"And every day new Authors doe appeare…": Labelling the Author in the Front Matter of Thomas Beedome's *Poems Divine, and Humane* (1641)

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And every day new Authors doe appeare,
As they the paper Merchants factors were,
And boast themselves the muses sons, when they,
Rime onely for some life-preserving pay.
Expect here no such Author, if thou't looke,
On th'inside more then th'outside of the Booke,
Put on thy judgements eyes, and thou shalt find,
This Authors fancy rich, as was his mind.

– from W. C., "On his deserving Friend, *Master Beedom*, and his Poems", A5r, ll. 5-12

Abstract: In 1641, Thomas Beedome's first and only book, *Poems Divine, and Humane*, was published posthumously. Considering this volume of poetry in the context of a proliferation of poetry publishing in mid-seventeenth century England and accepting the idea that early modern paratexts provided an ideal site for the renegotiation and manifestation of authorship, I argue that throughout the front matter of Beedome's book, the largest part of which is taken up by commendatory poetry, a concept of the author, not only as singular creator, but also as proprietor of his work, is created. This essay shows how the writers of the commendatory verses try to single out Beedome by almost obsessively labelling him as a worthy author, comparing him favourably with classical and contemporary poets, and affirming the proprietary relationship between Beedome and his poems.

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In 1641, Thomas Beedome's first and only book, *Poems Divine, and Humane*, was published posthumously. It included the long narrative poem "The Jealous Lover, or, The Constant Maid" and sixty lyric poems and epigrams, divided into religious and mundane poems. Beedome is one of more than thirty named authors of poems listed by the ESTC for 1641; when one includes broadside publications, more than a hundred print-publications of poems appeared that year. Nigel Smith argues that "[t]he capacity to put something into print grew in the 1640s" after the "end of the royal censorship and the growth of the capacity of the presses" (23). However, Smith further notes that the "often-claimed explosion of publications after the collapse of censorship in

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the early 1640s […] is most difficult to assess accurately […]." (24) The front matter of Thomas Beedome's *Poems Divine, and Humane* (1641),[1] from which the lines quoted in my epigraph are taken, provides at least some evidence that people writing and publishing in the early 1640s shared the impression that there was a proliferation of new authors in the marketplace at the time. The writers of the commendatory poems that preface Beedome's work furthermore agree that publishing *poetry* has become a fashion, a common and widespread activity. In the first line of Em. D.'s "To his Friend the Author, Master *Thomas Beedom* before his death, on these his Poems" it is acknowledged that "*This is the riming Age*" (A5v): everybody "*quaffs*" (l. 5) at Helicon today,[2] so that "*Each garded foot-boy belch[es] out Poetrie*" (l. 6). The writers of the commendatory poems prefixed to Beedome's poems addressed this proliferation, perceived it as a threat to the quality of true poetry and reacted to it by attempting to single out Beedome by almost obsessively labelling him as a worthy author, comparing him favourably with classical and contemporary poets, and affirming the proprietary relationship between Beedome and his poems. Throughout the front matter, the largest part of which is taken up by commendatory poetry, a concept of the author not only as singular creator, but also as proprietor of his work is created. Further, while the proliferation of print-published poetry and the idea that poetry could be published for the sake of financial gains are denounced, the advantages of print-publishing poetry, such as making the author's work accessible and maintaining his memory, are recognised and embraced by the commendatory poets and Beedome himself.

The front matter of early modern books, which includes "anything other than the text proper, including the title page, preface, frontispiece, dedicatory epistles and poems, tables, indices, errata, and colophons" (Voss 735) and thus corresponds to what Gérard Genette has termed "peritext" (5), was an important site for the manifestation, re-negotiation and presentation of writers as individual authors and for endowing them with authority (see Dunn and Saenger). Commendatory verses as part of the front matter were regularly prefixed to poetry collections from the late sixteenth century onwards and the convention reached its peak in the mid-seventeenth century (see Williams 1-5). The flourishing of commendatory verse thus coincided with a critical phase in the understanding of authorship. According to Michael Saenger, there was a "move from an understanding of collaborative textual authority to a concept of a more singular author" (18) in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and printed collections of poetry which provided the name of the author on the title page contributed to this development. The first collections of English poetry appeared in the second half of the sixteenth century (see Marotti 1991), the first of which was *Songes and Sonettes, written by the ryght honourable Lorde Henry Haward late Earle of Surrey, and other*, published in 1557 and better known to posterity as *Tottel's Miscellany*; and "in the last third of the sixteenth

[1] An online version of Beedome's book is available here: <http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep_1.1344.xml;chunk.id=d4;toc.depth=1;toc.id=d3;brand=default;query=Have%20Heart#1> This transcript, however, is incomplete: the Latin poem "In obitum Lachrymabilem, Thomas Beedome, nuper defunct, et in praeclara ingenii sui Monumenta, iam primum edita" by Henry Glapthorne is left out, as is Glapthorne's prose address "To the Reader".

[2] The same motif is employed in Samuel Sheppard's address "To the Reader" prefixed to his *Epigrams* (1651), though there it is "the Effeminate Gallant" who "boasts, that he hath [poesy] at his beck, and can quaffe up all *Helicon* at one draught" (A4v). In his "*Elegie*, on his Ingenious friend, the deserving Author, Master *Thomas Beedome*" Thomas Nabbes speaks of a "new Helicon", in whose creation Beedome, now that he is dead, is involved (B3r, l. 44). Allison Shell sees this passage as a possible source of inspiration of Francis Chetwinde's poem "New Hellicon", published the year after Beedome's *Poems* (274).

century, single-author editions of poems came on the market, as writers and publishers started to claim a new respect for literary authorship and print came to be regarded less as a 'stigma' than as a sign of sociocultural prestige." (Marotti 1995 211)

According to Biester, "[p]oems commending poets in the seventeenth century were expected to do three things: treat the poet as miraculous, or capable of producing wonder; praise the poet's wit, either for its boldness or, later in the century, for its restraint; and praise the style of a male poet as 'manly'." (507) Chandler emphasises the advertising functions of commendatory poetry in the context of the "growth of capitalism" and the developing "practice of mass advertising", namely "[t]o advertise the book to book-buyers", "[t]o advertise the author(s) to patrons and book-buyers" and "[t]o influence the interpretation of the book by any readers" (733). While much criticism on commendatory verse focuses on poetry written by and for Ben Jonson, who is credited with setting the standards for much of seventeenth-century commendatory verse (see Chandler, Lyon or Parfitt), the example of the minor seventeenth-century poet Thomas Beedome shows that the effort of creating a commendatory apparatus for print-publications was not restricted to the better-known poets of the period. All of the functions outlined by Biester and Chandler, apart from advertising the author to patrons, are discernible in the front matter of Beedome's book, together with the intention to construct and affirm Beedome's status as singular author and poet. In order to locate the front matter of Beedome's *Poems* within the conventions of seventeenth-century poetry publishing, my reading of Beedome's *Poems* will be complemented by examples taken from the front matter of other single-author poetry collections published from 1639 to 1651.

Poems Divine, and Humane, published posthumously in 1641, was Thomas Beedome's first, and only, collection of poetry. It was printed by the unidentified "E. P." for Iohn Sweeting, who was active from 1639 to 1657, but was not otherwise associated with the publication of poetry.[3] The title of Beedome's collection does not reflect the organisation of the poems; instead, like in Thomas Herrick's *Hesperides* (1648), whose subtitle used the same words in reverse order,[4] the "humane" poems precede the "divine" ones and also occupy more space. The collection starts with the narrative poem "The Jealous Lover, or, The Constant Maid", introduced by a separate title page. The poem, which takes up twenty-three pages, is written in Venus and Adonis stanzas and refers to Shakespeare also on the level of content, for instance by including lines from *Venus and Adonis*.[5] After the narrative poem, a new title (though no separate title page) announces

[3] The ESTC lists nine entries for Iohn Sweeting, publications which range from broadside pamphlets to miscellanea.

[4] The full title of Herrick's collection of poetry is *Hesperides: Or, The Works both Humane & Divine of Robert Herrick Esq*. See Tom T. Cain and Ruth Connolly's introduction to *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick* (2013), where they argue that the "descriptive combination 'Humane & Divine' is unique, though the same words had been used in reverse in Thomas Beedome's posthumously published *Poems Divine and Humane* (1641)." They see a possible connection between the two publications, since "Henry Glapthorne, who organized Beedome's publication, moved in the same circles as Herrick (see *ODNB*), and Beedome, like Herrick was well represented in Bold's *Wit a Sporting* of 1657 […]." (lxxv) "Divine" as a descriptive element in the titles of poetry collections had of course been used before Beedome's poems were published, see e.g. *Seuen Poems: Divine, Morall, and Satyricall* by Nathanael Richards (1631), Francis Quarles' *Divine Poems* (1633) or *A Paraphrase Upon the Divine Poems* (1638) by George Sandys. "Poems Divine and Humane" was later re-used as the subtitle for Patrick Ker's *Flosculum Poeticum* (1684).

[5] See Eric F. Langley, who claims that Beedome repeats "Shakespeare's lines [Narcissus so himself himself forsook, / Who died to kiss his shadow in the brook] word for word" (34). Actually, the second line is slightly changed in Beedome's poem; it runs "And dy'd to see his shadow in a brooke" (C1v).

"POEMS" (18 pages); followed by "EPITAPHS" (13 pages) and "EPIGRAMS" (17 pages); taken together, these constitute the "humane" poems. The final section of Beedome's book, which includes the "divine" poems (19 pages), is introduced by a change in the running title (from "Epigrams" to "Poems") and, of course, a change of topic. The divine poems include meditations on life, god and death "obviously modelled on [George Herbert's] *The Temple*" (Ellrodt 202).[6]

Beedome's "humane" poems are replete with conceits (both in the Petrarchan and metaphysical vein), Neo-Platonist ideas, and images borrowed from alchemy. They include poems of seduction, friendship poems and poems addressed to fellow poets such as Henry Wotton and George Wither. Francis Meynell (iv) is probably correct that the title of the poem "*To the memory of his honoured friend Master* John Donne, *an Eversary* [Anniversary]" is misleading, since the elegy deals with the death of a young man, and not with the poet who was almost sixty when he died in 1631: "For if long age can be counted but a span, / Thy inch of time scarce measur'd halfe a man." (G7v) So contrary to Shaver's claim that Beedome is worth remembering because he counted John Donne among his "honoured friends" (412), it is more likely that Beedome was not personally acquainted with the older poet. In "*To the excellent Poets* [sic] *Mr George Wither*" Beedome admits that he does not know Wither in person either, but explains how he was hugely influenced by the experience of reading Wither's work; he describes how he first encountered his works when he was sixteen and then "Made hast to purchase" Wither's satirical work immediately afterwards (Gv, ll. 13-14). There is no evidence in the collection of poetry that Beedome was personally acquainted with any of the poets or playwrights of his time apart from Henry Glapthorne, Thomas Nabbes and "Ed. May" (who contributed the first commendatory poem and could be identical with the Edward May who published *Epigrams Divine and Morall* in 1633), but he was obviously well-read and entered into dialogues with his literary forebears and contemporaries by imitating their style, reacting to specific earlier poems, or listing the poets' qualities in his own poetry. In "*Encomium Poetarum ad fratrem Galiel Scot*." Beedome expresses his admiration for Daniel, Spenser, Jonson, Drayton, and Harrington and presents their work as immortal, before, towards the end of the poem, he voices the wish that also his work may live on once he is dead:

> Now faints my pen, and, fainting, feares that I
> My selfe may perish, if with clemencie,
> My reader censure not, yet hopes to raise
> A memory to it selfe, though not of praise;
> That I being earth, something may live of mee
> Perhaps this paper if approv'd of thee. (F5v, ll. 105-10)

Apart from praising the earlier poets' accomplishments, Beedome outlines the performative power of poetry as such: it does not only have the ability to immortalise the ancient and modern poets, but also to influence politics, win women, charm the audience in general and to commit slander. Moving in his argument from the power of poetry to the power of the poet ("Thus Poets like fates factors here do hold / All power underneath their pens controld" (F5v, ll. 97-98), which leads him to a discussion of the modern poets before he finishes the poem with the lines quoted above, Beedome establishes his own position as a poet as one of

[6] See also C. A. Patrides, who argues that three of Beedome's poems "echo Herbert's mode of articulation" (5); Edward B. Reed is more specific in citing Beedome's poems "Meditation" and "The Mercy Seat" as imitations of Herbert in a discussion of the popularity of Herbert's *The Temple* (287).

power. He thus attempts to inscribe himself into poetic traditions and fashions himself as a poet for his audience.

Little is known about Beedome's life. He died in 1640 or 1641; according to Shaver's research, he "cannot have been more than twenty-eight years old" at the time of his death (413) and the commendatory poems all present him as a young man who died before his time. From the title page of the poetry collection it can be concluded that he was probably not of noble descent since his name is given without any title. No university affiliation is provided. As far as his poetical output is concerned, Beedome had contributed one of the seventeen commendatory poems to the merchant Lewes Roberts' *The Merchants Mappe of Commerce* (1638) and another one to *Lychnocausia siue Moralia facum emblemata* (1638) by Robert Farley (see Bullen and Shaver) before his poetry was published, which indicates that he had some literary connections. Moreover, the collection of his poetry was prefixed with twelve commendatory poems, which testifies to a certain popularity since this was more than the average number of commendatory verses at the time.

However, despite all the praise lavished on Beedome in these commendatory poems, his *Poems* did not see a second edition, and he soon fell into oblivion (or was at least not considered an important poet of his time in the second half of the seventeenth century) since he is mentioned neither in Edward Phillips' *Teatrum Poetarum* (1675) nor in William Winstanley's *Lives of the most Famous English Poets* (1687). He seems to have been rediscovered in the late eighteenth century since he is included for example in Ellis' *Specimens of the Early English Poets* (1790), where the full text of Beedome's "The Question and Answer" is printed, together with the observation that his "posthumous poems contain many good lines, but [are] in general wretchedly marred by extravagant conceits." (268) In 1847, *The Gentleman's Magazine* printed three stanzas of "The Jealous Lover…" and six extracts from Beedome's "humane" poems in a "Retrospective Review" of Beedome's volume, thus making a small portion of his work available to a larger audience. *Half-Hours with Our Sacred Poets*, published in 1863, introduces two of Beedome's "divine" poems with the remark that Beedome's fame is "at present […] probably as near as zero as possible" and that it "was never universal" (203), but that it is the aim of the collection to present "for the first time […] to the general reader "some names of poets who are now not so much unpopular as lapsed from popularity" (iii). At the beginning of the twentieth century *Select Poems Divine and Humane* were published. Edited by Francis Meynell in 1928, the long narrative poem "The Jealous Lover, Or, the Constant Maid" and all of the front matter were omitted. An edition of Beedome's poetry with an Italian introduction followed in 1954. In addition to that, several of Beedome's poems have been collected in anthologies of seventeenth-century poetry.[7]

There has been little critical interest in Beedome so far. Apart from a short article on the poet by Chester L. Shaver (1938) there is no work dedicated exclusively to Beedome, but he is mentioned in passing in studies on other topics and lines of his poetry are quoted in places. Miller Christy includes the full text of Beedome's poems "To the Heroicall Captaine THOMAS JAMES, of his discovery made by the Northwest Passage towards the South Sea, 1631" and "To the same Captaine on his Couragious and pious behaviour in the said voyage" as examples of a "contemporary reference to James's voyage" even though he believes that "they have no poetic

[7] For example, Grierson and Bullough included "The Broken Heart" in their *Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century* (1934) which was replaced by "The Question and Answer" and "The Petition" in *The New Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse* (1992); "The Present", a religious poem, was included in Colin Burrow's 2006 anthology of *Metaphysical Poetry*.

merit" (clxxxvi).[8] Beedome is listed among the "forgotten poets of the period" (Marshall 40) in an essay on the seventeenth-century poet William Lathum, and three lines of his poem on the death of Gustavus Adolphus are quoted in "The English Revolution and the Brotherhood of Man" by Christopher Hill (1954).

Shaver suggests that Thomas Beedome "will probably be remembered less for his poetry than for his admirers and his admirations" (412), the admiration being expressed in the twelve commendatory poems prefixed to Beedome's *Poems*. Apart from these commendatory poems, the front matter of Thomas Beedome's *Poems Divine, and Humane* consists of a title page, a short address "To the Reader" by Beedome's friend the dramatist Henry Glapthorne (see Zwickert 6) who acted as editor, a separate title page for "The Jealous Lover…" and a short address "To the Reader" by Thomas Beedome himself following that title page, so Beedome was obviously involved in the plans to publish his poetry. It does not contain a dedication to a (prospective) patron; such dedications, however, were no longer an omnipresent feature of the front matter in the 1640s (see Chandler 53). The front matter is thus largely composed of what Genette has referred to as "allographic paratext", i.e. material outside the text proper contributed by someone else than the author him- or herself. Only Glapthorne, the playwright and poet Thomas Nabbes and Beedome's brother are clearly identified as commendatory poets, and the other poems are signed only with initials.

The commendatory poems are presented as part of a monument to the author and display features of a concerted effort.[9] The first poem, "On the deceased Authour, Master *Thomas Beedom* and his Poems" by Ed. May closes with the lines "*I […] am sent / To bring this first stone to his Monument*" (A3v, ll. 47-8). Henry Glapthorne reveals the intended function of his verse at the end of "On the death and Poems of his most deare friend, Master *Thomas Beedome*": "*This is my vote, which to thy Booke shall be, / A just applause, to thee an Elegie*" (A4v, ll. 41-2), and thus emphasises his contribution to the joint effort to present Beedome's work. "To his Friend the Author, Master *Thomas Beedom* before his death, on these his Poem" by Em. D. presents an anomaly, since, as the title indicates, it was written while the author was still alive, and serves as further indication that Beedome had been involved in planning the publication of his poems: Em. D. refers to the author's "*labour'd Booke*" (A5v, l. 16) and speaks of Beedome in the present tense. After downplaying his own contribution, H. P. suggests that the next edition of Beedome's poems will feature even more commendatory verses:

> *And with the next impression, this thin Booke,*
> *I prophesie, shall like a Uolume looke.*
> *Thickned with severall Poems in his praise,*
> *That all his readers will adde to his bayes,*
> *I come but to unload my heavie eye,*
> *Vpon this spare blanke, in an Elegie.* (A7v, ll. 7-12)

H. P. thus reflects on the convention of adding additional commendatory verses to new editions of a book, and self-reflexively refers to his task of contributing to the front matter. R. W. refers to the concerted effort of the front matter:

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[8] An extract from the former poem is later quoted in Wayne K. D. Davies' *Writing Geographical Exploration: James and the Northwest Passage*, *1631-33* (2003).

[9] See Kiséry (47) for the popular conception of the work of an author as their monument in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Where we thy friends, and I among the rest,
As a chiefe mourner, in the Ensignes drest
Of hearty sorrow, sadly seeke to pay,
This as a gratefull tribute, to thy bay,
Which being watred with our briny dew,
Shall still spring up more, flourishing and new. (A8v; ll. 21-26)

J. S., on the other hand, sets apart his efforts to commend Beedome, claiming that he does not "hope (as others) to adorne / With my quaint lines thy Booke" (Br, ll. 13-14), "Their sole ambition being to attend / Thee, with the true devotions of a friend." (Bv, ll. 17-18) after having stated in the first line of his poem that there are already "So many great names fixt before they Booke". Em. D. contributed a second poem, this time an "Elegie on the death of his ingenious friend, the deserving Author, Master Thomas Beedome", in which he explains that he originally did not intend to write another piece for the publication of Beedome's work ("Once I resolved a silence, was content, / With the rare Fabricke of thy Monument"; B4v; ll. 1-2), but claims to have heard a voice from Beedome's grave which "in a Language full / Of incens'd anger vow[ed] to disannull / All former friendship, if I should denie, / Mongst other friends to write thy Elegie;" (B5r, ll. 19-22). "On the Poems of the Author, his deare Brother, Master Thomas Beedom deceased", written by Francis Beedome, completes the allographic paratext by addressing and justifying the commendatory efforts in a direct address to the reader:

Then Reader know, we have not us'd our brains,
To usher in absurd, uncivill straines;
Such as might pale the Paper, blacke the Inke,
And cause the ghost of our dead friend to shrinke. (B6r, ll. 7-10)

The cross-references and self-reflexive statements referring to a concerted effort to present Beedome indicate the care with which the edition – or at least the front matter – of Beedome's *Poems* was prepared.

The titles of six of the prefixed poems explicitly position Beedome as the author of the book by referring to him as "autho(u)r"; as well, Thomas Beedome's own address to the reader is entitled "THE AUTHOR, to the READER". The label "autho(u)r" is further repeated four times within the poems. The use of the label "author" as part of the titles of the individual parts of the front matter is not particular to Beedome's *Poems*, it is found throughout the early seventeenth century. The almost excessive use of the label, however, seems to have reached an apogee in the decades between 1630 and 1650: In 1633, for example, the label is used six times in the two-page address from "The Booke-seller to the Reader" prefixed to Robert Gomersall's *Poems*, which closes with the following sentence: "*But I beginne to talke rather like a Maker, then a seller of Bookes: I have nothing now more to adde, but this, love the Authour, and me for bringing you acquainted*." (A3 v) All of the six commendatory poems in Matthew Stevenson's *Occasions Off-spring or Poems on Severall Occasions* (1645) bear "Author" (always capitalised) in their title; as do six of the seven of those prefixed to Martin Lluelyn's *Men-Miracles with other Poems* (1646). In the seven-page section "To the Reader" prefixed to William Cartwright's *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, With other Poems* (1651), the label "author" is used fifteen times, set apart typographically by Roman print and capitalisation.

The poets' authorship is thus established and confirmed by the repetition of the label "author". Drawing on Berensmeyer, Buelens and Demoor's concept of authorship as performance (2012), one could grasp these – mostly allographic – labelling efforts as acts of performing authorship. The writers whose work is introduced and praised are made into authors by editors, fellow poets, friends or family members in the context of publishing their work because they are referred to as such. However, while these efforts testify to the desirability of being – and being perceived as – an author, it is evident that the label "author" alone does not have discriminative value. It is used generically for everyone who has written, and published, work of any kind, regardless of the perceived quality of that work. This becomes especially clear from W. C.'s poem: new authors can appear on the book market every day; it does not take much to become an author. Since the label "author" alone carries neither positive nor negative overtones, the author whose work is recommended and introduced to the reader needs to be distinguished from the mass of other authors by other means.

In the front matter of Beedome's *Poems*, this happens in the first place by qualifying the label "author" when it refers to Beedome: Beedome becomes "the deserving Author" in Nabbes' and Em. D.'s poems. Further, Beedome's name is repeated frequently – his name, with the variant spellings "Beedome" and "Beedom", is part of all the titles of the commendatory verses and is repeated as often as twelve times within the poems.[10] With the help of this strategy the reader, who might have been unfamiliar with the author when first picking up the book, is reminded persistently of the author's name; the name of the author becomes, furthermore, closely connected with the "poems" in the course of the front matter.

In a successive step Beedome is thus referred to as "poet", not just "author", both directly and by association of his name with "his poetry". Em. D. even calls him "Poet Laureate" (A6r l. 22). In contrast to many other examples of early modern front matter, no explicit endeavours are undertaken to define either poetry in general or the features of the ideal poet; the labels are used without much further definition. Rudimentarily, Beedome as a poet is distinguished from other authors with the help of a description of his stylistic qualities and by reference to his works. In his address to the reader, Henry Glapthorne explicitly, though not very specifically, affirms that Beedome's "works are as excellent, as singular" (A2r). In "On the deceased Authour, Master *Thomas Beedom*, and his Poems" Ed. May outlines some qualities of his poetry ("*The sweet / And gentle cadence of [his verses'] ordered feet*"; ll. 5-6) and even names one specific work, namely "The Jealous Lover, Or, the Constant Maid" (l. 16), which, although he does not discuss the narrative poem in any detail, at least shows that May had some knowledge of Beedome's work and did not just reiterate staple conventions of commendatory verse The poet's good qualities are also defined *ex negativo*, by juxtaposing the often vague praise of Beedome's work with that of the "*illiterate*" "*Scullers*" and plough-men whose attempts to write poetry result in "*empty nothings*" (Em. D. A5v; ll. 7, 2, 14) or by associating Beedome with well-known earlier poets. In "To the Memorie of his friend, Master Thomas Beedom. And upon his Poems" H. P. attempts to inscribe Beedome into a tradition of established English poets; their names serve as shorthand for their qualities, which are implicitly transferred to Beedome:

> […] *Tell yee he's gone, whose muses early flight,*
> *Gave hopes to th' world, we nere should see a night*
> *Of Poetry, that th' Widdow of those rare men,*

[10] See also Chandler's chapter on Shakespeare for the repetition of proper names in commendatory poetry.

> *Spencer, and Drayton, admir'd Donne, great Ben,*
> *Should now remarried be, but see th' ill lucke,*
> *When just the match was made, of the rude plucke!*
> *Death snatch'd him hence, left Poetry, and us,* […]. (A7v, ll. 15-20)

The strategy of characterising an author by way of association or comparison with established English writers was a popular one for presenting and advertising poets: Crashaw in 1646, for instance, is presented as second only to George Herbert ("The Preface to the Reader"; A3v) and he is even elevated above "Homer, Virgil, Horace" (A4r). The favourable comparison with classic writers was another popular variety of this strategy, employed as well for example in the front matter of Francis Beaumont's *Poems* (1640), where it is claimed that Ovid "*No more shalbe admir'd at: for these times / Produce a Poet whose more rare invention*, / *Will teare the love sick Mirtle from his browes,* / *T' adorn his temple with deserved boughes*." ("To the Author" by J. F.; A3r ll. 7-12) These attempts to present the author, which further qualify and define the label "poet", are of course conventionalised commonplaces and thus their power to individualise the authors may seem limited. However, the act of comparison as such bears performative value for the construction of individual authorship, and the authors' achievements and qualities are evaluated with references, however vague or far-fetched, to their work. The close connection between the authors and their work is thus affirmed in these acts of comparison and evaluation.

The individualising impulse is maintained in the comparison of Beedome with 'unworthy authors', those who constitute the mass of new authors. These authors are not named, which emphasises that they are not perceived as authors of any distinction by the writers of the commendatory verse and further serves to single out and particularise the named author Beedome. The mass of unnamed authors, who are only labelled generically in the front matter of Beedome's *Poems* as "new Authors" or by reference to their original professions – foot-boys, scullers, plough-men – is placed in direct opposition to the praiseworthy author Thomas Beedome whose "*fancy [is]rich, as was his mind*" (W. C., l. 12), though W. C. complains that a distinction between the two is not always easy: this "*age […] 'twill scarce admit, / Distinction betweene ignorance and wit*" (ll. 1-2) since "*Each weares the others habit, neither's knowne / By the wanted proper dresses that was its owne*" (l. 3).

The unfavourable depiction of the other authors is often accomplished with the help of derogatory labels: one of them is "scribler". The idea of the scribbler is repeatedly employed in order to distinguish worthless authors from "real poets" in early modern front matter to poetry collections. In a dedicatory poem prefixed to Francis Beaumont's *Poems* (1640), e.g., Laurence Blaikelocke contrasts Beaumont's work with "worthlesse Poems or light Rimes / Writ by some common scribler of the times" (A2r; ll.1-2). The label "rimer" is also sometimes used in a derogatory fashion (e.g. in a commendatory poem prefixed to Mill's *A Night's Search*, 1640: "*Some loose-lin'd Rimers by lascivious* Layes, / *Infect the Aire; thou justly bear'st the Bayes*, […]."; B5r, ll.1-2).

What is conspicuous, however, is that the label "writer" is not applied, neither in the front matter of Beedome's *Poems* nor in the other examples examined in this essay. This can be explained by the fact that, according to the *OED*, "writer" used to denote someone who wrote professionally. Leon. Digges, in his commendatory poem prefixed to Shakespeare's *Poems* (1640) uses the label "writer"; but he uses it derogatorily when he speaks of "upstart writers" in the proximity of "needy Poetasters" (*3v; ll. 27-28), whom he only grants the right to publish and perform their works to keep them from starving. "Writer" is thus associated with a professional activity undertaken with the aim of earning money. Beedome is presented as a good or worthy

poet because he is not one of those who write for money only, he does not "Rime [...] for life-preserving pay". According to Andrew Bennett, "the attempt to earn either wealth or position from publication was seen as both an unnecessary and a disreputable degradation of one's aristocratic status, or one's aspirations to such status." (47) Thomas Nabbes, who also contributed a commendatory poem to Beedome's volume, contrasts Thomas Jordan's achievements decidedly from those of the "poetasters" who are only interested in earning money with their verses:

> *Some* Poetasters *of the times,*
> *That dabble in the* Lake *of* Rhimes*;*
> *Care not, so they be in* Print
> *What sordid trash or stuffe is in't.*
> *There are too many such I feare*
> *That make Bookes cheape and Paper deare.*
> ("To Mr. Thomas Jordan on his Fancies", n.pg., ll. 7-12)

Like W. C. who disdains those authors who "*Rime onely for some life-preserving pay*" (l. 8), Nabbes strives to present the author whose work he commends in stark opposition to such abominable people, and calls Jordan "*Poesie's* true *sonne*" (l. 13), whose worth is balanced not in money but the moral accomplishment of his elaborate poetic creation.

John Feather argues that "despite the contempt in which those who wrote for money were held by their more fortunate contemporaries, authorship was a recognisable occupation by the end of the sixteenth century." However, "[a]t least another century was to elapse before the professional author could take some pride in his profession [...]." (27) The publication of Beedome's *Poems* comes at a point at which authorship as profession was not yet fully accepted, but nevertheless practiced by many: the reference to the new authors who try to make their way every day suggests that there was a flourishing market for poetry books, but it is expressed that earning money was not deemed respectable. Pretending that one was not interested in the commercial side of publishing was a common topos; as Saenger points out, "[c]haracterizations of the author as dignified, reluctant, original, or indignant are [...] all topoi of the publishing trade. These topoi all fit with the larger fiction of noncommerciality [...]." (32) These "fictions of noncommerciality" often go hand in hand with (fake) protestations that publication was undertaken against the will of the author.

This is not the case in Beedome's volume of poetry. Though, like in many of the other texts discussed above, writing poetry and publishing it only for the sake of money is decidedly presented as undesirable, publishing as such is not viewed as harmful. The advantages of publishing the poet's work in book form are not denied: the ability of the printed book to maintain the poet's memory is emphasised throughout the front matter of Beedome's *Poems*. The entire paragraph addressed "To the Reader" presents the book at hand as "a loving Monument to [the poet's] worth", which "can never convert to ashes" (A2); "Bookes" are referred to as "pictures of mens lives delineated"; and referring to Beedome Glapthorne says that "he shall live in Paper, which shall make him live in's Marble". The memorialising and immortalising function of books dates back to antiquity[11] and the topos that "works have to

[11] See for example the epilogue of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Now stands my task accomplished, such a work / As not the wrath of Jove, nor fire nor sword / Nor the devouring ages can destroy. […] / If truth at all / Is established by poetic prophecy, / My fame shall live to all eternity." (379)

assume a material form to transcend their creator […] was acknowledged by many in the period" (Kiséry 47). However, here the book as a product of *print* is hailed as an apt means of keeping the poet's memory alive.

Beedome himself, in his address to the reader, presents the fact that his work can now be accessed in print as welcome; referring to what his Muse has produced he says, "*Which though it be but meane (as tis confest) / T' hath ventured hard to please thee, since tis prest.*" (B8v, ll. 7-8) The repeated references to the material qualities of the printed book and its capacity to preserve the author's work for posterity voiced in the front matter suggest that lyric poetry published in book form no longer had the ephemeral status it used to have in the early days of poetry publishing (see Marotti1995; 227). The emphasis on the book as a printed object further undermines the fiction of noncommerciality, since it emphasises the "book's heightened capacity as a commodity engendered by the introduction of printing" (Shevlin 49).

Throughout the front matter, a close connection is established between the author and his book, as in the following poem, where it is emphasised that the reader can trace in the book something that is Beedome's "own", something that belongs to him:

> *Till in thy Booke, thy blest memorial bee,*
> *As is thy soule, fraught with eternitie.*
> *And Beedom, shall survive in it with glory,*
> *It being his owne accomplisht perfect story.*
> (from "On the Poems of his worthy friend, Master *Thomas Beedome*, the lately deceased Author" by R.W., A8v; ll. 27-30)

The proprietary relationship, signalled for example by the use of possessive pronouns in the titles of the commendatory poems ("On the deceased Authour, Master *Thomas Beedom*, and **his** Poems"; "To his Friend the Author, Master *Thomas Beedom* before his death, on these **his** Poems" etc. [my emphasis]), is supported by the repeated statement that the book introduced by the commendatory poems is Beedome's. Though the meanings of "book" as material object and "book" as metonymically referring to the author's lyrical output are conflated, the basic idea of a proprietary relationship between the author and his work is expressed..

The repeated assertion that the poems in Beedome's collection are really his own further serves to forestall possible charges of plagiarism. While imitation was an accepted mode of composition provided that it was not accomplished in a servile fashion, it was distinguished from "outright piracy", from stealing someone else's work, in discussions of plays, poetry and other writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century (White 135). The commendatory verses prefixed to Beedome's *Poems* assert that the poet has written the poems himself, and the presentation of Beedome as the original author serves as yet another mark of distinction[12] in a time when passing off the works of others as one's own was not an uncommon practice, as is illustrated for example by the closing lines of "On Mr William Cartwright's excellent Poems" by Joseph Howe prefixed to Cartwright's *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, With other Poems* (1651), published eight years after Cartwright's death:[13]

[12] The presentation of Beedome as the original author of his work is, however, not entirely accurate if we consider his own unacknowledged repetition of lines from Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* in "The Jealous Lover".

[13] For further examples see Hayden White 187f.

And now we Writers too, that think
We sprinkle Balme instead of Inke
On his lov'd Memory, doe curse
The Printers that have made us worse
Poets than Mourners, whose sly drift
Is, thus to rob us of our Theft;
For He unpublish'd did allow
Safe Wit t'all Takers, and We now
Like Pirats praysing Plate-Fleets, deal,
Sadly commend what we would steal. (n. pg.; ll. 71-80)

Howe's lines emphasise the role of print-publishing in strengthening the proprietary connection between author and work; however, even though Beedome's work was print-published with his name on the title page and he was clearly presented as the author of the work to follow, about thirty pages of his poems were passed off as Henry Bold's in *VVit a sporting in a pleasant grove of new fancies* (1657) without any acknowledgment of the original author (see Bullen). Even such a rather personal title as "*Loves Apostacy to his friend M. E. D.*" is kept in the collection published under Bold's name without any change (C2v), while the information that the poem starting "Follow a shadow, it flies you" was written "*Per Ben. Johnson*" is omitted from Bold's volume.

Em. D., who emphasises that Beedome's poems were written by himself, connects this feature with their prospective favourable reception: "*For he that scans the* Poems *that are thine*, / *Must call them raptures, sacred, and divine*." (A6r; ll.17-18) One of the commendatory poems prefixed to Humphrey Mill's *Poems Occasioned by a Melancholy Vision* (1639) serves as another example: "Goe now with praise, feare not to finde sucesse, / Whats here's thine own, thou hast not rob'd the press." ("Of the Poems of his Friend" by P. H.; A5v, ll. 21-22) In Mill, this emphasis on the proprietary relationship between author and work is combined with a command not to fear publication and future criticism, so that publication of one's poems is once more presented as desirable. This idea is also expressed in the poem "To his Friend, H. M." by I. A. in the same collection of poetry, which closes with an echo of popular Horatian lines, "Let not thy conquest die, let's know the thing, / Sally forth little booke, feare no deadly sting." (A6r; ll. 11-12)[14]

The front matter of Beedome's *Poems* is not exceptional. The strategies and labelling efforts used in the attempts to particularise the author are commonly found in mid-seventeenth century front matter. However, the front matter of Beedome's *Poems* embodies the anxiety of the time that one specific author will drown in a sea of ever-new authors, which simultaneously expresses that authorship as such was perceived to have become a mass phenomenon *and* motivates the need for presenting the author in question as special. The label "author", unlike the labels "poet" or "scribler", does not carry positive or negative connotations in the front matter examined here and has to be further qualified and complemented in order to distinguish the writer in question. It is specifically employed, however, to signal a proprietary relationship between the writer and his or her work, irrespective of the quality of that work, so even though there were as yet no copyright regulations in seventeenth-century England, a concept of the author as the intellectual proprietor of his or her work was already being expressed.

[14] For further uses of the Horatian line from Epistles Book I see e.g. Chaucer, *Troilus & Criseyde*, stanza 256; George Cavendish's "Thauctor to / hys boke" in *Metrical Visions* or Spenser's "To his Booke" prefixed to *The Shepheardes Calender*.

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