the octavo editions that dominated Edwardian book production need not attest to the greater popularity, affordability and ephemerality of books published at this time. After all, the printing of shorter texts in smaller formats will result in a thicker book that would be far more durable than texts of comparable length printed in fewer folio or quarto gatherings (Galbraith).

When Edward VI's sister, Mary I, attempted to reverse changes in religion introduced by Henry VIII and Edward VI, authorities banned the English Bible and Protestant books and returned to the Vulgate Bible and Latin rite. Nonetheless, printers turned out large numbers of ABCs, primers, catechisms and other guides for religious instruction of the laity. Not only did the regime of Elizabeth I undo these changes by allowing for a return to publishing books in favour under her late brother, Edward VI, but

[18] John N. King, 'The book trade under Edward VI and Mary I', in *CHBB* 3, pp. 164–9.

it also attempted to counter the popularity of the unauthorized Geneva Bible (1560) favoured by Puritans with a new authorized version known as the Bishops' Bible (1568). It was replaced in turn by the King James' Bible (1611), which was regarded by many readers as the only acceptable version of the English Bible until the middle of the twentieth century. One must acknowledge that its version of the New Testament and other sections of the Bible assimilates a translation largely based on the one Tyndale had completed nearly a century previously. One may therefore think of the newly authorized version as an enduring monument of Tudor prose.

Black-letter typography characterized the great majority of pre-1590s English books, with the notable exception of the 1560 edition of the Geneva Bible and some later editions. This striking exception resulted from a chasm that had opened between the old-fashioned practices of English printers, who continued to follow Caxton's practice of printing vernacular books in black-letter type, and printers in the Low Countries, Switzerland, France, Italy and Spain. The latter had long before shifted to roman and italic type for printing books written in both Latin and vernacular languages. English printers lagged behind their counterparts on the Continent in using roman and italic type – originally designed for printing classical Latin and humanistic texts – for printing vernacular texts. The increasing archaism of Tudor typography did not result, however, from ignorance of the newer typefaces. After all, Richard Pynson introduced roman type into England in 1509, the year during which Henry VIII succeeded his father, Henry VII.[19]

The anomalousness of the first edition of the Geneva Bible is due to the fact that it was translated and heavily annotated by Protestants who migrated to Switzerland to escape persecution under Mary I. This landmark edition is notable for typography that had become standard in the city in which it was printed. During the years that he served as Queen's Printer (1577–87), Christopher Barker printed many editions of the Geneva Bible. He oscillated back and forth among editions set in black letter and in roman type. Not only did he have an ample supply of roman type during the 1570s and 1580s, he may have wished to cater to readers who had a definite preference for traditional English as opposed to continental typographical style.[20] Many English Bibles continued to be printed in black letter after *circa* 1590, when the English printers shifted *en masse* to roman type. Despite the survival of many black-letter Bibles after this date, a steady

[19] Lotte Hellinga, 'Printing', in *CHBB* 3, p. 76.
[20] I am indebted here to an unpublished paper by Robyn Malo.

trend moved in the direction of roman typography. Black letter retained an increasingly vestigial presence in certain classes of popular books and in the vernacular component of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (1563), which was one of the longest, most complicated and best illustrated English books of the early modern era. Publication of five editions of this notable book (1563, 1570, 1576, 1583 and 1596) was a singular accomplishment of the London book trade, but it seems much less significant when one compares the small scale of the English printing trade with the vast volume of the printing of big books at major centres of the continental printing trade. The last decade of the Tudor era witnessed the completion of a typographical revolution. The publication of *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and *Faerie Queene* (1590) exemplify this transition. After all, Hugh Singleton's use of black letter in the production of the former book was appropriate to the conventional employment of black letter in vernacular printing. Its alternate name of English type attests to its association with vernacular printing. Printed at the end of Spenser's career by John Wolfe on behalf of William Ponsonby, *The Faerie Queene* (1590, 1596) is a roman type book. By the 1590s this type had supplanted black letter as the typographical standard for books designed for polite readers.[21]

This cursory survey of Tudor book culture has considered some of the ways in which the materiality of books contributes to the construction of meaning. Contributors to the present volume include specialists in late medieval and early modern English literature and history, librarians, archivists, bibliographers and a member of the antiquarian book trade. Their contributions address a richly diversified range of issues related to how producers and sellers tailored the material construction of books to the interests of collectors and readers, who responded to their efforts in a variety of ways. Contributors investigate the involvement of patrons, publishers, booksellers, librarians and readers in the processes of production, dissemination, collecting, alteration and reading of books. In considering the interplay between the materiality of books and their interpretation by readers, these chapters address different points along the continuum between physical construction of codices in print or manuscript, on the one hand, and their reception by readers who read books and viewed their illustrations, on the other. Despite points of dissimilarity, the thinking of contributors converges on a number of nodal points addressed in the three sections of this book.

[21] Bland, 'Appearance of the text', pp. 105, 117.