

## MATTER AND MAKING IN EARLY ENGLISH POETRY

What is literature made from? During the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, this question preoccupied the English court poets, who often claimed that their poems were not original creations, but adaptations of pre-existing materials. Their word for these materials was “matter,” while the term they used to describe their labor was “making,” or the act of reworking this matter into a new – but not entirely new – form. By tracing these ideas through the work of six major early poets, this book offers a revisionist literary history of late-medieval and early modern court poetry. It reconstructs premodern theories of making and contrasts them with more modern theories of literary labor, such as “authorship.” It studies the textual, historical, and philosophical sources that the court tradition used for its matter. Most of all, it demonstrates that the early English court poets drew attention to their source materials as a literary tactic, one that stressed the process by which a poem had been made.

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MATTER AND MAKING  
IN EARLY ENGLISH  
POETRY

*Literary Production from Chaucer to Sidney*

TAYLOR COWDERY

*University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*



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## *Abbreviations and Editorial Conventions*

CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
CWE	<i>Collected Works of Erasmus</i> , gen. eds. Richard J. Shoenk and Beatrice M. Corrigan, 86 vols. (Toronto, 1974–)
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. Henry Colin Gray Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (Oxford, 2004–)
EETS e.s.	Early English Text Society, extra series
EETS o.s.	Early English Text Society, original series
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>HLQ</i>	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
<i>JEGP</i>	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , ed. Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor, 1956–)
<i>OODE</i>	<i>Opera omnia Desiderii Erasmi Roterodami</i> , 50 vols. (Amsterdam and Leiden, 1969–)
PIMS	Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne (Paris, 1844–64)
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>The Review of English Studies</i> , new series
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i>
STC	<i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640</i> , ed. A. W. Pollard, G. R. Redgrave, et al., revised and enlarged second edition (London, 1926–1991)
TEAMS	Teaching Association for Medieval Studies

*Abbreviations and Editorial Conventions*

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I have preserved the original spelling and orthography in my citations of primary sources, with certain exceptions. To make the text more legible to the modern eye, I've consistently replaced "j" with "i," thorn ("þ") with "th," and yogh ("ȝ") with "gh," "y," "w," or "z" as the case demands. I've also silently re-punctuated quotations as they appear in manuscripts and printed editions to clarify syntax and sense. In those instances where the original employs abbreviations, I have expanded them silently. Unless a reference is made in the notes to a translated version of a text in a language other than English, the translation provided is always my own.

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