

Textual Introduction for TVW

Jan van der Noot's *A theatre wherein be represented as wel the miseries and calamities that follow the voluptuous worldlings* is the third component of a polyglot effort. The first version, in Dutch, was printed by John Day; its dedicatory letter to Roger Martin, Lord Mayor of London, is dated 18 September 1568. Day also printed a French version, dedicated to Elizabeth; its dedicatory letter is dated 28 October 1568. A translation of the dedication to Elizabeth, with the date changed to 25 May 1569, is printed near the opening of the English edition, but the printer and publisher had shifted from Day to Henry Bynneman. Despite the date of that translated dedication, the book may not have been printed until a few months later: Bynneman entered 'a booke intituled *theatrie or mirror*' in the Stationer's Register in the latter part of the summer of 1569. Copper engravings, probably by Marcus [Gheeraerts](#), illustrate the poems in *Het theatre oft Tooneel waer in ter eender de ongelucken ende elenden die den werelts gesinden ende boosen menschen toecomen* and in the French version, *Le theatre auquel sont exposés et monstrés les inconveniens et miseres qui suivent les mondains et vicieux*. The English version is illustrated with woodcuts of a very similar design. The composition of most of one set of images inverts that of most of the other set left-for-right, indicating that the basic design of one set of images was mechanically copied from the other. Because the English version was published second, the woodcuts were long thought to be derived from the intaglio images, but Michael Bath has mounted a strong case for the compositional priority of the woodcuts. The use of woodcut illustrations enabled Bynneman to produce *The Theatre* in a single shop, for woodcuts are printed using the same platen press employed for letterpress printing, whereas intaglio prints require the greater pressures of a rolling press, almost certainly not part of Day's physical plant. Bynneman was also no doubt hoping to take advantage of the greater durability of woodblocks, for he could reasonably anticipate more substantial sales for an English edition than Day could have mustered for the Dutch and French versions. Perhaps regarding his volumes as something of a boutique effort, Day did not bother to secure stationer's copyright for the Dutch or French versions; Bynneman's sense that the book might prove popular probably motivated him to register the English book and so secure copyright.

Spenser would later revise all but the final four poems translated in the *Theatre*; the revised translations, with a few supplementary translations were published in *Complaints* of 1591 as *Bellay* and *Petrarch*. No edition of the *Theatre* or of the poems as printed there was issued prior to Hughes' edition of 1715. We therefore regard the 1569 *Theatre* as the sole textual authority for this edition.

Seven complete copies have been collated for this edition: two held at the British Library, and one at each of the Bodleian library, the Huntington Library, the Pforzheimer Collection of the Harry Ransom Center, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the Princeton University Library. (The complete copy at the Newberry Library was also spot-checked, but not thoroughly collated.) Two defective copies were also collated: one held at the National Library of Scotland; the other, missing only two leaves, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As with other works in the OET Spenser, we have used an eclectic copy text that comprises the corrected state of each of the book's formes.

A compositor with a strongly editorial attitude to his copy might have produced a more polished text. In several places, Theodore Roest, the translator, has evidently misunderstood his source or rendered it quite carelessly, and his clumsy rendering has passed without correction, along with some obvious instances of compositorial misreading of copy.

That said, corrections in both the inner and outer formes of signature E suggest at least a brief period of editorial attention. While the presses were stopped in the midst of printing outer forme E (that is, E1, E2v, E3, E4v, E5, E6v, E7, and E8v), probably to correct a spelling error on E8v, the corrector made several other adjustments, including a fussy improvement to the syntax of a sentence on E4v. Similarly, while the printing of inner forme E (E1v, E2, E3v, E4, E5v, E6, E7v, E8) was interrupted to make a spacing adjustment on E1v, the rendering of ‘*scoone kinderen*’ (*Het theatre*, C8v) as ‘cleane children’ – the version probably present in Roest’s manuscript translation – was adjusted to ‘propre children.’ That these corrections cluster together with four stop-press corrections in outer forme F suggest a day of special attentiveness in the course of presswork.

The portion of the volume devoted to commentary on the poems that Spenser translated runs from D7 to S1v; from outer forme E through outer forme I the commentary was set using a single skeleton forme, at which point it was noticed that the running head for the rectos of signatures 7 and 8 had been printed with the spelling ‘worldlyngs’ rather than ‘worldlings’, the spelling that appeared on the other rectos. While the first skeleton was corrected, a new skeleton was also set up, presumably to speed up production. The compositor made an error in the running title for K3 when he set the second skeleton forme, but this time the error was quickly caught and remedied, along with five other minor errors. Somewhat later, the same forme was examined more closely, leading to six more corrections. There is a seventh variant in this third state of the forme, but it represents an inferior reading, ‘corporal ,stoales’, where the earlier copies read ‘corporals,stoales’. It is impossible to determine whether the ‘s’ dropped out in the course of printing the second state of the forme, thus instigating the interruption of the press-work and a careful review of the forme, or the interruption was provoked by zealous proofreading, and the ‘s’ lost by subsequent carelessness in correction.

Finally, a stop-press correction in outer forme Q presents a slight difficulty. The Folger copy preserves the reading, ‘fynging with a grace’ at Q6v. That this is the only copy of those collated that witnesses this reading suggests that the correction to ‘fynging with grace’ was made rather early in the printing of this forme. Several of the other copies contain a variant in the running head on the same page, some following the Folger copy in reading ‘A Theatre’ and others reading simply ‘Theatre.’ Either the correction destabilized the skeleton forme, so that the ‘A’ in the running title eventually dropped out, or the ‘A’ was somehow removed while the text was corrected, and the disruption of the running title was later caught and repaired.

By and large, however, the quality of production need not be held in high esteem. Many

errors in the French *Theatre* go uncorrected and on many occasions in which manifest difficulties in the French text have been noticed, the solution to the difficulty is ill-considered. Roest is responsible for at least some of the limited, awkward efforts to ameliorate errors in the French source; whether others may be traced to someone in Bynneman's employ cannot be determined. But the clumsy guesswork evidenced across the book suggests that Van der Noot was not closely involved in the preparation of printer's copy.