MAKING THE CAXTON BRAND: AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF THE BRAND NAME IN EARLY MODERN PUBLISHING

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ABSTRACT

   This dissertation explores the utility of applying the concept of the "brand" to literary and biographical studies via an exploration of the career of England's first printer of vernacular texts - William Caxton (active c.1473-1492). Presently, the brand is generally conceived as an interface between commerce and culture. Recent work by Naomi Klein and Celia Lury has suggested that the goal of the brand is to engender a lifestyle – or, rather, to become a culture unto itself. Generally, perhaps rightly, this view arouses considerable suspicion about the role of branding in everyday life. As tension between Art and Commerce (articulated by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art*) is present in many aspects of literary criticism (particularly biography), it is common to find that figures like William Caxton often have their non-commercial activities marginalized on account of their business practices. My work seeks to address this problem by rejecting the either/or tension between Art and Commerce in favor of a new, more inclusive model centered on the brand. The brand, in contrast to the current, dominant paradigm, is a multi-faceted entity that operates in aesthetic and commercial spheres simultaneously. By using the brand as a model for biographical and historiographical studies, we are able to ascribe both of these aspects to an individual without negating the whole.

   As Michael Saenger has observed: "The idea of an artless publisher may be as much of a myth as the idea of a noncommercial artist." Accordingly, I recognize the necessary interconnectedness of artistic and commercial production, and propose that we approach Caxton (and his legacy) as we would explore the evolution of any other brand. By addressing a figure, or a body of work, as a brand, we are free to remove the weight of critical wrangling over Art and Commerce, and, instead, focus on the interconnected nature of literary and commercial activities without prejudice. It is hoped that, in so doing, we will allow for more complete studies of literary publishers and printers like William Caxton.

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<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The introduction of printing in the West during the mid-fifteenth century heralded many changes in European society. Among the gradual increases in education and literacy, as well as myriad literary and scientific achievements, the rise of a new form of capitalism – one built in part on brand name entities – was concurrent with the rise of the publishing business in the late-Fifteenth and early-Sixteenth centuries. While the brand name is often thought of as being a product of the industrial revolutions of the Nineteenth Century, its underlying structures and networks of operation can be found at work in the publishing business of Fifteenth Century English entrepreneurs like William Caxton. Caxton's career is particularly interesting as it foreshadows what would later become a trend, among printers and publishers, of moving away from a patronage-driven economy toward a market-driven economy. Caxton's largely speculative publishing agenda relied on his ability to interface with the social aspirations of the emergent middle class, the varied desires of the aristocracy, and his networks of craftspeople and traders. What sets Caxton apart, however, are his extensive paratexts, and – in a near-first for England – a printer's device that marked his works as distinct from similar commodities. Additionally, the Fifteenth Century saw a rising interest in vernacular books among the merchant and laboring classes, as well as significant increases in women's literacy, which Caxton wholly encouraged and supported with his publishing. All of these factors combine to make Caxton a pivotal figure in the histories of publishing and the brand name, and one that is entirely deserving of a fresh look.

Therefore, this dissertation is intended to focus on the creation of the Caxton brand, and the ways in which this brand reflects the broader social and cultural changes at work during the incunabular period in England. Through this

examination of Caxton's brand, this study intends to demonstrate the ways in which the history of branding might be profitably extended into the Early-Modern period in England for the purpose of developing a fuller picture of the interconnected networks of commercial and artistic production that found a locus in the printed book. Central to this discussion will be the belief that the brand is a construct that is uniquely suited for the discussion of the history of literary texts, as the study of brands is a study of the marriage of commercial and aesthetic projects – something that is particularly useful for the history of literary publishing.

The study of any publisher goes beyond the person in question and his or her output. Such a study naturally encompasses business decisions, public reaction, literary culture, politics, and various other socio-cultural factors – some of which operate independently of the publisher's designs. For this reason, I have chosen to build my study of Caxton around the brand, as brands are continuously built (and rebuilt) by these same processes. Indeed, it is my belief that the brand is a natural consequence of the capital (cultural and economic) that accretes during a cycle of production and consumption. Because of this, brands can be influenced, or even partially designed, but never avoided altogether. They are, I will argue, a necessary part of both cultural and economic commerce, and also the symbolic containers of our own economic and aesthetic preferences within the marketplace. Therefore, by moving the focus of critical and literary inquiry from Caxton the man to Caxton the brand, we are creating a framework that is better suited to assess the totality of Caxton's output and its historical impact, and one which emphasizes the interconnected (and often intersubjective) nature of commercial and aesthetic production.

I will continue this introduction by discussing contemporary scholarship on the histories of the book and printing, and then I will augment this discussion by examining the role of the publisher with respect to the creation of a new marketplace for books that was driven in large part by its readership. In particular, I will look at the rise of readership among the merchant classes, the ways in which Caxton's embrace of the vernacular expanded the reading public, and the economic conditions that governed both the quality of printed texts and the size of print runs. Finally, I will set the stage for our discussion of Caxton by looking at some recent scholarship on his place in the history of printing, and the ways in which this scholarship might be expanded by embracing some of the tools of brand history.

I. From Scriptoria to Printing House: An Overview of Scholarship on the Emergence of Printing and the Work of Johannes Gutenberg

With respect to understanding the change that books and their readers experienced in the mid-fifteenth century, it is useful to consider the emergence of the role of the Publisher during Caxton's time in England. Inititally, those who – like Gutenberg – produced books were simply regarded as printers. Along with a host of compositors, rubricators, and other such craftspeople, books were assembled and printed with little paratextual intrusion or improvement. In this, we can infer that printed books were intended to satisfy existing market demands (that is, the demands of the market for manuscripts), and not to lead the creation of new markets or methods of usage or consumption. However, the division of responsibilities between printer and publisher began to become increasingly defined during the last three decades of the fifteenth century, particularly in Caxton's workshop at Westminster, and finally culminated in the fully-articulated role of Publisher during the early

sixteenth century when Caxton's successor – Wynkyn de Worde – was actively working.

The so-called "printing revolution" is a source of ongoing contention within the fields of bibliography and literary criticism. Recent work on the history of the book has largely focused on the gradual, accumulative change in the marketplace for books, rather than on the idea that the move from script to print was radical and instantaneous. In order to contextualize the history of the debate surrounding the degree of change brought about by print, it is useful to examine a recent exchange in the *American Historical Review Forum* between Elizabeth Eisenstein and Adrian Johns. Eisenstein's article "An Unacknowledged Revolution Revisited" is a response to Johns' (1998) *The Nature of the Book* as well as the criticism that has stemmed from her own assertion that the printing press represented an agent of radical and sweeping cultural change. In her own words:

> My work was not intended to be framed by either the history of the book or the history of reading. Instead, I had in mind a broader, currently unfashionable, unit of study: Western Civilization (or "Western Christendom"—as it was known in the fifteenth century). I wanted to explore how the shift from script to print affected diverse institutions, traditions, occupations, and modes of thought and expression that were present in Western Europe during the late fifteenth century. I was particularly curious about the way changes affecting the transmission of texts over the course of many generations impinged upon historical consciousness. Thus I was concerned with a "long revolution" entailing cumulative effects, as well as a short one, entailing a rapid increase in output. (Eisenstein 2002, 88)

Eisenstein's most significant areas of concern with Johns' work arise from three factors: 1) That Johns asserts that there are no intrinsic powers in the press and that the mode of duplication is largely irrelevant; 2) That Continental concerns, particularly religious ones, do not feature in his work; and 3) That the printing "revolution" was recognized long before the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Of these concerns, I will examine points one and three, as they are the most directly relevant to our work on printers and publishers like Caxton and Gutenberg. What is at stake is not simply the chronology of the "printing revolution," but also the ability

to consider when society may have first begun to recognize, and actively attempt to capitalize, on the power and reputation of the printing press. For the development of the brand, this is an important point, as the purposeful attempt to direct the brand name in the public sphere comprises half of the brand's total essence (with the other half being the reception of that brand). If, as Johns contends, the press was only recognized as a viable, commercial tool in retrospect, then the discussion of brand names is quite a nonstarter. However, if the press was recognized as immediately viable in these respects, then the same discussion becomes eminently important. It is then only a task of determining to what extent the brand was the focus, or to what extent it merely supported the printers and publishers' work.

Johns outlines the following differences between his work and Eisenstein's in his article "How to Acknowledge a Revolution:"

> Where Eisenstein asks what print culture itself is, I ask how printing's historic role came to be shaped. Where she ascribes power to a culture, I assign it to communities of people. Most generally, where she is interested in qualities, I want to know about processes. Both of these last are valid interests, and deciding which is preferable is not an empirical matter. But the decision does have to be made, and which side we choose will have real consequences. In light of this, we should not get too bogged down in arguments of detail. We ought instead to be arguing over the very shape and character of a history of print. We should especially be debating whether a cultural history of print—which is a different thing from a history based on print culture—is either possible or desirable. (2002, 110)

For an example of the sort of culture that Johns is referring to, we may turn to his *The Nature of the Book*: "In general, we may conclude that print entailed not one but many cultures, and that these cultures of the book were themselves local in character" (1998, 30). Taking this expression of localist diversity a bit further, Johns writes: "If printing held no necessary bond to truth, neither did it show a necessary bond to falsity or corruption. Each link remained vulnerable to dispute. It is this epistemic indeterminacy that lends the history of the book its powerful impact on cultural history. Understanding how it could be overcome to make knowledge and hence cultural change is what the history of the book is for" (36). In both cases,

Johns wishes to emphasize the microscopic. The sense that the "revolution" of print was what people made it out to be, even if it was inherently uneven from place to place, is central to Johns' construction of the history of printing. He contrasts this position with Eisenstein's assertion that the change brought about by printing was sudden and sweeping. In their Introduction to *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Trapp and Hellinga (1993, 3) recall Johns as they discuss the printing revolution: "The transformation wrought by the invention of printing and by its introduction into Britain twenty years later, by William Caxton in 1476, was far-reaching. It was, all the same, neither instantaneous nor, from some aspects, even radical."

This focus on the individual and the small-scale is passionately echoed by Alexandra Halasz in her 1997 work *The Marketplace of Print*:

> But to speak of the capitalist potential of print technology is no simple matter, for if "print" is itself a term that raises complex issues of agency, invoking "capitalism" only compounds the problem. Thus while interconnections between "print" and "capitalism" are a commonplace of Western European history, the ambiguities of their relationship are most often bracketed and agency granted to print itself, as evidenced by the title of Eisenstein's influential book, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Print, however, is not an agent, but a technology used in the manufacture of texts; it was not print that altered the discursive field, but the interests of those who knew, used, and controlled the technology. (20)

Eisenstein refers to this focus on specific printers and print communities as "commendable," but then goes on to suggest that Johns' oversight (and so, by extension, Halasz') was to deny that the "wooden handpress had any intrinsic powers (guns don't kill people)..." (2002, 89-90) Such a debate holds in the balance the extent to which we may ascribe autonomy to individual publishers, printers, and publics. If, as Eisenstein suggests, the press had an intrinsic power, then we might be inclined to support a view like that of David Carlson:

> If the ephemera had not been ephemeral, the printers would have wanted to make them so. For their ephemerality made their production still more beneficial to printers, as an outlet for their machines' productive capacity. A strategy of obsolescence would be fundamental, in this and other ways, as in the case of improved second editions, for example, to profitable

> exploitation of the productive capacity that was the soul animating the new machines...Evidently, the technology's capacity was so imperious that, absent another outlet, it could put Caxton to work for Caxton, at an immediate loss. (2006, 43-4)

Such a position ascribes not only a telos to the technology of the press, but a *soul*. Though perhaps not literal in its metaphysics, what this passage does assert is the notion that a technology can subordinate the will of its surrounding society to itself, and that there exists the possibility that the decision as to whether or not to use such a technology can be made by the technology itself. In such a world, then, printers and publishers become attendants to forces larger than themselves, and are driven by the fundamental need to both operate the press efficiently and profitably.

If, however, we accept the idea that the press had no intrinsic value, and relied rather on extrinsic forces to give it purpose, then we are subscribing to the notion that it was institutions and individuals operating on behalf of economic and cultural forces that supplied the meaning for printed materials. In such a world, printers and publishers would be allowed a multitude of reasons for engaging in their craft. Such a position can be found in Steve Mentz's 2006 book, *Romance for Sale in Early Modern England*:

> Printed books are complex artifacts, and their history is not just intellectual and textual, but also economic, social, and ideological. What Roger Chartier calls the "order of books" produced at least two kinds of communities in early modern England: book makers, which included artisans, craftsmen, and booksellers as well as writers and editors; and readers, which included more diverse if less clearly identifiable groups. (7-8)

Though he was writing predominantly on the Elizabethan period, Mentz reflects here the notion of the stratified, individualistic print culture that Johns and Halasz argue for. Perhaps more importantly, Mentz clarifies this debate by setting up a dialectic between Agents and Individuals. When applied to the debate between Johns and Eisenstein, such terminology allows us to discuss print cultures in terms of action and effect – regardless of whether we place the power in the hands of the press or its operators. If one accepts this model, then it becomes increasingly difficult to

analyze the work of early printers and publishers based solely on their role in the chain of supply and demand. Instead, we are forced to confront the somewhat murkier prospect that intentions were, indeed, wholly mutable. Setting aside the dimension of the inherent powers of the press, I wish to carry forward this interpretation of the nature of intentionality, as this is central to my understanding of the brand as a fluid, dynamic construct. A willingness to consider individual cases and situations is the only way to produce a comprehensive, realistic portrait of any historical figure – and, particularly, William Caxton.

While Johns and Eisenstein both make valid arguments for the direction that the study of the history of the book should take, it is useful to recognize that their debate stems from a position of privilege – in particular, the benefit of hindsight. The need to define the role of printing in cultural change is a historical one, and it is often combined with the need to comment on the sweeping changes that have been brought about in our own era via digital texts and other revolutions in communications technologies. For us, the power and influence of communications technologies cannot be overstated. For early modern readers, the availability and quality of texts was of concern to a few specific classes of people. It was for this group that sweeping changes did, in fact, occur, but this is not the wide-scale, earth-shattering revolution that some critics propose. In discussing this point, Asa Briggs and Peter Burke (2002, 16), in their *A Social History of the Media*, wrote the following on the slow spread of printing in Russia: "The fact that printing arrived so late in Russia suggests that print was not an independent agent and that the print revolution did not depend on technology alone. Printing required favorable social and cultural conditions in order to spread, and Russia's lack of a literate laity was a serious obstacle to the rise of print culture."

This example offers up the kind of compromise that can help us move beyond the impasse of current debates over the nature of 'print culture' and a putative 'printing revolution.' While there is little doubt that the introduction of the printing press had a significant impact on these sorts of social networks and uses of printed materials, it seems equally apparent that such changes required the ingenuity and creativity of independent human agents. As Briggs and Burke point out: "...as new media were introduced, older ones were not abandoned but coexisted and interacted with the new arrivals. Manuscripts remained important in the age of print, like books and radio in the age of television" (5). This is a point with which Eisenstein agrees, writing: "I stress the difference between the two modes of duplication and believe the shift from one to the other affected significant historical developments" (2002, 90). Ultimately, this quotation reveals the considerable common ground between Johns and Eisenstein, and suggests that their fundamental disagreement is the assessment of the intrinsic power of the press. This fixation with the intersection between technology and societal change is a common one in contemporary studies of the history of printing, and is, at least partially, the cause for a tendency to overlook the purely social and aesthetic motivations of those early printers and publishers who operated in this medium.

William Kuskin revisits Adrian Johns in his "Onely imagined: Vernacular Community and the English Press" by articulating what he sees as a fundamental, and unanswered, line of critical inquiry:

> Reconsidered as a machine of symbolic, as well as material production, the early press demonstrates how various modes of production—economic and political, capitalist and craft-based, linguistic and literary—are intertwined yet discrete, evolving at uneven rates and according to different historical trajectories with a complex production network. (2006, 201)[1]

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[1] Here, Kuskin echoes Rudolf Hirsch's claim that "the road from manuscript to print was continuous *and* broken..." (2006, 31n45). This, in turn, echoes developments in orality studies that attempt to acknowledge the often haphazard development from an oral culture to a literate one as occurring on a sort of continuum. For more on this point, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's (1990) <u>Visible Song</u>.

Kuskin's clear articulation of a system of textual production that is heterogeneous, allowing for the literary and the commercial to operate in tandem, and in varying amounts, is vital to my conception of Caxton as a multi-vocal printer of varied intentions and ambitions. On the recent critical reconsideration of such issues, Kuskin writes:

> The unique relationship between English printing and vernacular writing is, I suggest, representative of a much larger relationship between the material production of goods and the symbolic production of national identity. At the end of the century this relationship became decentralized and expanded; it underwent a transformation that brought printing to the English subject not as a unified cultural practice, but as a constellation of interrelated modes of production that were literally incoherent but nevertheless ideologically synthetic. (2006, 199-200)

Though far more concerned with the material aspects of Caxton's work than other critics typically are, Kuskin nevertheless argues for a historical scenario in which Caxton might have simultaneously engaged in the production (and, so, promotion) of his wares while also influencing the social applications of those same wares. Indeed, in *Symbolic Caxton*, Kuskin (2008, 114) argues that: "...Caxton's prose and press speak not of static literary or economic categories arranged in opposition, or undergoing either a radical or glacial process of transition, but are imbricated in a variety of forms: literary and political, courtly and common, mercantile and capitalist." These recent critical negotiations, all but absent in the work of William Blades in the late-Nineteenth century, through to H.S. Bennett in the mid-Twentieth century, and on to the majority of late Twentieth-Century discussions of Caxton, make it possible to consider Caxton in a new light. Indeed, Kuskin announces a challenge to the status quo that informs my study of the literary brand:

> For some time now the study of early books has proceeded as if the essential questions about the introduction of printing can be explored only in the narrowest terms. Unable or unwilling to discuss the period's relevance to modernity, snugly mired in its paradox, early book scholarship has allowed broader disciplines to claim that the incunabular period has little to do with modern history. Myopia of this sort has obscured the relationships between technology and ideology, literature and economics, and English writing and the English

> canon...To do so is to cede the field at a crucial moment, to admit either by agreement or by proxy that the innovations of fifteenth-century culture are sealed off in the past. (23-4)

Kuskin's call to reexamine the innovations of the Fifteenth century in order to shed light on modernity is precisely what I intend to take up by exploring the creation of publishers, and with them the rise of the brand.

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As can be seen in this brief overview, considerable quantities of scholarship on the history of printing have focused on the relative speed with which the adoption of the printing press engendered a variety of social, political, economic, and religious changes. The swiftness of the "printing revolution," and the degree to which it spread, have captured the attention of those who have focused on the ability of a technology to affect change in the broader culture. In many ways for these scholars, the *histoire du livre* is one of the struggle and interplay between culture and technology. While these are issues with important parallels in our own interaction with digital texts and other emergent media, I intend to largely set them aside in order to consider a parallel transformation which took place within the broader marketplace for books. That is, the rise of the publisher as a figure separate and distinct from that of the printer. It is through the actions of publishers that readership is expanded, books are exposed to broader markets, and literary brands – particularly, for the purposes of this dissertation, the Caxton Brand – are given their birth. The publisher, I contend, is a figure that could not have existed in the manuscript world at the time of Gutenberg, as this role required the willingness to attach texts to the personality and ideology of the seller – something that Gutenberg was unwilling to do, as seen by his relative textual silence.

In this dissertation, the transition from printer to publisher will be examined through the lens of the career of William Caxton. I will argue that the marketplace for books in England became differentiated in Caxton's lifetime between manuscript and print, as the newer technology was directed to create printed editions of native, vernacular works that had been previously unavailable to members of the mercantile and middle classes. As a result, the new marketplace of printed books – with its differentiated commodities and heightened emphasis on the desires of an emergent reading public – provided the soil from which the brand name was able to spring. Moreover, I will contend that the brand is an intrinsic property of all human marketplaces – social and economic – and that models of brand history can help us to better understand, and interpret, the legacy of critical, social, and cultural attitudes toward the work of publishers like Caxton.

On the success of Caxton's strategy of using the vernacular, English text as a way of forging a new market for printed books, Margaret Lane Ford (1999, 227) writes: "Caxton could be assured of success, because he exercised a virtual monopoly on books in English and at the same time may have indulged an affection for English literature. We have seen that the initial demand for the works being printed by Caxton was among the gentry-merchant class, a class whose book interests were not being met by the Latin trade." It is the cultivation of readership among this class that is the major initiative of Caxton the Publisher, and the single most significant distinction between Caxton and Gutenberg. By encouraging the growth of a readership of vernacular texts, Caxton achieved two major goals: the creation of a reading public that he alone was able to supply, which is essential for a novel business venture, and the creation of a business model that could exist outside of the complicated channels of patronage. Ultimately, it is this attention to a

readership and its tastes (or potential tastes, in the case of speculative printing), as well as the move to a market-driven printing business, that marks the rise of the publisher and the moment at which the brand becomes relevant to figures like Caxton.

To begin to understand this evolution from printer to printer-publisher, and then ultimately to printer *and* publisher, it is helpful to sketch out the career of the original printer: Johannes Gutenberg. On the historical reception of Gutenberg and his work, perhaps no single compilation is more helpful than Butler's (1968) *Origin of Printing in Europe*. True to his roots as bibliographer, Butler examines a number of disparate, contemporary accounts of printing's origin and spread in order to determine how it was once viewed by those who were living through the changes it brought. One source, taken from a text published by Roccobaldus of Ferrara at Rome in 1474, states the following under an entry for the year 1458: "James, surnamed Gutenberg, a native of Strassburg, and another named Fust, having attained skill in making impressions on parchment by means of metal types, became known at Mainz, a city of Germany, each as the printer of 300 leaves a day. John, also styled Mentelin, at Strassburg, a city in the same country, a skillful workman in the same art, comes into notice as the printer of an equal number of leaves daily" (100). Butler provides this quotation in contrast to the following, taken from Ivo Wittig's dedication of a German translation of Livy that was given to Emperor Maximillian in 1505: "In that city [Mainz] the wonderful art of printing was first invented by the ingenious John Gutenberg A.D. 1450 and afterward in the same Mainz, by the industry, money, and labor of John Fust and Peter Schoeffer, practically applied and permanently established" (99).

When Roccobaldus wrote on Gutenberg, he described the mechanical act of printing in terms of the quantity of leaves that could be printed in a day, and established Mentelin on equal footing on account of his ability to produce an equal number. For Roccobaldus, this technological accomplishment was the measure of Gutenberg's contribution, and the reason to offer him praise. It is essential to consider that this is a detail of Gutenberg's production capacity is entirely couched in the terms of a manuscript culture. The preoccupation here is with the speed with which Gutenberg could replicate a text. At no point do these critics recognize the potential for new markets, nor do they view the printed book as a distinct object – the focus, as it is, is entirely on the constituent leaf. There is, in fact, no account of the artistic or cultural consequences of this hitherto unknown form of media production. In some ways, this is perhaps the most significant fact when one sits down to assess the scope of Gutenberg's work as a printer.

While Butler's primary concern is discovering the originator of printing, as documented in contemporary accounts, it is particularly interesting that he echoes this sentiment by not choosing to distinguish between economic and artistic activities. Indeed, Butler follows the trend of describing Gutenberg as "skillful" and "ingenious." As we will see, this is hardly the terminology applied to printers like Caxton and, later, de Worde. For an example, one need look no further than David Carlson's (2006, 58) assertion that Caxton was interested in literature only so far as "…the love of literature in potential book-buyers...might be subjected to commercial exploitation..." for confirmation of this difference. This could well be because, as Pierre Bourdieu notes, there is a significant difference in attitudes towards originators (avant-garde) and those who come after:

> At one pole, there is the anti-'economic' economy of pure art. Found on the obligatory recognition of the values of disinterestedness and on the denegation of the 'economy' (of the 'commercial') and of 'economic' profit (in the short term), it privileges production and its

specific necessities, the outcome of an autonomous history. This production, which can acknowledge no other demand than one it can generate itself, but only in the long term, is oriented to the accumulation of symbolic capital, a kind of 'economic' capital denied but recognized, and hence legitimate – a veritable credit, and capable of assuring, under certain conditions and in the long term, 'economic' profits. At the other pole, there is the 'economic' logic of the literary and artistic industries which, since they make the trade in cultural goods just another trade, confer priority on distribution, on immediate and temporary success, measured for example by the print run, and which are content to adjust themselves to the pre-existing demand of a clientèle. (1996, 142)

Gutenberg (and with him, Schoeffer) might well be considered as belonging to this first group, at least from a historical perspective, as their print runs were of objects that they deemed useful and necessary, and little of their work was produced to order. Additionally, they were obliged to define the terms by which printed books would be set forth. Indeed, in both form and content, Gutenberg's output was tailored to suit the needs of an *existing* readership, and seems to have done little to foster new markets for books. By contrast, a third of Caxton's output was produced under patronage, and the rest was designed, and marketed, to an emerging class of English readers. Caxton, therefore, resides at the second (lower?) pole of Bourdieu's outline, and is largely considered to be little more than an opportunistic merchant.

In order to better illustrate this point, let us return to the story of Gutenberg's career as presented by scholars both modern and historical. We have already seen, in Butler, how Gutenberg's immediate followers characterized him. While some controversies existed as to the legitimacy of his claim to have invented printing – indeed, almost every nation with a press had its own tale to tell – history, along with his peers, tends to endorse the view that Gutenberg, during his time in Mainz, began the production of certain quantities of printed materials. In his study of Gutenberg's production, Stephan Füssel (2004, 58) provides the following contemporary account of Gutenberg's achievements issued from the press of Peter Schoeffer's son in 1505: "In Mainz the sagacious Johann Gutenberg discovered the wonderful art of printing, thereafter it was improved and perfected thanks to the industry, outlay, and efforts of

Johann Fust and Peter Schoeffer in Mainz." Schoeffer's account is one of the discovery of that somewhat abstract notion of an art, which is then later refined by followers and technicians. Gutenberg is not simply syntactically separate from Schoeffer and Fust, but rather his discovery, set on the pole of wisdom, is removed from the commercial pole of industry and outlay. Whether or not we choose to take "art" as indicative of a technical or philosophical system, we are clearly presented with the notion that something was created and then later refined by technicians. This separation, found in Bourdieu's writing, and, as we shall see, in the work of Febvre, is necessary for maintaining a certain type of what Bourdieu describes as "legitimacy." It is in this separation of innovation and industrialization that artistic credibility – that is, "authenticity" or "pure art" – is preserved.

For his own part, Schoeffer characterizes Gutenberg as being wise, but unable to perfect the art of printing without the intervention and assistance of knowledgeable partners. Setting aside the personal interest for Schoeffer, there is a subordination of the lofty to the practical here that will carry over into later readings of Caxton in a strikingly different way. Albert Kapr adds the following commentary on Gutenberg:

> Gutenberg can only be understood as a man of his age – caught up in the tensions between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His personality brings together the devout yet superstitious representative of the old established order, and the inventive, steadfast seeker and striver after more knowledge typical of a new, middle-class and mercantile society. (1996, 12)

Kapr describes Gutenberg as a seeker of knowledge, and a member of both the *ancien regime* of the Middle Ages and the *novus ordo* of the Renaissance. He positions Gutenberg not just between two discrete temporal units, but also between the pious, orthodox structures – what Althusser called the Ideological State Apparatuses – of the Middle Ages, and the pragmatic, commercial interests of the

upstart middle classes that would feature so prominently in the Renaissance. Such a depiction requires an implicit admission that Gutenberg is a transitional (even revolutionary) figure, and, yet, it does not require that we regard him as someone who was disruptive or disrespectful. Whatever the changes Gutenberg ushered in via printing, he is simultaneously credited and absolved. It is a remarkable critical position, but not an uncommon one. Indeed, given Gutenberg's relative orthodoxy with respect to the form and content of his printed matter, this may be the best possible description of his overall influence on print culture.

Turning then to one final comment on Gutenberg's influence, Füssel offers us the words of Joachim Vadian. Written in 1511 "in an introductory poem to a Viennese impression by Vietor and Singrenius," they reveal a contemporary response to printing that revels in the transformative power of print: "...The Germans, however, cast single letters from metal and showed that through a single pull of the press the highest daily output of the nimblest scribe could be exceeded, thus outshining all the inventions of the ancients put together; praise and glory to them!...For what one reads and by what means one's god-given brains are fed will be attended to from now onwards by the quality of metal alloy" (Füssel 2004, 108-9). This passage exhibits no uneasiness about the relationships between technology, art, and commerce. Indeed, a statement such as this collapses the two poles, earlier posited by Bourdieu, into a single, complete position. In this, I see a meaningful expression of an early modern response to printing (here, a humanist one) that is devoid of the sorts of tensions between art and commerce that are so common today (and, indeed, elsewhere in the early modern world). I believe that this is worth holding on to, as we begin to question the interplay of these two elements in the figure of the publisher.

II. Printing's Second Revolution: William Caxton and the Rise of the Publisher

An examination of the long-lasting consequences of William Caxton's publishing career in England might be profitably begun by turning to Lotte Hellinga's 2010 book *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*:

> The introduction of printing intensified what was already emerging as a cultural division, or what may be viewed as the coexistence of two parallel worlds. There was the world of the literati, the clerics, the academically educated, lawyers and doctors, who communicated in a single language, Latin. And then there was the multilingual vernacular world in which courts and their entourages had a very visible role, but in which the extensive mercantile classes and their organizations proved to be a growing power. The mercantile world was literate in its own way, in vernacular languages, and so was the smaller world of privileged, often highly literate women. Although printing belonged in the first instance to the Latin world, a slow and eventually successful process of conquest by the vernacular languages was set in motion not long after its invention. Caxton and his successors in England had an important, even decisive, part to play in it. (8-9)

What we find here is a description of Caxton's efforts to expand and create readership by embracing the vernacular. This decision to embrace the vernacular may initially be chalked up to an accident of circumstance. Caxton's printing career began in Cologne, where he worked on an edition of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*. It was also at this time that Caxton translated the first work he would publish: *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. He would conclude this work in September 1471, and would later that he had been able to do so "…because that I have now good leisure, being in Cologne and have none other thing to do at this time." This translation, later revised with encouragement and patronage from Margaret of York, would mark the beginning of Caxton's printing career in the Low Countries. When Caxton finally left to install himself at Westminster (records indicate he was paying rent as of September 30th, 1476), he continued the strategy of printing translations, and therein undertook to locate suitable works for publication.

In so doing, he printed works by notable, English literary figures like Lydgate and Chaucer, and also imported and translated a number of Continental texts. On this point, Trapp and Hellinga (1999, 4) write: "He made available in print the works of Chaucer, Lydgate, Gower and Thomas Malory in their original language, and he sought to enrich the expressive power of the vernacular at the same time as giving it a common and generally intelligible form. He also sought financial profit. To these purposes he brought an exceptional ability as a translator, as well as a sound commercial instinct, including how to find patronage."

One of the significant differences between Gutenberg and Caxton, as illustrated in these few examples, is that Caxton's criteria for the selection of texts to produce was motivated by a desire to create a new marketplace for his wares. Rather than playing to an existing literati, Caxton invested heavily in the vernacular. In so doing, he drew upon the interests of an emergent mercantile readership, and forged a new space in which printed books could contribute. On this point, H.S. Bennett argues:

> The fifteenth century had seen the rapid growth of the manufacture of vernacular manuscripts to meet a great variety of needs, and from Caxton onwards, printers were aware of the desire of men and women for texts upon all kinds of practical matters, as well as others dealing with religion, legal, scientific, or educational topics. Even Caxton (despite his obvious leanings towards certain types of literature) showed from an early date that he recognized this, and catered for a wide variety of tastes and of people. (1952, 54)

Bennett recognized that Caxton's success rested in part on identifying texts that brought forward a feature of manuscript culture – in this case, increasing vernacular production – and using that feature to address and connect with a wider body of readers. On a related point, Trapp and Hellinga argue: "Caxton prepared texts as editor and translator. He introduced a significant section of contemporary literature in French into the English literary tradition, and in doing so made it accessible to readers to whom it had largely been unknown. He contributed substantially to the creation of a wider readership among the merchant and professional classes, mostly

in London" (10). This cultivation of readers through an understanding of their tastes and social aspirations is an innovation that serves as a useful point of division between the work of the printer and the work of the publisher. In Caxton's enterprise, the selection of texts is driven not, as it was for Gutenberg, by an assessment of what is *already* popular. Instead, Caxton's publications are driven by an assessment of what the marketplace (and its readers) might desire. This speculation requires an understanding of both literature and its marketplace, and carries with it a number of concerns – marketing being chief among them – that are not significant for those who are simply printing books to satisfy patrons or specialized, dedicated clientele (as in legal and medical texts).

On the issue of marketing and Caxton's publishing decisions, Margaret Lane Ford writes:

> The owners mentioned above [a collection of London merchants], and the lines of connection linking many of them, demonstrate clearly the network of owners of these early English-printed books among the merchant, gentry and noble classes, based, if not on actual blood-ties, then on professional and social associations, such as the Middle Temple, the House of Commons or mercantile endeavours. Prestigious patronage certainly influenced the ownership of these early English books, both directly through distribution of sponsored books, and indirectly through prestige placed on such ownership. Book ownership was an attribute of high social status, which Caxton not only understood but was able to exploit. From the evidence of surviving books, he was entirely successful at judging the market for his books. Unlike books owned by the university-educated, books owned by the gentry-merchant classes were not directly necessary to conducting their affairs, but, as devotional aids and works of edification as well as entertainment, Caxton's books were necessary to their life-styles. The social status of these classes provided the leisure to enjoy such books and the means to acquire them. (1999, 218)

Here, Ford hits upon an essential component with respect to evaluating Caxton's publishing career: his focus on the "social status" of books. This desire to link his literary wares to the social capital that his readers valued indicates that Caxton's commercial strategies were not so far removed from those who currently market books. As we will see in the examination of his paratexts that follows in Chapter Two, Caxton actively engaged in a program of marketing for his books – a program that strove to define the social, moral, or other need that his books could satisfy.

Indeed, it is in this that we are able to appreciate the business savvy of Caxton's publishing enterprise, and also that we are able to build a bridge between a modern conception of branding and those activities that define the work of an early modern publisher. To begin to see this link more clearly, let us examine Caxton's publishing career in a bit more detail.

On Caxton's publishing agenda, Alexandra Gillespie (2006, 34) writes: "Caxton was a book producer as well as a writer. Vernacular texts served as precedents for his authorship; vernacular English books, and the growth in their production in the decades before 1473-4, must also be considered a part of the way that he thought about his work." And, indeed, they must. For if we are to truly learn anything about the nature of those who purchased Caxton's books, as well as Caxton's own understanding of his marketplace, then we must begin to recognize the continuity of these two entities from the late-medieval to the early modern period. Andrew Taylor (1999, 364) addresses the nature of this demand: "The pattern of supply and demand changed dramatically with the introduction of print. Simply meeting the demand had been a major challenge for the manuscript book trade, but a technology that produced several hundred copies at a time provided a new commercial drive for the formation of readerships." These demands are discussed primarily in relation to Caxton and his immediate readers, but the supposition of their universal existence underlies most modern criticism. To see this more clearly, consider the work of Walter Benjamin in his landmark 1936 essay entitled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction:"

> In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. Replicas were made by pupils in practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain. Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. Historically, it advanced intermittently and in leaps at long intervals, but with accelerated intensity...The enormous changes which printing, the mechanical reproduction of writing, has brought about in literature are a familiar story. (1167)

Benjamin continues, painting a portrait of a revolution in both aesthetics and

distribution that will seem familiar, indeed, as we continue to explore Caxton

scholarship:

> ...[F]or the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. (1172)

This is certainly reminiscent of David Carlson's (2006, 51) assertion that: "Printing

required the creation of new populations of book users, and could do so most

effectively by distinguishing its products from handmade ones, by means of design

features that at once were technically more apt for mechanical reproduction (e.g.,

one rather than multicolor printing) and would also appeal directly to new end-

users." Of course, Carlson is at odds with those who, like Alexandra Gillespie,

suggest that the reading public was largely primed for Caxton's arrival. For Carlson

the expansion of the reading public is a teleological component of the printing press

and its deployment – the press, by virtue of its considerable potentiality as an agent

of change, *must* grow beyond its roots. In a sense, this recalls Eisenstein's earlier

assertion that the press has an intrinsic transformative power, and seems to take the

responsibility for change straight out of the hands of the human attendants to this

nascent print culture.

On the transformative power of the press, Andrew Taylor (1999, 364) writes:

"Caxton depended heavily on a traditional patronage network to underwrite the cost

of a print run and may even have run a scriptorium, but he also endeavored to

expand his readership, deploying a complex set of strategies in his dedications and

prefaces to "make" his readers." These strategies that Taylor references may be seen

in the habits of early modern readers and book-buyers, perhaps most readily by

looking at the collected volumes – or *sammelbände* – that these readers compiled out

of printed stock. Though he is concerned primarily with the nature of Elizabethan

book-buyers and book-sellers, Steve Mentz (2006, 14) provides an idea that may

usefully be extrapolated to the incunabula period: "The interactions between

Elizabethan fictions and the peritexts of print demonstrates the rise of a new field of

literary culture, driven neither by patronage nor the joint-stock companies of the

public stage, but by an implied contract between authors and readers that expressed

itself economically in the book market. The anonymous transaction of buying a book

first began to loom large in the imaginations of professional English writers in the

Elizabethan period..." While not quite the personalized experience promised by the

interchange of books in the Elizabethan era, Caxton's encouragement of the

construction of *Sammelbände* suggests that he intended to levy the power of his

press in order to support the needs and desires of his book-buyers. On this point,

Gillespie writes:

> ...*Sammelbände*, like manuscript booklets, allowed for a dynamic aspect in the early trade in printed books. They could accommodate the whims of buyers, and they suggest the importance of those whims to the producers of all late medieval books, manuscript and print alike. I argue below that, in certain ways, this remained true throughout the period of concern in this study [printing after 1478]. But *Sammelbände* containing copies of Caxton's folio Chaucer editions—which were more expensive to produce than his small pamphlets of Chaucerian verse and presumably cost more to buy—suggest something else as well. As they issued growing numbers of printed books for the English market book producers and retailers sought, and found, new mechanisms to single out, promote, and also to link their wares... (2006, 67-8)

Gillespie argues for a system in which books were transitory, and texts canonical.

The individual buyer was allowed, perhaps for the first time, an easy system of

assembling a book that met particular needs and satisfied personal desires – and,

perhaps more significantly, contained those *authors* he had come to prize. This is a

technological consequence of printing, and is here linked to an economic force –

market demand. Of course, this is not the sort of top-driven demand that one finds

Carlson promoting, but a genuine, grassroots desire for customizable printed books.

In addition, this customizability of one's books speaks to a fluidity in the Caxton

brand, and, perhaps more importantly, the use of individual texts to more definitively

define one's own personal brand. However, it is important to recognize that such

customized compilations were commonplace in manuscript culture, as often a larger

text would be made out of smaller, occasionally-related texts (consider, for example

the medieval compilations like the so-called "Vercelli Book," or the "Exeter Book" –

these being seemingly random collections of Anglo-Saxon prose homilies,

hagiographic texts, and verse). Lotte Hellinga, examining this situation, does not

regard Caxton as merely an opportunist, but seems to support the notion that Caxton

may have held the materials he printed in genuine regard:

> However, English printers did produce texts which could not be obtained elsewhere. Only rarely did imported books cover the same ground or affect the same aspects of life. This gave English printing a unique national and almost chauvinistic character. Caxton seems to have foreseen this from the beginning...When he settled at Westminster he must have planned to begin an independent press, and to publish literary works in English – texts that were his own delight – for a public that was not accustomed to owning books. Patrons, royal or otherwise, were a matter of opportunity and not a basis for business. To prepare the way for the *Canterbury Tales* he printed some appetising little books which could be assembled to a sizeable volume. (1982, 101)

Here, Hellinga has married the financial concerns of the press, the demands of the

English market, and Caxton's own personal appetites (or, rather, supposed appetites)

in a way that jeopardizes neither scholarly integrity nor critical merit. Indeed, she

echoes G.M. Trevelyan who wrote: "[Caxton] was an early and noble example of a

well-known modern type that has done so much for the world, the individualistic

Englishman, following out his own 'hobbies' with business capacity and trained

zeal...His industry was prodigious...He had indeed a missionary zeal for the

dissemination of good and useful books..." (quoted in Deacon 1976, 54-5)[2]

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[2] Such characterizations seem to follow from Plomer, who writes: "His [Caxton's] work as an editor and translator shows him to have been a man of extensive reading, fairly acquainted with the French and Dutch languages, and to have possessed not only an earnest purpose, but with it a quiet sense of humour, that crops up like ore in a vein of rock in many of his prologues" (1900, 18).

Though Caxton's texts often resembled, sometimes in painstaking material detail, the manuscript texts he copied, the production of *sammelbände* (and lesser-known works, generally) represents an important break in the method of early modern print consumption. Such a tactic caters to both casual and specific consumers, and eliminates the need for premeditated acquisition. That is, the emphasis on allowing readers to assemble books that interested them from a variety of options helped speculative printing become a viable business model. It is in this single act, I find, that the power of the press, the variability of taste, and the rising interest in English language texts are most happily married. And it is this combination of factors that makes the rise of the brand during this period something of considerable consequence for the field of literary criticism. For we must consider that the absence of any physical, unifying characteristic suggests that readers were making their purchases based on taste, cultural capital, or familiarity with the printer/publisher. This is the very essence of branding, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

III. Appraising Caxton's Success as a Publisher through Patronage and Textual Diversity

One of the considerable difficulties with appraising the success of publishing ventures during the incunabular period is the lack of hard data with respect to the scope of their respective operations. Caxton's work is no different, and so the relative success of his publishing enterprise – based on the modern measures of sales figures, customer engagement, and market share – is largely impossible to ascertain. In light of this, I propose that we evaluate the success of Caxton's enterprise by examining the amount of work that was done under the auspices of patronage, as well as the number of discrete titles that were produced by his press. The first of

these criteria allows us insight into the amount of traction that Caxton gained in the existing market for literary production. Conversely, the amount of material produced without need for a patron is suggestive of a business that was taking hold in a market economy where success was determined by supply and demand. The second criterion – discrete titles – allows us to infer that a press was established enough to speculate on the needs and wants of readers. For purposes of this introduction, I will argue in general terms that the increase of this number over time was reflective of the success that Caxton enjoyed, and that any decrease may be construed as a decline in market share (even if, at times, this may have been Caxton's decision). Finally, in order to set these numbers in relief, I will contrast them with the same data as related to Caxton's apprentice and successor: Wynkyn de Worde. On this last point, Trapp and Hellinga (1999, 10) argue: "Caxton organized a many-sided publishing business, which was thriving at the time of his death in 1492, and stable enough to be taken over successfully by Wynkyn de Worde."

As discussed previously, Caxton's career in publishing with his translation of *Recuiel des histoires de Troies*, which was produced under the patronage of Margaret of York. Janet Backhouse describes Lady Margaret's involvement with early publishers:

> Lady Margaret, celebrated for her piety and for her patronage of scholarship, not only owned a number of manuscripts, some of which are mentioned in her will, but also was a noteworthy patron of early printing in England. Caxton, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson all issued editions in her name or at her command, usually of devotional material and including continental works of which she was herself, on occasion, the translator. (1999, 273)

On the significance of Margaret early on in Caxton's career, Hellinga writes: "Now, with the presence of Margaret of York and her patronage of his translation of the Recueil des histoires de Troies, he was in a position to follow the Brugundian model for a work in English, and to turn it into the novel medium of print" (2010, 38). Lady Margaret would remain a prominent figure in Caxton's career, as some

30% of the works that Caxton produced would be for patrons. This portion of

Caxton's career would also involve a considerable involvement with Anthony

Woodville (second Earl Rivers, and close relation of Elizabeth Woodville who was

the Queen of Edward IV and Margaret's sister-in-law). It is clear that this set of

interconnected familial relations proved a fertile source of support for Caxton's

publishing venture.[3]

On the size of the marketplace in which Caxton operated as a publisher, Trapp

and Hellinga write:

> Some printing statistics may be useful here. Before 1501, in the incunabular period, some 402 items, 364 excluding broadsides, were printed in four English centres: Westminster, London, Oxford and St Albans, all but 20 or so in the two first named. Those in Latin (120) account for about 33%; in English (214) 59%; in Law French (30) 8%. This compares with an overall figure for European incunabula of something over 70% in Latin and under 30% in the various vernacular languages. The English situation is a reflection in part of market conditions, and in part of the fact that no work of prime importance was written in Latin in Britain during the fifteenth century. (17)[4]

As a subset of this data, Caxton printed about 108 items, with 87 of these being

individual titles. Allowing for the nine years between Caxton's death and 1501,

Caxton is responsible for nearly 50% of books printed in English with 81% of these

being individual titles. If we take Bennett's (1952, 61) figure of 30% as

representative of the amount of work that Caxton produced under patronage, then

only about 32 works out of Trapp and Hellinga's figure of 214 were brought into

being with the assistance of Caxton's patrons. Critics have argued that this is largely

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[3] At times, this support took on rather more personal forms than simply money, as in this anecdote that Bennett recounts: "The Earl [Rivers] sent one of his gentlemen to Caxton with this message, promising him in addition a yearly fee of a buck in summer and a doe in winter" (1952, 16).

[4] Bennett offers this cautionary advice when dealing with statistics of this sort: "If we turn from these general statements to examine the position more in detail, we may begin by noting that a little over 5000 volumes containing separate editions of works written in English were published before 1537 and still survive. This last phrase is important, for we cannot calculate how many works were printed during this period which for various reasons have perished altogether. Often what survives does so in such a way as to make clear the tenuous nature of the link between survival and destruction. For instance, there are a number of books which we know of only by the chance survival of a few strips, or of a single page. Others have come down to us in unique single mutilated copies, often lacking beginning and ending. Others, again, are found only in one or two examples – the sole evidence of an edition" (1952, 20).

because Caxton intended to do his work without the assistance of patrons. Russell

Rutter, in his 1987 article "William Caxton and Literary Patronage" writes:

> In her recent book on the introduction of printing in England, Lotte Hellinga has urged that the patronage of Earl Rivers was more significant than has been believed, extending even to the first edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. But, she cautions, when Caxton settled in Westminster, "he must have planned to begin an independent press. … Patrons, royal or otherwise, were a matter of opportunity and not a basis for business." The evidence that, for Caxton, patrons were "not a basis for business" lies in the prologues and epilogues contained in many of his books. The nature and significance of this evidence will not be appreciated, though, unless the prologues and epilogues are read without the assumption that Caxton was merely working within the patronage system. (444)

Rutter augments this argument: "Caxton was not a lone author seeking protection

and sustenance but rather a printer and publisher in control of a press and a system of

book distribution. What literary activity—mainly translation—Caxton engaged in he

engaged in by choice: he could easily have paid translators, as de Worde and other

printers were to do" (453). It is indeed important to note that Caxton's interest in

patrons, given his success in trade and service on the Continent, was likely not

driven solely by economic means. The evidence for this can be found in his nearly

2:1 production of speculative works over those advanced with some involvement of

patronage. We must, therefore, do as Rutter urges, and consider the possibility that

Caxton truly set out to forge an independent publishing business that relied in no

small part on his "readers and hearers."

One potential measure of success for Caxton's publishing agenda is its

longevity. While Caxton worked in England for fewer than twenty years, his

apprentice – Wynkyn de Worde – continued and expanded upon the publishing

strategies that he began. As I will discuss in the third chapter, de Worde printed

nearly 400 titles in approximately 750 editions. He also introduced new, better

typefaces and woodcut illustrations. Additionally, de Worde greatly expanded

Caxton's offerings by producing popular romances, cookbooks, grammars, musical

texts, and other such ephemera. All of this was done with very little assistance from

patrons, while de Worde built upon Caxton's speculative agenda by forging links with other networks of printers, publishers, and booksellers. Though it is certain that patronage continued after de Worde's death, it is equally clear that his ability to forge ahead with Caxton's program, despite his lack of title or position, is indicative of the viability of a publishing model that relies on readers to keep it afloat. I will turn to a discussion of these readers in later chapters, but first I would like to turn my attention to the brand.

Considered from the perspective of "reputation," or perhaps "cultural capital," the transition from a patronage-driven economy to a brand-driven economy is not so unexpected. Indeed, patronage is partly an indication of an investment in the perceived merits of an individual. That is, patronage is granted on the basis of an individual's reputation. In similar fashion, brands achieve their success because they are thought of as having merit or utility to the consumer. When Caxton and de Worde moved away from patronage, and strove to build their own enterprise, they were forced to build a new system of reputation for themselves. The introduction of the printer's mark to heighten familiarity and indicate continuity, and the cultivation of taste among specific groups of readers (particularly those of the mercantile class, as well as women), contributed to the building of favor towards these new enterprises as they created a sense of involvement on the part of the reader. This type of engagement is with the "life-style" that Ford described, and it is this system of relations that creates what we recognize now as a branded entity. I will discuss all of this in the following chapter, but it is important to recognize here that the brand in its early modern sense is a container for the attitudes and impressions that readers held toward publishers, and so it is through the personalization of their wares to meet the needs and tastes of their clientele that Caxton and de Worde were able to form a

successful publishing business in which the readers themselves became patrons and – most importantly – consumers of a particular brand.

<div align="center">***</div>

I will now proceed to the body of my dissertation where I will advocate for the utility of the brand with respect to literary analysis. I will argue that there exist significant parallels between the manner in which brands develop and the publishing careers of Caxton and de Worde. I will work to establish this through a discussion on the nature of the brand, and its analogues in the field of literary production and promotion. I will examine Caxton's work in detail, focusing on his prologues, epilogues, and printer's device in order to demonstrate the strategies that may be seen as contributing to the construction of a brand in the wider marketplace of books and readers. Beyond this, an examination of the ways in which Wynkyn de Worde was able to build upon, and then extend, Caxton's publishing strategies is intended to demonstrate the commercial viability of Caxton's brand.

Considered in finer detail, I will begin Chapter One by laying out the role of the brand as a historiographical and biographical tool, as well as outline its potential for bridging book history and business history. I will explore the varied contemporary roles of branding, and demonstrate the ways in which using the framework of the brand will allow for more nuanced studies of early printers like Caxton. Chapter Two will extend this work by providing a detailed analysis of the historiographical construction of Caxton and his work, and in so doing I will explore several critical conflicts that might be resolved through the use of the more inclusive model of the brand. Through this discussion, I will discuss the utility of the brand

for capturing the aesthetic and commercial activities of a given publisher without necessitating the privileging of one over the other.

Chapter Two will also focus on a close reading of Caxton's prologues and epilogues, in order to better develop a sense of how Caxton worked to fashion his public persona (a key component in the early life-cycle of a brand). This discussion will also feature a look at his use of a printer's mark, and his other commercial efforts. In so doing, we will begin to trace the path from individual printer to brand, and so illustrate how critical biographies are often about the impression of a figure, rather than the figure itself.

Chapter Three looks at the "afterlife" of the brand via the work of Wynkyn de Worde, and discusses the ways in which Caxton's brand was posthumously shaped by de Worde. There are two key reasons for doing this. The first of these is so that we might arrive at a more complete understanding as to how a brand's "secondary development" (contrasted here with the "primary development" that occurs in its native context) complicates our understanding of that brand. Following on from this, the second reason for discussing de Worde is to get at some of the criticism that paints him and Caxton with the same brush. The purpose of this is to effect a more sophisticated understanding of brand development, which, in turn, might help to produce more accurate depictions of historical figures and their immediate actions and influence. Finally, I will offer a few concluding suggestions as to how this work might be extended to other areas of literary and cultural studies.

<u>Chapter One</u> - Brands and Book History

Up to this point, I have presented a variety of topics in an attempt to set the scene for Caxton's arrival in England, as well as the difficulties posed by existing in both the commercial and artistic spheres. I have examined a sample of Caxton and Gutenberg scholarship in order to demonstrate the differing critical approaches to their legacies, and I have worked to establish the cultural trends that led up to the printing of vernacular books in England. In doing this, I have endeavored to establish the social and economic context surrounding the emergence of the brand. However, what remains, and what I will now undertake to provide, is a survey of various theories of branding, as well as business practices among early modern printers, and an expanded discussion of the differences, highlighted particularly by Lesser, between printer and publisher during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries. In the course of this discussion, I will examine where responsibility for the creation of the Caxton brand lies – either with Caxton, his public, or later scholars of the history of print culture. Such a discussion naturally hinges upon the extent to which it can be shown that Caxton innovated over previous modes of textual representation with respect to presentation, advertising, and cultivation of name recognition. As the creation of a brand relies in large part on the differentiation of that brand from others in the marketplace, these remain crucial issues in our attempt to define what the Caxton brand really is. Furthermore, as a subset of this discussion, I hope to demonstrate that contemporary critical attitudes toward the interplay of Commerce and Art are integral to any such consideration, as they determine, and have previously influenced, the critical willingness to admit non-profit-driven models of textual production during Caxton's period. This willingness, in turn, influences where we might be willing to place the branding of early printed books between (or,

it is hoped, across) the poles of Commerce and Art. Finally, an investigation of the change in such critical approaches over time will reveal how the nature, and scope, of bias and suspicion with respect to this relationship has changed since the early modern period. In what is perhaps a slightly provocative turn, I will suggest that early modern brand capitalism existed in a way that is not directly analogous to our modern conception of branded culture.

Let us begin, then, with a contemporary account of the brand, as presented by Naomi Klein in her book *No Logo*:

> Though the words are often used interchangeably, branding and advertising are not the same process. Advertising any given product is only one part of branding's grand plan, as are sponsorship and logo licensing. Think of the brand as the core meaning of the modern corporation, and of the advertisement as one vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world. (2001, 5)

Klein is keen to separate the idea of the "brand," which represents a "core meaning" from communicative functions it holds through "advertising." While advertising was greatly diminished during the incunabular period, we do find that printers' marks served to both demonstrate the provenance of a text and to provide an endorsement for its content. Generally affixed to a page at one extreme of the text, or occasionally in the margins, these marks recall the heraldic and guild insignias used elsewhere to denote ownership, authorship, or origin. As Martha Driver (2004, 90) notes: "Using a woodcut mark or device to identify the producer of a book was a new idea that came along shortly after the invention of movable type...By identifying the maker of a book for prospective customers, the printer's mark functions as a label and an advertisement." Continuing on from this, Paul Duguid (2010, 157) observes: "Brands, then, have many distinctive aspects; among these is their signalling power, which is capable of acting across distances." Yet despite the apparent harmony between Klein, Driver, and Duguid's positions, there exists a powerful difference in the modern response to brands and their early modern

deployment. For Klein and similar critics of corporate tactics, the project of brands is "...transforming culture into little more than a collection of brand-extensions-in-waiting" (30). There is an aspect of class struggle to Klein's sweeping review of branding: "Though the degree of meddling varies, our culture was built on compromises between notions of public good and the personal, political and financial ambitions of the rich and powerful" (34).

However, to paraphrase Johns' argument on the intrinsic powers of the press, it is not the mark, but readers' reception of it, that shapes the scope of its influence. Furthermore, marks set in texts would only have been discovered by those who were already invested in a literary culture – excepting, perhaps, the occasional advertisement. They were not attempts to win new converts to reading, or to one particular type of reading, but rather signposts for the involvement of particular printers or publishers. Alternatively, one might consider these signs as being typically invested with those attitudes and intentions that the reader brought to them, and, thus, they served as a symbol of what one has done, or what one has aspired to, rather than anything more concrete and mercantile.[5] As such, what we are really dealing with is a question of legitimacy/authority, and the creation of a particular relationship between publisher and consumer, rather than one of marketing. The printer's mark is operating here as a component of the overall brand (here, a logo), and would likely have been more readily viewed as the endorsement of a particular publisher/printer rather than a metonymic stand-in for a type of commodity, as trademarks and logos of today would be. The printer's mark of Caxton and de Worde's day is, in simplest terms, a textual thumbprint. It is a logo for a particular

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[5] A more detailed discussion of Caxton's device can be found in Chapter Two. Additionally, the use of Caxton's device by Wynkyn de Worde is a key feature of the discussion in Chapter Tree.

publisher/printer, and it is also an indication of the source of a translation and text. In this way, it is more a stand-in for the type and quality of a text than anything else.

As I have observed previously, the publisher's ultimate goal is to create a rapport with his readers. One that would allow his products to accumulate, via his good reputation, a cultural capital that would help them to sell – even if, as was often the case, they were only minor texts or corrected reprints. In this sense, there is a hint of the modern brand philosophy that people do not purchase goods; they purchase a way of life. Yet, even so, the printer's device is an endorsement that carries less weight than a modern brand, in that it cannot take the place of other advertising and paratextual information (as the modern brand might). The problem, then, is that there are few accounts of reader responses to the presence of printers' marks on texts. Instead, we are left to attempt to reconstruct the nature of the marketplace from the actions of printers and publishers like Caxton, as well as the general success of their business practices.

All of this analysis of branded culture and printed marks is intended to move us towards a position of being able to recognize that the particular brand of publishing that Caxton employed was far different from the "brand-name" publishing of today. This point seems a vital one, as many critical analyses of Caxton's output are couched solely in terms of his relationship to the economic marketplace in which he operated. By overlooking any other ambitions he might have held, as well as the commercial aspects of his texts that readers might well have demanded, we are missing an opportunity to advance not only the history of branded culture, but also a chance to redefine just what it means to be a "brand name." Furthermore, I feel strongly that our blindness to the difference between pre-Nineteenth Century constructions of the relationships between Commerce and Art,

and those of the current critical moment, says much about those assumptions that underlie and obscure our analyses of early modern output. As scholars like Lesser are just beginning to outline the existence of a "publishing function" that is analogous to Foucault's "author-function" and lies on the end of a continuum from printer to publisher, it remains obvious that much needs to be done in the way of reclaiming the particulars of those first early modern gestures towards a print culture.

In his 2008 book *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism*, William Kuskin concludes a discussion of Caxton's prologue to the 1490 *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796) with the following:

> For the nineteenth century, the library is living room and study, a repository for private indulgence that is also a place of public gathering and performance. The historical circumstances are different for Caxton but nonetheless public. Caxton constructs himself as an occupant of Diodorus's library, uninterested in the materials of production and entirely engrossed in the world of reading. If the nineteenth – and twentieth – century libraries show us, generally, that the consumption of books is also a mode of social production, Caxton's depiction of his study shows us that the mode of production constitutes a mode of consumption as well. All three libraries are symbolic constructions as they are physical places, and as such they speak their culture in ways beyond individual intervention; in each case, however, the book appears as one element in a larger cycle of social production and consumption. (49)

Kuskin's conclusion typifies the ongoing redefinition of the early modern book by scholars such as Alexandra Gillespie, Seth Lerer, Adrian Johns, and others as the locus of a vast network of socio-cultural and economic practices. For these scholars, as it is here with Kuskin, the book is the intermediary in not only a capitalist economy, but a cultural one as well.[6] A similar critical methodology can be brought to bear on the human agents (the printers, publishers, booksellers, etc.) in that economy. Indeed, further inquiry needs to be made into the process by which these figures mediated cultural and economic concerns within their work. In an effort to

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[6] On this point, I am particularly interested in Guillory's (1995, *ix*) discussion of "cultural capital" as it relates to the literary syllabus: "First, it is *linguistic* capital, the means by which one attains to a socially credentialed and therefore valued speech, otherwise known as "Standard English." And second, it is *symbolic* capital, a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person" (*ix*).

achieve what I believe to be a more comprehensive understanding of the careers of de Worde and Caxton – one that is thematically akin to the characterization of the book that Kuskin outlines – I have elected to (re-)appropriate the concept of the brand from its general, business-centric context. I have done this because brands, like individuals, have a life within society that is simultaneously consequent of, and independent from, their own economic interest.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives us two useful examples of the nominative uses of the word "brand." The first of these from the Nineteenth Century – "A trade-mark, whether made by burning or otherwise" – is in line with the historical focus of the brand as a physical mark of possession or denotation. However, the 1950s and '60s yield the following nominative entry: "...as **brand-image**, the impression of a product in the minds of potential users or consumers; also *transf.* and *fig.*, the general or popular conception of some person or thing; **brand-name**, a trade or proprietary name..."[7] It is here that we begin to see the recognition that the brand is operating in spheres beyond the physical, in much the same way that Kuskin, Johns, and others have argued for the book's symbolic qualities. Curiously, however, an examination of the verbal entry for "brand" reveals that this dual-life of the brand as a physical and psychological entity is much longer lived than might be supposed. Beginning with an entry from page xii of Arthur Golding's translation of De Mornay's *A woorke concerning the trewnesse of the Christian religion,* and proceeding through a 1644 entry of the Connecticut Public Record, the Sixteenth Century offers the familiar definition: "To mark indelibly, as a proof of ownership, as a sign of quality, or for any other purpose; to impress (a word, letter, or device) by way of brand. *spec.* to mark (cattle or horses) with a brand," as well as the

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[7] See the entry "n." in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., s.v. "brand," accessed May 22, 2010, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50026645.

considerably more modern definition – "[t]o set a mental mark of ownership upon" – taken from a 1602 entry in William Warner's *Albion's England*: "The greene knight, be whoso he shall, her heart had branded hers."[8] Taken altogether, it is apparent that the brand has enjoyed a complex history as a mediator of both economic and cultural capital.

Therefore, what I am proposing is a realignment of the brand within our critical vocabulary, in order to recover its dual nature. As the brand is something that is already defined in a public context as a bearer of both economic and cultural interests, it is possible, and useful, to use brand analysis to organize sets of historical and biographical data – in this case, with respect to Caxton and de Worde. As I have noted above, critical treatments of Caxton have tended to focus on his economic interests, and have subordinated his literary practices to these. In responding to this, my project picks up from Kuskin:

> From Caxton's perspective the trademark had more pressing work to do: it had to produce his role as a commercial, indeed as *the* commercial agent on the book. It accomplished this not in coded depth but in a symbolic level of meaning that remains entirely on the surface of the page. Freed of its commemorative relationship to history, the printer's mark acts as a sign lifted from commerce and applied to the object of the book as a symbol of its mode of production. In this, the device accomplished the same function as the modern and postmodern library: it implies an order for books as a metaphor for social organization. To answer the question of the relationship between print production and biography embedded in the printer's mark, then, I offer the following: the printer's mark consolidates the individual into an identity, and makes that identity available for public consumption. It describes the book as a particular printer's work, a form of property transferable to the reader through retail sale, but never entirely divorced from its maker. Thus, it articulates a relationship between the individual and the book in which the individual is organized by the book, but also by implication beyond it, in ways incoherent. (2008, 79-80)

Kuskin's description of the printer's mark, as it encapsulates the encoded intentions and proprietary claims of the printer, even as it makes that printer available as a product or a series of products, is precisely what I am hoping to emulate and expand in my evaluation of Caxton's career and output. It is insufficient to consider Caxton

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[8] See the entry "v." in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., s.v. "brand," accessed May 22, 2010, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50026645.

as the producer of a set of material texts, or as the owner of England's first vernacular publishing house. After all, this is not the man that critics like Carlson (2006, 58) had in mind when he wrote: "Caxton would have been occupied by consideration of such cultural abstractions as literature only secondarily, as a by-product of his preoccupation with distribution of the productive capacity of the technology in which he had invested. His book publishing was strictly business, a reaction to the prior, materially determined fact of the technology's productive capacity." Here, Carlson has constructed a pseudo-Caxton: a figure that is born of a modern understanding of the history of book production, the organizing power of the printed word, and the circles in which those objects moved. Carlson's Caxton is a figure who is dominated by his technology, and compelled to forsake the literary for the commercial.

By embracing the brand – a conceptual and commercial object that exists as the locus for the accumulated "capital" that the cultural, political, social, and economic lives of an entity produce – we are adopting a structure that allows us to organize these influences within our critical studies without needing to choose a "dominant" mode as Carlson does. This is similar to the "incoherence" that Kuskin refers to above, in speaking of the relations that govern the interactions between individual and book. In this dissertation, I will use the concept of the brand as an organizing tool for all sorts of historical and biographical information, and I will begin by elaborating on the ways in which Brands are established. I propose that all Brands participate in a life-cycle, and that this allows for a logical organizing principle in this dissertation. This life-cycle of the brand being, generally, Birth (establishment/creation of the brand), Life (the give-and-take process of negotiation between consumer and producer), and Death/Afterlife (the re-

appropriation/abstraction of the brand by those who come after its maker).[9] Indeed, a

cycle is a useful way of conceptualizing the development of brands, and branded

entities, just as it is for the literary work that Darnton, Barker, and Adams describe in

their own models. As brands do change considerably over their lifespan, and

develop in ways that are often linear and progressive, such models are very well

suited to this discussion.[10]

      Much as is the case with semantic meaning, which is dependent on two or

more speakers arriving at a shared interpretation, brands – being dependent as they

are on a shared relationship between product and consumers - arise when an

individual encounters a given product. The act of encountering that product, and the

phenomenological responses of the consumer (or viewer, reader, etc.), begins to

assemble a connected set of impressions within that individual's mind. However,

unlike language-based meaning, brands simply require a network of social

connections in order to exist. There is some expectation – for crafted brands – that

the brand will act as a referent for some particular entity, but this is never perfectly

attainable. Regardless, the brand will exist in this inchoate form because it

represents a system of reactions, even as it endeavors to stand for a *particular* agent.

During the next, post-establishment phase of the brand's life-cycle, the brand will

negotiate its place within a cultural/social/economic framework. For products, this

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[9] One finds a slightly different construction of the Brand Life Cycle in the BNET Business
Dictionary: "The three phases through which brands pass as they are introduced, grow, and then
decline. The three stages of the brand life cycle are the introductory period, during which the brand is
developed and is introduced to the market; the growth period, when the brand faces competition from
other products of a similar nature; and, finally, the maturity period, in which the brand either extends
to other products or its image is constantly updated. Without careful brand management, the maturity
period can lead to decline and result in the brand being withdrawn." accessed May 22, 2010,
http://dictionary.bnet.com/definition/brand+life+cycle.html.
[10] By "progressive," I intend to indicate that a brand cannot be returned to an earlier "pristine" state
by simply undoing changes. Brands are repositories of impressions, and, as such, cannot be
"unmade." One example of this phenomenon is Coca-Cola's reintroduction of "Old Coke," or "Coca-
Cola Classic," after the disastrously unpopular launch of "New Coke" in 1985. Though the formula
was reset to its original state, the soft drink bore the contrasting label "classic."

first requires a system of differentiation from other material objects of similar type.

For individuals, this first necessitates the establishment of "presence" within the

broader context. However, as should be readily apparent, these needs are easily

shared between the two types of brands. This is because the brand is accumulating

both economic and cultural value through its labors, as well as a secondary system of

meanings, affects, and connotations through a system of public interactions. Once a

brand is well-established, it may very well move into its "afterlife." In this phase,

immediate familiarity with the brand's referent is no longer required to deploy it

symbolically in any number of intellectual and social frameworks.[11] What is

critically important about this life-cycle is that it cannot be directed with any

considerable measure of success, as it relies – much like reader-response theory – on

the phenomenological responses of diffuse individuals.[12] On this point, the work of

Andrew Wernick on the concept of artificial semiosis proves informative:

> Artificial semiosis is a mutliple practice which occurs at all the points in production, distribution, and exchange at which the commodity imaging process takes shape. These imaging sites can be thought of as ranged along a line whose two endpoints define both the object and mechanism of the whole promotional process. At one end - not only in the form of advertisements, but also through packaging and presentation, the staging of media events, the use of 'name' sponsorships, etc. - we have the completely separated *promotional sign*. At the other, we have the composite entity comprised by the commodity itself, together with the significations imparted to it through advertising and design. Advertising transfers meanings on to a product from the outside, through repeated imagistic association. Through design, on the other hand, that same signification is stamped on to it materially. The result is a dual-character object, the *commodity sign*, which functions in circulation both as an object-to-be-sold and as the bearer of a promotional message. As the latter, it serves to advertise both itself (on the shelf) and (wherever displayed) all the other produce to which, by brand and style, it is imagistically linked. (1991, 15-6)

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[11] We see this effect with other metonymic usages such as "The White House" for the U.S. Government, etc. To use this metonym successfully, one need only be informed about some context that it operates within. As long as the individuals that he/she is communicating with are familiar with this semantic structure, no actual knowledge of government policies, officials, etc. is required for a successful interchange.

[12] One potential area of anthropological complication that is perhaps best saved for a more thorough investigation is the significance of Brands as they exist over time, or simultaneously in different cultures. It is certain that attitudes about status and ownership, and especially the channels through which Brands are mediated, will vary depending on culture and historical moment.

In Wernick's conception of artificial semiosis, we find that the object and its external affects are linked together in the form of a "commodity sign." I will contend, going forward, that Wernick's articulation of the "commodity sign" directly correlates to the manner in which the brand operates. With this in mind, I will begin by examining the complex issues surrounding the status of print and branding in literary criticism.

Our contemporary understanding of those who first introduced printing to the West often relies on criticism that has been colored by feelings and fears about the nature and worth of a print-saturated society. As Zachary Lesser notes, this is a commonplace occurrence: "... [S]tudying the politics of publication can reveal the ideological assumptions of our readings by highlighting the fact that, like the publisher's reading, ours are adaptations for a particular historical moment" (2004, 228). Though Lesser is discussing later, Elizabethan printing, his attempt to underscore the subjectivity that underpins critical investigations of the written word (and its producers) is very much worth re-appropriating here.[13]

Indeed, Lesser's statement is easily, and logically, extended to our construction of the printers and publishers of the past. This study is particularly interested in the historical accounts of England's first printer, William Caxton, as well as his emergence and continued existence as a "brand name." It is in this changing narrative of Caxton's career that we see a modern attitude develop that is far more skeptical of the integration of Commerce and Art than the early moderns ever were. It is in the figure of the printer, at first tradesman and later master craftsman and businessman, that contemporary and historical attitudes are (mis)translated. And it is with the figure of the publisher, particularly William

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[13] Admittedly, Lesser's concern is with the nature of historicizing reading and the practice of production. However, I believe that the cautiousness that Lesser advocates in those areas may serve equally well in a study of the work of printers like Caxton.

Caxton, that we will begin to construct a picture of the work that can be undertaken to further our understanding of the attitudes and activities of the past.

In order to begin this process, it is essential that we come to terms with the brand as a social and economic construct. Additionally, it will be useful to set out a model for the brand's creation that can be easily transferred to the literary work, and eventually to the figure of the publisher (in our case, Caxton). In the following section, I will set out some of the discussion that surrounds the brand with respect to its creation, operation, and purpose. Beyond this, I will explore the ways in which scholars such as Darnton, Barker, and Adams have proposed models for textual transmission that closely mirror the creation and transmission of the brand.

I. The Branded Text: An Exploration of the Interconnected Systems of Literary Production and Brand Consumption

In the introduction of her 2004 book *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*, Celia Lury writes about the construction of the brand:

> The suggestion to be developed here is that while the brand is not itself fixed in time or space in terms of presence or absence, it is a platform for the patterning of activity, a mode of organising activities in time and space. It is not simply either here or somewhere else, but rather is some-thing that emerges in parts. It will also be suggested that the brand is not a closed object, but is, rather, open, extending into – or better, implicating – social relations. It is some-thing that is identifiable in its doing...It is implicated in everyday life, and we are – sometimes only just – implicated in it. Finally, it will be argued that the brand is not a matter of certainty, but is rather an object of possibility. (1-2)

On the subject of possibility, Jean Baudrillard (1988, 17) writes: "The function of the brand name is to signal the product; its secondary function is to mobilize connotations of affect..." Additionally, Gillian Dyer offers the following in her 1999 edition of *Advertising as Communication*: "The audience member is involved in the work of the text and the production of its meaning; his or her own knowledge, social position and ideological perspective is brought to bear on the process of the

construction of meaning" (116). Each of these positions suggests that the brand is a socially-constructed – indeed, interactive – entity that necessarily varies in value from person to person. While, as Baudrillard notes, the brand may have a primary signaling power, it is powerless to direct reception – or, rather, it cannot dictate a specific reception. Such is the case with literary objects – and, by extension, literary brands – as, for example, Caxton would have been unable to predict/direct the reception of his "Worthies Series." For critics concerned with the historical/biographical construction of a brand (and, particularly, a branded individual), it is important to bear this fact in mind. Of a related problem, Lury observes: "The brand is simultaneously virtual and actual, abstract and concrete, a means of relativity and a medium of relationality" (2004, 15). With particular relation to this project, this suggests the necessity of considering more than any immediate effect that Caxton's actions had on his own fortunes, but rather how those actions might have been interpreted by, or influenced the perception of, people at various points along a social continuum. As it is imperative, going forward, that we have a clear picture of what is meant by "brand" in a literary context, I will now separate out the Business-oriented model of the brand from the more literary, abstract model that I am attempting to develop here.

As useful point of departure for this discussion may be found in Klein's (2001, 5-6) description of the origin of the brand: "The first brand-based products appeared at around the same time as the invention-based ads[…], largely because of another relatively recent innovation: the factory. When goods began to be produced in factories, not only were entirely new products being introduced but old products – even basic staples – were appearing in strikingly different forms." In addition, Klein suggests that the "brand as lifestyle" model was a necessary consequence of the

sameness of objects during the Industrial Age: "Competitive branding became a necessity of the machine age – within a context of manufactured sameness, image-based difference had to be manufactured along with the product. So the role of advertising changed from delivering product news bulletins to building an image around a particular brand-name version of a product" (6). For Klein, this is the origin of the oft-misleading, manipulative techniques of modern businesses who seek to blur the line between style and substance until the two are completely inextricable from one another. It is this practice of business that unsettles Baudrillard, who writes:

> The psychological restructuration of the consumer is performed through a single word – Philips, Olida, General Motors – a word capable of summing up both the diversity of objects and a host of diffuse meanings. Words of synthesis summarizing a synthesis of affects: that is the miracle of the "psychological label." In effect this is the only language in which the object speaks to us, the only one it has invented. Yet, this basic lexicon, which covers walls and haunts consciences, is strictly asyntactic: diverse brands follow one another, are juxtaposed and substituted for one another without an articulation or transition. It is an erratic lexicon where one brand devours the other, each living for its own endless repetition...And the "loyalty" of a brand name is nothing more than the conditioned reflex of a controlled affect. (1988, 17)

For Klein and Baudrillard alike, the brand is problematic because it is a transgressive entity. That is, the brand is not contained by either the sphere of business, or the sphere of culture. It is a conduit through which values and information are transferred from one to the other. Additionally, much like a physical counterpart might, this conduit of the brand accumulates residue in the form of cultural capital. It is necessary, therefore, to separate critiques of the brand from critiques of the system of branding. Klein is particularly anti-brand, suggesting that brands themselves are the entities that debase our society and impoverish our culture: "The effect, if not always the original intent, of advanced branding is to nudge the hosting culture into the background and make the brand the star. It is not to sponsor culture but to *be* the culture" (30). In fact, however, what Klein has issue with is those who use a system of branding to leverage cultural institutions and systems for business

purposes. The brand is, as I have said, a passive entity in all of this. It is those who would manipulate the public through branding that should be the target of Klein's anger (as, indeed, they often are). By contrast, the previous quotation from Baudrillard's "The System of Objects" reveals a concern over the system of branding, which manifests itself in a distrust of, and distaste for, branded entities. Baudrillard's objection seems to stem primarily from the cognitive and linguistic indeterminacy that branded entities carry, and the negative influence that these entities then extend over the public once they transverse the divide into the realm of everyday living.

Both Klein and Baudrillard are considering the brand as a contemporary, value-laden entity that necessitates the merger of culture and commerce. And this is a fair assessment of the general deployment of brands throughout our consumer society. However, what is lost here is the sense of what brands *were*, and what they *might be*. When the Bass red triangle became the first trademark registered under the Trade Mark Registration Act of 1875, it heralded the linkage of logos and products in the modern era.[14] From there, history develops much as Klein outlines in *No Logo*, but what are we to say of the past? Printer's devices, such as those employed by Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde, once signaled the involvement of their printing houses in the production of textual materials. In this way, they differed little from later Elizabethan printers who used devices to signal their involvement, or safeguard copyright. Even if we advance the clock to the advent of the Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*), we find that the world's first multinational corporation employed its device simply to mark property and preserve corporate dominion. In this early corporate use of the logo, there is

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[14] Notably, the red triangle makes a fairly quick transition to the artistic sphere – appearing in Edouard Manet's 1882 painting *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, and several works by Picasso including his 1914 *Bouteille de Bass, verre et journal*.

considerably less in the way of attempts to forge a "brand consciousness" within the public, and more of the contemporary practice of demarcating livestock. Kuskin describes the presence of the printer's mark thus: "The printer's mark signifies not only the spread of printing but also a logic of appropriation by the individual consumer...Physical and symbolic, the printer's mark is not simply reflective of the political economy; it is productive of that economy as well" (*Symbolic* 79). For Kuskin, the individual, his/her text, and the broader culture are all united in the presence of the mark. He challenges us further: "In this lies a mandate: bibliographical study cannot restrict itself to the object of the book, for to do so is to separate off the book from the totality of culture production that creates the individual" (2008, 79).

This suggests that the branding of literature was considerably advanced over other forms of commercial branding, in terms of attempts to unify content and lifestyle. As I have discussed previously, those ideological communities forged by Caxton's work would logically have identified the printer's mark with that phenomenon. Whatever the experience meant to the individual, that mark was part of it (to be included or discarded at will). However, products like the spices of the Dutch East India Company, or even the ale of the Bass Brewery, carry a practical value that makes them necessary to the individual. These items will be selected on the basis of *need*, and the decision process may, or may not, be influenced by the presence of a given logo. By contrast, literature is not *necessarily* part of a need-based economy. As aesthetic objects, works of literary production are selected on the basis of a variety of social and cultural factors, but are rarely themselves

necessary to the individual.[15] In this model, then, these early, commercially-branded objects are not transgressive, as they do not, themselves, seek to be brought from the commercial to the cultural sphere. By contrast, branded literary objects are necessarily transgressive, as they rely on a mercantile economy (as well as a cultural one) to succeed. These literary objects use the physical economy of goods and services to disseminate their aesthetic content. It is, therefore, fair to suggest that the modern use of brands in business, as objects that operate simultaneously in spheres of culture and commerce, is the result of a gradual adoption of principles of branding that were extant in cultural practices since at least the dawn of Printing.

The point of this reversal is not to "expose" Literature as a for-profit enterprise, or to protest the innocence of modern, corporate branding, but, rather, to demonstrate the inherent duality in the brand. Modern operators in the realm of Business often suggest that the brand is a recent innovation, as is the case with Nike CEO Phil Knight: "For years we thought of ourselves as a production-oriented company, meaning we put all our emphasis on designing and manufacturing the product. But now we understand that the most important thing we do is market the product. We've come around to saying that Nike is a marketing-oriented company, and the product is our most important marketing tool" (quoted in Klein, 22). Indeed, to the folks at Nike in the 1990s, the elevation of marketing must have seemed to be a truly magical innovation in business practice, as the success of this strategy would free the company from having to compete on basis of product quality, and allow it to dominate solely through command of the media. However, in a considerably more crowded (or, during Caxton's time, nascent) field like English literary texts, the

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[15] We might make an exception for texts that are required in the pursuit of a vocation, education, or religion here. In light of these categories, it is unarguable that texts can become *necessary*, but I would argue that this need is contingent on the desire to change one's social/economic status. Because of this, the texts are part of a role, and therefore the question of *need* is secondary to the requirements of the position.

primary purpose of marketing a product was to signal its existence and distinguish it

from a field of similar objects. On this point, Voss writes of a slightly later period in

Books for Sale: Advertising and Patronage in Late Elizabethan England:

> Literacy allowed for choice among thousands and thousands of new texts, all promising delights unavailable to prior generations. So while we encounter the negative side of advertising on a daily bases (i.e., junk mail, commercials, telemarketing), the advertising arts in late Tudor England allowed many more printed texts to appear despite an appreciable decline in literary patronage. The rise of advertising contributed to new methods of writing, printing, and promoting books, allowed the literate Elizabethan unprecedented opportunities in acquiring new knowledge. (1998, 755)

It is important that we hold on to a sense of the practical, even positive, aspects of

advertising, as they cannot be divorced from the literary culture that existed during

the first century of printing in England. Indeed, while content would have a

significant bearing on the individual's perception of that brand over time, it is

certainly secondary to the casual browser of new works of fiction who cannot spend

the time reading an entire book to engage in the redundant (if comic) act of

determining whether or not he should purchase it to read at home. Instead, it is

advertising – be that word-of-mouth, print advertisement, or the presence of a

recognized logo or trademark – that must supply some of the determining criteria.

And so, it is in the buyer-response to these factors that the product either succeeds or

fails. All of this explanation is to suggest that the history of branding is longer than

contemporary authors of sociological and economic studies of the brand would

contend. And so, just as we're considering the evolution of the Caxton brand, we

must also consider that the brand was evolving through use and selection, too.

In order to better examine some of the complex systems of interaction

between culture, economics, and literary texts, it is beneficial to turn to the work

done by Robert Darnton, Nicolas Barker, and Thomas Adams on the nature of

literary production, communication, and publication. This work, which closely

mirrors the study of the brand, will better enable us, as we move forward, to discuss

precisely how the brand and literary publishing intersect in both a modern, and an early modern, context.

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In his now famous article "What is the History of Books?" (1982), Robert Darnton argues that the study of book history has become so crowded by "interdisciplinarity run riot" that it is now "useful to propose a general model for analyzing the way books come into being and spread through society" (67). He contends that even though "conditions have varied so much from place to place and from time to time…printed books generally pass through roughly the same life cycle. It could be described as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit, because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition" (67). Finally, Darnton observes the manner in which messages pass "from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment" (1983, 67). This Communications Circuit, (fig. 1), is perhaps difficult to apply to the incunabular period directly, as the position of "bookseller," as well as that of the "author," are greatly reduced from the Eighteenth Century model that Darnton has based his model on. Nevertheless, Darnton's model is provocative inasmuch as it locates the book as a nexus of the economic and the social – challenging those who would divide texts into commercial and non-commercial categories. In so doing, Darnton emulates the working of the brand, as

presented by Lury and others, and strengthens the case for a new interpretation of the

history of the book. Even so, the model is not without its challengers, as some – like

Nicolas Barker and Thomas Adams – view the model as failing to account for the

chaotic, uncertain nature of the early book trade.

In response to Darnton's Communications Circuit, Barker and Adams offer

the following critique in their 1993 book *A Potencie of Life*:

> The history of the book has all too long suffered from fragmentation. Too many
> bibliographers have been content to dig their own small patch, without surveying the whole
> landscape beyond. There is a need for integration. The most significant recent contribution is
> Robert Darnton's model 'The communication circuit', which he offers as a possible
> framework for absorbing and interpreting the masses of information we have on the 'fate of
> books'. It is a schematic structure that is well adapted to the need of the history of the book in
> general, allowing as it does for the interplay between external forces and the various
> processes through which the book goes. The word 'publisher' is anachronistic, except for the
> last century, and conceals a tissue of complex relationships between the roles of patron,
> printer, stationer and bookseller. (10-12)

In this response, Barker and Adams praise Darnton's efforts as a social historian,

while simultaneously arguing that his model has failed to recognize the complexity

of the publishing business. Instead, Barker and Adams seek to complicate our

understanding of the history of publishing by confronting us with the variability of

intention that stands behind the texts we study. Additionally, they advocate for a

system where the book, and its cycle of creation and distribution, is the locus for a

variety of external forces at work in the broader culture. In this model, as seen

below, the book is a phenomenon that represents a moment in a larger cycle of

communication and transmission.

On their new model (fig. 2), Barker and Adams propose that we privilege the

book over the people involved in its transmission:

> The structure, or model, now to be put forward owes its inspiration to that offered by
> Darnton: that is, a circle of connected elements which are influenced, or can be influenced,
> by the forces placed in the centre. But since our theme is the book rather than the people
> involved in its movements, the order of Darnton's elements and forces is inverted. The cycle
> of the book becomes the centre: the indirect forces are seen outside it, looking and pressing
> inwards. Instead of the six groups of people who make the 'Communications Network'
> operation we have five events in the life of a book -- publishing, manufacturing, distribution,
> reception and survival -- whose sequence constitutes a system of communication and can in

turn precipitate other cycles. Instead of overlapping circles of influence in the centre, indicating intellectual, socio-economic, and official pressures, there are four separate zones, enlarging the scope of outside influences, on the periphery of the circle, each influencing two or more of its stages, depending on individual circumstance…The text is the reason for the cycle of the book: its transmission depends on its ability to set off new cycles. (13-5)

What is most significant about Barker and Adams' model, as pertains to our study of the brand, is the recognition that the internal entity – in this case, the book – is shaped by the socio-economic forces on the periphery of the circle, even as it, in turn, drives those forces. Barker and Adams suggest that the transmission of a text is contingent upon its ability to engage with those larger forces, and such is certainly the case for the brand.

The model put forward by Barker and Adams does, indeed, recall Lury's claim that the brand is an "object of possibility," inasmuch as nothing is determined in their model. The success or failure of a text is contingent upon its ability to connect with the wider culture. In this, one finds a clear intersection of the goals of branding and literary publishing, and recognizes the brand as natural outcome of production and consumption.
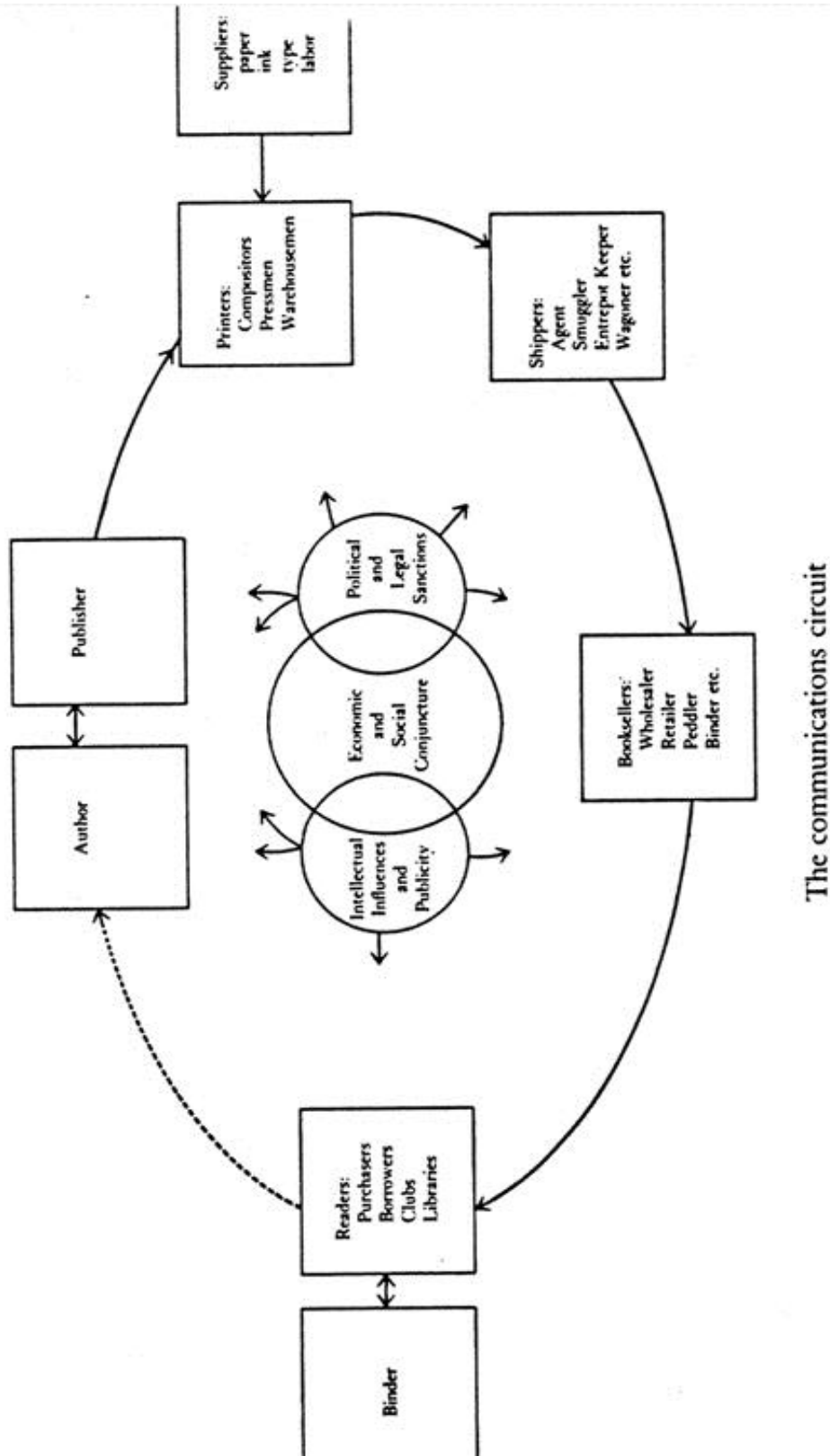
The communications circuit

Fig. 1

THE WHOLE SOCIO - ECONOMIC CONJUNCTURE

Intellectual Influences

Political, legal and religious influences

Publication

Survival

Manufacture

Reception

Distribution

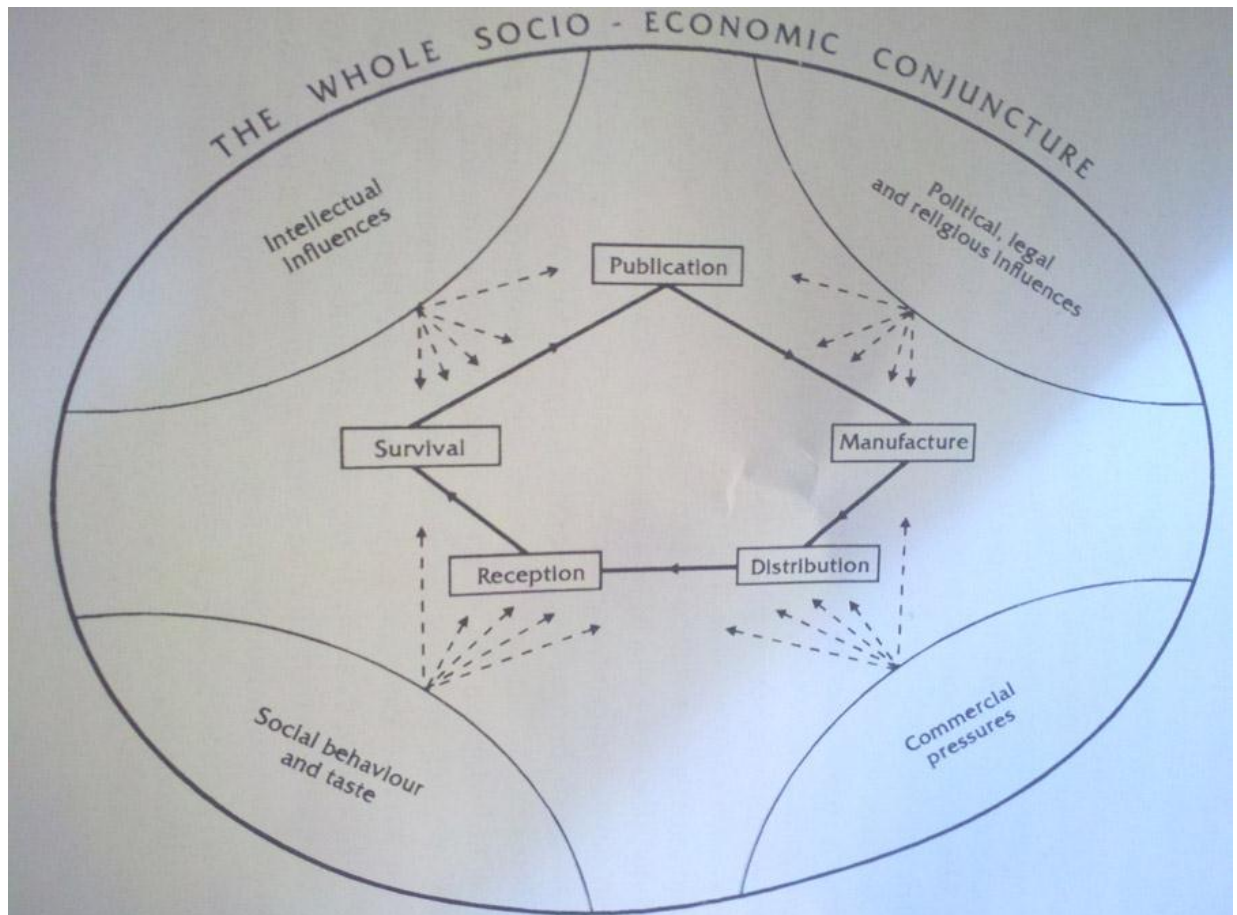Social behaviour and taste

Commercial pressures

Fig.2

On the construction of models of this type, the work of Arjun Appadurai proves particularly illuminating. In this essay "Commodities and the Politics of Value," he argues:

> This may be an appropriate point to note that there are important differences between the *cultural biography* and the *social history* of things. The differences have to do with two kinds of temporality, two forms of class identity, and two levels of social scale. The cultural biography perspective, formulated by Kopytoff, is appropriate to *specific* things, as they move through different hands, contexts, and uses, thus accumulating a specific biography, or set of biographies. When we look at classes or types of thing, however, it is important to look at longer-term shifts (often in demand) and larger-scale dynamics that transcend the biographies of particular members of that class or type. Thus a particular relic may have a specific biography, but whole types of relic, and indeed the class of things called "relic" itself, may have a larger historical ebb and flow, in the course of which its meaning may shift significantly. (2003, 34)

Here we can plainly see that Darnton's model, with its emphasis on the agents at work on a given book, mirrors the position advocated by Igor Kopytoff, and that the model of Barker and Adams fits neatly within the long-term framework that Appadurai encourages us to adopt. The short- and long-term interplay of forces on

the book or brand is of particular consequence when we consider the distance that is often found between the historical and contemporary standing of those entities.

On the process of textual selection and survival, which is essential to all of the models heretofore discussed, Lotte Hellinga encourages us to consider the environment:

> In the transmission of texts, and their survival in books, we can see a selection process at work that can be expressed in evolutionary terms, leading to a perception of the environment as a controlling factor in more than one sense. (1993, 64)

Hellinga is here continuing a trend of scholarship that, through its emphasis on the external context in which a text or book is transmitted, proves almost ethnographic in its sociological approach to the history of the book. On this approach to bibliographic inquiry, perhaps no work is as appropriate as D.F. McKenzie's *Bibliography and Sociology of Texts*:

> In the ubiquity and variety of its evidence, bibliography as a sociology of texts has an unrivalled power to resurrect authors in their own time, and their readers at any time. It enables what Michel Foucault called 'an insurrection of subjugated knowledges'. One of its greatest strengths is the access it gives to social motives: by dealing with the facts of transmission and the material evidence of reception, it can make discoveries as distinct from inventing meanings. In focusing on the primary object, the text as a recorded form, it defines our common point of departure for any historical or critical enterprise. (1999, 28-9)

McKenzie's approach to the text as sociological record intersects neatly with the work of Appadurai and Wernick, acknowledging the copious amount of possibility and play available to us in the interpretation of textual artifacts. Accordingly, I believe it is appropriate to pause a moment to consider those criteria by which readers tend to select texts for consumption, as this will help to form a more complete picture of the context in which literary works – and brands – operate.

Let us begin our discussion of textual selection by turning to Adrian Johns' famous description of a book at the beginning of his *The Nature of the Book*:

> Pick up a modern book. This one will do: the one you are looking at right now. What sort of object is this? There are certain features about it of which you can be reasonably confident. Its professed author does indeed exist and did indeed write it. It contains information

> believed to be accurate, and it professes to impart knowledge to readers like you. It is produced with its author's consent, and it is indeed the edition it claims to be…
>
> Begin to use this object. It should immediately become clear that there are things about its proper utilization of which a reader like you can be equally confident. This book has not been produced with a specific, individual reader in mind. To some extent, at least, it is a commercial product, designed to appeal to purchasers… (1998, 1)

The state in which the book exists, Johns suggests, is partly as a "commercial product," and partly as a free-form repository of information.[16] And this is, indeed, what a book is. It is this hybridized nature – commercial and intellectual – that suggests the utility of the brand, as I will soon discuss. In the passage quoted below, I have replaced Johns' reference to a modern text with an early modern edition:

> Pick up a Caxton. Any one will do: take the second edition of *The Canterbury Tales* for example. What sort of object is this? There are certain features about it of which you can be reasonably confident, but which may have seemed very different to an early-modern reader. Its professed author did indeed exist and did indeed write it, but this may have once seemed quite difficult to verify. It contains information believed by us to be accurate, but historically vouchsafed only by Caxton's assurance of its pedigree and completeness. It was produced without its author's consent, as was the custom of the age, and it claims to be a superior edition to those produced earlier on.
>
> Begin to use this object. It should immediately become clear that there are things about its proper utilization of which a reader like you can be equally confident. This book has not been produced with a specific, individual reader in mind – but, just the same, it is clear that you, the early-modern reader, are in a select group of newly constituted readers. To some extent, at least, this book is a commercial product, and your status allows you to afford and access such a volume. Indeed, its cost may have limited its readership somewhat, but you may have been fortunate enough to purchase an unbound copy that allows you access without the greater expense of bookbinding. You yourself are free to carry it around and to lend it to others. You are also largely free – as an early-modern reader who operates in a time of rampant piracy– to reproduce its contents in your own right for commercial gain. You may also proceed to issue translations, epitomes, and abridgments of those contents. Provided you have access to a press or scribal workshop, and raw materials, of course. It is entirely possible that you will choose to declaim the text of this book aloud in a public place, as is your right (and a common enough occurrence).
>
> That you can assume all these things of such an object – that such an object actually exists – derives from your living in what many people call "print

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[16] By free-form, of course, I am suggesting, as Johns does, that the book has no *set* use, and that it is, instead, an entity whose utility is a function of its reader's perception.

culture." Such phenomena, we say, are due to printing. Or rather, we would say this, if it were clear, as yet, just how such an object differs from the many scribal editions that are also available. Indeed, apart from the fact that this work was purchased from a printer, it seems very much the same as a scribal text.[17] The font, the heft, and the presentation are all quite the same. The cost may have been somewhat less, and it certainly took less time to produce copies once the initial text was laid out; and so, for now, this edition remains a quicker, cheaper, perhaps "more standard" version of similar works. Of course, this last point has little concern for you, the early-modern reader.

From this somewhat tongue-in-cheek paraphrase, it becomes increasingly clear that the early-modern book was more a locus of potentiality than it was a site of permanence and stability. Because of this, as well as the general nature of change in reading publics, describing the material and cultural realities of a Caxton-produced text in a historical framework is inherently different than doing the same with *The Nature of the Book*. Regardless, we are able to speak of practices common to both ages with a bit more certainty; among these are authorship, production, distribution, and reception.

In the spirit of this argument, Kuskin writes:

...I suggest that we reconsider the categories of patronage and commerce within the larger production of knowledge fostered by the press. In place of patronage and commerce, I offer **capital** as a medium for reading Caxton which recognizes the essential doubling of textual and economic practices at work in his production process, a doubling that allows him to present the printed book as an object of authority connected to but also separate from the manuscripts of the English Burgundian courts. (2008, 81-2)[18]

Kuskin's use of "capital" reflects its dual nature as a social and economic entity. He suggests that one can use a construct like capital to encompass the textual and the economic aspects of Caxton's work, and, in so doing, acknowledge the multiple lives of a book. However, the term capital relies on a construction wherein the "worth" of

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[17] As Blake notes in *England's First Publisher*: "If you were looking at a Caxton volume and an ordinary fifteenth-century manuscript the first thing to strike you would be how alike they are" (1976, 55). On the early impact of printing on scribal markets, Eisenstein writes: "The Parisian *libraires* may have had good reason to be alarmed, although they were somewhat ahead of the game; the market value of hand-copied books did not drop until Fust was dead. Other members of the *confrérie* could not foresee that most book-binders, rubricators, illuminators, and calligraphers would be kept busier than ever after early printers set up shop" (1997, 50).

[18] Emphasis mine.

an object – in any sense – is valuated through a process of positioning it relative to other objects in its field. Brands rely on the accumulation of "capital," also, but the process of situation that defines capital is merely one dimension of their use. Put another way, no value need be attached to the various components of a brand, in order for that brand to exist; valuation is a process wherein the field of brands is discussed, and remains relevant only for contextualizing purposes.

One positive use of "capital" in the sense that Kuskin intends, however, is to demonstrate the ways in which economic and sociocultural valuation are so very similar. "Capital" is accumulated by objects/individuals in either arena, and the term simply signifies a change in that object's/individual's state of "worth." As such, whether we are concerned with economic or cultural capital, we are implicitly invoking a binder that speaks to the tension between "pure" and "commercial" Art which Bourdieu describes. The straightforward articulation of this tension goes something like this: if an author puts together a difficult, avant-garde tome, which then goes on to sell very little, but sparks imitation, then he/she might consider him/herself to be operating at the pole of "pure" literature: a pole defined by operations which are clearly non-commercial. However, should one put together a novel that is more accessible, or is operating in an established field/genre, *and* that book goes on to sell well, then one is said to be operating in the sphere of "commercial" Art. Qualitatively, such thought would contend, those novels operating at the "pure" end are more valuable (that is, more literary/artistic) than those operating at the "commercial" one. What is lost in such an idealized schematization is the reality-based observation that all artists, regardless of standing or status, must engage with the world on both artistic and economic grounds. Indeed, their output cannot be disseminated – materially or socially – without some

manner of economic engagement – be that with transportation, production, promotion, etc. We are left, then, with a functional, but ultimately meaningless way of classifying artistic production, which only furthers the entrenchment of outmoded critical analysis.

An alternative approach to analyzing the literary marketplace, and the status of objects within it, might be found in Adrian Johns' concept of "credit:"

> In attending to this issue, *The Nature of the Book* builds on Steven Shapin's identification of trust as a key element in the making of knowledge. Where Shapin concentrates particularly on intersubjective trust, asking fundamental questions about whom one should believe, why, and in what circumstances, *The Nature of the Book* identifies a similar issue in the trust accorded to printed materials. It asks how readers decided what to believe. A central element in the reading of a printed work was likely to be a critical appraisal of its identiy and its credit. Readers were not without resources for such an assessment. When they approached a given book, with them came knowledge about the purposes, status, and reliability of printed materials in general--knowledge they used to determine the appropriate kind and degree of faith to vest in this unfamiliar object. (2002, 31)

As much as it might be based upon knowledge of the marketplace, this system of credit – much like the system of patronage - is reliant on reputation. In this case, the public appraisal of a given printer, publisher, or author's reputation. For our purposes, we might think of credit as one of the external, environmental factors at work in the model of Barker and Adams, or as a component of a brand's identity in the broader marketplace.

With this in mind, I will turn to a discussion of Caxton's specific engagement with branding via his publishing business. I will carry out this discussion in the context of Caxton's contemporary critical standing, as well as the incunabular marketplace. The emphasis on Caxton's critical standing will serve a twofold purpose. First, it will establish the "credit" which Caxton currently enjoys via his paratextual efforts. Second, such a discussion will lay fertile soil for the first-hand exploration of Caxton's published work in Chapter Two.

II. A Survey of Caxton's Critics and the Benefits of the Brand.

Coming as it does from the fields of Business and Marketing, the term "brand" may seem like an unusual choice for literary criticism. However, as a number of related terms have been used to describe both artistic and commercial practices – "capital," "capitalist," and "economy" being three prominent examples – it becomes clear that there is more taxonomic overlap than one might assume. One of the strengths of a brand is that it can be discussed in many specialized connotations relating to its economic or aesthetic features while still retaining familiarity for those who wish to discuss other aspects of its whole. Brands are built by a system of perception and interaction, and so straddle the perceived divide between the artistic and the commercial with ease. Yet, brands do not come into being with this duality intact. Instead, much as texts evolve as they are transmitted through the models in section one of this chapter, brands gradually accumulate their commercial and artistic aspects through a process of socioeconomic interaction. As such, brands are less like the unchanging, neon signposts of commerce that we generally take them for, and much more like a wall of graffiti which may, or may not, repeat or represent the original message. Indeed, this wall of graffiti is a perfect metaphor for the brand, as the wall's myriad content is the result of a stimulus (in this case, the brand, which provides a unifying principle in the form of our metaphorical wall), and yet the results may go in many different directions at once.

In this discussion of the brand and its relation to Caxton, I will follow Kuskin in employing the term "capitalist" to describe Caxton's business practices. While this may seem anachronistic, the defense of this practice is a simple one: Caxton deployed capital to increase production and sell more texts, in turn increasing the

amount of capital that he acquired.[19] The majority of Caxton's work was at his own initiative, while only a minority, as we have observed in the Introduction, was conducted under the auspices of patronage. This is capitalism of a sort, even if the society at large did not yet participate in a fully-fledged capitalist economy. Even so, Kuskin adds the caveat: "...I suggest that early print production, indeed printing in general, is ill-served by monolithic terms such as *capitalism* and *print culture*, which suggest large-scale divisions between cultural practices, and is better served by an understanding of historical shifts which looks not for moments of originality but seeks out relationships within an ongoing reproduction cycle" (2008, 18). In addition to gesturing towards my own conception of the branded individual, this is a handy way of warning us against the dangers of oversimplifying Caxton's relationship with his press and his output, as well as an over-dependence on these two terms.

However, for the simple reason that Caxton's business model meets something we would recognize as "capitalist," the term seems fairly applied to a *portion* of his business practices.[20] Of those who praise the invention of printing as something that brought about a great historical shift, Kuskin writes: "The claim is true, but it is also hyperbolic; it misrecognizes Caxton's period to suggest a unity of purpose and technique for what was a hybrid and experimental practice" (7-8). With no established model for the sale of printed books, early publishers like Caxton were forced to create (or, at least, define) both the social and commercial economies in

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[19] Kuskin writes: "Volume is print production's guiding principle of innovation and its rule for survival. Volume is fundamentally built into print production as a mandate and goad to reproduce capital, for a working print shop can only be financially viable if it maintains a high enough output to pay off its initial investment in type and presses and thus keep up with the continual costs of labor and raw materials..." (17)

[20] Additionally, it is important the other aspect of Caxton's business model – patronage – but I will hold this discussion for a later stage.

which those texts operated. This process was specific to each location, and is, therefore, too diverse to be contained within any unifying description or definition.

The term "capital" might serve, then, as a sort of fluid binder of Caxton's artistic and commercial endeavors. It is in this term, Kuskin argues, that we are able to locate both the social and economic reach of Caxton's endeavors, as well as to discuss the duality of his product. There is, of course, a differentiation between economic and cultural capital. As John Guillory writes of cultural capital, in relation to literary syllabi, in his *Cultural Capital*:

> First, it is *linguistic* capital, the means by which one attains to a socially credentialed and therefore valued speech, otherwise known as "Standard English." And second, it is *symbolic* capital, a kind of knowledge-capital whose possession can be displayed upon request and which thereby entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of the well-educated person. (1995, *ix*)

Kuskin's discussions of early-modern books are clearly infused with these ideas: "Invested with a self-reflective quality, books are symbolic machines of social reproduction" (2). And yet, despite the extensive scholarship on the concept of "cultural capital" (itself stemming from Bourdieu's work), there is something lacking with respect to the individual's selection and promotion of specific texts. While "cultural capital" describes the process by which canonical texts encourage their reproduction through the impartation of symbolic capital, this does not explain the process by which new texts become canonical. That is, the actual *doing* part of things is left out in favor of a discussion of impersonal forces at work within a society. We can demonstrate the process of canonizing from a contemporary vantage point, and therefore bypass the need to speak in a purely historical way about the canonization of literature. The concept of the "brand name" allows for this discussion, but it must first be separated from its business context in order to be used in this project.

William Caxton is widely regarded as the father of English print culture, as well as an opportunistic venture capitalist. His name is synonymous with cheap, unscholarly editions of popular romances and poetry, and so he is simultaneously lauded (in guarded fashion) for fostering the development of an English print culture and derided for his amateurish interventions in some of our more canonical texts (such as his conclusion to Chaucer's "House of Fame")[21]. Of Caxton's work with Chaucerian texts, Blake (1991, 165) writes: "Commercial gain rather than *pietas* may have been the principle motive behind those works which Caxton printed on his own initiative. Finally, it is impossible to accept the view that Caxton took care to publish as accurate a text as possible of Chaucer's works." However, Caxton's reputation as a ham-handed, greedy man is the ill-deserved result of critical and historical oversimplification. Such depictions are, I contend, the result of a failure to consider the totality of Caxton's influence, as it might be encapsulated in the brand name. However, I will not argue an excuse for commercialism, for I find that such discussions have little to do with the business decisions of a retired, financially-secure printer, but rather I will argue that relations between those who consumed, and those who produced, aesthetic objects in the early-modern period were not quite as contentious as we have been led to believe by modern theorists and others caught up in an increasingly-turbulent struggle between these spheres.

Literary critics such as Norman Blake and David Carlson have, through their work, reinforced the idea that Art and Commerce are at odds, and that no individual can operate in both realms with equal sincerity of purpose. While the first of these observations might well have a basis in truth, the second is somewhat oversimplified and in need of further examination. One way to bridge this divide, and thereby

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[21] A more complete description of Caxton's interaction with the "House of Fame" may be found in Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, pp.163-5.

enhance our understanding of early modern publishers, is to turn to the brand to provide a more inclusive form of analysis. The brand, as has been discussed, is a construct of economic and social realities, and, more importantly, it is imprinted with an individual's reactions and understandings about these forces. Logically, the nature of these reactions, as well as the interpretive scope, will vary over time – as they certainly have from Caxton's day to our own – but the cognitive processes by which these impressions are achieved remain largely the same. Indeed, meaning, much like any other semantic unit, has always had both a shared, external value as well as an internalized constellation of meanings. It is for this reason that the brand is particularly well-suited for this project, which is not so much a contribution to the *histoire du livre*, but rather what might be called the *historiographie du livre*. While scholars have studied individuals like Caxton in their historical context, I believe that we must develop a critical apparatus that allows us to investigate our constructions of literary authors and publishers with a specific eye towards separating our contemporary attitudes towards Commerce and Art from a historical reality.

Recent work by William Kuskin has come tantalizingly close to breaking down the artificial divide between commercial and artistic practices that has distorted our understanding of Caxton's work and legacy. In his 2008 book *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism*, Kuskin writes: "The importance of the printer's mark is that it is a sign of market development, a *visual poetic of commerce* that describes a graphic process of engagement with the reader and indicates the symbolic depth of the printed page. I term the study of this printed page *symbolic bibliography*" (73-4). In other words, the printer's mark represents the successful re-appropriation of commercial practices by the artistic sphere – a sort of metonymic reconfiguration, and an example of the successful movement between

spheres of influence that are typically divided by literary critics. I propose that we follow Kuskin's example, and, through an exploration of the publishing careers of William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde, produce a systematic examination of how the movements between these spheres are not only frequent, but necessary.

Therefore, one of the goals of this dissertation is to investigate the origin of Caxton's poor critical standing, and to explore some of the reasons for Caxton's current critical status as "merchant printer," and not "merchant, editor, writer, and printer." The majority of critical treatments of Caxton, thus far, have helped to heighten the tension that exists between what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "Pure" and "Commercial" Art:

> These fields are the site of the antagonistic coexistence of two modes of production and circulation obeying inverse logics. At one pole, there is the 'anti-economic' economy of pure art. Founded on the obligatory recognition of the values of disinterestedness and on the denegation of the 'economy' (of the 'commercial') and of 'economic' profit (in the short term), it privileges production and its specific necessities, the outcome of an autonomous history. This production, which can acknowledge no other demand than one it can generate itself, but only in the long term, is oriented to the accumulation of symbolic capital, a kind of 'economic' capital denied but recognized, and hence legitimate – a veritable credit, and capable of assuring, under certain conditions and in the long term, 'economic' profits. At the other pole, there is the 'economic' logic of the literary and artistic industries which, since they make the trade in cultural goods just another trade, confer priority in distribution, on immediate and temporary success, measured for example by the print run, and which are content to adjust themselves to the pre-existing demand of a clientele. (1996, 142)

In Bourdieu's scheme, there is a question of artistic "legitimacy" that is inherently tethered (in inverse proportion) to commercial viability. This tension is very much alive within Caxton scholarship, and it is the source of the disparity I have observed. Therefore, taking a cue from Michael Saenger, who writes in his *The Commodification of Textual Engagements in the English Renaissance* that "[t]he idea of an artless publisher may be as much of a myth as the idea of a noncommercial artist," (2006, 19) I propose that we work towards a critical framework that allows for these two forces to be discussed in a way that strips them of their adversarial roles, and instead emphasizes their interconnectedness. To best achieve this, I

propose that we appropriate the brand, and use its hybridized nature as commercial

symbol, artistic icon, and social network to create an intellectual framework that

addresses the role of these forces in William Caxton's career.

Central to this discussion is the description found in Celia Lury's influential

study, *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*:

> This book will claim that the brand is an object. What might this mean? An object, surely, is something that is external, fixed, closed; something solid that can be touched. The brand is none of these things. But the brand satisfies some other common dictionary definitions of objects. It is some-thing 'to which some feeling or action is directed'; it is an object-ive in that it is the object of 'a purpose or intention', or even a whole series of purposes: and it is also 'a noun or its equivalent acted upon by a transitive verb or by a preposition'. Put somewhat differently, the brand is the outcome of object-ives, it is produced in the tests and trials of object-ivity, and it is, sometimes, a matter of objection. It both is an object of information and objectifies information. But its objectivity also involves images, processes and products, and relations between products. Indeed, the preliminary definition of the brand adopted here is that it is a *set of relations between products or services*. Perhaps, then, while incorporeal or intangible...the brand is not immaterial. The suggestion to be developed here is that while the brand is not itself fixed in time or space in terms of presence or absence, it is a platform for the patterning of activity, a mode of organising activities in time and space. (2004, 1)

This last claim is particularly important, as my study of the brand focuses on its

socially-constructed (and negotiated) nature. It is essential to recognize that a brand

is as much the *result* of activity, as it is the *cause*. Moreover, brands are assembled

asynchronously, through interaction, and so it is necessary to recognize that they

exist simultaneously in multiple configurations that are contingent/dependent on the

user's/viewer's identity. This recalls the models of textual creation and transmission

that were discussed earlier in this chapter, and indicates a theoretical and functional

overlap between literary and brand transmission. Additionally, it is important to note

that the process of learning to negotiate the various material and commercial realities

of the world leaves us with a system of impressions regarding objects, and the worth

of particular brands, that neatly ties into Johns' notion of credit. This is a significant

concept because it suggests that critical practices that attempt to divorce the

"Commercial" from what we know as "Art" are inherently stunted. Using the

structure of the brand that Lury describes, then, allows us to assess the totality of

Caxton's self-presentation in both material and literary terms, as well as critical responses to those components, without yielding to an impulse to define or limit the Caxton brand to being merely commercial or artistic. This allows one to take account of the way the reception and appropriation of Caxton's products helped shape their position in the literary marketplace, and to see not only the emergence of the Caxton brand, but the ways in which that brand is a posthumous creation with a rich afterlife, beginning with the re-appropriations of Wynkyn de Worde.

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In order to have the fullest understanding possible of the critical field in which my new application of the brand is intended to operate, I want to introduce and summarize the positions of some of the key players in Caxton scholarship. Perhaps the most prolific writer on Caxton is Norman F. Blake. Though it is impossible to touch upon all of the works that Blake has produced over the years, there are three remarks about Caxton in *Caxton: England's First Publisher* (1976) which encapsulate Blake's approach. The first: "The picture we get of Caxton from his prologues and epilogues is of a man at the centre of a busy literary circle. This view is one sided...No patron came forward who had a real love of literature and no English humanist seems to have taken any interest in what he was doing...He spent most of that [time] translating or attending to the financial side of his business" (1976, 53-4). On the subject of printers' marks, Blake adds: "One way in which a book's appearance could be enhanced was by the addition of a printer's device. But in this as in so much else Caxton's work is uninspired" (121). He seems to sum up his position with: "When all is said and done they [Caxton's printed books] are neither textually accurate nor aesthetically appealing" (120). While Blake is interested in, and writes extensively about, the aesthetic features of Caxton's printed

books, he nonetheless subsumes this analysis in a critical program that demonstrates the historical emergence of the "merchant printer" in the guise of Caxton.

This line of scholarship continues to the present moment, and can be found echoed in the work of scholars like David Carlson (2006, 51): "Like the 1477 handbill, Caxton's prologues and epilogues belong to this history of advertising in the first instance, at the distributive end of production, not to literary history—or only to literary history to the degree that the urgencies of the printers' invested capital forced them into literary history, deflecting it and deforming it in ways determined by commercial exigencies." Carlson is not only unimpressed with Caxton's literary contributions, but his use of negative verbs like "deform" and "deflect" recalls the perceived antithetical relationship between Commerce and Art that I have already mentioned. Such a position is not unique, and, indeed, it seems that only a minority of critics have sensed any artistic merit in Caxton's contributions to his printed texts.

In contrast to the rather rigid, orthodox position that scholars like Blake and Carlson hold on the subject of the relationship between Art and Commerce, more recent work has attempted to recognize the interrelation of these two forces in the production of any artistic product. In the introduction to her *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, Alexandra Gillespie (2006, 15) writes: "'Libri volant [books fly]' writes St Bernard of Clairvaux in the twelfth century: if, in all their many forms, books have a common nature, it is perhaps as objects designed to convey and contain texts, to assign them boundaries, and paradoxically, to enable their traffic and their reception." Following on from this, Gillespie writes: "A printed book will 'flygh forth faste' even as, or perhaps because, it recalls and promotes the localized, traditional, authorial, and also inscrutably personal meanings for literary texts" (77).

Gillespie combines the material and social aspects of the book and presents

something that operates more as a phenomenon than an individuated unit of text. It

is perhaps because of this that Gillespie's depictions of figures like Caxton and de

Worde lack the sort of judgmental tone that Blake and Carlson display.

Perhaps the best example of this more recent approach to "print culture" is

that which is articulated by James Raven in his *The Business of Books*:

> Culture, of course, need not be commercial, but it often is. Culture, indeed, can be big
> business. Before the fifteenth century, it was rare for any European to make money from art,
> music, or literature, whether in making or supplying it. Thereafter, the closed patronage of
> Court and Church fragmented and eventually palled before the advance of broader markets.
> From the late fifteenth century, cultural entrepreneurship promoted one of the most
> fundamental transformations in our history: the production and circulation of the book.
> Books, print, engravings, newspapers, and magazines changed individual lives. To their
> creators and suppliers, books and print variously brought fortune, fame, poverty, bankruptcy,
> insanity, and martyrdom. The wealthiest beneficiaries of literary commerce were not
> necessarily the most innovative; some of the most daring proved the least commercially
> successful. (2007, 3)

Raven augments this observation by issuing a critical challenge that I am

attempting to take up – at least in part – in this dissertation: "...the careers and

achievements of publishers, printers, and booksellers should be set within the

broader economic, social, and political changes that created, extended, and

sometimes suppressed demand for the new products. Ideas count as much as

economics in literary commerce, but the promulgation of knowledge, news, and

authority was business..." (4) It is this final assertion – that concepts and capital are

equally weighted in literary commerce – that allows for the logical extension towards

a Brands-based analysis. As any brand incorporates both of these elements – often

without negation or subordination – it is a suitable tool for describing the career of

an individual within the sphere of literary commerce. Indeed, as our own digital

culture increasingly heralds the arrival of the "personal brand," it seems both timely

and fitting to attempt to explore this concept's applicability to historical and literary

situations. In so doing, I believe, we will be able to answer Raven's call to set

publishing achievements within economic, social, and political contexts without forcing ourselves to place economic concerns at the heart of our discussion.

Freeing the brand from its current status as a constituent of business practices requires a bit of redefinition, as well as a realignment of our understanding of how brands interact with our needs in the first place. Contemporary definitions of the brand tend to come from the arenas of Business and Marketing. Typically, these definitions hold that brands are comprised of a logo, slogan, and other features that set them apart from competitors' brands. These divisions are backed up by a system of interconnected media that work to assert the social "role" of that brand. The object is to create an entity with which people can identify, in the hope of selling some product. The most successful brands, then, are the ones which seem truly obvious and indispensable, and therefore exist as functions of our daily lives. In this dissertation, however, I am proposing a more inclusive definition of the brand. That is, I am proposing a study of branded objects that are not necessarily commodities, and which gain this attribute ("brandedness," let us say) as a result of social and cultural factors rather than any sort of commercial need. In this way, we can account for those objects that simply "become" commercial, or which have in addition a commercial component, in a framework of analysis that seeks to discuss the totality of an individual's career without privileging one aspect over the other.

On Caxton's business practices and his literary contributions, David Carlson writes:

> [T]he strategy of distinction comprised the invention of a range of book design features that have come to be normative but were innovations at the time: trademarking the products themselves, by means of printers' devices (more visual than verbal still, in this period when words on shop signs remained rare)...and, most notoriously in Caxton's case, the prologues and epilogues of his own composition...Caxton's prologues and epilogues belong to this history of advertising in the first instance, at the distributive end of production, not to literary history—or only to literary history to the degree that the urgencies of the printers' invested capital forced them into literary history...(2006, 51)

The status of Caxton's prologues and epilogues is another area of debate, as will be discussed in the following chapter, but it is important to note that many critics, Carlson and Norman Blake included, assert that they are inextricably bound up with Caxton's desire to maximize profit. Moreover, I have marked the concept of the "trademark" as a constituent part of the "brand," and, indeed, I have done the same with Caxton's prologues and epilogues, as most of the scholarship on these texts links them in a chain of commercial production and advertising. What I will attempt, as we move forward, is to demonstrate the way in which printers' marks (or devices), as well as paratextual promotions, served the creation of a new entity in the form of the "brand name." For Carlson, and others, paratextual elements are marked as components of the process of distribution, serving an economic, nearly mechanical, function in their quest to help expand readership. I find here a bit of room for debate, as a number of Caxton's prologues and epilogues engage in social commentary seemingly for its own sake. While salesmanship is never far off, there also appear to be attempts to define the role of Caxton the Publisher, garner a measure of literary authority, and express other, not-necessarily-commercial aspects of Caxton's persona. Furthermore, the language of profit and print is born of an era when the industry of printing is an established, well-defined one. Even so, bearing in mind that the early modern reader/consumer would have shared little understanding of our business terminology, I contend that it is appropriate to use terms like 'capitalist' and 'print culture' in the discussion of the brand, as these are recognized social and cultural factors that have a bearing on the reception/creation of the socialized 'brand.'

The final component of this project is a discussion of the creation and deployment of printers' marks – absolutely commonplace in the early modern world

of printing– as these are fundamental to an understanding of the origin and context of

the texts that bear them.[22] As a textual expression of the identity of the producer of a

given work, the printer's mark is a powerful conveyor of the brand. It stands as one

of the few ways in which the brand, in its totality, is deliberately signaled by the

principle agent of that brand. By contrasting early modern understandings of "print

culture" with our modern conception of the same, I contend that much work needs to

be done in order to create a fuller portrait of the activities of early publishers.   For

this reason, I will examine the possibility that Caxton, like Gutenberg, his much

more celebrated forebear, might be thought of as being both artist and entrepreneur –

with both roles having a specific bearing on the nature of the "brand." In light of the

theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu, and the introduction of the brand as a tool for

the organization of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors that attend an

individual, I believe that Caxton's current reputation as an opportunistic capitalist is

simply the end-result of a set of modern practices that are suspicious of the sorts of

activities that he once engaged in.

     However, I have no interest in attempting to invalidate contemporary critical

analyses of Caxton, or any other printer, solely on the basis of their continued

adherence to the Pure/Commercial Art paradigm. Rather, this is an attempt to define

the terms of a critical struggle that is taking place at this moment in history. As

Bourdieu informs us:

> It is not enough to say that the history of the field is the history of the struggle for a
> monopoly of the imposition of legitimate categories of perception and appreciation; it is in
> the very struggle that the history of the field is made; it is through the struggles that it is
> temporalized. The ageing of authors, works and schools is something quite different from a
> mechanical sliding into the past. It is engendered in the fight between those who have
> already left their mark and are trying to endure, and those who cannot make their own marks
> in their turn without consigning to the past those who have an interest in stopping time, in
> eternalizing the present state; between the dominants whose strategy is tied to continuity,
> identity and reproduction, and the dominated, the new entrants, whose interest is in
> discontinuity, rupture, difference and revolution. (1996, 157)

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[22] A detailed discussion of Caxton's device will feature in the following chapter.

For a time, I assert, this struggle that Bourdieu so passionately outlined was suspended between the poles of publisher and printer – sometimes, therefore, within the very same individual. During the early modern period, figures like Caxton were endeavoring to advance a technological and commercial venture while also acting as arbiters of taste and literariness. In the case of Caxton, however, we might say that this struggle changed rather significantly with his successor – Wynkyn de Worde. De Worde did not attempt to lead taste, providing little original paratext, focusing instead on the expansion of his market and clientele. Returning to the above quotation, one might therefore see Caxton as one of these new entrants turned, inevitably, by his success and readership into a "dominant." This domination is inherited by de Worde, and becomes a sort of conservative orthodoxy. Caxton, as Lesser writes, not only performed, but was the first to undertake, a great many roles in the English vernacular print trade:

> When William Caxton set up the first press in England in 1476, he performed all the functions that would later be divided among various groups of stationers. Caxton was a master craftsman who ran a printing house; he was also a merchant who imported Continental books, published the books he printed, wholesaled them to other booksellers, and sold them to his customers directly; often, he was even the author or translator of these books. Of course, at the time Caxton was himself virtually the entire English printed book trade. (2004, 29)

For this final reason alone, I believe we must strive to find a model that accurately, and completely, encompasses Caxton's publishing career on both commercial and aesthetic grounds. In so doing, we will claim not only a more complete understanding of the man and his work, but also of the early vernacular book trade in England.

Though the history of the early-modern publishing trade is now quite clear to us (even if there are gaps in our knowledge), it is too much to assume that the same was ever true for those operating in pre-Elizabethan England. Consequently, the subsequent chapters will examine some of the less-considered differences between

now and then, while also furthering a new program of exploring Caxton's – along with Gutenberg and de Worde's – particular brand of capitalism. I have chosen printers' marks to facilitate this discussion, as they are the most obvious carry-over to the modern entity that is the "brand name." Yet, there is considerable room to discuss, as I have noted, the role which the printer's mark, itself a logo or trademark in function, played in the overall creation of the brand, as well as the extent to which the fashioning of the publisher helped to usher in this concept. One useful and necessary way to augment this discussion is by looking at the prologues and epilogues that Caxton, de Worde, and others affixed to their texts, as these are so often the entities that modern critics use to demonstrate that commercial interests were the primary focus of printers during this period. Additionally, work by Lesser, Mentz, and Saenger on Elizabethan print culture and the role of the "publisher function" helpfully facilitates a direct examination of Caxton and de Worde's texts, as well as comparisons with manuscript culture and Continental print models, allowing us to discuss some of the ways in which readers may have responded to paratextual elements such as prologues, epilogues, and other, visual elements. This is essential, of course, as it will teach us more about the origin of the construct that we now know as "the Caxton brand."

The final, and perhaps most significant, component needed to flesh out the widely different critical receptions of the work put out by Gutenberg and Caxton is an examination of critical approaches to Caxton's publishing strategy. Perhaps the best summation of Caxton's career, or rather those critical positions which most commonly attend it, may be found in the work of two great *histoire du livre* scholars – Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin:

> En 1476, enfin, Caxton, un marchand anglais qui a appris la typographie à Cologne et a fait fonctionner une presse à Bruges, passe en Angleterre et s'installe à Westminster.

[Finally, in 1476, Caxton, an English merchant who learned typography in Cologne and operated a press in Bruges, moved to England and established himself at Westminster.][23] (1958, 278)

It is the simple biographical fact that Caxton was a merchant, enshrined not only in volumes of criticism but in Caxton's own prologue to *Le Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, that seems to define the critical trajectory of Caxton's career. On the beginnings of Caxton's career, Norman Blake, writes:

> When Caxton became aware of the possibilities of the printing press, he decided to capitalize on the good fortune which had brought him to the Low Countries where he was engaged in the trade in manuscripts and where he had dealings with the highest in the land. In his career as merchant adventurer he had risen to be Governor of the English Nation at Bruges...By printing English translations of these works he could corner the market, for he alone would be able to provide members of the English nobility with reasonably priced books which contained what was currently the most fashionable reading-matter in their own language. It was for this reason that he established his press at Westminster Abbey on his return to England in 1476... ("Selections." 1973, viii)

For Blake, as we have seen, Caxton is an entrepreneur who desires only to make the most of what he regards as a business opportunity. That is, Caxton's story is more or less that he had the savvy to get in on the ground floor of the English printing trade. Of course, given the rising interest in vernacular texts during the Fifteenth Century in England, it might well be argued that printing such books was destined to be a profitable enterprise, even if it were executed with even a modest amount of skill. The time had simply come – to borrow a modern expression - for such a commodity to make a splash, and the subsequent success does not, therefore, negate any other designs which Caxton may or may not have had. This is, in fact, one of the concepts that is easily translated within the framework of the brand name. As a sort of quantum descriptor, the brand allows for a change in state without necessitating a corresponding change in function. Much like an electron which might become positively or negatively charged without losing its subatomic identity, a brand might

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[23] Except where otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

become commercially viable or artistically successful without forfeiting its other

attributes.

This is a central point in the assessment of printers like Caxton, and the work

that they undertook en route to becoming publishers. Generally speaking, one of the

key attributes that a publisher possesses, which a printer does not, is a desire/ability

to lead public taste. The willingness to engage with the abstract, aesthetic principles

of the marketplace, and its occupiers, sets the figure of the publisher apart from the

more technically-minded printer. While both do operate within commercial and

aesthetic spheres, I think it might be fairly said that the work of the publisher is more

socially interactive than that of the printer. It is therefore important to consider

whether or not Caxton attempted to drive taste, or whether he simply responded to

emerging demands, as the outcome of this determination will have a bearing on our

construction of that part of the Caxton brand that relied on his actions and designs.

One such way that Caxton may have attempted to drive taste is found in Kuskin's

Symbolic Caxton, where Kuskin describes Caxton's "Worthies Series" as an attempt

to "...[articulate] canon, authority, and audience as cogent and interrelated concerns,

thereby producing a comprehensive intellectual framework for the physical products

rolling off his presses" (2008, 193). On the subject of the creation of niches such as

within marketplaces, Bourdieu writes:

> At the end of a process of specialization which has led to the appearance of a cultural
> production specially destined for the market and, partly in reaction against that, a production
> of 'pure' works destined for symbolic appropriation, the fields of cultural production are
> organized, very generally, in their current state. The principle of differentiation is none other
> than the objective and subjective distance of enterprises of cultural production with respect
> to the market and to expressed or tacit demand, with producers' strategies distributing
> themselves between two extremes that are never, in fact, attained – either total and cynical
> subordination to demand or absolute independence from the market and its exigencies.
> (1996, 141-2)

This model expressly forbids an agent from operating in a purely dependent or

independent mode, and is therefore pragmatic in its approach to cultural production.

For us, the question with respect to Caxton is whether or not he was responding to explicit or implicit market demand – and, in either case, what this might mean with respect to his approach to textual arrangement, selection, and marketing. Kuskin outlines a critical program for Caxton that is "synthetic" (193). This program would allow for intellectual interests to be advanced by commercial ambitions without sacrificing the essence of either. If Bourdieu's union of cultural and commercial concerns is a valid one – and the majority of critics would seem to agree that it is – then we must also ask ourselves, as Kuskin does, how it might be possible for a publisher or printer to privilege the impractical/cultural in a competitive marketplace that would require constant production of capital to ensure viability. And if such a thing is not generally practicable, then we must ask whether or not a general distrust of the commercial aspects of cultural production is not more of a societal self-loathing than a legitimate concern over interference.

Yet, before delving too deeply into the responsibilities heaped upon the publisher and printer, and indeed it is telling that a discussion of Caxton seems to necessitate justifying the choice of category, it is important to ask after the readers of these texts. Just who were Caxton's public, and what were their demands? If, as some have argued, the market was primed for an explosion of interest in the printed vernacular, then we must ask just who was driving whom. For me, this issue hinges upon two things: the importance of the rising vernacular manuscript trade in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and the social and educational status of Caxton's readers. The former category is useful in determining to what extent Caxton's (or any publisher's, for that matter) economic success was a *fait accompli* in late-Fifteenth Century England. What is especially important, with respect to the general discussion of brand names, is the determination of the extent to which the audience

had to be "trained" in the new literary culture. If, as scholars like Bennett suggest, literacy was already on the rise, then readers might very well have had an idea of the sorts of texts they desired, and so Caxton's choices would have been partially dictated to him.[24] If, however, readers in England were largely unfocused, then Caxton's hand would have been freer in the choosing of texts, and, conversely, he would have had to work harder to retain readership. In other words, the former case would argue for a more collectively-driven Caxton brand, while the latter case would suggest a brand that was more driven by the response to Caxton's actions. While this is, ultimately, an historical point, it is relevant to the discussion of the ways in which literary brands developed during the early modern period in England.

The first of my conditions for the success of Caxton's printing – the rise of the vernacular as a mode of literary expression – has been well documented, and a complete overview of such scholarship is well beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, I will provide a small sampling in order to better fix the bounds of this present discussion. The issues I am predominantly concerned with are the extent to which the vernacular had penetrated the market for texts, as well as the changes in the marketplace of print that were brought about by an increased interest in the vernacular. On the spread of the vernacular in fifteenth-century England, Kuskin writes:

> Vernacular literary production expanded dramatically throughout the century: for example, Derek Pearsall and A.S.G. Edwards count some thirty extant English vernacular literary manuscripts from 1325 to 1400, and six hundred from 1400 to Caxton's introduction of the press. After the development of the press, Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp estimate, some 59 percent of books printed in England were in English, a striking number considering that the

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[24] Bennett (1952, 19) writes: "For a long time it was fashionable to regard the people of the fifteenth century as almost totally illiterate, and to look to the sixteenth century, and especially to the reign of Edward VI, 'the founder of the Grammar Schools' for the beginnings of education in England. Thanks to the labours of scholars such as A.F. Leach, James Gairdner, C.L. Kingsford and J.W. Adamson, much has been done to correct this view. Leach showed, with a wealth of examples, that the Grammar Schools had a history which stretches back to Anglo-Saxon times, while in addition many other schools of lesser importance were in existence throughout the later Middle Ages."

Continent only 30 percent of fifteenth-century printed books were in vernacular languages. (2008, 44)

While it is important that we temper such statistics with the knowledge that the Renaissance arrived later in England than on the Continent, and so a demand for books in Classical languages remained higher on the Continent for longer, these figures are certainly indicative of a rapid increase in native interest in printed, vernacular texts. Alexandra Gillespie addresses the social conditions that allowed for the rapid increase in printing in her 2006 book *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*:

> The market for books widened after the twelfth century, and especially in the late fourteenth and then fifteenth centuries. Demographic changes at the very end of the medieval period resulted in rising living standards and higher demand for specialized and luxury goods and 'ever cheapening methods of manufacture'—the use of parchment devalued by increasing meat consumption, a growing number of clerks, notaries, and commercial scribes available as copyists, the arrival of paper, the advent of printing—coincided with these changes. Book ownership, still largely the preserve of the aristocracy and cloistered religious in the thirteenth century, became more securely the province of other sorts of men and women: those in the royal or noble service or at work within a growing royal bureaucracy like Chaucer or Hoccleve; minor gentry and wealthy merchants... (33)

It is fair to assert that the printed book, while certainly a novelty in England during Caxton's initial time at Westminster, represented more of an empowerment of native authors and traditions – that is, a legitimization of English as a literary and commercial language – than it stood for a complete revolution in the way that people thought about texts.[25]

It is perhaps for these reasons that Curtis Bühler described the incunable as more Medieval than Early Modern: "In its typeface, its anonymity, and its heterogeneity, it belongs to the Middle Ages. In its mode of production, however, it is indistinguishable from the sixteenth-century book, and thus is modern" (quoted in Kuskin 2006, 4). For this reason, Elizabeth Eisenstein and Kuskin suggest that

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[25] On this point, Manfred Görlach writes: "From 1476 onwards, printing made books more easily accessible, and better education and the increasing confidence of the middle classes led them to question the earlier educational privileges of the upper class. Such pressures, combined with a growing national pride, slowly removed doubts about using English – or Scots – for *all* purposes" (1991, 37).

incunabula support the hypothesis that a "very gradual evolutionary change" was underway with respect to printed materials, while simultaneously noting that print did eventually, by virtue of "new features," begin to distinguish itself from manuscript culture. One obvious point bears mentioning here: Caxton did not introduce printing to England; he merely began the printing of vernacular texts. In so doing, he began the process of commodification with respected to printed literary works, and he also oversaw the acceleration of an existing market. However, the location of his printing may be said to be particularly important, as some, like Nicholas Watson, view Caxton's success as contingent upon the fact that the English language had "...attained much of the standardization and prestige that made his success possible" (1999, 333). In *The Idea of the Vernacular*, edited by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, this phenomenon is attributed to the powerful role that audiences played in the success of the book: "...given the volatile status of the vernacular throughout the period, the importance of patronage, and the often highly specific social matrices in and for which texts were composed...readers and audiences were in practice as important as authors in the production of English texts and translations" (110). What emerges from these quotations is a sense that the market for English books was comprised of both readers and hearers, and so Caxton's success was dependent on the favor of the high and the low. Granted, it is unlikely that capital did anything but seldom flow to him from the *illiterati*; however the prestige of his editions, and thus their salability, seems to have been at least partially contingent upon the reception of the hearing public.[26]

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[26] Derek Pearsall and Jeremy Griffiths (1989, 258), speaking of the rise of the reading public in their *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475,* write: "The reasons for the change in the patterns of book-production, which during the years 1390-1410 sees a shift from isolated and scattered production in different parts of the country, and the beginnings of routine commercial production in London, in standardised dialect, spelling, script and format...The re-expansion of English into areas of court-based literary culture previously occupied by French and Anglo-Norman is

Dialect standardization features prominently in many critical discussions of the literariness of Caxton's texts. Surprisingly, some suggest that Caxton's contributions to literary and print culture were more significant in this arena than in his actual role as publisher: "William Caxton occupies a significant place in the history of printing and literature, but even this is outweighed by his contribution to the emergence of a standard English which overrides the various dialects. So Caxton serves as a significant promoter of a universal English literary language, to be compared in terms of the history of language to Martin Luther and tremendous impact on the German language of his Bible translation" (Füssel 2004, 69). As Görlach (1991, 13) observes: "The rise of the standard language in the fifteenth century meant that it quickly became equated with correct speech, whereas dialect came to be associated with uneducated and incorrect usage. The printing presses soon ironed out the remaining local differences in written English..." Henri-Jean Martin (1994, 260) puts forth the idea, in relation to French printing, that such influence was directly related to the status of the readers themselves: "Typographers had always taken traditional texts that the literati considered outmoded and relaunched them at a low price to a humbler clientele of relative newcomers to reading." Accordingly, it becomes possible to suggest that the location of Caxton's press at the seat of government in Westminster, coupled with the commercial necessity of finding a body of work that would appeal to new readers (and, indeed,

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one...The decisive reason might be that there was now, with the mature English writing of Chaucer and Gower...vernacular poetry, in quantity, of a kind capable of attracting paying customers, customers themselves representative of a wider range of the literate public than the traditional court-based literary culture." On the nature of this audience, Mentz (2006, 19n) writes: "This audience was constrained by, but not limited to, the number of literate readers. The practice of reading aloud allowed printed works to circulate among groups that were only partly literate. Roger Chartier has observed that the development of "popular" reading in the early modern period occurred on multiple levels, including the emergence of silent reading, the "sharing" of texts by elite and popular readers, and the book business's efforts to expand circulation of printed works."

that would succeed in gaining new readers in the first place), resulted in the increased prestige of London English.

Late in his career, Caxton touched upon this debate in his 1490 prologue to *Eneydos*. After an amusing, and familiar, tale about a merchant who did desire to purchase "eggys" in London, and was turned away for the hostess' lack of facility with the French language (she eventually responds to a request for "eyren"), Caxton offers a somewhat spirited, political defense of his linguistic agenda:

> And for as moche as this present booke is not for a rude vplondyssh man to laboure therin / ne rede it / but onely for a clerke & a noble gentylman that feleth and vnderstondeth in faytes of armes in loue & in noble chyualrye / Therefor in a meane bytwene bothe I haue reduced & translated this sayd booke in to our englysshe not ouer rude ne curyous but in suche termes as shall be vnderstanden by goddys grace accordynge to my copye. And yf ony man wyll enter mete in redyng of hit and fyndeth suche termes that he can not vnderstande late hym goo rede and lerne vyrgyll / or the pystles of ouyde / and ther he shall see and vnderstonde lyghtly all / Yf he haue a good redar & enformer / For this booke is not for euery rude and vnconnynge man to see / but to clerkys and very gentylmen that vnderstande gentylnes and scyence. (1927, 109)

Caxton identifies his readers as emerging from both the middle classes ("clerke") and the aristocracy ("noble gentylman"), and, in so doing, suggests that education is the single, unifying requirement for access to his work. Additionally, Caxton suggests that the removal of non-standard (as he sees them) dialect features is directly related to the improvement of his texts (and readers). All of these things point to Caxton's concern for the general readability of his texts – though, perhaps, less of a concern for those readers in outlying areas – as well as his belief in the transformative properties of standardization. For Caxton, little seems lost in translation, and, despite his entreaties for mercy, he merely signifies his willingness to accept "correctyon" (1927, 110). Even so, Caxton seems little worried as the book is then dedicated to Arthur, Prince of Wales. It is this detail that unites Caxton's choice of language for clerks and gentlemen with the Crown, and, as such, formally announces the primacy of London English. By allying himself so closely with a London dialect, and additionally setting out a program for the proper use of English,

Caxton is, in fact, strongly declaring one of the intended functions of his brand. For it is in this decision to choose a place, and a language, that will define his work that Caxton signals the social sphere in which he most wishes to operate. Accordingly, those who would partake of his work are invited to join, through Caxton's texts, an extended (even imaginary) community of readers that they had perhaps not known previously.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

So, then, what does it mean to speak of a "Caxton brand?" Caxton was not for sale, nor, until much later editions, did his logo make it beyond his texts (or the texts of his successor Wynkyn de Worde). Caxton's logo did not appear on his advertisements, and it is unlikely that those outside his social sphere would have found it familiar. How then, with such poor promotion, could Caxton be a brand? While Caxton's partial gestures towards brand recognition may or may not have been intentional, it is certain that he has become a symbol for modern critics who, like Norman Blake, regard him as one of the earliest commercial printers. However, such a belief is built on the idea that brands and capitalism are inherently negative structures, and so such a criticism is really an attack on Caxton's lack of artistic credibility rather than a meaningful description of his output. This is what must be challenged as we move forward. In a sense, it does not matter whether Caxton dreamed of profit, or literary glory, or the reinvigoration of the Crusades, or all of these, as Caxton's actions may be interpreted as a particular function of his multifaceted brand. I suggest that these matters of intentionality are only partially relevant, because Caxton's actions – and those of his successors who acted on his

works and behalf – caused him to become the brand.[27] Through this process, Caxton

would eventually become someone whose name carried connotations of a certain

quality, and so he would, himself, become a branded entity. I will say more on this

in the chapters that follow, but it is important to note that I am separating the brand

that Caxton and de Worde attempted to create from the critical "brand" that exists for

Blake and Carlson. In a sense, I am talking about a literal and a virtualized Caxton

brand. This is a consequence of the nature of interaction with objects and people,

which, in a manner akin to that described by Darnton, Barker, and Adams, results in

the ordering of concepts, values, and information that constitute brands. Such a

process – being, as it is, born out of the social and ideological realities we all share -

is, indeed, unavoidable.

As a final note on the subject of Caxton's business practices, Kuskin (2008,

43) observes: "Instead of trumpeting...investments in hardware and evolutions in

technique, Caxton emphasizes facts that make the book a social object: he gives its

manuscript history, its Burgundian pedigree, its similarity to his source; he places it

in a chain of patrons; he looks ahead to its use as a gift" (Symbolic Caxton 43). As

will be discussed in the following chapter, Caxton uses his paratexts to inform the

reader of the nature of the book before him, and invests himself with the authority to

make these declarations by citing the endorsement of patrons, gentlemen, and others.

He establishes himself as an exegete, and thereby offers his readers a portion of his

persona – his Caxtonness, as it were – via his critical wrapping of the texts that he

prints. This is the very essence of branding, and the heart of a new model for

understanding Caxton and his publishing career.

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[27] I do not intend to suggest that these actions were always purposeful and conscious, through my use
of "caused," but rather a simple statement that an array of external factors contributed to the birth of
the Caxton brand. It is more probable that these factors, in much the same way as the external factors
in Barker and Adams' model, were both conscious and unconscious, and, moreover, that a portion of
them were entirely unintentional. More on this in Chapters Two and Three.

I will now move on to discuss Caxton's attempts to create a permanent, recurring presence via his "Worthies Series," as well as his use of a printer's device. In this discussion, it is important to note that Caxton used his paratexts to directly address similar groups of people at different moments in time. As Kuskin does, I argue that it is useful to discuss Caxton's individual social position synchronically through the means of "capital," but I also find the concept of the brand far better suited for discussing the transmission of Caxton's texts diachronically. It therefore stands to reason that, as Caxton assumed continuity amongst his readers, these readers expected a certain continuity in Caxton's texts. This is the nature of brand recognition, and the origin of the Caxton brand.

Chapter Two - The Life of the Caxton Brand: Examining Caxton's Paratexts in Detail

Until now, I have discussed the tensions between commerce and art that have arisen within studies of early-modern books and their printers, and, more particularly, in the study of Caxton's career and output. In so doing, I have identified the brand as an entity that spans this range of concerns and interests, and proposed that it might be re-invented to provide a diagnostic, biographical function. In discussing Bourdieu, Lury, and Klein, I have attempted to present a portrait of the complex issues surrounding the notion of the "brand," as well as the difficulty in locating, as Saenger put it, "the noncommercial artist" (2006, 19). The purpose of this chapter, then, is to discuss Caxton's career, through his own prose, as well as his use of a printer's device, in an attempt to demonstrate how Caxton worked to create his own "brand," and how he attempted to leverage that brand to gain both economic and social capital. Additionally, I will consider the varying types of entities to which the label "brand" has been applied, and I will explore the ways in which a brand represents various economic and aesthetic forces. I will examine this potential through an analysis of Caxton's paratexts, focusing on Caxton's use of different textual voices as his career progressed. This discussion of Caxton's paratexts is perhaps the most significant component of the study of the Caxton brand. Indeed, as Caxton left us with no materials that specifically outline a business model, an awareness of the brand, or a plan for shaping his public identity, these paratextual components are all that remain with regard to the formative stage of Caxton's brand. I have therefore chosen to look at Caxton's paratexts with the hope of discerning from his rhetorical strategies, how Caxton viewed, and wanted others to view, his body of work. On this point, as I will soon discuss in greater detail, Caxton's desire

to shape the reading public through his texts is inextricably linked to his desire (conscious or otherwise) to perpetuate his brand. Business strategies of Caxton's period were created to serve individual works, or sets of works (like the "Worthies Series" for instance), as well as a partial conception of the overall "lifestyle" into which those works might be incorporated. Indeed, many printers and publishers elected to focus on a particular genre of text, and, in so doing, they attempted to cultivate a readership for those materials. The intention was not so much to achieve brand recognition, even if this was a consequence, but, rather, to ensure an enduring system of production, transmission, and reception. I have taken some guidance from studies of Caxton's paratexts by Norman Blake and William Kuskin, but hope to show that there is a fair amount of uncharted territory in both of these areas.

Like most authors or publishers, Caxton employs a wide range of rhetorical strategies in his writing. In some cases, we find familiar humility tropes, while in others still we encounter a man who is seemingly earnest in his enthusiasm for the materials he prints. As we will find, some, such as Norman Blake, have found all of these activities to be components of the singular desire for profit. Others, like William Kuskin, seem more willing to accept that Caxton might well have been operating on multiple levels. Whatever the details, both sets of opinions revolve around a central perception that there exists a tension between commercial and artistic practices, and that any act on behalf of the commercial will inevitably reduce the artistic. Or perhaps, in the case of Kuskin, such a desire constitutes recognition of the prevailing acceptance of this notion. What is certain is that this tension is a modern problem. Literary circles of Caxton's period felt no such uneasiness about the commingling of commercial and aesthetic activities – indeed, the glories of the Renaissance were the sole result of extensive patronage and financial competition

(the work done by Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel, or Ghiberti's work on the South Door of the Battistero di San Giovanni in Florence being two fine examples) – and so, the injection of this tension is a modern preoccupation. Accordingly, the brand model serves as a means for addressing these critical concerns; however, since it is couched in descriptive, anthropological terms, the brand does not aspire to inject any ahistorical anachronisms into accounts of Caxton and his work. It is in understanding these classification schemes that we will begin to discover those materials that simply do not fit, and we will find therein the opportunity to complicate Caxton's historical persona.

For the purposes of this examination of Caxton's various textual voices, I have chosen to re-appropriate Blake's division of Caxton's texts into varying personae – with one addition. While Blake recognizes in Caxton's work the voices of "The Editor," "The Humble Servant," "The Moralist (and Patriot)," "The Educator," and "The Meager Wit," I feel that Caxton's work has, at times, a populist streak which might be recognized as the voice of "The Man of the People." [28] At times, these personae will overlap, and these points of contact should not be viewed as contradictory. Indeed, Jacques Derrida's (1992, 230) *The Law of Genre* offers us an insight that reflects on this discussion: "...a text would not *belong* to any genre. Every text *participates* in one or several genres, there are no genreless texts, there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging" (230). And so it is with these narrative voices, each one being free to exclude and include

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[28] I have chosen to refer to these different categories as "voices," as I perceive them to be distinct manners of approaching the business of discussing the content of Caxton's printed books. However, one might just as readily reference them as "themes" (as does Blake), "modes," or "roles." When interchangeability would detract from a proper understanding of what is intended, I will endeavor to provide further comment. For instance, those figures – like the "Humble Servant" – that intersect with established literary tropes will be discussed in relation to these tropes. As such, readers are free to consider references to these six figures as references to equivalent narrative functions, except for those places that are explicitly noted to be otherwise.

as the situation demands. All of this is to say that I do not wish to get caught up on the need to eternally classify the aspects of Caxton's narrative voice, as this entire exercise is simply to provide an overall familiarity with the collective tone. While it is probable that there are nuances in the voices that are particularly relevant to the making of the Caxton brand, I will withhold any generalizations about the relationship between each of these rhetorical modes and the brand. Instead, I will comment on these instances as they arise in the course of reading Caxton's prose, and proceed from there.

In his *Caxton and His World*, N.F. Blake describes the themes upon which Caxton builds his dedicatory paratexts:

> There are three themes around which Caxton built his dedications: the value of the book itself, whether on account of its novelty, its edifying stories or its courtly style; the nobility of the patron; and the humility of the printer-translator. These three themes, which are traditional, were filled out by details concerning the book's publication, by moral precepts, and by injunctions to behave virtuously and to read other books of the same type. (1969, 152-3)

These observations largely reflect my own categorizations, accounting for the voices of the Editor, Humble Servant, Moralist and Patriot, Educator, and Meager Wit. A deviation, however, is to be found in my figure of Man of the People. For Blake (and many others), Caxton's intentions were limited to the generation of profit and the extension of the marketplace. By contrast, I encourage the reader to consider that Caxton might well have been working at goals beyond self-aggrandizement while also toiling away in the pursuit of profit. This is not to say that Blake is purely cynical in his approach to Caxton's career. Quite the opposite is true, in fact, as Blake often speculates on Caxton's motivations in both a fair and an open-minded spirit. What will be unique about my deployment of these voices is that they will be mapped against the chronology of their publication with the express aim of attempting to chart the evolution of the man (Caxton) and his rhetoric. In charting

this chronology, we may well discover how Caxton adapted his business model to changing political and social situations, while also getting a sense as to the way in which Caxton's approach to his craft and his readership changed over the course of his career. By setting aside the tension that comes from needing to pinpoint Caxton's focus – whether on commercial or literary practices – in favor of the more dynamic, inclusive model of the brand, a critical scenario is created wherein all aspects of the brand might be given equal weight in this study.

<div align="center">***</div>

It is important, at this stage, to consider the material environment in which these voices operated – that is, Caxton's text. I will now outline the experience of discovering, and interacting with, a Caxton edition with the intention of explicating the potential points of intersection and departure from the earlier, scribal medium of textual transmission. As Seth Lerer writes, such material concerns are often essential to the study of the history of the book:

> The study of print's social and material experience has enhanced, and at times even dominated, the study of authorship and aesthetics. The visual appearance of the page bears as much literary meaning, perhaps, as the author's text itself; the volume as an object carries as much social weight as the repute of the writer. Literary history has, for some, become book history, and the study of the works of medieval and Renaissance English literature in particular -- The Canterbury Tales; the plays of Shakespeare; the poetry of Wyatt, Spenser, and Milton; the histories of Leland, Bale, and Foxe; the English Bible--has come to be the study of the books that hold them. (2007, 453-4)

Shifting slightly from Lerer's argument, I would argue that the visual appearance of the page bears as much meaning for the brand, as it does for literature. The format of the page, and the relative consistency with which editions are produced, has a strong effect on the experience of the reader, and so the reputation the brand enjoys. Therefore, it is vital that we come to grips with the material Caxton.

Viewed in passing, a Caxton edition is remarkably similar to the English manuscripts that preceded it. While the material of Caxton's editions, generally

paper, was somewhat lighter and less resilient than the heavier parchment that was

commonly used in the manuscript trade, the content of those pages - lengths of lines

and the size of textual blocks, for instance - was comparable. Indeed, even Caxton's

typefaces, be they his earlier French lettre bâtarde or his later textura types, strongly

recalled scribal hands that were common in the period leading up to the introduction

of the incunabula. On Caxton's bastarda type, which served as his longest running

typeface, Trapp and Hellinga (1999, 74) observe: "It was a remarkably elegant

typeface of generous size, clearly inspired by the scribal traditions of the ample,

luxury manuscripts produced for the court of Burgundy. Its direct model is reputedly

the hand of Colard Mansion, scribe and printer in Bruges, with whom Caxton must

have entered some form of partnership before his departure for Westminster" (74).

One of the immediate outcomes of the introduction of movable type, of course, is a

significant reduction in graphic irregularity. While some imperfections would

naturally remain, Caxton's typefaces signaled their separation from the scribal hands

that gave them birth by introducing a more "stable" text.[29] This fixity that Caxton

would increase the credit his work might enjoy, as Johns notes:

> Printers and booksellers were manufacturers of credit. They had to be. The skills of those
> producing and trading in books, and the perceptions of those using them in learned work,
> might not intersect harmoniously. Whether or not they did at the moment of publications,
> moreover, accounts of printers' and booksellers' actions might still be drawn upon later by
> critics and rivals to challenge the value of any particular book, for example by alleging
> piracy. (1998, 33)

While Johns often uses the notion of "fixity" to address the matter of piracy, and so

the concept of authority, it is important to consider that the stability of a text – as

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[29] David McKitterick (2003, 101) offers a useful caveat here: "And yet, in some respects printing
remained subject to many of the same kinds of uncertainties that are to be found in the production of
manuscripts, whether in the printing house itself or in the ways that the printed sheets were further
enhanced (for example, by decoration, rubrication, colouring, organisation, or pen correction), or in
the process of binding, on their way to the reader. Type was subject to alteration at press, and inking
of type and of illustration was subject to skill or accidents of the pressman. The differences were of
scale, and not least in the ways that variations were inevitably dispersed among a far larger audience
than hitherto. In these respects, reading audiences in the fifteenth century did not necessarily change
in their expectations very quickly, or all change in the same way."

seen in its general lack of variability – is also a meaningful component in the overall

assessment of a text's reliability.

Turning then to a specific example of the differences inherent to the Caxton

edition, let us examine the 1485 printing of *Morte d'Arthur*. Sue Ellen Holbrook

describes Caxton's text in her essay "On the Attractions of the Malory Incunable and

the Malory Manuscript:" "The Malory typeface [Caxton's Type 4], then, marks this

edition's kinship with a prolific program of books, begun with the advent of Type 4,

on a variety of subjects for a variety of customers—religious professionals and

secular people ranging from King Edward IV, earls and ladies, mercers, one William

Prude, to 'all estates.'" (327) Holbrook also notes that this typeface was typically

used in the production of larger, more prestigious works:

> Caxton's edition is a folio…during the Type 4/4 period, most of his editions were folios, a choice demonstrating, as Carol M. Meale observes, Caxton's 'decorum of format' for 'substantial and/or prestigious works.' And substance is what we embrace when we lift the Malory incunable from a shelf. Its size is startling—its 11 ¾" height and 8" width, its 3" thickness, its nearly seven-pound weight. This is no book to curl up with, perch on your lap, or hold up in your hands. (2000, 327)

Indeed, the heft of Caxton's edition is particularly limiting with respect to its

functional benefits. As Holbrook notes: "Moreover, opened on such a lectern or

closed and stored on a shelf in a cupboard or near a reading desk, this incunable

signifies the owner's participation in a book culture and acquisition of an object of

value" (328). It is this final observation that is most suggestive with respect to the

relation between Caxton's brand and his material texts. Indeed, the heft of Caxton's

folio, which is demonstrative of the labor involved in its production, as well as the

edition's calligraphic typeface, which recalls the aristocratic productions of the pre-

incunabular book trade, combine to create the impression that Caxton's editions are a

continuation of a literary culture that enjoyed a prestige among the middle class

readers who aspired to rise.

Considered, then, in the light of D.F. McKenzie's (1999, 13) charge that any history of the book "is a record of cultural change," the Winchester manuscript of Malory's *Morte* (a leaf of which may be seen in fig. 3 below), and the Caxton folio edition of the same (see fig. 4 below), invoke the sense that the change, for Caxton, was found more in his readership rather than in his books' form. While the manuscript – with its rubricated proper nouns – is suggestive of a readership that was already familiar with the content, and therefore benefitted from an easy form of reference, Caxton's edition reduces these rubricated nouns into merely capitalized forms. This is indicative of a publishing program that sought to encourage access at, perhaps, the expense of easy, scholarly reference. Taken from the perspective of the brand, we might infer that Caxton sought to engender his readers with a sense that their texts were substantial, complete, and, perhaps above all, open to all. By removing the more complicated systems of manuscript annotation and engaging in a "flattening" of potential readings, Caxton is reducing the amount of specialized knowledge and experience that his readers must bring to the text. In this way, we might argue that Caxton, true to his Man of the People persona, is democratizing the literary work in a way that had previously not been attempted in England.

However, in light of the work of David McKitterick, it is important that we pause to recognize that these changes, such as they might have been, were largely confined to the habits of readers. McKitterick, in his *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order: 1450-1830*, reminds us that the cultural status of a printed book, and a manuscript book, was actually quite similar:

> In libraries, manuscript and print were shelved side by side, and the early sixteenth-century library catalogue of Syon monastery makes abundantly plain how manuscript and printed works co-existed on an equal footing. The catalogue, a document itself notably more lavishly set out than many others of its kind, adhered to the medieval practice of identifying books by the first words of the second leaf: so far from being distinguished for their novelty, printed books were treated like manuscripts. (2003, 51-2)

This is an important consideration with respect to the extent we can claim that Caxton's editions were culturally transformative. While the Caxton brand marks a significant milestone in the development of urban readers, it is a bit too much to claim that Caxton's editions were immediately recognized for their distinctness. As McKitterick notes: "In considering what we may term historically transitional forms or, more accurately in that it ignores any implied periodicity, those that fuse one with the other, it is again important not to assume that print is inevitably different in status from manuscript. The two were used and published side by side" (53). Such a point, I contend, actually strengthens the case that Caxton would have felt the need to establish his brand for its utility and quality, as the material form underpinning his work would, owing to the perception of material similitude, have been of lesser concern to his readers.
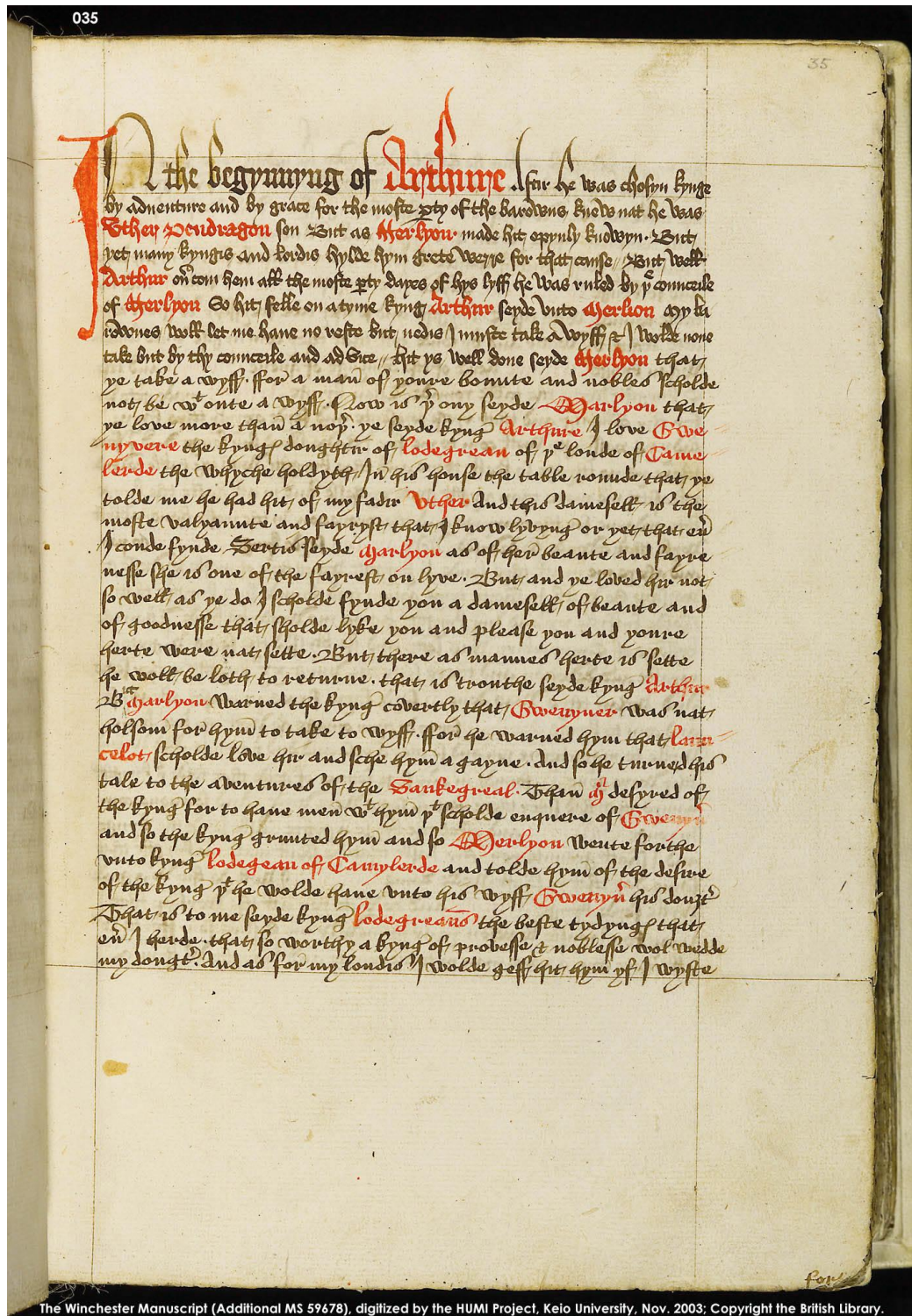
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IN the begynnyng of **Arthur** . for he was chosyn kyng
by adventure and by grace for the moste pty of the barons knewe nat he was
Uther Pendragon son But as **Merlyon** made hit opynly knowyn. But
yet many kyngis and lordis hylde hym grete werre for that cause But well
Arthur ou com hem all the moste pty dayes of hys lyff he was ruled by p conceile
of **Merlyon** So hit felle on a tyme kyng **Arthur** seyde vnto **Merlyon** my ba
rons woll let me have no reste but nedis I muste take a wyff / I wolde none
take but by thy conceile and advice / hit ys well done seyde **Merlyon** that
ye take a wyff for a man of youre bounte and noblese scholde
not be wt oute a wyff. Now is ther ony seyde **Merlyon** that
ye love more than a noper ye seyde kyng **Arthure** I love **Gwe-**
nyvere the kyngis doughter of **lodegrean** of p londe of **Tame-**
lerde the whyche holdyth In his house the table rounde that ye
tolde me he had hit of my fadir **Uther** And this damesell is the
moste valyaunte and fayryst that I know lyvyng or yet that eu
I coude fynde Sertis seyde **Merlyon** as of her beaute and fayre-
nesse she is one of the fayrest on lyve. But and ye loved hir not
so well as ye do I scholde fynde you a damesell of beaute and
of goodnesse that scholde lyke you and please you and youre
herte were nat sette. But there as mannes herte is sette
he woll be loth to returne. that is trouthe seyde kyng **Arthur**
But **Merlyon** warned the kyng covertly that **Gwenyver** was nat
holsom for hym to take to wyff. for he warned hym that **Laun-**
celot scholde love hir and sche hym agayne. And so he turned his
tale to the aventures of the **Sankegreal**. Than the kyng desyred of
Merlyon to have men wt hym p scholde enquere of **Gwenyv**
and so the kyng graunted hym and so **Merlyon** wente forthe
vnto kyng **lodegean of Camylerde** and tolde hym of the desyre
of the kyng p he wolde have vnto his wyff **Gwenyvir** his douzt
That is to me seyde kyng **lodegreano** the beste tydyng p I h
eu herde. that so worthy a kyng of probesse & noblesse wol wedde
my douzt. And as for my londis I wolde geff hit hym yf I wyste

Fig. 3

After that I had accomplysshed and fynysshed dyuers
hystoryes as wel of contemplacyon as of other hysto
ryal and worldly actes of grete conquerours & pryn
ces / And also certeyn bookes of ensaumples and doctryne /
Many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Eng
lond camen and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherfore
that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the
saynt greal / and of the moost renomed crysten kyng / Fyrst
and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy / kyng Arthur /
whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge vs englysshe
men tofore al other crysten kynges / For it is notoyrly knowen
thorugh the vnyuersal world / that there been ix worthy & the
best that euer were / That is to wete thre paynyms / thre Jewes
and thre crysten men / As for the paynyms they were tofore the
Incarnacyon of Cryst / whiche were named / the fyrst Hector
of Troye / of whome thystorye is comen bothe in balade and in
prose / The second Alysaunder the grete / & the thyrd Julyus
Cezar Emperour of Rome of whome thystoryes ben wel kno
and had / And as for the thre Jewes whyche also were tofore
thyncarnacyon of our lord of whome the fyrst was Duc Jo
sue whyche brought the chyldren of Israel in to the lond of
byheste / The second Dauyd kyng of Jherusalem / & the thyrd
Judas Machabeus of these thre the byble reherceth al theyr no
ble hystoryes & actes / And sythe the sayd Incarnacyon haue
ben thre noble crysten men stalled and admytted thorugh the
vnyuersal world in to the nombre of the ix beste & worthy / of
whome was fyrst the noble Arthur / whos noble actes I pur
pose to wryte in thys present book here folowyng / The second
was Charlemayn or Charles the grete / of whome thystorye is
had in many places bothe in frensshe and englysshe / and the
thyrd and last was Godfray of boloyn / of whos actes & lyf
I made a book vnto thexcellent prynce and kyng of noble me
morye kyng Edward the fourth / the sayd noble Jentylmen
Instantly requyred me temprynte thystorye of the sayd noble
kyng and conquerour kyng Arthur / and of his knyghtes
wyth thystorye of the saynt greal / and of the deth and endyng
of the sayd Arthur / Affermyng that I ouzt rather tenprynte
his actes and noble featis / than of godefroy of boloyne / or

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At this point, then, it is important to take stock of what we have learned of the Caxton brand. We have already seen how his folio editions have striven for quality, even as they reduced the complexity of their manuscript forebears. Beyond this, Caxton's embrace of the vernacular, and of literary texts in general, signals his desire to participate in the transmission and production of cultural capital within the non-aristocratic classes. Even so, Caxton's occasional work under the auspices of patronage declares his familiarity and success within more traditional modes of textual transmission and production. What emerges, then, is a brand that is able to transgress the class structures of Fifteenth Century English society in order to engage in a larger cycle of production – particularly with respect to cultural capital – than those involved in the predominantly specialized and aristocratic realm of manuscript production.

Having explored some of the material aspects of Caxton's brand, I will now turn to an examination of the narrative strategies that Caxton deployed in his paratexts, with particular attention to his so-called Worthies Series, before finally laying the groundwork for the eventual transmutation of his brand via the work of Wynkyn de Worde.

I. An Overview of Caxton's Narrative Voices and Strategies

Appearing in nearly half of the surveyed texts, the figure of "Caxton as Editor" is the single voice that unifies the entirety of Caxton's career. This figure operates in three distinct manners: translator, compiler, and interpreter – three features that are ever-present for Caxton. Each of these voices provides insight into the nature of the work, and to its specific provenance and context. Considered in relation to the brand, we might describe these as "baseline" or "essential"

components, in that they represent attempts on the part of Caxton to define the scope

of his objects, and, accordingly, the information provided by this voice would have a

meaningful effect on the situational interpretation of the reader. In order to better

understand these, let's look at one or two short examples of each. The first is

straightforward enough, and Caxton the translator is particularly keen to point out his

paltry skill as well as the history of textual transmission as he understands it. The

former concern – that of the humility trope - will be discussed in a following section,

and so we can set it aside for the moment. The latter concern serves to demonstrate

both the authority of the work, as well as the occasional prestige of its

author/patrons. Consider the following two examples, the first from the first edition

(1477) of *The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres* and the second from the first

edition (1481) of *The Mirrour of the World*:

> Here endeth the book named the dictes or sayengis of the
> philosophhres enprynted by me william Caxton at westmestre the
> yere of our lord MCCCC Lxxvij. Which book is late translated
> out of Frenshe into englyssh by the Noble and puissant lord Lord
> Antone Erle of Ryuyers lord of Scales &[30] of the Ile of wyght
> Defendour and directour of the siege apostolique for our holy
> Fader the Pope in this Royame of Englond and Gouernour of my
> lord Prynce of Wales... (Crotch 1956, 18)
>
> --
>
> As the chapitres here folowyng shal more clerly shewe and
> declare to you / whiche said book was translated out of latyn in to
> ffrensshe by the ordynaunce of the noble duc / Johan of Berry and
> Auuergne the yere of our lord. M.CC.xlv. And now at this tyme
> rudely translated out of ffrensshe in to English by me symple
> persone william Caxton / at the request. desire. coste and dispense
> of the honourable & worshipful man Hugh Bryce Alderman &
> Cytezeyn of london / entendyng to present the same vnto the
> vertuous noble and puissaunt lord / wylliam lord hastynges lord
> Chamberlayn vnto the most Crysten kynge / kynge Edward the
> fourthe kynge of England... (Crotch 1956, 52)

The first of these two excerpts contains one of the more common features in

Caxton's printing – the colophon. Such information, in addition to its factual nature

which might be intended to guard against piracy or to establish provenance, was

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[30] I have updated the original punctuation, and the ampersand shall appear in place of the Tironian nota.

meant to reinforce the impression that Caxton's work was recent and, therefore, of greater value to the reader/buyer. Given that the Caxton brand carries with it the novelty of a new medium, a colophon that emphasized the novelty of the printed object for the reader is likely intended as a reinforcing feature for the brand. One might argue, however, that this feature, stable as it is across Caxton's body of work, might very well have been meant (either consciously or unconsciously) to serve as a unifying force within Caxton's body of work – that is, a phrasal (or multi-phrasal) unit that, though varying in content, provided a consistent, predictable way for the reader/hearer to know that the end of a given work had been reached (similar, perhaps, to the bow at the end of a theatrical performance). By contrast, Caxton provides the latter bit of authorial and patronal information for two reasons (beyond the matter of textual convention): authority and prestige. Indeed, the noble translator would likely have balked at the absence of his name from text. Therefore, there is a *necessary* reason for Caxton to provide it. However, the full scope of the man's title would likely confer a sense of authority to a reading public that was used to finding the great names of past authors on texts of merit. Additionally, Caxton would derive a certain amount of prestige for facilitating the printing of the nobleman's text – prestige which would, logically, be incorporated by, and carried with, the Caxton brand.

In the second example, we see a slightly different method at work. Caxton, with customary self-deprecation, provides the history of the text's transmission which culminates in this present edition. Apart from presenting a simple fact, this would have the added benefit of establishing Caxton as a link in this line of transmission – usurping the authority of the past for his own devices. In looking at the French original, however, it seems fair to note that Caxton, even if self-

aggrandizement is his aim, has not acted selfishly. Where he might have gathered far greater glory for himself by attempting to position himself as the "discoverer" of the text, Caxton translates the following text without abridgement: "...*Et est ce present volume appelle lymage du monde Et fu translate de latin en franchois par le commandment || et ordonnance du noble duc Jehan de berry et Dauuergne lan M. deux cens quarante cincq...*" (Crotch 1956, 52) Instead of attempting to inflate his reputation by omitting facts about textual transmission (something many contemporaries might have done, including a man called Buffreau who would publish the poem under his own name in Geneva in 1517)[31], Caxton accomplishes this by noting that the book is intended for the young King Edward IV. By extension, then, the book was certainly suited to a general audience if it were fit for the monarch.

<div align="center">***</div>

Appearing almost as frequently as the figure of "The Editor," is the figure of "The Humble Servant." I have appropriated this characterization because of Caxton's deployment of humility tropes to create a markedly deferential tone in those texts in which he attributes either the composition or the commission to noble personages. By so doing, Caxton is endeavoring to establish himself as a simple, textual craftsman while simultaneously emphasizing the technological means by which he has completed his printing. In this way, the Caxton brand garners a sense of modernity, even as it expresses an artistic (even aristocratic) sensibility. Caxton's very first printed text in England (c. 1477) – *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* – offers us an example of this voice:

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[31] See page ix in Oliver Prior's (1966) *Caxton's Mirrour of the World*.

> ...And was fully in wyll to haue lefte hyt. [the work which he has set down previously on account of his rude skill] tyll on a tyme hit fortuned that the ryght hyghe excellent and ryght vertuous prynces my ryght redoughted lady mylady Margarete by the grace of god suster vnto the kynge of Englond and of france. my souerayn lord Duchesse of Bourgoine of lotryk. of brabant. of lymburgh. and of luxenburgh Countes of fflandres of artoys & of bourgoine Palatynee of heynawd of holand of zeland and of namur Marquesse of the holy empire, lady of ffryse of Salius and of mechlyn sente for me to speke wyth her good grace of dyuerce maters among the wyche y lete her hyenes haue knowleche of the forsayd begynnyng of thys werke which anone comanded me to shewe the sayd .v. or .vi. quayers to her sayd grace and whan she had seen hem. anone she fonde a defaute in myn englissh whiche sche comanded me to amende and more ouer comanded me straytli to contynue and make an ende of the resydue than not translated. whos dredfull comandement y durste in no wyse disobey because y am seruant vnto her sayde grace and resseiue of her yerly ffee and other many goode and great benefenes... (Crotch 1956, 5)

This lengthy quotation illustrates some of the key elements of "The Humble Servant" motif. As is the general formula for many such dedicatory verses, Caxton subtly reduces his station by touching upon his general lack of sophistication – in either birth or language – and presents the ranks and titles of his patron with a considerable attention to detail. This is, of course, what one would expect from any member of the middle class with a mind towards rising, but it is also a useful rhetorical device with respect to impressing the "merit" of this text upon the reader. As is also part of the generic formula, Caxton tells us that he has finished this book at the insistence of this great personage. Accordingly, this is an *essential* text that has been called upon by special command. Readers apart from the Duchess, it follows, are especially privileged to share in this triumph of literature which, despite Caxton's "meager" abilities, has become authoritative inasmuch as it now serves the needs of the ruling classes. Such a construction creates the perception that the social capital that belonged to the elites could be had, at least in part, through the shared experience of reading Caxton's text. As has been discussed, brands often work to engender a life-style in their consumers, and this sort of status transfer is one key mechanism by which this is accomplished.

On the subject of this "humility formula," N.F. Blake (1991,18) writes: "Caxton's use of the humility or submission formula shows that, though he was a mercer dealing in cloth, he nevertheless knew what the fashionable literary formulas were and felt obliged to use them." Blake also provides us with this quotation from Derek Pearsall's *The Floure and the Leafe*:

> In the fifteenth century the most elaborate submission formulas were reserved for 'commanded' works, prepared at the request of some powerful patron...; the examples in Lydgate are prolonged and effusive. The full modesty epilogue has an initial command, 'Go little boke'...; an apology for the author's inadequacy, for his 'rude langage' and 'rurall termes'; a request for the reader to make corrections and improvements where he thinks fit; an assertion that all lies 'under support of' the patience and tolerance of the reader, and that the author would never have presumed to trespass so far had it not been for his patron's insistence; and a final commendation of the poem, with all its faults, to the mercy of the reader... (quoted in Blake 1991, 17-8)

It is these types of deployments that, in particular, characterize "The Humble Servant." While the assurance that the author has a particularly meager wit can be found in other types of prologues, we are, for the purposes of this category, only interested in the integration of these testaments with the above-quoted tropes.[32] As Blake does, we might refer to this fully-integrated voice as the "courtly" voice, as it exhibits the sort of deferential rhetoric most commonly associated with requests for patronage.

All of this, of course, has a very familiar sort of logic and feel – remaining, as it does, in our continued use of the "blurbs" from established authors which adorn almost every new publication in nearly every field. Creating the sense that the reader is becoming part of an important, and, at times, exclusive club is a useful way to move new books. Consider, also, this lengthy excerpt from the prologue of *The Game and Playe of the Chesse* [c. 1475]:

> Oh the right noble / right excellent & veruous prince George duc of Clarence Erle of Warwyk and of salisburye / grete chamberlayn of Englond & leutenant of Irelond oldest brother of kynge Edward by the grace of god kynge of England and of fraunce / your most humble seruant William Caxton amonge other of your seruantes sendes vnto yow peas. helthe. Joye and victorye upon your Enemyes / Right highe puyssant and redoubted prynce /

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[32] For more on these "modesty topoi," see Taylor, et al. *The Idea of the Vernacular*. pp. 8-10.

> For as moche as I haue vnderstand and knowe / that ye are enclined vnto the comyn wele of the kynge...Therefore I haue put me in deuour to translate a lityll book late comen in to myn handes out of frensh in to englisshe / In which I fynde thauctorites. dictees. and stories of auncient Doctours philosophes poetes and of other wyse men which been recounted & applied vnto the moralite of the publique wele as well of the nobles as of the comyn peple after the game and playe of the chesse... (Crotch 1956, 11-2)

The stock elements are present in this dedicatory prologue – the recitation of the patron's many virtues and accomplishments and the unworthiness of the dedicator – and yet, for all this, the book is marketed as something that might improve the abilities and understanding of this great patron. Not, of course, because Caxton has a brilliant idea, but because it contains the works of "auncient Doctours." In this way, Caxton positions himself as a conduit through which the stores of knowledge which lay idle under centuries of neglect might finally be transported to those that need them. (In this case, both the patron and the audience who, it seems, remain suspended as spectators in this textual interlocution.) He is not an Authority, as such, but his books bear the imprint of ancient and aristocratic authority. Therefore, while it might be said that he is only a merchant and servant, it must also be said that he has fashioned himself into an indispensable figure by virtue of his near monopoly on English printing in the first few years of his press' operation in London. This is an important contextual concern for the evaluation of the Caxton brand, and must be borne in mind as we continue to discuss his evolving career.

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Perhaps the most unusual rhetorical figure in this collection is "The Moralist and Patriot." Caxton appears to feel that it is his duty to interject (and abridge) where appropriate so that his books might have an effect on the character of his English readers. It is here that Caxton is at his most explicit in his attempts to shape his reading public, and it is because of this that we also get here what is perhaps the

most straightforward glimpse at the emerging Caxton brand. Indeed, I contend that this figure, and these interjections, are the neglected half of the equation when later critics analyze Caxton's intentions and contributions. It is easy to see, as Carlson, Blake, and others do, that Caxton was engaged in a for-profit enterprise. It is also easy to forget that Caxton adds elements of little practical value to his texts. But it is precisely in these elements that Caxton adds a voice, and perhaps value, to his work, and so it is here that we must look to complete our impression of the Caxton brand.

One might speculate that the reason for such irruptions into the texts he is working with might simply be a hearkening back to the medieval tradition of "enhancing" a text through commentary. It may be equally plausible to suggest that Caxton is operating in this mode out of genuine passion, and, given his somewhat turbulent history in government, a desire to put to right those wrongs he feels he has endured. Whatever the case, the trope is a powerful component of Caxton's own writing, and it remains part of the inherited legacy of his brand. Consider the following pair of examples, the first from the epilogue to *Godefroy of Bologne* (1481) and the second from the epilogue to *The Order of Chyualry* (c.1484):

> Thus endeth this book Jntitled the laste siege and conquest of Jherusalem with many other historyes therin comprysed...And of their releef & conquest of Jherusalem / and how Godeffroy of boloyne was first kyng of the latyns in that royamme & of his deth. translated & reduced out of ffre[n]sshe in to englysshe || by me symple persone Wylliam Caxton to thende that euery cristen man may be the better encoraged tenterprise warre for the defense of Cristendom. and to recouer the sayd Cyte of Jherusalem in which our blessyd sauyour Jhesu Criste suffred deth for al mankynde...And also that Cristen peple one vnyed in a veray peas / myght empryse to goo theder in pylgremage with strong honde for to expelle the sarasyns and turkes out of the same that our lord myght be ther seruyd & worshipped of his chosen cristen peple... (Crotch 1956, 48)
>
> --
>
> O ye knyghts of Englond where is the custome and vsage of noble chyualry that was vsed in the dayes / what do ye now / but go to the baynes & playe atte dyse And some not wel aduysed vse not honest and good rule ageyn all ordre of knyghthode / leue this / leue it and rede the noble volumes of saynt graal of lancelot / of galaad / of Trystram / of perse forest / of percyual / of gawayn / & many mo / There shall ye see manhode / curtosye & gentylnesse / And loke in latter dayes of the noble actes syth the conquest / as in kyng Rychard dayes cuer du lyon...Allas what doo ye / but slepe & take ease / and ar al disordred fro chyualry / J wold demaunde a question yf J shold not displease / how many knyghtes ben ther now in Englond / that haue thuse and thexcercyse of a knyghte... (Crotch 1956, 82-3)

The former example is both patriotic and - perhaps in a modern sense – evangelical, exhorting the readers to take up arms to free the Holy Land. It is a curiously anachronistic call to arms, as well, what with the Ninth Crusade having ended some two centuries prior, the city of Constantinople having fallen about thirty years earlier, and new calls to Crusade by Sixtus IV and Innocent VIII being generally ignored in Europe. Considering the two options presented by Caxton – war and pilgrimage – it seems likely that the latter is the true focus of the encouragement.[33] Even so, the presence of this text reveals the very mechanisms by which Caxton hoped to shape his reading public. That is, we are told that it is Caxton's specific hope that disseminating this text will directly influence the behavior of Christian Englishmen. In this way, at least, Caxton recognizes the potential of his medium to be an instrument of social change – something which, as we'll later discuss, seems to occur only sporadically to him, but plays an integral part in the creation of the Caxton brand.

The above passage from *The Order of Chyualry* represents a more reproachful, moralistic Caxton, even while it works towards the same goals as the passage from *Godefroy*. This aspect of Caxton's moralizing seems deeply rooted in his assertion that his texts will provide a remedy to the ills of society. As these texts contain examples of the glories of former days, and the ideals of moral perfection, they are naturally suited to be emulated by their readers. A modern reader might very well be inclined to look at this link between morals and merchandising as nothing more than an attempt to sell more copies for sheer profit. However, I feel that this is unnecessarily cynical. While it remains a meaningful potential motive,

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[33] Even so, Kuskin (2008, 214) observes that Caxton did do some jobbing work by printing at least ten indulgences to finance a new Crusade.

the pursuit of profit is likely not Caxton's sole ambition.[34] Surely, the pursuit of

position and social preferment by establishing himself as a figure of good character

and judgment would be equally important – especially when one considers the

nascence of his chosen profession in England. By working to establish the potential

for positive moral influence via printed texts, and perhaps, importantly, the

continuity from manuscripts in this regard, Caxton would simultaneously have

enhanced his own reputation. In terms of both posterity and survivability, for both

his career and his brand, this work would be far more useful in the long-term than

any quick profit could be.

<div align="center">***</div>

A related voice, that of "The Educator" serves two distinct functions. First,

this figure is particularly interested in garnering the patronage of the nobility by

offering them instruction. On the other hand, it is equally interested in announcing

its ability to provide useful instruction to the rising middle-class reader. This

ambition seems to be manifested most often in an attempt to create a respect for the

book as repository. Consider the following pair of excerpts – one from Caxton's

first printed book in England, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, and the other

from his *The Historie of Jason* (1477):

> And for so moche as this booke was newe and late maad and drawen in to frenshe / And neuer had seen hit in oure englissh tonge / I thought it my self hit shold be a good besynes to translate hyt in to oure englissh / to thende that hyt myght be had as well in the royame of Englond as in other landes / and also for to passe therwyth the tyme. and thus concluded in my self to begynne this sayd werke... (Crotch 1956, 4)

> Thenne for the honour & worship of our sayd moost redoubted liege lorde whiche hath taken the sayde ordre / I haue vnder the shadowe of his noble protection enterprised taccomplissh this sayd litil boke not presumyng to presente it vnto his highnesse. for asmoch as I doubte not his good grace hath it in frensh which he wel vnderstandeth but not displesing his most noble grace I entende by his licence & congye & by the supportacion of our most redoubted

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[34] A useful bit of circumstantial evidence for this, to be discussed later, is Caxton's complete lack of output during 1486 - a year in which he enjoyed a total monopoly over printing in England.

> liege lady most excellent princesse the Queene to presente this sayde boke vnto the most fayr and my moost redoubted yong lorde...To thentent he may begynne to lerne rede Englissh. not for ony beaute or good Endyting of our englissh tonge that is therin but for the nouelte of the histories whiche as I suppose hath not be had bifore the translacion herof... (Crotch 1956, 34)

In the first of these excerpts, Caxton suggests that his translation of *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* serves to make English learning, even in this small matter, equivalent with that of other nations. English is presented as an equally-capable language of learning to French, and the text is both a diversion and an asset. Conversely, the second example suggests that English is an inelegant language that is ill-suited to aristocratic discourse. Indeed, the primary purpose of the translation, as stated, is to provide an amusing set of stories to facilitate the acquisition of reading skill. By alluding to the language's meager status, Caxton effectively relegates English to the discourse of the middle and lower classes. One must certainly wonder at this, given the language's status as a literary language in light of the work of authors like Chaucer and Lydgate. One might begin to wonder if rhetoric such as this – largely absent when Caxton prints Malory and Chaucer – is designed to deflect anxiety over a vernacular printing industry in England. Certainly, Caxton's depiction of a relatively-impotent language might serve to calm the fears of a social and linguistic revolution in England. In this way, Caxton might well be operating as many new brands do. That is, he is attempting to emphasize the revolutionary nature of his product, while simultaneously suggesting that the revolution is limited to experience rather than practice.

The rhetoric of literary self-deprecation was already well-established by the time Caxton set out to write his prologues and epilogues. Accordingly, it is unsurprising for us to find numerous examples of Caxton's attempts to downplay his own facility as a translator and author. Yet, despite their stock character, the deployment of these remarks is not without a bit of slyness on the part of Caxton the

entrepreneur. Caxton simultaneously establishes himself as a figure in need of patronage and support, as well as a man of the people. That is, Caxton demonstrates that he is a sort of "local boy done good," despite his numerous educational and social advantages. The result of this is a figure whose works appeal to both nobleman and merchant. Consider the following examples, one from *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, and the other from *Reynart the Foxe*:

> And was fully in wyll to haue lefte hyt. [the text] tyll on a tyme hit fortuned that the ryght hyghe excellent and ryght vertuous prynces my ryght redoughted lady mylady Margarete by the grace of god suster vnto the kynge of Englond...fonde a defaute in myn englissh which sche comanded me to amende and more ouer comanded me straytli to contynue and make an ende of the resydue than not translated...forthwyth wente and labouryde in the sayde translacion aftyr my symple and pour connyng also nigh as y can folouyng myn auctor mekeli...and requyre & praye alle them that shall rede this sayd werke to correcte hyt & to hold me excusid of the rude & symple translacion... (Crotch 1956, 4-5)

> And yf ony thyng be said or wreton herin / that may greue or dysplease ony man, blame not me / but the foxe / for they be his wordes & not myne, Prayeng all them that shal see this lytyl treatis / to correcte and amende, Where they shal fynde faute / For I haue not added ne mynusshed but haue folowed as nyghe as I can my copye whiche was in dutche, and by me willm Caxton translated in to this rude & symple englyssh in thabbey of Westmestre... (Crotch 1956, 62)

In the first of these examples, Caxton offers the explanation that his "symple and pour connyng" allow him only to follow his "auctor mekeli." Taken at face value, such an explanation suggests that Caxton truly believes his skill unfit to the task of approaching the act of translation. It is likely, however, that such rhetoric is merely the continuation of the traditions of manuscript culture into a new medium. Partly, one would suspect, this is due to the relatively nascent nature of the print medium in England. However, it is reasonable to assume that Caxton chose to emphasize the imperfect nature of his works, rather than the speed with which they might be disseminated or amended, in order to avoid upsetting the status quo. Indeed, as long as Caxton was beholden to the continued favors of patrons, I would contend that he had little interest in jeopardizing his position.

Realistically, there would be little reason for Caxton to do so in any case. Given the almost complete lack of competition that Caxton faced, one might think of his brand as operating in the way that brands of dried goods do now, rather than the way in which movies and music do. That is to say that printed books of this incunabula period were far more likely to be unique within a given market. Such uniqueness might very well have the effect of creating a consumer who was therefore disinterested in questioning a book's pedigree and simply interested in owning "some books" rather than "books printed by Caxton." In a sense, then, the more successful brands of the period would be those which did little to upset this worldview. Of course, in a market as small as the English one, it might very well be that success depended only on *presence* within the marketplace. Lastly, it must be taken into account that the existence and commonness of *sammelbände* suggests a more engaged readership, even if they may have ultimately been less discerning than we might find in Paris or Cologne.

Returning, then, to the second above-quoted example, we find a bit more insight as to the degree in which Caxton truly believed in his "symple connyng." Though Caxton suggests that he has used "rude & symple englyssh" to translate *Reynart the Foxe*, he also jokingly informs us that we should "blame not me / but the foxe / for they be his wordes & not myne" (Crotch 62). Published some six years after *Troye*, such a joke might suggest that Caxton has gained a sense of security in his place within the English print trade. However, as he is employing the very same rhetorical phrases to surround the joke, it seems at least plausible that Caxton never truly regarded himself as an inferior figure. As such, we are left to wonder after the purpose of the narrative figure of "The Meager Wit" – especially in light of our final, populist voice: "Man of the People."

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Almost entirely absent from the first five years of Caxton's printing, and appearing with increasing frequency towards the end, the figure of "Man of the People" serves as an interesting barometer for Caxton's growing stature (and so, the viability of his brand) within England. This figure is often similar to The Patriot, as he champions England's cultural and historical achievements. However, more than this, this figure is interested in encouraging the pursuit of literature within the emerging middle classes.[35] In this effort, Caxton's shaping of the reading public was a considerable success. It is also in these moments where Caxton helps to shape and define his readership, that he is simultaneously imprinting his brand with the values and qualities he imparts to the reader. In so doing, Caxton is self-fashioning every bit as much as he is making readers. This link, I feel, is crucial when it comes to later constructions of Caxton's career and brand. As Wang (2004, 180) observes: "...[T]he evidence of early ownership in the romances printed by Caxton that still survives today suggests that merchants, clergy, members of provincial landed families, lawyers, officials, and court servants—rather than members of the royal family or higher nobility—were the main readers of the romances."[36] From this, one might consider that Caxton was merely posturing – offering his wares in order to assist only those who could read and, more significantly, *pay*. However, Caxton's repeated address to "readers and hearers" is sufficient to give pause to such an argument. It is, in fact, enough to suggest that Caxton's intended audience was far

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[35] On the considerable involvement of middle class readers, as well as those of lesser nobility, it is useful to consult: Wang, Yu-Chiao. "Caxton's Romances and their Early Tudor Readers" in *HLQ*. 67.2 (2004): 173-188. A more specific discussion of the various classes that made up Caxton's readership is planned for the following chapter.

[36] Here, Wang seems to be employing Andrew Taylor's description of the "middle class" as a group that is "neither peasantry nor aristocracy" (1999, 362). Such is the definition that is being employed throughout this dissertation.

greater in scope than the audience suggested by so many of his prologues. Approached more cynically, one might suggest that it is a similar model that influences contemporary radio programming, as listeners might one day become customers.

In order to supplement the discussion of this tension, I will present a few useful examples of this voice before proceeding. The first from *Tullius of Old Age* (1481), the second from *The Mirrour of the World* (1481), and the third from *The Order of Chyualry* (1484):

> I haue endeuoured me to gete it with grete difficulte, and so goten / haue put it in enprynte & dilygently aftir my litil vnderstandyng corrected it / to thentente / that noble / vertuous and wel disposed men myght haue it to loke on & to vnderstonde it. And this book is not requysyte ne eke conuenyent for euery rude and symple man. whiche vnderstandeth not of science ne connyng. and for suche as haue not herde of he noble, wyse / & grete lordes gentilmen & merchauntes that haue seen & dayly ben occupyed in maters towchyng the publyque weal... (Crotch 1956, 42-3)

> And emonge alle other this present booke whiche is called the ymage or myrrour of the world / ought to be visyted / redde / & knowen / by cause it treateth of the world and of the wondreful dyuision thereof / in whiche book a man resonable / may see and vnderstande more clerer by the visytyng and seeyng of it and the figures therin / the situacion and moeuyng of the firmament / and how the vnyuersal erthe hangeth in the myddle of the same... (Crotch 1956, 52)

> Allas what doo ye [knyghtes of Englond] / but slepe & take ease / and ar al disordred from chyualry / J wold demaunde a question yf J shold not displease / how many knyghtes ben ther now in Englond / that haue thuse and thexcercyse of a knyghte...Thenne late euery man that is come of noble blood and entendeth to come to the noble ordre of chyualry / rede this lytyl book / and doo therafter / in keepyng the lore and commaundements therin comprysed / And thenne J doubte not he shall atteyne to thordre of chyualry...(Crotch 1956, 83-4)

The first passage presents tropes that should be familiar from our examination of Caxton the Meager Wit. We are informed that Caxton has taken great pains to produce and correct the text according to his humble intellect and skill. Despite these difficulties, the result is proclaimed fit for those "grete lordes gentilmen & merchauntes" that work on matters related to the "publyque weal." Moreover, the understanding of the text is left to "vertuous and wel disposed men," indicating, it would seem, that the complexity of the text has been readily understood and overcome by the translator. Therefore, I believe we can see here the conflict

between literary rhetoric and the desire to market texts based on the quality of the work and, perhaps more importantly, the skill of the translator. This conflict will influence the shaping of the English reading public during this period, as it directly impacts which texts and audiences will be privileged by the English print trade. Moreover, it has significant influence over the shape of any emergent brand, as it dictates the class boundaries within which it must operate. Going a step further, this conflict will therefore shape the reading public by deciding which tastes and interests would find their way into print, and therefore define the field upon which the Caxton brand (or any literary brand, for that matter) would operate.

The second passage directs the text towards reasonable men, and would, therefore, seem to suggest that the only requirement for successful usage is sound judgment. This lack of specificity on the part of the author as to the nature of the reading audience is somewhat unique for Caxton, and would seem to indicate that there was some desire to broaden the scope of the reading audience. At the very least, we might suggest that this lack of definition stemmed from a lack of interest in narrowing his own marketplace. This address, combined with the extensive woodcuts found in *The Mirrour of the World*, as well as the sporadic mention of "readers and hearers," would suggest that Caxton had intended to move beyond reliance on the noble and merchant classes for financial success – or, somewhat more controversially, that profit was not Caxton's principle ambition.

Even so, the later *The Ordre of Chyualry*, with its address to the "knyghtes of Englond" would suggest that Caxton had never intended to fully privilege one group over another. Or, it is perhaps better said, that Caxton never intended to exert influence over just one group. The form of the third, above-mentioned excerpt would likely resonate with those who employed knights just as well as those who

were subject to their authority.[37] If the first excerpt showed us a Caxton who was still largely beholden to patronage and the good favor of the upper classes, and the second showed us a Caxton who was keen to bring his trade to the masses, then this third excerpt shows us a man who has learned to combine his two designs seamlessly. Here, a popular interest in the state and the quality of its governance is combined with subject matter that is of particular interest to the ruling classes. The result is a text that could just as easily satisfy people of either station.

These passages present a conflicting set of character traits, emphasizing the quality and utility of the texts while simultaneously downplaying Caxton's ability as a translator. Curiously, however, Caxton still suggests that his books are fit for knights, merchants, and nobles – the very same classes that would expect higher quality work than what is being marketed. While this might well be chalked up to the author keeping within the bounds of convention, it seems a curious mix of signals to direct towards the middle classes – as these readers are far less likely to have had experience with the literary conventions involved. Despite this fact, and perhaps owing in part to the inclusiveness and accessibility of the Caxton brand, middle-class readership increased steadily over the span of Caxton's life, as well as throughout the sixteenth century. In order to better understand how this came to be, it is useful now to turn to an examination of Caxton's narrative voices as they were deployed during different stages of his career.

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[37] Considering Caxton's urban readership, and his own distance from the areas of England that remained more tightly feudal, such an assault on the character of the knighted class might also be reflective of emergent tensions between urban and rural societies in England at the time.

I. Caxton's Voices and their Interaction with the English Reading Public

Caxton is not generally attributed with a strong desire to shape or create the English reading public. If this is true, it would follow that Caxton did little to further his own brand, as reception easily accounts for half of the brand's topology. Scholars like H.S. Bennett and N.F. Blake have pointed out that Caxton did little to influence the development of literary culture – either through original composition or tenacious encouragement of literary movements. To scholars such as these, Caxton was a printer "...working within well-defined limits." He was a figure who made "...little attempt to educate or lead public taste, but [instead printed] what it was easy for him to know was popular by inquiry of the scriveners concerning manuscript circulation..." (Bennett 1952, 17) Blake expands this slightly, giving Caxton credit for the selection of materials to be printed, but nothing else: "Normally he would not have interfered in the actual printing operations, and it is not right to think of Caxton as a printer. He was the publisher and entrepreneur. He provided the capital, chose the books and distributed them, leaving the printing to others" (1969, 59). More recently, scholars like Alexandra Gillespie have endeavored to renegotiate the terms by which we consider print culture:

> ...[I]f, in all their many forms, books have a common nature, it is perhaps as objects designed to convey and contain texts, to assign them boundaries, and, paradoxically, to enable their traffic and their reception. Printing involves the replication of a text in multiple, more-or-less identical copies. It expedites the outcome of any process of cultural production—that this process will, as Michel De Certeau puts it, be 'confronted by an entirely different kind of production, called consumption'. And printing as a process has typically taken place, at least in the West, within a motivating framework of pecuniary profit rather than (or as well as) spiritual or cultural reward. (2006, 15)

Gillespie identifies the reciprocal processes of production and consumption, and, therein, sets the trade in printed books within a framework that is equally suited for either economic or cultural analysis. Both of these forces are set in contrast to the notion of reception, and so we might come to see this as a realignment of the system

of print culture into camps of subjectivity and objectivity (taste and profit).

Curiously, however, Gillespie seems uneasy with acknowledging the existence of

any potential for not-for-profit printing. Any spiritual or cultural reward, Gillespie

observes, is an added benefit to the "pecuniary profit" of the printing house. Despite

the new framework, then, such a position does little to advance the hypothesis that a

printer might have desired something other than profit from his work – or, indeed,

that the profit might have been incidental to the actual craft of creating and sharing

texts. On this point, Barker and Adams offer the following:

> Not all people who publish do so expecting a profit. We tend to think of publishing as an enterprise invariably commercial, but how many books published in the last five hundred years paid for themselves through sales and how many were financed in part or wholly in some other way? We do not know, but there were and are those whose primary consideration is communication. Here the burden of cost falls on the author or patron. Ecclesiastical bodies financed the printing of several substantial early books, an important factor when the new mass book trade was in its infancy. (1993, 16-7)

In light of this, I offer a system of branding that allows for either intention (that is,

printing that is either for, or not for, profit) to hold primacy at varying moments –

and with equal sincerity on the part of the printer. It is my belief that narratives

which speak in such concrete terms about movements taking place across cultures,

classes, and historical periods are less likely to truly represent the complexity of

individual moments and circumstances. While these grand narratives are useful in

the general sense, inasmuch as they provide a skeletal intellectual framework, we

must always strive beyond them in order to discover the truth (as much as possible)

of any given situation. With Caxton, I believe that the viability of his brand can

largely be determined from the success that he enjoyed in shaping the English

reading public, as well as in his circulation and cultural longevity.

In addition, I believe that there is a bit of a self-reinforcing prejudice at work

in the construction of Caxton as a man who was primarily interested in money, on

account of his lack of long-lasting influence over the English reading public. One of

the key aspects of a brand is its desire to replicate – and, in turn, its desire for "reach." This reach is often seen as a measure of a brand's dominance of a given market. Accordingly, we might find that the most successful brands in daily life are those with the most successful logos: McDonald's, Nike, and Coca-Cola. However, these sorts of aesthetic-economic indicators relate to only one type of brand. Here, we might call this "the mega-brand." There are, however, equally viable, durable brands of common goods that enjoy no visual recognition beyond the market in which they are sold. I would class most dry goods (salt, wheat, etc.) in this category. While these are the products of companies that are interested in profit, they are clearly governed by different forces (or different measures of forces) than the latest shoes, fast food, or beverages. How then, can we make this knowledge work for us in the assessment of Caxton's own career?

I propose that we look at Caxton's lack of long-lasting influence (as set out by Bennett and Blake) as a symptom of the mundane nature of his presentation – or, instead, a symptom of the mass-uniqueness problem I alluded to earlier.[38] Perhaps, because of Caxton's lack of aggression in promoting his brand (he did, in fact, only ever make one advertisement, and this lacked his name and provided only his location – that being in 1477), we have gotten the impression that he either possessed a disinterest in literary culture or in the quality of the materials he was selling.[39] Yet, in considering Caxton's shifts and evolution in rhetoric, as well as his continued development and pursuit of new typographical and visual features (e.g. woodcuts), I find a man who was considerably more engaged with the presentation of his wares,

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[38] Later narratives of Caxton's success, as I have already said, come to similar conclusions about his intentionality and importance. While I will certainly address Kuskin (especially *Symbolic Caxton*) and Gillespie in later parts of this dissertation, I am much more interested in staying on Caxton's paratexts at this present moment.

[39] See: Caxton, W., & Nicholson, E.W.B. (1892). *Caxton's advertisement*. London (England), Bernard Quaritch.

and the opinions of his readers. While it cannot be said with certainty whether this concern was couched in affection or avarice, it must be allowed that both realities are possible.

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This development and incorporation of new rhetorical approaches over time shows us that Caxton was – to paraphrase Wordsworth - consciously endeavoring to cultivate the taste by which he was enjoyed. In this section, I am going to examine Caxton's career in increments of roughly one-third at a time. I will examine the deployment of the previously-outlined narrative voices, and discuss the effect that these might have had on Caxton's business at a given time. In addition, I will endeavor to show that Caxton had a calculated interest in the quality of the materials he chose, as well as to reaching out to middle-class (i.e. non-aristocratic) readers (and hearers). All of this, naturally, will be discussed in relation to the creation of the Caxton brand.

As a prologue to a discussion of the first third of Caxton's career (roughly 1476-1481) in England, it is worth considering a popular critical assessment of the state of the reading public at this time:

> During Chaucer's lifetime it became clear that the long drawn out battle between English and French was over, and that henceforth English for the English was to prevail. French gradually ceased to be the language of the aristocracy, and the fifteenth century was not very old before the vernacular was everywhere in control. Once this was so, things began to move rapidly. The demand for reading-matter in English was insistent, and to meet this the multiplication of vernacular manuscripts greatly increased. Wherever we look the evidence confronting us shows writers and scribes eagerly at work seeking to satisfy the newborn demand. (Bennett 1952, 7)

Intensifying this somewhat, Bennett concludes: "A reading public, in short, had been created, mainly during the fifteenth century, and the conditions were ripe for the coming of printing" (9-10). Naturally, this prompts the question: "Who comprised

this reading public?" Bennett focuses on the gentlemen and aristocrats, while Blake (1973, 65) separates Caxton's texts into those that are "courtly" and those that are "practical." Both authors concede that some of Caxton's works have broader appeal, but remain largely tacit on the question of identity. Even so, I believe it fair to say that these assertions are fundamentally accurate. That a marked increase in the production of texts was underway is easy enough to demonstrate.[40] However, despite this, Caxton's success was far from assured when he set up the first English press in Westminster.

Caxton's early years are dominated by the figures of the "Moralist and Patriot," "Humble Servant," and "Editor." The last of these is common throughout, and little will be said here unless it is directly relevant to the evolution of the book trade or reading public. Of the other two categories, the more obvious one is the "Humble Servant." Despite Caxton's years as a bureaucrat abroad, he required patronage to get himself established in London society. Moreover, the sales of his texts were initially guaranteed by their recommendation, rather than their quality. On this point, Blake writes: "Caxton sought patrons for the same reasons as the writers and scribes of the fifteenth century: financial gain and the recommendation for a particular work which a patron's name gave" (151). Blake goes on to note that this search for patronage was particularly important for Caxton as it was a part of his quest to be established as court printer. (151) Accordingly, we see a considerable amount of work being done by Caxton to establish himself as a worthy recipient of patronage. Moreover, Caxton's early works owe a considerable portion of their success to this same patronage. On this point, Bennett discusses Caxton's early work with *Troye*:

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[40] On this point, see: Taylor, et al. *The Idea of the Vernacular* or Joyce Coleman's "Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France" in <u>Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature</u> (No. 26).

> It will not have escaped notice how important a part his patroness has played in all this. Not only had she seen his early effort at translation, but she had advised Caxton concerning its shortcomings and ordered him to continue. When he had finished it, she accepted it, and rewarded him handsomely. In addition, there can be little doubt that it was her interest that stimulated diverse gentlemen and friends to ask for copies...This was a very substantial volume of just over 700 folio pages, so that it will be realized that its publication was a hazardous venture for a first attempt by a beginner at the craft. (1952, 11)

Caxton, by Bennett's account, has a stroke of luck in that his patroness has made his work fashionable through her favor, and so established a demand for his early volumes. This might be considered as the first investiture of cultural capital into the Caxton brand. Simultaneously, Caxton is beginning to set up shop at Westminster, and, unsurprisingly, has a considerable amount of work to do in further establishing his imprint. It is perhaps for this reason, suggests Bennett, that Caxton did very few original translations during his first few years, focusing instead on works by noble translators:

> In publishing his first large book in England, therefore, it is clear that Caxton had written off a part of the risk incident on the production of a folio volume of 156 pages [*The Dictes or Sayengis of the Philosophres*] by accepting a 'good reward' from the Earl. (13)

Bennett goes on to suggest that Caxton was able to test the market for printed books by providing a significant number of well-established poetical favorites and pre-made translations: "He showed considerable worldly wisdom in his choice, for he printed four poems by that popular fifteenth-century versifier John Lydgate, as well as Chaucer's *Anelida* and *The Parlement of Foules*...More serious readers were given Benedict Burgh's translation of the distiches of Cato, Christine de Pisan's *Morale Proverbes* and a little *Book of Courtesy*" (13).

If one were to stop here, it would seem that the conclusions made a generation ago about Caxton's passive role in leading public taste were entirely well-suited to the matter at hand. However, the simple fact of the matter is that Caxton endeavored, despite his less-engaged stance in these early years, to shape public opinion through his prologues and epilogues. The other narrative voices that

dominate this early period – Editor and Moralist – are of considerable significance when it comes to assessing Caxton's impact on the English reading public. I should stress, at this point, the critical importance of Caxton's involvement in leading public taste. As the Caxton brand is largely dependent on its reception and operation in the public sphere, the negotiations between Caxton and his public – via his paratexts – become crucial founding documents. Caxton's attempts to lead the public taste are largely overlooked by scholars like Blake who prefer to focus on the formulaic elements in Caxton's texts: "...certain stock ideas and expressions which filled his mind emerged whenever he composed a prologue or epilogue. His books are recommended for the same reasons: they were uplifting, but also unusual" (1973, 159). In the interest of fairness, it must be considered that texts presented formulaically are not necessarily trite and valueless as agents of cultural change. Quite the contrary, as what Caxton is affecting, via this seemingly bland and conservative set of expositions and endings, is the stability of the printed format. Here, the Caxton brand emphasizes its continuity with the manuscript culture that dominated the age, and encourages readers to think of printed books as analogous items to manuscripts. This is an important first step in training an audience to receive a novel brand, and, as such, we cannot simply dismiss these actions as irrelevant. It is only by examining what Caxton does beyond these things that we will be able to fully grasp their significance, or lack thereof.

In the epilogue to Book III of *Troye*, Caxton, after shrewdly pointing out the great reward that Margaret had given him for the text, wrote the following:

> Praying her said grace and all them that shall rede this book not to desdaigne the symple and rude werke. nether to replye against the sayyng of the maters towchyd in this book / thauwh hyt acorde not vnto the translacion of other which haue wreton hit...but all acorde in conclusion the generall destruccion of that noble cyte of Troye...which may be ensample to all men duryng the world how dredefull and Ieopardous it is to begynne a warre and what hormes. losses. and deth foloweth... (8)

Despite the stock humility, this small passage would resonate with readers who were

still caught up in the struggles of the Wars of the Roses. Though this is not so much

a shaping of the tastes of the reading public, it is an attempt to use literature to

provide discourse (however allegorical) that is pertinent to contemporary events. Or,

perhaps more accurately, it is the provision of a new means of social discourse to an

increasingly literate public. However, before going too far down that particular

populist track, let us move on, with one caveat, to consider another example from

Caxton's early writing. The singular thing which I hope to impress upon the reader

during this examination of Caxton's early, more passive years is this: that the printed

book in England helps to reify the English reading public into a community with

active, shared interests. Caxton seems to recognize the existence of this stable

group, as the discourse in his prologues suggests familiarity and mutual engagement.

Consider the following two excerpts from his paratexts – the first from the second

prologue to the *Golden Legende* (1483) and the second from *Kyng Arthur* (1485):

> The Holy & Blesses Doctour Saynt Jerom sayth thys auctoryte / do alweye somme good werke / to thende that the deuyl fynde the not ydle / And the holy doctour saynt austyn sayth in the book of the labour of monkes / that no man stronge or myghty to laboure ought to be ydle for which cause whan I had parfourmed & accomplisshed dyuers werkys & hystoryes translated out of frensshe in to englysshe at the request of certeyn lordes / ladyes and gentylmen / as thystorye of the reuyel of Troye / the book of the chesse / the hystorye of Jason...[etc.] (71)
>
> --
>
> ...Many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Englond camen and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherefore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the saynt greal / and of the moost renomed crysten Kyng / Fyrst and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy... (92)

We can read the list of printings in the first excerpt in a few different ways. On the

surface, it does seem a bit like advertising. Indeed, as Kuskin notes, Caxton does

recognize that his "Worthies Series" is a handy way to unite and present a number of

his works to potential customers. I would also contend, though, that it is significant

that Caxton seems comfortable assuming that people are familiar with himself, and

his work, as this suggests that he has achieved a measure of recognition – even brand recognition – within the literary community of the period. The term "literary community" is, naturally, a somewhat subjective entity, but I have intended here to represent those readers and hearers who engaged with Caxton's materials.

The second excerpt may be read as being a patently false way to scare up more business by inflating the importance of the work, as Blake and others do, but I believe that, in light of Caxton's prologue to the 1484 *Canterbury Tales* and the 1483 *Book of Fame*, we might very well consider the real possibility that Caxton felt that he was personally responsible to a *specific* community of readers – or, indeed, that his reputation was caught up in the *literary* quality of his output. In this case, we might consider that the Caxton brand is a local entity, at least by initial design, and this consideration might very well be important when we come to the later, critical assessment of Caxton's ambitions. At no time, despite Caxton's export business, do his paratexts announce any of his printed materials as foreign (that is, to the community of readers). They are not presented as new creations from far off. Quite the opposite, as the texts themselves are advertised as translated imports, or native treasures. A meaningful component of the Caxton brand, as I will discuss in the third chapter, is its localism.

It is for this second reason that Blake's injunction against the formulaic nature of Caxton's prologues is somewhat unimportant. Consider this example from the epilogue of the 1478 printing of *The Conscolacion of Philosophie*:

> ...Maister Geffrey Chaucer hath translated this sayd werke oute of latyn in to oure vsual and moder tonge...in the sayd boke they [readers] may see what this transitorie & mutable worlde is And wherto euery mann liuyng in hit ought to entende Thenne for as moche as this sayd boke so translated is rare & not spred ne knowen as it is digne and worthy For the erudicion and lernyng of suche as ben Ignoraunt & not knowing of it... (37)

Although the assertions that the text is valuable because it comes of a famous translator and that its contents are doubtlessly useful to those who haven't previously

been exposed to them, are, in fact, stock ones, they must be considered as something else given the novelty of the medium in which they are presented. Furthermore, we should consider how Caxton chose to deploy this particular bit of text. That is, the positioning of such a text as epilogue suggests that Caxton was hoping to guide the impression that the work would leave upon the reader, rather than to merely advocate for its purchase. This is to say that Caxton was mindful of the community of readers, as well as the marketability of his texts. Though we will find more sophisticated attempts at doing this, it is noteworthy that Caxton makes such an attempt so early in the English phase of his career. Especially as this demonstrates that Caxton was simultaneously concerned with the marketing and *reception* of his printed volumes. Therefore, it is worthwhile to consider that Caxton may have done much more to influence the reading public than previously thought. This effect, though sporadic and somewhat inconsistently achieved, is yet another component of the Caxton brand. In this way, these texts have an added-value component of "Caxtonness." There is, I feel, a sincere attempt on Caxton's part to serve as Virgil to the reader's Dante.

Even so, contemporary scholarship is rife with disparagement of Caxton on the grounds that he was unoriginal and uninventive. While Caxton is far from a great literary innovator, I find that it is unreasonable to expect that his output would be highly novel simply because he moved to a new medium. While there is a novelty to his work that affords a fresh examination of archetypal elements, it is important to bear in mind that Caxton was still required to work within (or very near to) the boundaries of received literary notions in order to guarantee financial success. Without doing so, Caxton would surely be a mere footnote in our history of English printing. Moreover, the success of the Caxton brand – its reach, significance, and

prominence – was entirely dependent on cultivating a field of readers and other

consumers of literary works. It seems straightforward logic that a brand must first

offer, or achieve, something, before it can move beyond the obvious world of supply

and demand.[41] For this reason, we might consider Caxton's efforts – direct or

indirect – to shape the reading public as important groundwork for the viability of his

brand.

Rather than relying on these generalizations, however, I want to examine

some examples from the middle period of Caxton's career, as it is here that Caxton

makes the transition from fledgling printer to established publisher. While Caxton's

tastes during this period largely mirror the Continent – as evinced by his emphasis on

poetry and devotional literature – they are importantly distinct inasmuch as Caxton is

giving English readers homegrown authors like Chaucer and Malory while

simultaneously encouraging them to see the worth of their own English literary

culture. It is here that the Caxton brand comes to stand for a sort of proto-

nationalism, as well as the belief in the viability of the native literary tradition. The

texts that Caxton chooses fall largely into two categories: works that have been

previously successful in other formats (e.g. Chaucer) and those that have been given

to him by noble translators. On this point, Blake writes:

> Furthermore, the works he first printed in England were of known popularity, for they were
> being produced by the commercial bookshops, or they were translations by such people as
> Earl Rivers and Chaucer, whose names guaranteed a steady sale. Caxton was no doubt a
> cautious man; his policy was to establish himself by printing accepted works and shorter
> pieces. Furthermore, the works of the English poets he printed would offer his public a wise
> selection of texts, and each piece would act as an advertisement for the others. (1973, 72-3)

Here, Blake hits upon a key feature of Caxton's influence over the reading public:

variety. Indeed, there is considerable range in the texts he chose during the middle

period, and even more in the rhetorical modes with which he approaches the

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[41] Of course, such an achievement might be only the acquisition of fame, or some other, intangible
goal. Even so, this would require a number of concrete, antecedent actions.

prologues and epilogues of this period. It is here that we see the emergence of the voice I have labeled "Man of the People," and the continued integration of the various rhetorical modes into the majority of the pieces written between 1480 and 1485.

One of the striking elevations of rhetorical formulae during this period comes from the discussion of Caxton's "readers and hearers." To be sure, this is a stock construction of the audience that dates back centuries. However, at the time of mobile, efficient printing presses, we must begin to consider the legitimate possibility that these "hearers" might well be people beyond the religious, academic, and aristocratic classes. At the same time that Caxton's works become more political, his first references to these readers and hearers begin. On the one hand, one might simply attribute this to his ability to branch out now that he has established himself in England. And while there is a considerable amount of common sense in such an analysis, it is still worth considering that these passages reflect Caxton's awareness of his reading public's makeup, and of his ability to draw them in. Moreover, on the Caxton side of the brand equation, such rhetoric suggests an awareness of the reach and popularity of the brand. Indeed, it is worth noting that such an extension would effectively extend and amplify the Caxton brand by bringing it into a new sphere of interaction.

From *Polycronicon*, we find the following example of the "readers and hearers" motif: "Grete thankynges lawde & honoure we merytoryously ben bounde to yelde and offre vnto wryters of hystoryes / which gretely haue prouffyted oure mortal lyf / that shewe vnto reders and herers by the ensamples of thynges passyd..." (64) A second, similar example may be found in *Charles the Grete*: "Neuertheles who so vnderstondeth wel the lettre / Shal wel compryse myn entencyon / by which

he shal fynde nothyng by moyen for to come to saluacyon / To the whyche may
fynally come alle they that wyllyngly rede / or here / or do thys book to be redde
Amen" (99). These passages – the first from 1481 and the latter from 1485 –
illustrate Caxton's growing desire to expand his readership beyond those who
directly provided his patronage. While the addresses may be formulaic, they are
only being deployed in Caxton's texts after he reaches a period of commercial
stability. Circumstantial evidence, to be sure, but perhaps telling when combined
with an examination of the matters that Caxton treats on during this period. It is my
belief that Caxton's sudden inclusion of "herers" – those middle-class citizens who
would either be too poor to procure a personal copy, and so might have to settle for a
group reading, or those who weren't yet capable of reading lofty subjects - combined
with his sudden examination of matters of good government, indicates his desire to
make literature more appealing to these same middle classes.

In another lengthy passage from the prologue to *Polycronicon*, Caxton
discusses the nature of the work and its benefits in a meditation on what makes the
reading of a book profitable:

> For certayne it is a greete beneurte vnto a man that can be reformed by other and straunge
> mennes hurtes and scathes / And by the same to knowe / what is requysyte and prouffytable
> for his lyf, And eschewe suche errours and Jnconuenytys / by which other men haue ben
> hurte and lost theyr felycyte / Therfore the counseylles of Auncyent and whyte heeryd men /
> in whome olde age hath engendryd wysedom / ben gretely preysed of younger men / And yet
> hystoryes soo moche more excelle them...Historyes ought not only to be Iuged moost
> proffytable to yonge men / which by the lecture / redyng & vnderstandyng made them
> semblable & equale to men of greter age...but also thystoryes able & make ryght pryuate
> men digne & worthy to haue the gouernaunce of Empyres & noble Royammes / historyes
> moeue and withdrawe Emperours and kynges fro vycious tyrannye... (64-5)

While Caxton is certainly praising the virtues of the work at hand, and, in so doing,
endeavoring to inflate its marketability, his insight in the guise of the "Moralist"
offers us a glimpse of a guiding philosophy in his authoring and publishing of texts –
namely, that they should enhance the character and judgment of those who read

them. This particular assessment of the proper use of history recalls the earlier

passage from *Tullius of Olde Age*, and suggests that Caxton is truly interested in the

well-being of the public. If, as some have speculated, Caxton were only interested in

appeasing a noble audience, it would be somewhat unnecessary to put these sorts of

judgments – along with ones that are critical of elements of the elite (the injunction

against the bad behavior of knights in the *Order of Chyualry* for instance) – into his

prefatory materials. Unless they were truly meant to specifically reprimand the

noble readers of these texts, such comments on the nature of the state and of

literature would be nothing more than mere formulaic formalities.

It is for these reasons that I regard the figure of "Man of the People" to be an

important component of Caxton's shaping of the English reading public, and a

distinct feature of his brand. Setting aside for a moment Caxton's assault on the

knights of England, as, by this time, they were largely moribund in terms of political

clout, these continued assurances that literature can be used to inform and enhance

the governance of the public serve to create a sense that there can be such a thing as

"required reading" for the leaders of men. While this is far from a historical novelty,

Caxton's ability to produce large texts with relative speed, and disseminate them

with equivalent ease, made a far more compelling case for the education of the

aristocracy. The best ideas about governance and civic order from ages past were

brought forward with increasing speed, made widely accessible, and, in turn, became

compelling arguments for the appraisal of a leader's value. During the turbulent

years of the Wars of the Roses, it is hard to imagine that such a fact was lost on the

purchasers of Caxton's works. On this point, critics such as Lauryn Mayer suggest

that Caxton was endeavoring to leverage his quickly produced, relatively cheap texts

to allow a diverse group of readers to develop common economic and political

ideals.[42] In so doing, Caxton stands as a link between a medieval past and a more

modern, Humanistic present.[43]

This may, in fact, be why so many of Caxton's works produced during this

middle period (1480 – 1485) treat on government and morality. In these five years,

Caxton produced *Descripcion of Britayne*, *Tullis of Olde Age*, *Tullius of Friendship*,

The Declamacion of Noblesse, *The Mirrour of the World*, *Polycronicon*, *The Golden*

Legende, *Caton*, *The Order of Chyualry,* and others. All of these texts touch upon

the governance of the individual (both morally and socially) and of the state, to one

degree or another. Left out of this list were *Reynart the Foxe*, *The Canterbury Tales*,

King Arthur, and a few other poetical works. I will return to these works shortly, but

I would like, for now, to focus my attention on the former group.

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While a number of this first set of works were popular prior to their printing,

this does not necessarily negate their relevance with respect to Caxton's desire to

shape the English reader. Indeed, it can reasonably be argued that this prior

familiarity allowed Caxton to put his stamp on the public by piggybacking on the

ready acceptance of these materials. Additionally, it is important to consider the

context in which Caxton presents these familiar rhetorical devices in order to assess

the potential impact of their deployment. As I have argued, the significance of

presenting these elements in conjunction with the emerging medium of printing far

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[42] For more on this, see: Lauryn Mayer, *Words Made Flesh: Reading Medieval Manuscript Culture*.
[43] An opposing viewpoint is offered by Clare Carroll (1996) in her essay "Humanism and Literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries." She cites Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and its medieval style and content, as evidence that England was a "desert" with respect to humanistic ideals. Curiously, a counter-example is given in the form of the sixteenth-century text *The Mirror for Magistrates*. A number of Caxton's earlier texts, as this chapter discusses, serve the function of "speculum," and, as such, it would seem that Carroll is overlooking Caxton's contributions to the Humanistic movement in England. Such an oversight speaks more to a general scholarly perception of Caxton as a one-dimensional salesman than to a shortcoming on Carroll's part. Nevertheless, it serves as a useful demonstration of how easily Caxton's contributions can be taken for granted.

outweighs the ingrown interpretive apparatuses of the fifteenth-century reader. The

production of so much political material at a time of political unrest in England

affords readers who are concerned about the same to find points for discussion and

contemplation. By delivering printed works, Caxton opens the gate for communities

of readers to gather around individual texts – perhaps, more importantly, this

becomes possible with great speed and with little regard for the physical location of

these readers (more pointedly, these things can happen outside the traditional

channels of Church and University). Therefore, the placement of familiar rhetorical

models alongside new editions of texts allows for these formulaic elements to serve

as a guide to interpretation, rather than mere filler. On this point, however, N.F.

Blake offers the opposing point of view:

> Caxton's words have been taken at their face value. However, although the prologues and
> epilogues are the major sources for our knowledge of the printer, the information they
> contain must be properly interpreted. He did not write them to inform posterity of details of
> his life; he used them to convince would-be purchasers of his books that they were worth
> buying. To do this he employed the fashionable formulas and modes of expression. So each
> passage must be examined to see whether it is based round such a formula and in the light of
> the particular purpose for which the complete prologue or epilogue was written. (1973, 16)

Written in a style reminiscent of the Formalists, Blake's expression of suspicion with

regard to Caxton's use of formulae recalls the work of scholars like Milman Perry

and Albert Lord who often equated formulaic elements with unimaginative

recitation. While I do not wish to adopt the polar opposite opinion that Caxton never

relied on rhetorical formulae, as he clearly did, I believe that such critical opinions

risk overlooking the potential contributions of Caxton's prologues and epilogues.

Blake seems to have suspected as much: "The prologues and epilogues are valuable

in that they show how the stock contemporary phrases could be welded together in a

literary composition. They reveal who were the popular authors and also illuminate

Caxton's own tastes and prejudices" (170). What is missing, of course, is a

discussion of how Caxton's tastes and prejudices may have influenced those of his audience. By considering these opinions as integral components to the Caxton brand, we are free to use the brand as a diagnostic tool in this regard. In taking these paratexts out of the singular realm of the economic, and instead stopping to consider the ideological and social aspects that intersect with Caxton's economic agenda, we are, in reality, exploring an effect that is the central goal of branding – modern or pre-modern.

In light of which, it is perhaps best to move here to an examination of Caxton's final years in publishing. The period was marked by a number of large productions – Malory and the reprinting of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, being two such undertakings – and demonstrates a near total integration of his various narrative voices into what we might call "the voice of the Caxton brand." While earlier periods were marked by a dominant voice, this "late period" has no such thematic leader. Blake's work suggests that this is indicative of Caxton's increased reliance on formulae, but a cursory reading of these materials demonstrates that they are of considerably variable lengths and treat on a host of topics. While the elements with which they are constructed may, in fact, be formulaic, their deployment is anything but.

This late period also demonstrates a few other changes to Caxton's approach. The use of named patrons significantly increases during Caxton's final decade, and these five years are no exception. On this point, Bennett writes:

> As we have seen, Caxton had commenced printing with royal encouragement, and had had aristocratic support from Earl Rivers for three volumes. For a number of his works supported by patrons we have only the shadowy 'requests of dyverce gentilmen', or of 'a noble lady which hath brought forth many noble and fayr daughters', or of 'a gentyl and noble esquyer', which he tells us encouraged him to put them in print. We have no reason to suppose these characters to be fictitious, but it would have been more helpful had Caxton described them by name. The last ten years of his career, however, saw at least ten new publications expressly put forth at the request of a named patron. Royalty, the aristocracy, and rich citizens of London all made use of his services. (1952, 15)

While commercial viability does not necessarily equate to an active role in shaping the reading public, it does indicate that the potential existed for the same. At the very least, the commercial successes that Caxton enjoys during this period demonstrate the presence of a dedicated readership, and the increased viability of the Caxton brand. To better understand Caxton's approach to this readership, it is perhaps best to examine two of his more well-known prologues from this period – those of his *Eneydos* and the new *Kyng Arthur*.

In an above-mentioned excerpt from the prologue to *Kyng Arthur*, Caxton uses all of his various rhetorical modes to introduce and advertise the text. We are told that "Many noble and dyuers genylmen of thys royame of Englond camen and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherfore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the saynt greal..." (92) As Blake and others have suggested, there is no reason to not take this example at face value. As it is, it is a fairly stock description of the origin of a particular publication. What it does show us is the guise of "Caxton the Humble Servant," as his edition is seen as meeting noble demand. Moving beyond this, the stated purpose of the reading is given to us in the following terms: "And for to passe the tyme thys book shal be plesaunte to rede in / but for to gyue fayth and beleue that al is trewe that is conteyned herin / ye be at your liberte but al is wryton for our doctryne / and for to beware that we falle not to || vyce ne synne / but texercyse and folowe vertu..." (95) This selection, delivered in the guise of "The Moralist" is a fairly formulaic one. However, as a means of describing an original work, this stock attribution suggests that the same work is capable of being considered alongside previously-published, authoritative texts. One might argue that, in addition, the text demonstrates Caxton's desire to educate the public, as, prior to this speech, he has listed the litany of themes and situations that

may be found in the work. In a sense, and it may be worth considering moments like

Caxton's interjections during "The Day of Destiny" here, Caxton may be seen as

working towards an interpretive straitjacket. His commentary (and I am considering

his prologues in this category) often recalls the work of medieval commentators who

are concerned with the reader achieving the "right" understanding of a text.

All of this accompanied alongside a feeble attempt to protest the meagerness

of his abilities, and to legitimate the existence of Arthur through a variety of quasi-

historical facts. What really stands out, however, is that the majority of these voices

have now been subordinated to "The Editor." Consider the following piece of this

prologue:

> Thenne al these thynges forsayd aledged J coude not wel denye / but that there was suche a noble kyng named Arthur / and reputed one of the ix worthy & fyrst & chyef of the crysten men / & many noble volumes be made of hym & of his noble knyghtes in frensshe whiche I haue seen & redde beyonde the see / which been not had in our maternal tongue / but in walsshe ben many & also in frensshe / & somme in englysshe byt nowher nygh alle...I haue after the symple connynge that god hath sente to me / vnder the fauour and correctyon of al noble lordes and gentylmen enprysed to enprynte a book of...whyche copye Syr Thomas Malorye dyd take oute of certayn bookes of frensshe and reduced it in to Englysshe... (94)

Caxton uses the editorial voice to discuss the many reasons why Malory's text is

necessary, and why its printing is authoritative. Caxton's assertion that no complete

edition has been previously published in English echoes Malory who often ends

narrative arcs with statements such as this one from *The Day of Destiny*: "Thus of

Arthur I fynde no more wrytten in bokis that bene auctorysed..." (Vinaver 1970, 717)

Ultimately, this prologue demonstrates Caxton's willingness to subsume the other

rhetorical modes he has worked with (and privileged) to his authority as Editor. It is

Caxton who sets out to lead public taste – choosing, as he does, not to rely on a

named patron. While many of the components of this prologue may be formulaic,

they are arranged and weighted by Caxton in an effort to sell the public on Malory's

work. It is in this that we see a "fully-integrated" Caxton; a Caxton who is willing to

lead public taste overtly instead of subtly, and, thus, a Caxton whose brand has achieved stability, viability, and public prominence.

Caxton's attempts to lead public taste continue on into his prologue for *Eneydos*. After an amusing anecdote about the idle hours that led to the discovery and translation of the text, Caxton discusses the state of the English language. In the epilogue to his well-known story about the sailor who asked for eggs from the good wife, and was rebuffed as a foreigner, Caxton offers the following observations about the state of the language:

> For in these dayes euery man that is in ony reputacyon in his countre. wyll vtter his commynycacyon and maters in suche maners & termes / that fewe men shall vnderstonde theym / And som honest and grete clerkes haue ben wyth me and desired me to wryte the moste curyous termes that I coude fynde / And thus bytwene playn rude / & curyous I stande abasshed. but in my Iudgemente / the comyn termes that be dayli vsed ben lyghter to be vnderstonde than the olde and auncyent englysshe / And for as moche as this present booke is not for a rude vplondyssh man to laboure therin / ne rede it / but onely for a clerke & a noble gentylman that feleth and vnderstondeth....Therefor in a meane bytwene bothe I haue reduced & translated this sayd booke in to our englysshe not ouer rude ne curyous but in suche termes as shall be vnderstanden by goddys grace accordynge to my copye. And yf ony man wyll enter mete in redyng of hit and fyndeth suche termes that he can not vnderstande late hym goo rede and lerne vyrgyll...For this booke is not for euery rude and vnconnynge man to see / but to clerkys and very gentylmen that vnderstande gentylnes and scyence... (108-9)

It seems a wonder that it should take Caxton until so late in his career to comment in detail on the linguistic diversity that confronted his trade. While not expressing a strong mandate for standardization, Caxton chose to print in the prestige dialect of his day (that of the South-East and London) and, in so doing, made this dialect the unofficial language of the English book trade. While indirect, such a shift would certainly have influenced the reading public of Caxton's day, and created a desire for new editions of previously popular works from other dialects. The semi-defiant tone in Caxton's suggestion that those who disapprove of his translations should go and read the original Latin for themselves is, perhaps, a sign of his financial and social security, and of his belief in the strength of his printing house. Additionally, Caxton

seems to settle the matter of his English by specifically recommending that John Skelton – poet laureate and Classics scholar at Oxford – correct any errors in his edition. By making this request, Caxton has indicated that he is secure in his choice of dialect, and desires only a more authoritative translation. In this, we find a Caxton that is at once similar to, and far-removed from, the author of *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. He is similar, in that he still seeks the advantage of patronage (*Eneydos* is dedicated to Henry the VII), and removed in that he is comfortable placing this as an afterthought to his own examination of language. The late-period Caxton is one that finds the editor's position to be considerably more consequential than the servant's, and also, as these two prologues have shown us, he finds it far more capable of influencing public opinion. In creating the first editor of not only text, but taste, Caxton has helped to influence the reading of texts by establishing baseline expectations and necessary elements for a new reading public (specifically that of the middle class).

II. The Serialized Brand: Caxton and the "Worthies Series"

Caxton's attempts to shape the reading public, and so, by extension, the operation of his brand within early-modern England, also resulted in the serialization of some of his publications into what Kuskin describes as the "Worthies Series." This important form of advertising, common even in our own shared experience, is something that later critics like Bennett, Kuskin, and Blake will seize upon in an effort to demonstrate anything from Caxton's intense focus on business matters and opportunities to his desire to create a worthwhile series of literary works. In fairness, the truth is probably some mixture of the two elements. While we cannot know with certainty, it is important to examine the construction of this "Worthies Series," as

Kuskin names it, in order to fully articulate the operating principles of the Caxton brand within its historical context. Additionally, and tangentially to this, it is worth considering Caxton's use of his printer's device – itself a lasting logo for the Caxton brand – as this constitutes perhaps the most common, visible element of Caxton's efforts to lead taste and gain market recognition.

It is important, in either a discussion of Caxton's engagements with literary culture, or with the marketplace, to recognize that he endeavored to link himself firmly with the works that he published. Later printers, such as his successor, Wynkyn de Worde, did little beyond deploying a printer's mark in their texts. Indeed, many of Caxton's contemporaries, and immediate successors, left little of themselves in the texts that they created. In this way, Caxton is, perhaps, a harbinger of the Elizabethan printers that would follow in a century's time – rather than another medieval-minded, business-oriented printer. Without wishing to belabor the point, it seems fair to say that this simple truth provides enough of a reason to consider Caxton the individual, rather than Caxton the icon. On Caxton's relationship with his printed texts, Kuskin writes:

> I pursue this reading through the nineteenth century and back to the fifteenth to discuss the development of Caxton's printer's mark, the woodcut stamp with which he identified his editions, as a way into the history of early English printing, and to suggest the importance of his specific merger of economic and literary modes of production within his persona. This is a crucial point, one often overlooked for its obviousness: Caxton takes great pains to associate himself with his books...The only comparable examples in fifteenth-century English writing are those of John Shirley...and Thomas Hoccleve...The fundamental difference between their work and Caxton's is, of course, volume: where Shirley and Hoccleve are scribe-poets, Caxton is a merchant-printer, and though he is extremely careful to separate his prose from the economic world he worked in, his personal continually mingles the roles of capitalist, book producer, and reader. (2008, 21-2)

Kuskin is quite correct in seizing upon the varying personae at work within Caxton's output, and recognizing their unity in Caxton's printer's mark. I am proposing that we take this a step further, and recognize that the printer's mark is only one facet of the overall Caxton brand. Beyond it, we are left with the interpretive detritus of the

ages (for example, the work of critics like Blake and Bennett), as well as Caxton's own paratexts. Two of these, the paratexts and the device, are interchangeable in terms of their symbolic unity. That is, they each comprise the varying personae at work in Caxton's output – one textually and one aesthetically. As I will discuss in upcoming sections, we are dealing with two distinct brands, in effect: the Caxton brand of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the modern reconstruction of the same. It is imperative that we consider just how the lapse of time between Caxton's and our own, fraught as it has been with Modernist and Postmodernist critiques of corporate societies and structures, has influenced the reception of a branded entity. Did everything really begin to unravel in 1827, when the brand first came to mean "A trade-mark, whether made by burning or otherwise. (Applied to trade-marks on casks of wines or liquors, timber, metals, and any description of goods except textile fabrics.)?"[44] This is, of course, a somewhat facetious question, and a recognition of the fact that we understand, at some level, the intrinsic neutrality of the brand.

I would suggest that there is one further point worth considering, before engaging in a systematic, source-based investigation of Caxton's branding. As I have written with specific regard to the significance, and the intentionality of the brand, I find it useful to consider that the brand exists along a continuum from the Commercially-minded to the Aesthetically-driven. Much like Bourdieu's idea of Art and Commerce occupying two poles of literary/artistic production, the brand is likewise capable of being charted in relative motion depending on circumstance. The difference, here, is that we are not simply considering the market success of a given author/work in terms of its economics, but rather we are examining its function in marketplaces of culture, ideology, and so on. One simple example of this might

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[44] See the entry "n." in *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., s.v. "brand," accessed May 22, 2010, http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50026645.

be the Coca-Cola Company's use of its logo[45] in advertisements painted by Norman

Rockwell as compared to its deployment on the sides of bottles and cans. In general,

the Coca-Cola logo is meant to assure the consumer as to the quality and reliability

of the contents, while serving as a reference point for new/interested consumers.

The deployment of this logo through a variety of media in the form of advertising

increases the likelihood that the brand-neutral consumer will opt for something

recognizable when shopping. But what happens when the Coca-Cola logo is

attached to artwork that possesses a life of its own? In the case of the Norman

Rockwell series, the device has been successfully linked to art that is meant to

conjure nostalgic sentiment, but given the number of online galleries alone, it would

seem that many appreciate the art for its own sake. Unintentionally, we can assume,

the brand has slid from the commercial to the aesthetic end of the continuum. Of

course, given the variability in reception, the brand, in reality, occupies both ends of

the continuum (and many intermediary points) simultaneously. This is a simplistic

explanation of a phenomenon that will be explored in great detail later in this

dissertation, but it is important to be aware of this multiplicity of purpose as we

move forward.

Returning the focus to Caxton, then, we find that he employed a single logo –

in the form of a printer's mark – throughout his career. Interestingly, this mark did

not appear until 1487 – a mere three years from the end of Caxton's career. On this

point, Kuskin writes: "Appearing in 1487—a year after the other printers had given

up—Caxton's mark announces his monopoly on English print production and

importation, indeed, from what we can tell, on the entire trade in printed books"

(2008, 75-6). Despite the near ubiquity of printer's marks in the works of

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[45] Known officially as the "dynamic ribbon device."

Continental rivals, Caxton introduces his mark at a point in time where he faces little competition.[46] Indeed, at the point in which Caxton introduces the mark, it is fair to say that his brand is both established and nuanced, and that this mark may well be thought of as a consolidation of the efforts he has thus far put forth. Kuskin discusses the use of printer's marks further, suggesting they serve an alternate purpose to advertising:

> If the printing press is a physical machine for the literal production of objects of knowledge, the trademark device is a symbolic machine for the production of these objects' larger meaning. Physical and symbolic, the printer's mark is not simply reflective of the political economy; it is productive of that economy as well. In this lies a mandate: bibliographical study cannot restrict itself to the object of the book, for to do so is to separate off the book from the totality of cultural production that creates the individual. (2008, 79)

For Kuskin, the interconnectedness of the symbolic and the physical is essential. The printer's mark serves both the economic and symbolic needs of the publisher, and, in turn, operates at points along the branding continuum that I have described above. Such a recognition seems to work against critics like Bourdieu who posit that one must reside either at the pole of Commerce or the pole of Art, rather than occupying both positions simultaneously. While Bourdieu does leave some slack in this prescription, Kuskin's hybridized model is considerably more fluid than his predecessors. If, then, Caxton's device was simply a visual extension of the overall brand, and not the focus of his efforts towards public definition, then this examination of his paratexts allows us to discover how Caxton's actions shaped his brand. While I have already discussed Caxton's rhetoric above, I will now say a few words about what Kuskin calls the "worthies series."

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[46] Kuskin notes: "McMurtrie suggests 1,500 devices before 1500 (*The Book*, 294)" (313).

In order to set the stage for a lengthy discussion of Caxton's "Worthies Series," I believe it is profitable to reconfigure our understanding of that Series by expanding the contextual framework of Caxton's output. By this, I mean that it is helpful to reintroduce material from some of Caxton's other paratexts, in order to demonstrate the attributes of the brand that are not yet apparent. I have touched on this briefly in my discussion of Caxton's shaping of the readership through his different narrative voices, but now I would like to tie that work together with this investigation of the brand overall. My purpose, therefore, is to appropriate principles of Deconstruction into the realm of biography, as I believe that the reconstructive / re-centering attitude of that school of thought is what is particularly needed here.

So, then, let us return to the beginning – Caxton's *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* – and ask who Caxton is. Or, rather, let us ask whom it was that Caxton wanted his readers to see. Caxton tells us that he is a "...mercer of ye cyte of London..." who had the work "...translated and drawen out of frenshe in to englisshe...at the comaundement of the right hye myghty and vertuouse Pryncesse hys redoubtyd lady. Margarete..." (Crotch 1956, 2) From the inception of the Caxton brand, Caxton attempts to demonstrate that he is an erudite merchant with connections to the nobility. Of his project, Caxton informs us: "And for so moche as this booke was newe and late maad and drawen in to frenshe / And neuer had seen hit in oure englissh tonge / I thought in my self hit shold be a good besynes to translate hyt in to oure englissh / to thende that hyt myght be had as well in the royame of Englond as in other landes..." (4) In this, Caxton signals the novelty – even the exoticness – of his text, and establishes himself as someone worthy of patronage. The Caxton brand, then, is one that is sanctioned, novel, and has the ability to bring both "great pleasyr and delyte" (4). Of course, the Caxton brand is

not one that seeks to work outside the establishment, and so we are offered a customary humility trope in the form of Caxton's admission that he once abandoned the project for a time: "And afterward when I remembryd my self of my sumplenes and vnperfightnes that I had in bothe langages / that is to wete in frenshe & in englissh for in france was I neuer / and was born & lerned myn englisshe in kente in the weeld where I doubte not is spoken as brode and rude englissh as is in ony place of englond..." (4) Even though he is announcing himself as unlearned – a simple, country-bred mercer – Caxton is, with some humor, gathering to himself the weight of nationalist pride and a sense that his work is not above those people in similar situations. The Caxton brand, then, is for all to partake of, as it strives to satisfy the tastes of both merchant and aristocrat alike. Indeed, the spirit of democracy carries forward, as Caxton enjoins the reader: "...& praye alle them that shall rede this sayd werke to correcte hyt & to hold me excusid of the rude & symple translacion" (5). *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* is presented here as a new, partially complete translation that requires the reader's intellect to be made whole. In this way, the text draws individuals into the Caxton brand, and creates a culture that leads to a broader lifestyle change. Lastly, it is worth noting that Caxton is careful at two separate points to highlight the author of the French translation – *Raoul* Lefèvre – and so to establish a chain of transmission: "Ere foloweth ye plogue of that worshipful man Raoul le feure whiche was Auctor of this present book in the ffrensh tonge" (Crotch 5). As we will see again, Caxton seeks to establish himself as the conduit by which these authors enter into the English literary world, and therefore establish the brand as the point of cultural exchange and enrichment.

The epilogue of Book II of the *Recuyell* reinforces Caxton's attempts at humility, while simultaneously reminding his readers of the richness of an English

vernacular literature: "And as for the thirde book whiche treteth of the generall &
last destruccion of Troye Hit nedeth not to translate hit into englissh / ffor as moche
as that worshifull & religyous man dan Iohn lidgate monke of Burye dide translate
hit but late / after whos werke I fere to take vpon me that am not worthy to bere his
penner & ynke horne after hym. to medle me in that werke. But yet for as moche as I
am bounde to contemplare my sayd ladyes good grace and also that his werke is in
ryme / And as ferre as I knowe hit is not had in prose in our tonge..." (Crotch 1956,
6-7) Caxton becomes a reluctant translator who, though unwilling to tamper with
literary greatness, cautiously agrees to move the work from poetry to prose. The
Caxton brand, then, is meant to stand for novelty, respectfulness to those (greater)
authors that have preceded Caxton, and, also, a prose-based literature. Presumably,
this makes the work more accessible to the newly initiated members of the English
reading public, while simultaneously freeing Caxton of the burden of having
interfered with significant works of literature. The brand, in this case, is something
that brings the lofty to the common reader, and, therefore, it retains a universality
that might otherwise have been lost in the pursuit of more complicated, aristocratic
works.

In the final epilogue to the *Recuyell* – that of Book III – Caxton gives a
reason for establishing the text in print, and a final, amusing gesture of humility:

> Thus ende I this book whyche I haue translated after myn Auctor as myghe as god hath
> gyuen me connyng to whom be gyuen the laude & preysyng / And for as moche as in the
> wrytyng of the same my penne is worn / myn hande wery & not stedfast myn eyen dimmed
> with ouermoche lokyng on the whit paper / and my corage not so prone and redy to laboure
> as hit hath ben / and that age crepeth on me dayly and febleth all the bodye / and also be
> cause I haue promysid to dyuerce gentilmen and to my frendes to adresse to hem as hastely
> as I myght this sayd book / Therefore I haue practysed & lerned at my grete charge and
> dispense to ordeyne this said book in prynte after maner & forme as ye may here see / and it
> is not wreton with penne and ynke as other bokes ben / to thende that euery man may haue
> them attones / ffor all the bookes of this storye named the recule of the historyes of troyes
> thus empryntid as ye here see were begonne in oon day / and also fynyshid in oon day /
> which book I haue presented to my sayd redoubtid lady as a fore is sayd... (Crotch 1956, 7-8)

Mixed in with Caxton's protestations that he is an unskilled translator and printer is a passing reference to the "whit paper" that he is reading. There is in this a subconscious reminder of the novelty of his project, as surely the pages of older texts would not remain so crisp and glaring. Conscious or not, we have here a linking of the difficulty of the project with its innovatory qualities, which reinforce the sense that the brand represents a new mode of literature. Caxton stresses the universal, simultaneous availability of his text in the medium of print, and, yet, reminds us that the work is ordained by, and suited for, his noble patroness. The paratexts of the *Recuyell* make a case for a brand that has been conceived of, and operated as, an emergent, innovational entity. The brand represents the delivering of novel texts and (by oblique reference to Lydgate) national literary treasures to the English reading public. To participate in the brand at this stage is, then, to buy into a new form of cultural participation, and to enhance one's self through knowledge and culture.

Two years later, in the epilogue to 1477's *The Dictes and Sayengs of the Philosophres*, we find evidence that the brand has emerged, and that Caxton has an awareness of the methods and tastes of his readers. After the standard colophon which, in this case, informs us that the text is the product of "...the Noble and puissant lord Lord Antone Erle of Ryuyers lord of Scales & of the Ile of wyght / Defendour and directour of the siege apostolique..." and wherein Caxton mentions that he has "...certaynly...seen none in englissh til that tyme," we are told that, during an exchange between Caxton and Rivers over the quality of the book, it was proposed that "...sayd lord desired me to ouersee it and where as I sholde fynde faute to correcte it..." (Crotch 1956, 19-20) Caxton's status as a responsible printer and editor has provided him with the opportunity to handle the works of living nobles, but he de-emphasizes this, saying: "...I answerd vnto his lordship that I could not

amende it / But if I sholde so presume I might apaire it / For it was right wel &

connyg[n]ly made & translated into right good and fayr englissh..." (Crotch 20)

Here, then, is a sense that Caxton's projects are not usurpations of authority, but,

rather, the (humble) result of a process of negotiation with both texts and living

authorities (of the political and literary kind). Through this exchange, the readership

is engaged in a process of negotiation via Caxton's work, and is, therefore, part of a

larger community. With regard to Caxton's status within English society, however,

the continuation of the epilogue is particularly telling. After suggesting that he is

only "obeying hys request," Caxton proceeds to discuss Rivers' editorial choices

with regard to the writings of Socrates: "...I fynde that my saide lord hath left out

certayn and dyuerce conclusions towchyng women. Whereof I meruaylle that my

sayd lord hath not wreton them ne what hath meuyd hym so to do Ne what cause he

hadde at that tyme But I suppose that som fayr lady hath desired hym to leue it out

of his booke Or ellys he was amerous on somme noble lady. for whos loue he wold

not sette yt in hys book..." (20)

The familiarity of this speculation is suggestive of the well-established nature

of the Caxton brand at this time – or, at the very least, of Caxton's security with

respect to courtly life. Interestingly, despite what Caxton supposes as the express

wishes of his patron and Auctor, the missing text of Socrates' writings is re-inserted

into the epilogue. After which, Caxton defends the choice:

> And for asmoche as it is acordaunt. that his dyctes and sayengis shold be had as wel as others therfore I haue sette it in thende of this book / And also somme persones perauenture that haue red this book in frensshe wold haue arette a grette defaulte in me that I had not do my deuoir in visiting & ouerseeyng of my lordes book acording to his desir / And somme other also happely might haue supposed that Socrates had wreton moche more ylle of women than here afore is specified / wherefore in satisfyeng of all parties & also for excuse of the saide socrates I haue sette these saide || dyctes & sayengis a parte in thende of this book...Humbly requyryng and besechyng my sayd lord to take no displaysir on me so presumyng but to pardone where as he shal fynde faulte... (Crotch 1956, 29-30)

Caxton wants his edition to be thought of as complete, and so he exercises his editorial power to ensure that the deleted sections appear within the book. We see in this the difficulties faced by printers who relied on patronage but desired to produce works according to their own standards. There is a sense here that "a Caxton" is a book that will contain as much as is available (as Caxton himself often expresses that he can find no more of one book or another in his colophons), and that that content will not prove objectionable as it appears as the result of careful consideration. This sense is caught up in the larger brand, and would likely serve to impart on readers the sense that Caxton's texts operated within a register of sophistication and cultural virtue.[47]

Following on from the *Dictes* are *Moral Prouerbes* and then *The Historie of Jason*, which begins our familiar Worthies Series. Published in the same year as the *Dictes*, *Jason* announces a new strategy in the form of serial publication. Though it would not be fully articulated until somewhat later, we see here that Caxton hopes to transform his brand from something that is singularly useful to something that requires (or encourages) ongoing participation and interaction. The prologue to *Jason* announces that it is a continuation of the *Recuyell*, in much the same way that the prologue to *Charles* will herald it as the completion of a chain of readings. Which is to say that both prologues make reference to the fact that Caxton has produced related materials, but neither goes into exceptional detail about the availability, cost, etc. In so doing, Caxton provides signposts for his community of readers, who we can only assume are already familiar with the pragmatics of obtaining his texts, which signify how much they have thus far accomplished in their

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[47] Caxton seems to feel no such disease about recommending his *Book of the Knyght of the Towre* for "...ladyes & gentilwymen douȝters to lordes & gentilmen..." for its "...special doctryne & techyng by which al yong gentyl wymen specially may lerne to bihaue them self vertuously / as wel in their vyrgynyte as in their wedlok & wedowhede..." (Crotch 1956, 86)

pursuit/acquisition of history. As this was a lengthy, even expensive, project for many to participate in, it is logical to say that Caxton would have needed some means of encouraging his readers to undertake it (apart from paratexts which signaled the quality and novelty of the works themselves). By establishing himself as a printer of aristocratic works, a literary innovator, and a guardian of English taste and authors, Caxton provided a firm foundation for his brand to develop. That he was able to finance large publications like *Polychronicon*, *The Canterbury Tales*, and *Le Morte D'Arthur* suggests – along with his monopoly in 1486 – that the broader community took to his works, and, consequently, created that interactive entity: the brand. By the time of *Jason*, then, we might suggest that the brand is operating successfully with regard to its financial aspect, and, also, that it has garnered sufficient interest with respect to its aesthetic and literary aspects. The extent to which either succeeded is, however, a difficult matter to pin down, as we lack the figures on Caxton's sales, and are largely without written reactions by his readership.[48]

Appearing just before *Le Morte*, Caxton's second edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* provides a sense that the brand has indeed been established, and that it has begun to operate outside the realm of Caxton's control:

> ...I dyde do enprynte a certayn nombre of them / whyche anon were sold to many and dyuerse gentyl men / of whome one gentylman cam to me / and said that this book was not accordyng to my copye / and by me was nothyng added ne mynusshyd / Thenne he sayd he knewe a book whyche hys fader had and moche louyd / that was very trewe / and accordyng vnto hys owen first book by hym made / and sayd more yf I wold enprynte it agayn he wold gete me the same book for a copye / how be it he wyst wel / that hys fader wold not gladly departe fro it / To whom I said / in caas that he coude gete me suche a book trewe and correcte / yet I wold ones endeuoyre me to enprynte it agayn / for to satysfye thauctour / where as to fore by ygnouraunce I erryd in hurtyng and dyffamyng his book in dyuerce places...And thus we fyll at accord... (Crotch 1956, 90-1)

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[48] With respect to the amount printed, Kuskin does not offer a specific amount, but, rather, the following summary of practices during the period: "The impetus to print volume is accept as standard practice: see Phillip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, 161, and David R. Carlson, "A Theory of the Early English Printing Firm,"" (quoted in Kuskin 2006, 304)

It is here that we see a sort of gamble on the part of Caxton the publisher, in that

Caxton assumes there will be a greater public benefit in his admission of original

error than there would be profit in quietly amended and revising his text. This

suggests that Caxton has some personal accountability to his customers, in addition

to his desire to present himself as an honest printer of complete works by England's

best. This exchange also suggests the ongoing interactivity of the Caxton brand, and

that there is an external force acting on Caxton's own attempts to form a "brand."

However, despite this, Caxton continues to operate with similar commercial and

aesthetic strategies, offering, in the use of this mysterious "trewe" copy, a sense of

novelty for his edition, even as he puts forth a commercial retread.

Caxton endeavors to elaborate on his national pride and civic-mindedness in

his prologue to *Caton*:

> Vnto the noble auncyent / and renommed Cyte / the Cyte of london in Englond / J william Caxton Cytezeyn & coniurye of the same / & of the fraternyte & felauship of the mercerye owe of ryght my seruyse & good wyll / and of very dute am bounden naturelly to assiste ayde & counceille as ferforth as I can to my power / as to my moder / of whom I haue receyued my noureture & lyuynge / And shal praye for the good prosperite & polecye of the same duryng my lyf / For as me semeth it is of grete nede / by cause I haue knowen it in my yong age moche more welthy prosperous & rycher than it is at this day / And the cause is that there is almost none / that entendeth to the comyn wele but only euery man for his singuler prouffyte... (Crotch 1956, 77)[49]

Caxton announces this polemic by saying that the text is dedicated "vnto the Cyte of

london," and that it is a translation of a French work that had also been recently

translated by "Mayster Benet Burgh / late Archedeken of Colchestre and hye chanon

of saint stephens at westmestre" (76-7).[50] This fact simultaneously strengthens

Caxton's position, as it announces a moral authority's concurrent interest in the text,

and it signals Caxton's local interests. Readers would recognize the importance of

this chapel, and its worshippers, and this recognition would help to enhance the

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[49] This formula is repeated again in Caxton's 1487 *The Book of Good Maners*.

[50] This is the St. Stephen's Chapel in the old Palace of Westminster that was largely destroyed by fire in 1834. It was typically used by the Royal Family, their household, and diverse courtiers, and, accordingly, Caxton's inclusion here is a tacit link to the seat of power and authority.

reputation of the Caxton brand. There is a sense here that those works which had been previously restricted to the upper classes were now being delivered to those who could afford Caxton's texts. Of course, Caxton is not advocating an abandonment of learning. Indeed, quite the opposite, as we find in his penultimate text, 1490's *Eneydos*: "And yf ony man wyll enter mete in redyng of hit and fyndeth suche termes that he can not vnderstande late hym goo rede and lerne vyrgyll / or the pystles of ouyde / and ther he shall see and vnderstone lyghtly all / Yf he haue a good redar & enformer / For this booke is not for e[u]ery rude [and] vnconnynge man to see / but to clerkys and very gentylmen that vnderstande gentylness and scyence..." (109) Despite the usual traces of the humility trope that will follow, Caxton is expressing here a desire for his brand to be ranked (at least in terms of complexity) with Virgil and Ovid. By extension, if the readers are willing to accept this proposition, they are instantly elevated into an elite sphere of educated, cultured reading. This fulfills one of the central promises of brands, in that it augments the lifestyle of these readers.

In his prologues to *Canterbury Tales* and *Eneydos*, there is a sense of personal renegotiation of the brand on Caxton's part. The former is reactive, as I have noted, and expresses a sense of responsibility to his "community" of readers and buyers. The latter example is a reasonably stiff statement of intention with respect to the text's social register, and, in a sense, it rebuffs some of the more popular-minded clientele that de Worde would soon be cultivating with Caxton's other texts and other popular romances. This reaction is evidence of the ongoing tension between the "brand," and the more abstract "brand." This struggle is largely where Caxton seeks to articulate his program for posterity, as well as set the terms

for participation in his imagined community of readers, and it is also where readers influence Caxton's output through their feedback, patronage, and buying power.

For all of this, there are a few, rogue, personal elements in Caxton's paratexts that serve no other function than to enhance the brand via shared experiences. One such example occurs in the colophon that follows the epilogue to *Moral Prouerbes*: "Enprinted by Caxton In feuerer the colde season" (Crotch 1956, 32). What interests me in this particular line of text is its complete lack of utility. Unlike the anticipated components of the humility trope, and dedications, this simple comment on the nature of the world at the time of the printing serves as a reminder that Caxton is a man who – just like his readers – is experiencing the world as they do. One might couple this with other aspects of Caxton's stated biography – his Kentish upbringing, or his status as a mercer – and conclude that this is yet another way of imprinting the self on the brand. Indeed, this throwaway line functions in much the same way that a nod to a stranger at a bus station might in similarly cold weather – that is, it represents a small display of solidarity, and injects a touch of humanity into the situation. More than this, though, it provides a situational context for the text – inviting the reader to regard it as something with a fixed, local origin. The book is not just a product of Caxton's labor, then, it is a witness to the reader's society and environment. This is a particularly difficult area of the brand to address, as it requires considerable understanding of the readers and their situation, but it is worth noting that this sort of evidence is significant with respect to its [the brand's] overall phenomenology.

Having discussed various strands and aspects of Caxton's work, we are now able to see the Worthies Series as a strategic component of the overall program of establishing the brand. What is increasingly clear is that the complex strategies that

enter into the construction of something like the Worthies Series are only a fraction

of the total activity required to make the brand a thriving reality. It seems fair, then,

to suggest that a researcher who is interested in the brand might, therefore, have to

pursue it in much the same way that ethnographers approach broader cultures and

social movements.

> In his *Symbolic Caxton*, Kuskin outlines Caxton's "Worthies Series:"

> ...not only his Chaucerian texts are grouped in series: in his 1477 prologue to the *History of Jason* (*STC* 15383), Caxton refers his readers to his earlier *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (*STC* 15375) on the grounds that both stem from the Burgundian court; as I discussed in chapter 4, his epilogue to the 1479 *Cordyal* (*STC* 5758) emphasizes his printing of Anthony Woodville's translations; his *Fayts of Arms* (*STC* 7269) names John de Vere, for whom he translated the 1490 *Foure Sonnes of Aymon* (*STC* 1007) and an apparently lost *Robert Erle of Oxeforde*; he links his 1482 *Polychronicon* (*STC* 13438) and 1484 *Golden Legende* (*STC* 24873-74) as "noble historyes"; and he groups his 1481 *Godfrey of Boloyne* (*STC* 13175), 1485 *Le Morte D'Arthur* (*STC* 801) and 1485 *Charles the Grete* (*STC* 5013) around the conceit of the Nine Worthies. Illustrating a critical program capable of presenting various works as unified around common themes, these series are essential to our reading of Caxton's production techniques... (2008, 193-4)

Caxton's ability to unify his disparate audience is largely a testament to the viability

of his brand. Printing a series of related works would not have been sufficient for

Caxton to unify a readership, if he did not also offer those readers the sense that they

were connected with one another. Caxton achieves this, as we have seen above, by

attempting to shape the readership through his paratexts – for example, his repeated

mentions of people who have brought texts to him, emended the ones that he has

printed, or offered him suggestions for new undertakings - and by developing his

"presence" within those texts. Illusory or not, these described readers and

commentators serve to produce the sense that the present reader is both part of a

virtual community, and that he has the ability to further contribute should he wish.

As Lury observed, the brand introduces possibility into an object. In this sense, it

might be suggested that the Caxton brand introduces possibility into the text *and* the

reader. For Kuskin, this series is key to understanding Caxton's operation in its

totality: "...Caxton's editions actively produce it [his audience] as fractured but nevertheless coherent, unified in a history of common behavior. This occurs, in part, through Caxton's cogent political program, and in part through the romance genre's implicit imagination of social relations" (2008, 194).

The "Worthies Series" provides a useful case study for assessing both Caxton's understanding of the relations between his own texts, and his hope for the way in which his readers might come to relate his works. At times, these connections are stated quite straightforwardly, as in this excerpt from *Kyng Arthur* where, after a lengthy description of the Worthies, Caxton writes: "...The second was Charlemayn or Charles the grete / of whome thystorye is had in many places both in frensshe and englysshe / and the thyrd and last was Godefray of boloyn / of whos Actes & lyf I made a book vnto thexcellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye kynge Edward the fourth..." (92-3) Other times, there is a subtle connection that relies on the readers' comprehension of the Caxton brand. In his 1490 *Eneydos*, Caxton's career comes full circle with this reference to Troy: "After dyuerse werkes made / translated and achieued / hauyng noo werke in hande. I sittyng in my studye where as laye many dyuerse paunflettis and bookys. happened that to my hande can a lytyl booke in frenshe. which late was translated oute of latyn...which booke I sawe ouer and redde therin. How after the generall destruccyon of the grete Troye..." (107) In the first of these examples, it is clear that Caxton either believes, or wishes the reader to believe, that his *Godefray* will prove useful in extending the knowledge of the Worthies that will be gained through reading *Kyng Arthur*. There is both an explicit and an implicit connection between these texts, and this fact is central to the Caxton brand. That is, Caxton's repeated attempts to unify his printed materials by highlighting these serial connections is indicative of two things: First, that Caxton

imagined his readership as a relatively stable entity that, though perhaps slightly

different in composition from moment to moment, retained an awareness of his

output; Second, attempts by Caxton to unify his texts through his paratexts suggest

that he wanted his readership to find profit in obtaining more than one text. This is

evinced by Caxton's promotion of *sammelbände*, as well as his constant, subtle

reminders of the connections between his various texts. Therefore, an investigation

of the Worthies Series, and its place within Caxton's total output, will serve as a

useful illustration of the broader methodology of studying the literary brand, and,

furthermore, it will help to illuminate the many levels upon which Caxton operated

his press.

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In his article "Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture,"

William Kuskin describes the origin of the Worthies Series:

> In his 1477 prologue to the History of Jason, Caxton refers his readers to his earlier *Recuyell of the Histories of Troy* on the grounds that both texts stem from the Burgundian court; in his *Cordiale* (1479) he emphasizes that this text concludes his printing of Anthony Woodville's translations; he links his *Golden Legend* (1484) and *Polychronicon* (1482) as "noble historyes"; and he groups his *Godeffroy of Boloyne* (1481), *Le Morte Darthur* (1485) and *Charles the Grete* (1485) around the conceit of the Nine Worthies. Illustrating a critical program capable of presenting various texts as unified around common themes, these series are essential to our reading of Caxton's production techniques, and I offer the last, the Worthies Series, as a test case demonstrating how he produces literary culture. (1999, 511-2)

Revisiting these issues in his 2008 book – *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and*

Print Capitalism – Kuskin writes: "In reproducing a selection of works as texts

within a broader critical program, Caxton articulates canon, authority, and audience

as cogent and interrelated concerns, thereby producing a comprehensive intellectual

framework for the physical products rolling off his presses. Caxton's interest in

romance is part of his production process, and should be viewed as a sign not of

intellectual simplicity but of the ideological complexity involved in unifying English

identity" (193). This unity of the physical and the intellectual that Kuskin articulates

is an important first step, I feel, in the more general establishment of the literary

brand. It is for this reason that I am beginning this section with Kuskin's elaboration

of Caxton's Worthies Series, before embarking on a more in-depth examination of

the ways in which the brand offers new critical fodder.

For Kuskin, the Worthies Series is one of the principal engines that drives

Caxton's success over rival printers, and helps to establish his texts (and their

readers) as connected participants in a broader ideological program. This, as I have

discussed, is the heart of modern branding, and it remains an important first step in

the rise of the Caxton brand. More importantly, for our interaction with previous

critics of Caxton's career and output, is the consideration that such a proposition,

should it truly fit Caxton's agenda, necessitates a simultaneous consideration of his

aesthetic and commercial activities. If there is an ideological force driving Caxton's

material production, and thus his forays into the broader print market, then we *must*

evaluate this as something more than base commercialism. Therefore, it is essential

that we consider what the totality of the brand represented, and how it operated,

rather than giving in to more simplistic tendencies and analyses. As Kuskin

explains:

> ...[T]he importance of the Worthies Series is more profound than a notion of marketing allows, for rather than just appealing to this audience, Caxton's editions actively produce it as fractured but nevertheless coherent, unified in a history of common behavior...The interaction between explicit and implicit messages is layered: Caxton uses the Nine Worthies to call for a fifteenth-century crusade while printing indulgences for just such an excursion. These indulgences produce the very capital that underwrites more long-term literary projects such as *Le Morte D'Arthur*...Caxton's print program is ideological, therefore, because it promotes a material program of texts that allows its readers to participate in a larger imaginative structure...Caxton's critical program shapes the cultural imagination: transcending marketing and propaganda, it is productive of an ideology for English nationalism. (2008, 194-5)

In a similar configuration to Kuskin's, Celia Lury argues that the brand is "...a

specific market modality or market cultural form...[T]he brand mediates the supply

and demand of products through the organisation, co-ordination, and integration of the use of information. The emphasis will be on the use of information to organise relations between products in time, whether those relations produce sameness or difference. It is these relations that comprise the object – or medium of translation (Latour and Woolgar, 1986) – of the brand" (2004, 3).

To better understand how Caxton's Worthies Series might move beyond being a simple series of printed texts, and, in so doing, become an ideological instrument of social change, it is useful to examine Kuskin's construction of this series. The first text that Kuskin identifies – *History of Jason* – offers the following:

> Thenne for as moche as this sayd boke is late newe made aparte of alle thistories of the sayd Jason & the historie of him which that Dares Frigius & Guido de columpnys wrote in the begynnyng of their bokes / touchyng the conqueste of the sayd godle flese. by occasion whereof grewe the cause of the seconde destruccion of the sayd cite of troye. is not sett in the sayd boke of Recuyel of thistories of Troye / Therefor vnder the proteccion & suffraunce of the most hyghe puissant & Cristen kyng. my most dradde naturel liege Lord Edward...I entende to translate the sayd boke of thistories of Iason...(Crotch 1956, 33)

Here, Caxton marks *The Historie of Jason* as a straight continuation of the themes and history of his *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*. In a modern context, this work would be particularly appealing to fans of the former, completists, and general enthusiasts of Trojan history. For Caxton's time, the first and third reasons might hold, but the idea of "being a completist" would be a fairly novel – perhaps, indeed, unheard of – one. Therefore, Caxton must have relied on previous clients, as well as those persons who might be generally interested in his text. To intensify public interest, Caxton had to rely on a variety of techniques to make the Series more generally appealing. One such technique was to simply draw attention to the serial nature of his texts. As Kuskin notes, Caxton did this by referencing the translator – Anthony, Earl Rivers - in the epilogue to *Cordyale*: "Yet ouer that tenriche his vertuous disposicion / he hath put him deuoyr at all tymes whene he might haue a leyser. which was but startemele to translate diuerse bookes out of frensh into

english. Emong other passid thurgh myne honde the booke of the wise sayinges or dictes of philosophers & the wise & holsome prouerbis of Christine of pyse set in metre..." (39)

Caxton's willingness to provide and produce serial, thematically-linked publications suggests that he hoped that he would be associated with certain genres and histories. By establishing himself as facilitator of these ideological and aesthetic concerns into the commercial, literary sphere, Caxton identifies his brand with concepts (intellectual and emotional) of literariness and, at times, historical authority. Those who consume these texts are, then, by extension, adopting a lifestyle derived from the Caxton brand. This literary identity is perhaps the single greatest split with earlier manuscript culture, in that a single publisher offers disparate, but related, texts that all speak to a particular set of concerns. As Kuskin observes: "If the press is a physical machine, the book is no less a symbolic one, and it produces its readers according to the very mechanics by which it was produced: by making appear coherent what is actually fragmentary and disjointed" (2008, 137). Caxton continues his program of signalling the serial connections between his texts in the second prologue to *The Golden Legende*:

> The Holy & Blessed Doctour Saynt Jerom sayth thys auctoryte / do alweye somme good werke / to thende that the deuyl fynde the not ydle / And the holy doctour saynt austyn sayth in the book of the labour of monkes / that no man stronge or myghty to laboure ought to be ydle for which cause whan I had parfourmed & accomplisshed dyuers werkys & hystoryes translated out of frensshe in to englysshe at the requeste of certeyn lordes / ladyes and gentylmen / as thystorye of the recuyel of Troye / the book of the chesse / the hystorye of Jason / The hystorye of the myrrour of the world / the xv bookes of Metamorphesos in whyche been conteyned || the fables of ouyde / and the hystorye of godefroy of boloyn in the conqueste of Iherusalem... (Crotch 1956, 71)

Kuskin links this text with *Polycronicon* on account of the fact that both texts are presented as "noble histories," but I think there is a more compelling component with respect to the creation of the Caxton brand. In the prologue to *Polycronicon,* Caxton provides a lengthy statement as to the functions and benefits of "historyes."

Among Caxton's descriptions of "historyes," we find the following expression on the benefits of reading them: "Historyes ought not only to be Iuged moost proffytable to yonge men / which by the lecture / redyng & vnderstandyng made them semblable & equale to men of greter age / and || to old men / to whome longe lyf hath mynystred experymentes of dyuerse thynges..." (Crotch 1956, 65) Intensifying this somewhat, Caxton writes: "Other monymentes distributed in dy[u]erse chaunges / enduren but for a short tyme or season / But the vertu of hystorye dyffused & spredd by the vnyuersal worlde hath tyme / which consumeth all other thynges as conseruatryce and kepar of her werke..." (66) Caxton unites these concepts of self-betterment through reading and textual immortality, and suggests to the reader that he/she is participating in something that is possessed of eternal worth. In this way of making readers, Caxton is hoping to convince the reader (and, presumably, prospective buyers of his works) that there is a benefit to reading that will last beyond that specific material object that is the subject of the action. Caxton goes on to extol the virtues of preserved eloquence in writing – anticipating, perhaps, Matthew Arnold's suggestion that we should study "the best that has been thought and said in the world" – and, further, to emphasize the utility of his wares for all classes. Summarizing his position, Caxton provides the following statement of intention:

> Thenne syth historye is so precious & also prouffytable / J haue delybered to wryte twoo bookes notable / retenyng in them many noble historyes / as the lyues / myracles / passyons / and deth of dyuerse hooly sayntes which shal be comprysed by thayde and suffraunce of almyghty god in one of them / whiche is named legenda aurea / that is the golden legende / And that other book is named polycronycon / in which book ben comprised briefly many wonderful hystoryes... (Crotch 1956, 66-7)

The object of this prologue, therefore, is to first instill in the reader a sense of the great utility of "historyes," and then to generate specific interest in the text at end by establishing it as a pinnacle of the genre. This is not all that different from modern advertising, which seeks to impress upon the consumer the superiority of a particular

object over others of its type, and I think it might be reasonably classed as a commercial aspect of the Caxton brand. However, it is important to consider that such a prologue would likely color the impressions of readers, and provide them with a sense of belonging to an elite group. To read the *Polycronicon* is to participate in the exchange of cultural treasures, and, therefore, it is to be custodian of, and participant in, the splendors of history and language. It is in this way that the consumption of objects that belong to the Caxton brand helps to establish a shared readership that centers around a consensual hallucination in the form of "community." In addition, Caxton has carefully suggested that *The Golden Legende* would be an appropriate text for continuing such pursuits.

Despite Caxton's previous attempts to forge communities of readers through his serial publication, it would not be until the 1485 *Le Morte D'Arthur* that Caxton finally endeavored to fully articulate the project of his Worthies Series:

> After that I had accomplysshed and fynysshed dyuers hystoryes as wel of contemplacyon as of other hystoryal and worldly actes of grete conquerors & prynces / And also certeyn bookes of ensaumples and doctryne / Many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Englond camed and demaunded me many and oftymes / wherefore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble hystorye of the saynt greal / and of the moost renomed crysten Kyng / Fyrst and chyef of the thre best crysten and worthy / kyng Arthur / whyche ought moost to be remembred emonge vs englysshe men tofore al other crysten kynges...
>
> ...For it is notoyrly knowen thorugh the vnyuersal world / that there been ix worthy & the best that euer were / That is to wete thre paynyms / thre Jewes and thre crysten men / As for the paynyms they were tofore the Jncarnacyon of Cryst / which were named / the fyrst Hector of Troye / of whom thystorye is comen bothe in balade and in prose / the second Alysaunder the grete / & the thyrd Julyus Cezar Emperour of Rome of whome thystoryes ben wel kno and had / And as for the thre Jewes whych also were tofore theyncarnacyon of our lord of whome the fyrst was Duc Josue whyche brought the chyldren of Israhel in to the londe of byheste / The second Dauyd kyng of Jherusalenm...
>
> ...And sythe the sayd Jncarnacyon haue ben thre noble crysten men stalled and admytted through the vnyuersal world in to the nombre of the ix beste & worthy / of whome was fyrst the noble Arthur / whos noble actes I purpose to wryte in thys present book here folowyng / The second was Charlemayn or Charles the grete / of whome thystorye is had in many places both in frensshe and englysshe / and the thyrd and last was Godefroy of boloyn / of whos Actes & lyf I made a book vnto thexcellent prynce and kyng of noble memorye kynge Edward the fourth... (Crotch 1956, 92-3)

It is here that Caxton establishes the links between various products of the past eight years, and, in so doing, provides his readership with a sense of what he has

accomplished (thus reinforcing his position and authority), as well as what they might acquire by purchasing his other works. As Kuskin puts it: "...Caxton's use of the Worthies parallels a relationship between subjects and authority with one between readers and works. Operating across a series or works and disseminated in quantity, Caxton's critical program does something new: it produces a vernacular literary authority capable of placing his contemporary secular readers within community and literary history" (2008, 207). As I previously observed, the Caxton brand required the establishment of a readership, in order to grow and evolve, and this Worthies Series provides plentiful seed for such a project. The final such seed would come in the prologue to 1485's *Charles the Grete*:

> Thenne for as moche J late had fynysshed in enprynte the book of the noble & vyctoryous kyng Arthur fyrst of the thre moost noble & worthy of crysten kynges / and also tofore had reduced in to englisshe the noble hystorye & lyf of Godefroy of boloyn kyng of Iherualem / last of the said iij worthy Somme persones of noble estate and dregree haue desyred me to reduce thystorye and lyf of the noble and crysten prynce Charles the grete kyng of frau[n]ce...(Crotch 1956, 96-7)

Here, again, we find Caxton's attempts to connect his disparate works via the Worthies Series, and we are also informed, as has become custom, of related works that he has printed.

Kuskin (2008, 195) suggests that we can measure Caxton's success with this strategy by the publishing monopoly that would soon follow: "That in 1486, the year after Caxton published the Worthies Series, the three competing printing houses in England—the St. Albans Schoolmaster printer, William de Machlinia, and Theodoric Rood—vanished, suggests the power of his strategy." Perhaps so, but what are we to make of the manner in which Caxton wields this power during 1486? During that year of commercial triumph, Caxton produces next to nothing. There are no major texts from his press, and no significant importations of texts. It is possible that Caxton was ill, or that he decided he was secure enough to rest the presses, but his

absence at his moment of greatest triumph is conspicuous. From the moment that Caxton was first established in England as a printer, his presses were in near-continuous operation. In this way, the Caxton brand became synonymous with quality, relatively-cheap editions of popular, vernacular texts. As we have seen, attempts were made to establish a community of readers via the Worthies Series (and, indeed, other means as well), and these readers, it may therefore be said, had integrated the Caxton brand into their literary tastes and habits. In 1486, then, we witness the first time that Caxton's brand moves from the contemporary to the historical – surviving not on current action, but on reputation and nostalgia. This will be a useful starting point for a later comparison of historical and contemporary operations of the Caxton brand, and so I have raised this point here simply to indicate the difficulties inherent in assessing the impact (and strategy) of the Worthies Series. In the chapter that follows, I will examine the later stages of the Caxton brand, and the ways in which de Worde embraced and extended Caxton's strategies.

With respect to the transmission of this brand, it is now essential that we turn to consider the printer's device that William Caxton affixed to his later texts, and which was taken up by Wynkyn de Worde during his printing career. This device represents the "public face" of the Caxton brand, and, as such, is the point of intersection for the textual, material, and cultural aspects of Caxton's publishing career.
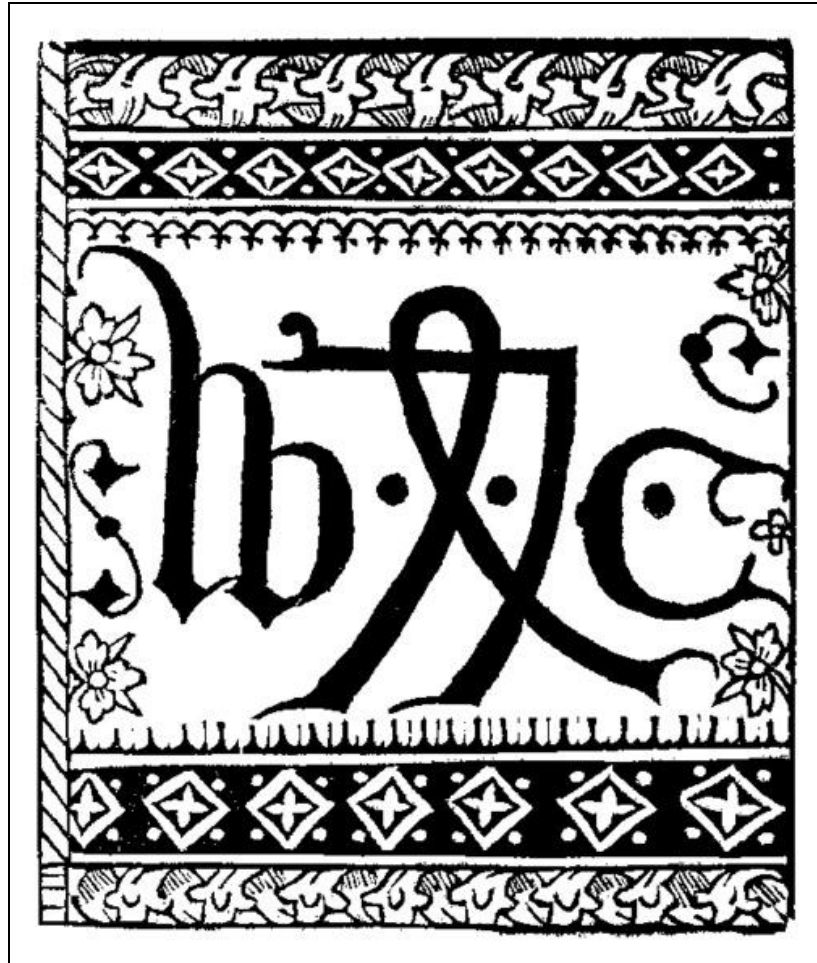
<div align="center">∗∗∗</div>

Fig. 5

When William Caxton first applied the above printer's device to the *Missale ad Usum Sarum* (Sarum Missal) in 1487, he was following in the footsteps of the Schoolmaster Printer at St. Albans, who was himself following in the footsteps of the Continental originators of printing. As one of his final business acts, the Schoolmaster Printer imported a number of English-language books in 1485, and had these affixed with a device (Fig. 6) that would identify the books as his own. Caxton's own text, a Latin missal that one might have expected to be the province of the Latin-oriented Schoolmaster Printer, created a sort of counterbalance in the marketplace. Except, of course, that the playing field had been emptied by 1487, and Caxton stood alone as England's only printer. Why, then, did he continue to use this

device on natively-produced texts, when there was no direct competition? One possible answer, suggested by the work of Girling and Davies, is branding.

Fig. 6

The mark of the Schoolmaster Printer of St. Albans serves all the same functions as Caxton's own – it provides a name, a logo, and a means of unifying his disparate products. There is nothing intrinsic to either device that is more effective or functional in terms of the broader marketplace. And yet Caxton's device has enjoyed a much longer life in the public sphere, while the St. Albans device has become increasingly known only to historians of the book. One obvious reason for this is that Caxton's device is buoyed by his status as the first printer of vernacular books in England. Yet, in another sense, Caxton's device has more cohesiveness than the St. Albans device. That is, its text is contained within the icon, and so it

successfully marries form and function in a way that the divided St. Albans mark

does not – indeed, the St. Albans mark is relying on the reader to unite the visual

icon with the name printed below. In this sense, it is perhaps more of Girling's older

world of merchants' marks than it is of the emerging world of the book trade. Where

Caxton's device firmly establishes, through the use of carefully demarcated borders,

the contents of his own brand, the St. Albans device leaves it to the reader to decide

which parts are relevant for transmission.

Beyond this, Caxton's apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde, incorporated his

master's device into his own – a significant development in the history of literary

branding that has direct bearing on the investigation in this dissertation, and which

will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. For now, it is important to note

that de Worde's output was unprecedented at that time for both its size and its scope,

and would eventually be franchised to all the corners of England, and many places

on the Continent. Caxton's device – the visual representative of his brand – enjoyed

a considerable afterlife through de Worde's actions, and would go on to dwarf St.

Albans' in both reach and recognizability. Indeed, the St. Albans device was not

reproduced at all during the incunabular period, and this is perhaps in part due to

poor brand design and viability.

A fundamental premise of this dissertation is that there is no functional

difference between Caxton's device, and this one:

Fig. 7

What I intend by "no functional difference" is this: Caxton's device interacts with our culture in essentially the same manner as the Volkswagen logo, and we, in turn, approach both with the same set of evaluative criteria. They are both symbols that connect our understanding of individuals, quality, economics, aesthetics, etc. Where Caxton's device primarily treats on artifacts of what we now term "culture" (given that antiquarian books are generally considered the province of the Arts), the Volkswagen logo is a symbol of what we generally term "consumerism" (inasmuch as the sale of contemporary, non-luxury automobiles is generally considered a for-profit, non-artistic act) – but neither brand is limited to these spheres, and both are freely moved between the two via the associations of those individuals who encounter them. Moreover, I propose that this synthesis of visual and textual information is a predominately intuitive process, and so – despite the relative novelty during Caxton's era – it would have operated on early modern readers in a similar fashion. Admittedly, each device (or logo) is the result of a considerably different set of historical factors, and the impressions that each factor would create on the minds of the reader/consumer will obviously vary. However, this difference is not particularly meaningful for our study, as the focus here is principally on the semiotics of brands, and not on the history of intellectual properties.

Some biographers of Caxton – in particular, Norman Blake and David Carlson – have espoused more orthodox views, and have sought to demonstrate how Caxton sacrificed the artistic aspects of his work to the commercial necessities of the time. Indeed, Carlson (2006, 58) offers the stunning pronouncement: "His [Caxton's] book publishing was strictly business, a reaction to the prior, materially determined fact of the technology's productive capacity." Yet, our world is not so black and white, and contemporary consumers of culture and commerce handle such intermingling with ease – even if those intersections aren't always without controversy. The brand name is often thought of as being synonymous with a corporate logo or trademark. Accordingly, brands are generally considered to be the province of the commercial centers of the world, and not of entities like opera companies, publishing houses, or theatres. The brand, however, not only exists in these areas, but represents a useful framework for encompassing aesthetic and commercial activities within the context of social agents engaged in their production and dissemination (be they an individual gentleman printer or McDonald's).[51] That is, brands are commercial entities that are carried and modified in the social sphere – the totality of this interaction accumulates, and so a brand carries with it not just its original referent, but also the cultural capital that is attributed to that referent.

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[51] On the successful interplay of commercial and aesthetic interests via the brand, we might consider the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, which is one of America's largest Classical Music organizations. Just as was the case for Caxton, the Met requires a significant amount of financing in order to continue its operations. Given the Met's status as a cultural institution, and one that is particularly associated with "high" culture, it is interesting to learn that, during the financial year 2007-08, it received some of its largest donations from Bank of America, Alcoa, Inc. (the world's third largest producer of Aluminum), and Sony Corporation of America. These donations have not interfered with the status of "The Met" as one of the premier opera houses in the world, nor has the need to raise funds prevented The Met from staging elaborate, commercially-risky productions. By all measurable standards – production reviews, artistic awards, etc. – The Met remains as dedicated to its chosen art as ever. Instead of the aforementioned sacrifice, we have here a situation in which commercial needs and artistic practices are functioning in harmony to facilitate the prestige and propagation of the brand.

Having discussed the general social life of the brand, it is helpful here to discuss the realm in which Caxton's printer's device was expected to operate, as well as the ways in which this brand acted as a continuation of earlier forms of commercial activity. In so doing, I will work to establish that the device was not only expected to serve as an identifying mark for a system of consumer goods, but also for the producer of those goods. This will have significant consequences with respect to the creation of a "Caxton brand."

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The printer's mark has undergone a considerable evolution in the last century of scholarship, and my conception of the mark as a visual analogue for the Caxton brand should not be considered a departure from existing work on the mark, so much as it is a consolidation of a portion of recent scholarship. My mark is the visual interface of the brand, in that it unites the cultural capital of the brand with its material form. In this symbol, the craftsperson certifies the work as representative of his/her work, and endorses the contents through an extension of the currency of reputation. For the consumer, the presence of the mark denotes the work as similar in kind to other products by a publisher's/printer's shop, and defines the work as distinct from other commodities. In order to better understand this constellation of relationships between producer and consumer, I will briefly examine the underpinning scholarship on the printer's mark.

William Roberts' book *Printers' Marks: A Chapter in the History of Typography* represents one of the first significant studies of Caxton's printer's mark. At the outset of the study, Roberts describes the mark in functional terms:

> Shorn of all the romance and glamour which seem inevitably to surround every early phase of typographic art, a Printer's Device may be described as nothing more or less than a trade mark. It is usually sufficient proof that the book in which it occurs is the work of a particular craftsman. Its origin is essentially unromantic, and its employment, in the earlier stages its history at all events, was merely an attempt to prevent the inevitable pirate from reaping where he had not sown. (1893, 1)

Roberts' charge that the mark was merely an attempt to ward off piracy recalls Johns' (1998, 33)assertion that piracy was a reason for finding "a book not to be worthy of credit." Because of this, the printer's device acts as an authoritative stamp which declares the text credit-worthy. In this articulation of the role of the printer's device in the broader marketplace – written just twenty-three years after the Bass Red Triangle became the first officially recognized trademark in England – Roberts advocates for an interpretation of Caxton's brand that is wholly functional in its scope. On the nature of the mark itself (see fig. 5), Roberts writes:

> So far as regards Caxton's device, it is easier to name the books in which it appeared than to explain its exact meaning. The late William Blades accepts the common interpretation of "W.C. 74." Some bibliographers argue that the date refers to the introduction of printing in England, and quote the colophon of the first edition of the "Chess" book in support of this theory. But the date of this work refers to the translation and not to the printing, which eas executed at Bruges, probably in 1476. Caxton did not settle at Westminster until late in that year, and possibly not until 1477. In all probability the date, supposing it to be such, and assuming that it is an abbreviation of 1474, refers to some landmark in our printer's career. Professor J.P.A. Madden, in his "Lettres d'un Bibliophile," expresses it as his opinion that the two small letters outside the "W. 74 C" are an abbreviation of the words "Sancta Colonia," an indication that a notable event in the life of Caxton occurred in 1474 at Cologne. (1893, 54-7)[52]

This speculation on the content of Caxton's device is revelatory inasmuch as it assumes that the content is personally significant to Caxton. Such an assertion challenges Roberts' assertion that the mark was merely a trademark, and suggests that Caxton had an awareness that the mark functioned as an extension of his self. In

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[52] On the issue of dates in Caxton's device, Davies (1935, 574) argues: "Caxton's is the first English device with the merchant's "four" mark, but not everyone will agree that this is what it really is. (Notary's is the next, c. 1496, but on an ** like the majority.) Many have been the conjectures on this point; generally presumed to be arabic numerals this mark has been taken for a date, (14)47 or '74 and therefore signifying some important period in C's career. They may be numerals of sorts but probably go back to the beginning of merchants' marks and to this writer's idea the origin of the mark is to be found in those of Cöln and perhaps other German or Flemish examples…"

this, we are able to see a way in which the device operates as a brand, serving to unite publisher and product in the public sphere.

As F.A. Girling (1964, 9) observed in his *English Merchants' Marks*, the use of a mark to stand for an individual trader has a lengthy history: "The marks here under review are usually termed merchant marks. Most of them do in fact appear to be the marks of traders. Personal marks or identity marks would perhaps be more truly descriptive of some of them. In the late Middle Ages almost everyone used a mark whether he was a trader or not." Girling sees a field of marks that are disparate in their symbolism, even as they are performing the same signaling function:

> Many of the devices of the early printers incorporate a merchant mark. Normally it occupies only a small proportion of the total area of the device, and is shown on a shield. It is probable that most of the early printers were already engaged in other enterprises when they took up printing, and that printing was never more than part of their business. These men would already have possessed marks. It is understandable, therefore, that printers' marks would have nothing in common with each other. (117)

Here, Girling presents a system of marks that operate only in service of their owners and the principle of identification and distinction at work in the broader marketplace. On this point, Hugh Davies (1935, 12) writes: "We shall, however, all be agreed that the device is a mark of ownership (or in later times, for the public an advertisement) used by printers and publishers to distinguish their own work or property at a glance." The conception of the mark as an arbitrary sign mirrors the world of brands, which can be said to have no logical organizing principle at work behind its iconography.

Moving beyond this, Girling establishes the bounds of interpretation by suggesting that "In every case the kernel of the device is the mark on the shield. The other items in the design, although often relevant are not essential in establishing the identity of the printer" (117). In practice, therefore, and with particular respect to Caxton's device, Girling writes: "His device consists of a personal mark, flanked by

his initials, with a decorative border at the top and bottom" (117). Girling suggests

that Caxton, like many other merchants and printers, chose the components of his

mark from a system of stock images. Seen in figure 8, the 'Agnus Dei' is presented

as a possible origin for the 'four symbol' in Caxton's device. In this image, the

design of the Lamb of God bearing the standard of Christendom is reduced to the

simple, geometric abstraction that is the "four." This stands in marked contrast to

the above-quoted work of J.P.A. Madden who claimed that this was literally the

number for, presented as part of the year '74.

Fig. 8

One finds that here, again, Davies differs in his interpretation of Caxton's

four and its attendant embellishments:

> The "four" shape (or cross) seen at the top of these "merchants' marks" is nearly always in a prominent position but alone does not constitute a complete mark. Various strokes and curves are added to the crossbar or stem evidently to distinguish one owner from the other. The stem is often supported on an arrangement of lines which sometimes at first sight might be taken for a monogram, but often the presence of plain initials shows that this was not intended...Occasionally, however, the added curves and convolutions may be interpreted as initials or may spell a name. These puzzling shapes may be the original primitive "housemarks" of an owner, or a pattern derived from the same source and, possibly in the case of the later instances in books, no longer have a specific meaning. In any case, it is fairly evident that these patterns are deliberate designs and not merely the outcome of caprice… (1935, 33)

Davies' agrees with Girling that the four is derived from a mercantile tradition, but suggests that the flowers, stars, and other embellishments in Caxton's device might be present in service of constructing a personal identity. At stake here is the extent to which the incunabular printer's mark might have been interacted with by a consuming public. If Girling's assertion that the components that are separate from the central "shield" are of little significance (as we might argue they are in the St. Albans device seen in figure 6), the visual component of the Caxton brand might be seen as resting on a fairly generic symbol. On the other hand, Davies' assertion that the totality of the mark is of interpretive consequence opens the possibility that Caxton was striving, at least in part, to craft a specific image (or experience) beyond that allowed by mere identification.

Whatever the ultimate cause for Caxton's decision to employ the mark that he did, it can be said with certainty that the mark served the purpose of identification while simultaneously relating his reputation and printed texts. It is precisely this issue of reputation that makes the work of Caxton's successor – Wynkyn de Worde – so particularly important with respect to the Caxton brand. On de Worde's continued use of Caxton's device, Lotte Hellinga writes:

> After using it for the two books printed in Paris, the missal and the Legenda Sarum, it became a regular feature of his books printed in Westminster, and was later taken over by his successor Wynkyn de Worde, no longer as the mark representing Caxton's person, but as the logo of the firm. (2010, 102)

This notion of Caxton's device morphing from self-defining to corporate logo is of particular consequence for the history of the brand, and I will now undertake to explore this transformation in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three – Wynkyn de Worde and the "Afterlife" of the Caxton Brand

The challenges Wynkyn de Worde faced in the mid-1490s upon the transition from printer to publisher were considerably different from the ones faced by Caxton two decades earlier. Where Caxton had the backing of Margaret Beaufort, and the accumulated wealth of a successful mercantile and political career, de Worde's status was considerably lower and his connections fewer.[53] While de Worde could count on some retention among Caxton's readers, his apparent disinterest in providing prologues, epilogues, translations, or most other sorts of textual engagements would force him to seek new strategies for engaging and attracting readers. In part, de Worde accomplished this by expanding the genres from which he drew, including many more popular romances and ephemeral texts. De Worde also introduced the title page, which provides a signaling function that is similar to, but conceptually distinct from, Caxton's prologues and epilogues. The title page alerts the reader to a text's contents, and often their provenance, but shifts the burden of evaluation to the reader. Additionally, de Worde greatly increased the graphical engagement of his texts by deploying myriad woodcuts, suggesting that English readers had begun to take a more pronounced interest in a printed text's visual properties. Given such a list, it is apparent that de Worde needed to work quickly, and to hold on to those aspects of his business which could help to bolster his cause. The most logical choice, then, was to employ Caxton's brand, which de Worde helped to create. The

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[53] In the entry for Wynkyn de Worde in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Blake indicates that de Worde had some interaction with Caxton's contacts: "Two books published in 1495 also have verse colophons: his reprints of Caxton's Polychronicon and De proprietatibus rerum. Both were requested by the mercer Roger Thorney, indicating that Wynkyn was in touch with Caxton's former colleagues."

natural points of contact for de Worde were Caxton's texts, and, perhaps more significantly, Caxton's device.

In this chapter, I will explore de Worde's use of Caxton's device, as well as his efforts to expand his readership, introduce formal and functional innovations to his texts, and build publishing networks that were unlike those seen in England before the Sixteenth Century. Additionally, I will explore the ways in which Caxton's brand was posthumously shaped by de Worde's actions, and discuss the impact of de Worde's career on the English publishing industry. I will divide this discussion into three parts treating on de Worde's actions following the death of Caxton, including his publishing program, de Worde's self-branding and network building, and the critical appraisal of de Worde's career. All of this will serve as prelude to a reflection on the ways in which the concept of the brand helps us to follow these trends in the history of England's early printers.

I.   Caxton's "Afterlife:" Wynkyn de Worde and the Inheritance of the Caxton Brand

Sometime in early 1492, Caxton passed away and left no obvious, filial heir to his printing business. His wife remains unknown to history, but it is clear that he had a daughter – Elizabeth – who was married to a tailor named Gerard Croppe. After Caxton's death, Crop took the executor of his will to court for the non-payment of "certain monies" (Blake 1976, 54). As noted in the Chancery Proceedings, Elizabeth and Gerard agreed to part company, and so the business fell to Wynkyn de Worde. Beyond the obvious significance of de Worde securing a continuing base of operations, it is at this moment that he also became the custodian of the Caxton brand. In practice, it was de Worde who would decide what, if any, use his device –

and, arguably, the cultural capital it had accumulated – would see going forward.

His initial efforts were somewhat tentative, as Blake notes in his entry on de Worde

in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (*DNB*):

> Perhaps Wynkyn was finding his feet and deciding how to develop the business. New developments characterize his work of 1494: an edition of *Speculum vitae Christi* is the first book to refer to Wynkyn by name as the printer; another text, *Scala perfectionis*, contains a verse explicit in rhyme royal stanzas. Many scholars denigrate Wynkyn's attainments by assuming he was unable to compose poetry, and claim that he employed Robert Copland to write these verses for him. But there is no evidence to support this view, and Wynkyn may be their author, for he is not known to have employed Copland until later. The explicit is followed by Wynkyn's own mark, which occurs here for the first time…That year he also published *Lives of the Fathers*, which Caxton finished translating on the last day of his life, though why Wynkyn delayed its printing so long is unclear.

What emerges here is the portrait of a printer who was, indeed, learning how to become a

publisher. De Worde claims no credit for any authorship that he might have undertaken,

which stands in contrast to his general willingness to give credit where it is due, and he does

not introduce his own device until after he had made a few other printings. As Blake notes,

it was not until de Worde's printing of *Vitas Patrum* that Caxton's passing was noted in de
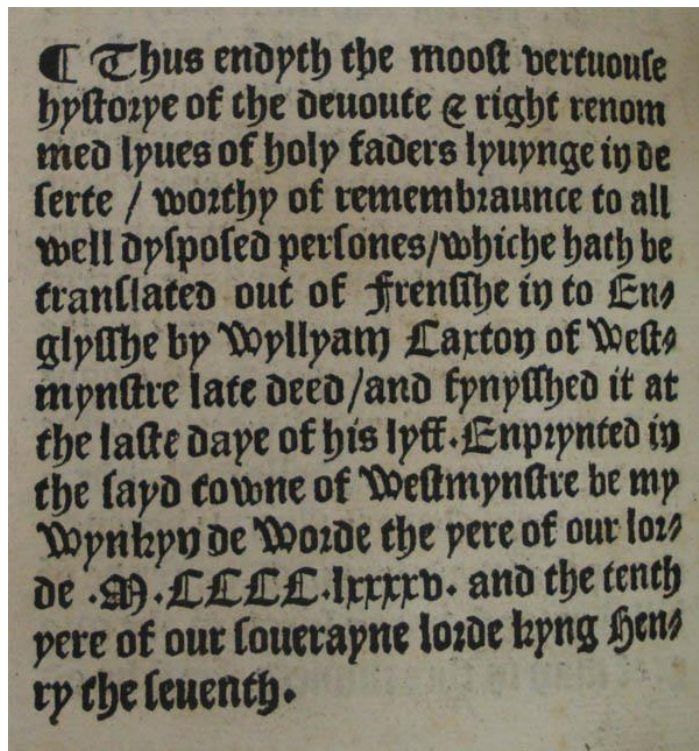
Worde's epilogue:

Fig. 9

While it is indeed a mystery as to why de Worde would wait so long to publish

Caxton's final text, we do know that de Worde would soon assume the mantle of the

Caxton brand by introducing a device that graphically established their prior

relationship (fig. 10). However silent de Worde might have been in his paratexts, his

press would soon roar to life. Lotte Hellinga writes:

> Once Wynkyn de Worde was entirely settled, had overhauled the material in Caxton's
> printing house and had fulfilled possible commitments to the heirs, he hit his stride; in his
> publishing career, no period equals the years between 1496 and 1499, if not in quantity, then
> in originality of the books he brought out in rapid succession, with hardly a schoolbook in
> sight. His books were well produced, aimed at the English readership by Caxton, but he did
> not reprint many of Caxton's works. Evidently he did not share Caxton's love of prose
> romances, for not one of his translations of such texts was reprinted by him until the early
> years of the sixteenth century. De Worde's great books of this period were interspersed with
> smaller quartos of religious texts in English, including some by living authors, John Alcock
> and Richard Fitzjames... (2010, 140)

What emerges here is an impression of a time wherein de Worde was evolving into a

publisher. His range of materials, numbering more than Caxton printed during his

entire career, speaks to an entrepreneur who is desirous of finding his own readership

to attend him.[54] De Worde's reincorporation of Caxton's device into his own

signaled to the broader marketplace that de Worde was the successor of the work that

Caxton had done, and so suggested continuity between the books printed by each.

This suggested relationship represents the first moments of the "afterlife" of the

Caxton brand, and, also an important moment in the history of the brand, as it

suggests that Caxton's device, even in its first decade, carried with it the system of

associations that we have come to expect from branding. However, de Worde's

effort to affect the appearance of continuity met a challenge in the form of his textual

presentation. Indeed, while his wares were of good quality, de Worde was somewhat

less careful with his text than Caxton had been.

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[54] Plomer suggests de Worde's slow beginnings were owed to legal disputes with Croppe over
Caxton's estate, and ultimately concludes: "That it was not due to any want of energy on de Worde's
part is shown from the fact that before the close of the fifteenth century he printed more than one
hundred books, in other words, when Caxton's affairs were settled up and the business was legally
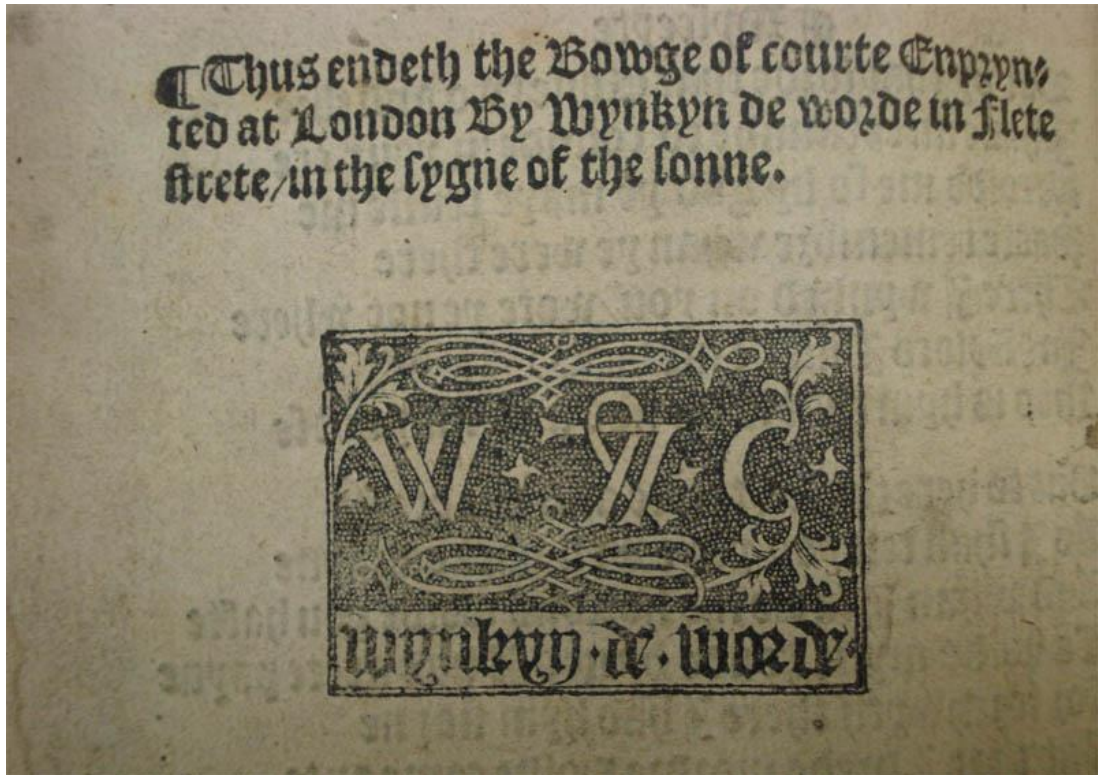handed over to him, de Worde more than made up for the lost time" (quoted in Moran 1976, 13).

Fig. 10

On this point, William Blades writes that de Worde generally made few obvious changes in reprints of Caxton's texts, as they continued to bear only Caxton's paratexts and device:

> Accuracy of information was in those days not much studied, and to a general carelessness about names and dates Wynken de Worde added a negligence peculiarly his own. We may excuse him for using Caxton's device in several books which by their dates and types are known to have been printed by himself, as well as for putting Caxton's name as printer to the edition of the "Golden Legend," printed in 1493, two years after his master's death. Such inaccuracies were at that time thought but little of. But how can we account for the blundering alteration of the 1495 edition of the "Polycronicon," where Wynken de Worde, making himself the speaker in Caxton's prologue, promises to carry the history down to 1485; [...] Other examples might easily be quoted, but enough has been adduced to show that Wynken de Worde was by no means careful in his statements. (1882, 65-6)

Here, Blades introduces an aspect of de Worde's publishing that has long been familiar, and confounding, to later historians of the book; namely, de Worde's seeming disinterestedness in the accuracy of the texts that he produced, even, and especially, as he took such care and expense for their publication. On the first point, we have considerable examples of de Worde's lack of paratextual intervention, which will be discussed in due course. On the latter point, we have de Worde's

heavy reliance on woodcuts, title pages, and an evolving series of printer's devices.

This latter evidence demonstrates de Worde's sensitivity to the way in which the

relationship between printer and reader was mediated by the text – most especially

by the text's appearance. Moving beyond this, though, it is especially important to

consider the ways in which de Worde's graphic sensibilities would come to intersect

with his entrepreneurial spirit, and so change the way in which brands operated in

the early modern literary marketplace.

Of de Worde's time at Westminster, Hellinga writes:

> Amid all this activity De Worde sought to expand production by commissioning work from others. In January 1497 the printing of a missal for Salisbury use was completed for him in Paris by the firm of Ulrich, Gering, and Bertold Rembolt; two other printer-publishers, Michael Morin and Pierre Levet, shared in the venture. About two years later, at the end of 1498, De Worde entered into an arrangement with two French printers who had moved to London, Julian Notary, a native of Brittany, in partnership with Jean Barbier. In December 1498 they completed for him another missal for Salisbury, at an address in Westminster, with their own type but with large woodcut initials that De Worde had provided. (2010, 148)

Hellinga introduces another important aspect of de Worde's career by indicating that

he actively sought to enlist networks of printers and craftspeople to expand the scope

of his publishing venture. Notably, we are told that de Worde supplied the woodcuts

to Notary and Barbier. This interest in controlling the visual components of his texts

would also feature in de Worde's provision of typefaces to other English printers, as

well as the appearance of de Worde's device in the work of printers from as far away

as York (as will be discussed below). Looking past this, however, what emerges is a

sense that the publishing trade was beginning to form its own networks of support

that could be separable from the older system of patronage. Here, we might consider

the work of Jürgen Habermas, who argued the following in his *The Structural

Transformation of the Public Sphere*:

> As long as it [early capitalism] lived from the fruits of the old mode of production…without transforming it, it retained ambivalent characteristics. On the one hand this capitalism stabilized the power structure of a society organized in estates, and on the other hand it unleashed the very elements within which this power structure would one day dissolve. We are speaking of the elements of the new commercial relationships: the *traffic in commodities and news* created by early capitalist long-distance trade. (1989, 15)

One of these unleashed elements, I contend, is the brand. The brand's signaling power invested it with the ability to unite varied readers, as it did for Caxton and de Worde's readers by offering them a common point of contact. Additionally, the printer's device – by carrying with it a network of socio-economic information – was able to strengthen and deepen relationships between individuals simply by providing an authoritative stamp. In this, we can find the transference of cultural capital (or, indeed, credit in the sense intended by Johns), and so the creation of a system wherein brands could begin to be valued for their own, abstract selves.

Returning, then, to the *DNB*, Blake discusses de Worde's collaborative spirit:

> Wynkyn worked, for example, with printers such as Richard Pynson, Julian Notary, and Peter Treveris, for they issued many texts co-operatively and exchanged woodcuts, borders, type, and probably text. Several printers started their careers as Wynkyn's apprentices. Robert Copland referred to him as his former master, and translated books for him and brought some to his attention. Henry Watson was another of his servants who translated books for him. In Wynkyn's will three other printers are identified as former servants: John Butler, James Gaver, and John Byddell; six servants included in the will may have been apprentices, and one servant is identified as a bookbinder. Wynkyn was happy to work with different people and, unlike Caxton, to acknowledge their contribution to his editions.

Of this period in de Worde's career, Hellinga (2010, 148-9) concludes: "By the time he left Westminster, De Worde had developed a personal publishing style, had attracted the beginning of a circle of authors, mainly ecclesiastics, had availed himself of the services of a gifted woodcutter, and found someone who was capable of a critical revision of *The Canterbury tales* …Once installed at his new address in Fleet Street, 'In the Sign of the Sonne', his activity did not diminish, but it was not long before his production apparently lost some of its originality." Once again, what emerges is a sense that de Worde was prolific, even as his work began to become uninspired. To better explore this critical paradigm, and so develop a more complete understanding of the contemporary status he enjoys, I will now turn to a brief discussion of the critical appraisal of de Worde's publishing career.

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Let us begin, then, by establishing a proper understanding of the career and work of Wynken de Worde. James Moran (1976, 51) writes: "Unlike other early printers he was a printer by origin. Caxton was a merchant, others were clerics or had been connected with other trades. De Worde almost certainly began his real working life in printing and owed a great deal to Caxton, whom he affectionately remembered throughout the rest of his life." Moran also uses a figure that will be come quite familiar in this discussion – the business-savvy de Worde – in describing de Worde's influence on publishing: "While Caxton was a scholarly man, de Worde was a craftsman but shrewd enough to realise that there was a wider market for cheap publications than that visualised by Caxton" (14). Referencing H.S. Bennett's *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557*, Moran adds:

> Mr. Bennett points out that de Worde saw there was a possible market for early romances which were still in manuscript form and from time to time throughout his career he printed little quarto volumes, containing such famous romances as *Bevis of Hampton, Sir Degare* and *Ipomydon*, as well as a number of others, at least four of which are unique, and it is to de Worde's enterprise that we owe the first editions of some of the romances. (15)

Yet, despite de Worde's prolific career (Bennett suggests he was responsible for 829 separate publications)[55], and the amount of capital that would likely be required to maintain it, de Worde, as Bennett has noted above, spent little energy on the pursuit of patronage. As suggested in the Introduction, this fact is indicative of the overall strength of de Worde's publishing program, and the resources he was able to draw from his wider network of printers and craftspeople. Additionally, de Worde's embrace of more popular romances opened new avenues for his wares to be sold.

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[55] Carol Meale offers this contrasting evaluation of de Worde's relationship with romances: "Of the eighty-eight romances in English which are extant in codices dating from the second half of the thirteenth century up until 1534/35, the year in which Wynkyn de Worde died, it appears that only twenty-one made their way, in one version or another, into print before de Worde's death. The accuracy of this statement is, of course, dependent upon there being some evidence of publication, and it is a common surmise that many copies of romances have been, in the words of H.S. Bennett, 'thumbed to pieces', leaving no trace of their existence in print" (1992, 285).

Indeed, regardless of de Worde's personal investment in the romances he printed,

what remains common to critical interpretations of his career is a sense that the

printing of these romances represented a shift away from the comparatively

"highbrow" editions that Caxton produced.

Significant to this discussion, and our construction of the afterlife of the

Caxton brand, are a number of technological innovations that de Worde introduced

to the printing of English books: "While Caxton was more concerned with text,

particularly with his translations, de Worde experimented with visual aspects of the

book, the page layout, the effect of borders and initials, and with various types of

illustration. De Worde's use of pictures signals a new way of thinking about the

book, the possibilities of the printed page, and the function of illustration" (Driver

2004, 87). With respect to de Worde's considerable use of woodcuts, McKitterick

writes: "One of the most enduring characteristics of this aspect of book production

[printing from small woodcuts or engraved plates] is that it was only a partial

mechanisation of manuscript practice, where repeated copying was widespread.

Printing made reproduction easier, and made it cheaper. It did not demand

adjustments actually in reading" (2003, 63). Taken together, Driver and McKitterick

present a scenario wherein de Worde's visual experimentation, such as it was in the

case of woodcuts, was at least partially geared towards bringing printed books into

parity with manuscript conventions. Indeed, de Worde's printed books were

considerably more similar to manuscript texts than Caxton's. Specifically, de

Worde's extensive inclusion of woodcuts (and other images) made his products more

visually akin to the medieval antecedents from which his master occasionally

worked. In this way, de Worde's changes from Caxton's work may have been more

easily embraced by readers whose expectations were shaped by interaction with

manuscripts, even as they appeared progressive within the scope of printed,

vernacular texts in England.

As Moran notes, de Worde's texts always featured these illustrations, which

speaks to a reliable facet of his brand: "There is no doubt that de Worde understood

the popular market. He seldom printed a book without illustrations, even if

sometimes they were badly done" (1976, 30). This last point is significant, as de

Worde's efforts were often far more primitive than those taking place on the

Continent.[56] Again, this reinforces the notion that de Worde was shrewd enough to

identify the more marketable components of his editions, but not necessarily skilled

(or interested) enough to realize the full potential of those components. An example

of this is given by Moran:

> But any illustration was better than none for de Worde...In *A right profytable tretyse compendiously drawn out of many and dyvers wrytungs of holy men* by Thomas Betson (1500) (a kind of early religious digest) he used a famous block of the Crucifixtion at both beginning and end. This is the book with the injunction to the reader to 'lerne to kepe your bokes clene'. Unfortunately the exhortation loses some of its effect by the fact that the 'n' in 'clene' is printed upside down. (30-1)

As with the previous example of de Worde's insensitivity to chronology and textual

editing, here we see a fine example of de Worde's textual innovations being

undermined by his lack of simple proofreading. It is difficult to speculate on the

reasons for this, as no account of the workings of de Worde's press at Westminster,

or at Fleet Street, is extant. However, the two most obvious reasons (and common

with respect to de Worde scholarship) are neglect and lack of interest. Both of these

would suggest that de Worde regarded his trade as one which produced

commodities, and not one which had any relationship with the construction of artistic

objects. Yet, for all this, de Worde's willingness to attempt new modes of graphic

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[56] On this point, Van Kampen (1999, 79) writes: "The imprints of Caxton, de Worde and Pynson, like the works of the Continental printers, are monuments inasmuch as they are valid representations of the cultural climate in which they were produced. At issue is not the importance of the work of England's first printers; it is the relative scarcity and simplicity of such accomplishments that is striking when compared to the quantity and sophistication of Continental book production."

inclusion in his texts is indicative of his engagement with the aesthetic aspects of his brand.

Once de Worde began to produce his own works at Westminster, he began to break with Caxton's formats in one key area: title pages. De Worde, as McKerrow writes in his *Introduction to Bibliography*, was quite keen to make the title page a distinguishing feature of his texts: "In the hands of Wynkyn de Worde, however, the title page rapidly developed into a conspicuous feature of the book, and though one or two of his earlier contemporaries never used it, we find that by the beginning of the sixteenth century some sort of title page is always present" (quoted in Moran 1976, 24-6). Blades notes the seeming triviality of these title-pages, but does take a moment to emphasize their relative uniqueness in England: "Wynkyn de Worde adopted the use of title-pages immediately after the death of his master, but Machlinia of London, and the schoolmaster-printer of St. Alban's, never used them" (1882, 45). Yet, despite these title pages, and the now standard practice of putting the publisher's name on them, it was not until around 1503 that de Worde began to use his name on any of the texts he produced (though, as Moran notes, many did contain his first device as in Fig. 10).

Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards note one critical area in which de Worde's title pages provided a lasting innovation to English literary texts:

> The routine provision of illustration in printed versions of literary texts such as these is a distinct innovation when compared to their presentation in manuscripts. While substantial, single-work manuscripts of texts such as Lydgate's *Troy Book* contained programmes of illustration, most manuscript anthologies of shorter poetic texts were relatively plain productions. De Worde in particular, however, seems to have pioneered the use of the illustrated title-page in his printed equivalents of the manuscript booklet, and may have seen the standardization of format and type as an invitation to buyers to collect uniform editions, possibly for binding together in larger volumes. (1999, 566)

Setting aside the potential for serialization that Boffey and Edwards raise, in order to focus on the perception that readers would easily adapt to, and come to rely on, them, de Worde's use of the title page is indicative of a conceptual shift wherein

texts are designed to be approached as self-contained commodities, rather than as works that require carefully prepared prologues and epilogues to indicate their purpose. On this point, Paul Christianson describes the period following Caxton's death as one that witnessed a significant paradigmatic shift in the distribution of books: "One way to describe the changes occurring is to note the gradual shift away from direct marketing of books by printers - such as De Machlinia, De Westfalia and Caxton himself - and by book-sellers - such as Frankenbergh, the Rue brothers and Actors - to a broader marketing scheme using a network of agents and factors, with wholesale distribution" (1999, 139-40). In this, Christianson touches upon a broader cultural shift away from the primary relations that governed the medieval world of patronage toward a capitalist world wherein the producers and consumers of commodities were likely to be unknown to one another. On this system of commoditization, and its effect on the status of individual objects, Appadurai writes:

> On the other hand, a Marxist critique of this contrast would suggest that it is commoditization as a worldwide historical process that determines in very important ways the shifting relationship between singular and homogeneous things at any given moment in the life of a society. But the important point is that the commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things. (2003, 17)

Here, we might speculate that de Worde's introduction of title pages may have temporarily shifted the emphasis away from books as a collective phenomenon, bringing it instead to the specific nature of individual volumes. In this, the brand becomes all the more vital, as it would likely serve as the only link between producer and consumer. Therefore, the evolution of the printer's mark from its beginnings as a merchant mark analogue to its later life as a container for credit and capital is not only a useful step in the growth of the publishing trade, but a goal to which de Worde actively aspired in his continual refinement of his mark for use in ever-widening contexts.

Beyond form, perhaps the single greatest change that de Worde made in the operation of Caxton's former shop is in the area of content selection. While Caxton often chose larger texts that reflected what he felt to be literary achievements, as well as works of moral significance, de Worde casts a much wider net into the sea of popular literature.[57] This has led to a considerably varied critical standing for de Worde. Plomer writes that he "...was utterly devoid of all artistic feeling," and "...[h]e had no literary tastes" ([1925] 1974, 101). Plomer also sets Caxton and de Worde on opposite ends of the publishing spectrum:

> Their interests never clashed. De Worde was content to remain the mechanic. He was in no sense a scholar, and knew little about the literary value of books. Caxton, on the other hand, loved the literary side of the printer's art better than the mechanical, and so long as his books were printed on good paper, with readable type, black ink, and were reasonably free from "errata," he troubled himself little about such things as title-pages, signatures, even spacing, or illustrations. (44-5)

Carlson (2006, 60) picks up from Plomer: "The printing of de Worde and Pynson was oriented above all toward (bourgeois) utility, not (aristocratic) enjoyment, running along lines laid out by Caxton but never thoroughly pursued by him." Others still, such as William West (2006, 254-55), more or less treat Caxton and de Worde as interchangeable entities: "They [Caxton and de Worde] are exploiters rather than lamenters of velocity. Both men, especially de Worde, printed in bulk and both printed works far from the cutting edge of thought...Although many of de Worde's extraordinary eight hundred-plus publications were first or unique, his larger projects were usually lifted wholesale from Caxton's stock." For all of these critiques, de Worde's choice to relocate to Fleet Street and embrace a more middle-class clientele, as well as his construction of a network of business relations throughout England, establish de Worde as a savvy entrepreneur who understood his readers' taste, the nature of the marketplace, and how to turn an existing brand – Caxton's – into

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[57] Plomer writes this about the quality of Caxton's work: "Caxton's press was fully employed printing English books and translations of foreign works into English, made for the most part by Caxton himself—work of the highest educational and national value" ([1925] 1974, 22).

something that could work to serve his own interests. It is in these areas that de Worde truly separates himself from his old master, and it is here that we begin to see a clearly-defined de Worde brand.

II.   Under the 'Sign of the Sonne:' De Worde's Work at Fleet Street and Beyond

In the year 1500, Wynkyn de Worde elected to move from Westminster and establish himself in London town at Fleet Street. On this, Carlson (2006, 59) writes: "These moves embody a recognition of the proper nature of the only foundation on which a local printing industry could be securely built, that is, on book-publication aimed at the (relatively) mass markets of book-using professionals, of the sort attracted to the city first of all, not the court." Moran (1976, 31-2) describes de Worde's output during the early period of the move: "The year 1501 was mostly taken up with settling into his new premises. His output was small, and only one book is known to have been issued that year – *Mons Perfectionis*. Wynkyn de Worde's output during the following years was moulded by popular taste and by foreign competition." With respect to the new printing house, Plomer ([1925] 1974, 65) writes: "De Worde's new premises were on the south side of Fleet Street, near the Conduit and opposite Shoe Lane. They consisted of a shop and printing-house and a dwelling-house, and were known by the sign of the Sun." It was this Sign of the Sun, often accompanied by some variant of Caxton's old device, that would become de Worde's printer's mark (fig. 11). As he had been using variations of Caxton's device before arriving in Fleet Street, it is logical to suggest that the incorporation of the new shop's sign into his device served to link the abstract

publisher – Wynkyn de Worde – with a concrete location, as well as with a series of

printed objects. In this fashion, de Worde firmly links his brand to this mark in a

way that Caxton had only just begun to do before his death. Given Moran's

aforementioned description of de Worde's output, we can begin to get a sense as to

the qualitative status of this brand in modern criticism – that is, that de Worde's

historical position is that of a shrewd, non-literary publisher of popular texts. We

can see evidence of this in Carlson and Moran's descriptions that modern critics

have come to regard the Sign of the Sun as synonymous with the pursuit of profit.

Fig. 11

To shed more light on those materials which have earned de Worde this reputation, let us begin by establishing what sorts of material characterized his eight-hundred-plus publications. Moran (1976, 14) tells us that de Worde was "...the first publisher and printer to popularise the product of the printing press. Duff calls him 'by far the most important and prolific of all the early English printers.'" Moran references H.S. Bennett who notes that de Worde "saw there was a possible market in early romances which were still in manuscript form," and who also wrote:

> Caxton's two chief successors, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson, seem to have shown little of his anxiety to find a patron. Each of them, it is true, published a limited number of books with the support of influential people, but on the whole they relied on their skill in judging what the public wanted. Other publishers, both contemporary and later, were seemingly not so confident of their powers in judging the potential market; and, as a result throughout the period, many printers were influenced by the wishes or instructions of patrons... (1952, 15-6)

From Bennett, then, we get a sense of de Worde's shrewdness, and an impression that he was, indeed, someone with his finger on the pulse of the book trade. Indeed, as A.S.G. Edwards has pointed out: "…[de Worde] was the first English printer to publish any substantial verse by living writers at all" (quoted in Machan 2006, 300). Here, Boffey and Edwards (1999, 566) observe: "Thus we find Stephen Hawes seemingly collaborating with his publisher, De Worde, to ensure a careful integration of text and image in his poems, and De Worde later taking care to illustrate the poems of Christopher Goodwyn and William Walter in an appropriate way." On this point, Machan (2006, 300) observes: "In so doing, de Worde's practices rendered print canonically as well as technologically innovative, a transformative medium that at least accompanied, even if it did not produce, some of the most influential social and cultural changes in England's early modern period." Given his expansive output, and his willingness to print cheaper, quarto versions of a number of romances, it is right to consider de Worde, as Carlson does, the first mass-market printer in England.

Given this, it might be said that we do not need to look terribly far to assess de Worde's stature within his own period. By all accounts, his works were wildly popular, and the reason that so few remain, as Bennett noted above, is that the others have been "thumbed to pieces." Plomer (1900, 69) adds: "Altogether some eight hundred books, the bulk of them undated, have been traced to his press. Manifestly, we can do little more than sample his work, more especially as examples of the rarer books are not easily accessible" (69). According to Moran (1976, 32): "He produced ballads, jest books, romances, and chap books, often only known from fragments, which have survived in old bindings. We cannot estimate the number which have perished" (32). And so, what comes down to us is a partial list of texts, many of which are only fragments of their former selves, and a sense that de Worde was far more interested in quantity than quality. As Moran notes: "There is no doubt that de Worde understood the popular market. He seldom printed a book without illustrations, even if sometimes they were badly done" (30).[58] In a strong contrast to Caxton, whose brand is often associated with higher quality editions, de Worde's brand is weighted more towards the commercial end of the spectrum. Because of this, perhaps, articles and biographies that are specifically about Wynkyn de Worde exist in a considerably smaller quantity than those about Caxton.[59] On the scarcity of de Worde scholarship, William West writes:

> Until quite recently, this sort of disappearance of Wynkyn de Worde in the bright light cast by the figure of his master, Caxton, has been altogether typical in research on the period of early printing in England. When de Worde appears at all in earlier works of criticism, it is generally to serve as Caxton's foil: de Worde's shrewd businessman in comparison with Caxton's literarily minded dreamer. Even a nominally sympathetic historian of the first half of the twentieth century like Henry Plomer can muster only the faintest of praise: although the larger-scale books that he produced "were among the best specimens of typography to be met with in this country…" (2006, 243)

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[58] In his *DNB* entry, Blake notes: "From the beginning he used woodcuts, despite their variable quality, to make his books attractive: his different editions contain over 1100."

[59] Indeed, a survey of the MLA International Bibliography for articles containing "Wynkyn de Worde" returns forty-eight articles. Of these, only about a quarter have nothing to do with Caxton.

We have seen much of this in our survey of de Worde scholarship thus far, and so it is not surprising to see West corroborate this scholarly tale. And indeed, as we have seen in our survey of Caxton scholarship, this dichotomy is very much in service now, as Hellinga's charge of a dearth of originality demonstrates. This is, perhaps, the least surprising aspect of this study. De Worde's reputation suffers from his commercial tendencies, and it remains to be seen how this aspect of the de Worde brand has influenced our understanding of Caxton's own.

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Yet the exceptional commercial viability of the de Worde brand is not the sole product of his ability to choose texts that would ultimately prove popular and successful. Perhaps one of de Worde's most significant differences from Caxton was his interest in forming a network of business connections with other printers throughout England (and on the Continent). De Worde used these connections to leverage his exceptional market share, and to ensure that he would be a part of any business going on in England. Edwards and Meale introduce the idea of collaboration by discussing how de Worde published works by his "coterie of writers:"

> It can hardly be coincidental that so many of de Worde's assistants turned their hands to literary activity, or that various literary figures seem to have formed particular links with de Worde. It suggests, once again, a systematic attempt to develop markets for various kinds of English books that was conducted on a level not matched by any of his contemporaries, or near contemporaries. This attempt seems, in its turn, to have been part of a wider concern to develop the book trade in terms of trade relations, in ways that may have been designed to facilitate the more effective marketing of both his own books and those of other, smaller printers. (1993, 120)

As this passage suggests, de Worde's ambitions extended far beyond Fleet Street, and would become a significant aspect of his brand's legacy. For de Worde, the creation of a large network of suppliers, sellers, and craftspeople was a means of strengthening his own position, and, in a position reflective of the emerging middle

classes, freed him from a dependence on any particular patron or constituency.

Blake's *DNB* entry on de Worde outlines this extensive, well-developed network of

printers and other craftspeople with which de Worde did business:

> In addition to his links with London printers and bookbinders, trading associations are indicated through his contacts with Hugo Goes, a York printer; John Scoler and Charles Kyrforth, Oxford stationers; Robert Woodward, a Bristol stationer; and Henry Jacobi, Henry Pepwell, and John Gough, London stationers, of whom the first also sold books in Oxford. John Tourner, a stationer, was a witness of Wynkyn's will. He had servants such as Robert Maas with Dutch names who may have formed part of his links with the Low Countries, and he was in contact with French printers. He had links with leather producers, probably through his own bookbinding activities. He also had a wide range of patrons, who requested books from him. Some are unnamed scholars; others are monks, such as Whitford, merchants, such as Thorney, or nobles, such as Margaret Beaufort.

Remarkably, de Worde's collaboration with other printing houses was the first of its

kind in England, as Moran (1976, 40) notes: "…in 1507 de Worde and Pynson tried

co-operation instead of competition and shared an edition of *The Boke Royal* which

de Worde printed. This is the first example in England of the combination of firms in

the book trade."

Stemming from this, and other collaborations that de Worde undertook, one

of the most significant developments in the early modern history of branding was the

simple dissemination of his device throughout England. De Worde's Sun appeared

in works by Goes, for instance, and the ninth version of de Worde's device (seen in

the 1520 edition of Whittington's *Syntaxis* (*STC* 25547), as well as in fig. 12 below)

passed on to John Bydell upon his death (Kuskin 2008, 67). In addition to de

Worde's work with Goes, Moran notes that Ursyn Mylner, York's second printer,

may have used de Worde's device to signify their professional relationship (see fig.

13): "His device consisted of a shield hanging from a tree supported by a bear…The

shield is divided per pale and bears in one half a windmill and in the other a sun. The

mill is obviously for Mylner and the sun may refer to a business partnership with de

Worde…" (1976, 40-1)

Fig. 13

This use of the printer's device to signify a business relationship is one of the many ad-hoc developments of the early Sixteenth Century, as Kuskin (2008, 70) writes: "…the development of the printer's mark illustrates some crucial terms for early English printing. It shows the way the press developed a heraldry for itself that combines craft and mercantile sensibilities, and emphasizes an overall practice of appropriation … Printers had to think through relationships of supply and demand in order to ensure that consumption grew in pace with production." Here, it can be argued that the abstraction of the physical sign (be it the "Red Pale" or the "Sign of the Sun") into a movable, textual environment marks a transition from the traditional, locative relations between producer and consumer towards a more fluid, asynchronous relationship that is more like what we now take for granted in a modern context. With regard to these changes, as they pertain to patronage, Edwards and Meale write:

> [B]y its nature print is obviously constrained by a form that emphasizes multiplicity, not particularity, and it is thus the exclusive nature of the relationship between producer and client — or patron — which is lost with the advent of printing. Indeed, patronage itself

undergoes a sea change, and if the relationship between supplier and customer may be defined as primarily and straightforwardly economic in the age of the manuscript, no such simple formulation is possible in the age of the printed book. The auspices of the patron, for example, become more talismanic and less manifestly economic in nature. (1993, 96)

Printing was perhaps the most successful early modern industry with respect to the distribution of not only physical objects, but of culture and an individual "brand." Indeed, given the rapid nature of production, the overall, qualitative similarity between texts, and the necessary investiture of a patron or publisher, I contend that the brand was both a natural, and a significant, outcome of the early modern publishing industry. While he would not have considered it in these terms, de Worde's work is the logical outcome of Caxton's experiments and compromises. That is, de Worde's desire to cultivate a readership by targeting his output to perceived needs, along with his distributed network of relations, and his interest in forging connections in England and Europe, speak to a publisher who understood the importance of virtualization and branding in an era long before the rise of commercial capitalism. It might be suggested, and indeed I believe it to be the case, that the production of printed objects – being both commercial and aesthetic in nature – requires a hybridized operation on the part of the publisher. And it can only follow that consumers of those works must engage with both sets of attributes, as I have written previously, in order to best determine what will fill their needs. For this reason, as I will now discuss, branding – itself a hybridizing process – is a far better method for describing the operation of printers and publishers than the current critical system of evaluating their work in terms of the antagonism between Commerce and lovers of Art.

III.   De Worde and the Legacy of the Caxton Brand.

Even the brief overview that features in the first part of this chapter will make it abundantly clear that de Worde's use of the brand was increasingly based on principles that were alien to the environment in which Caxton's was created. While Caxton attempted to cultivate an air of sophistication, and good relations with aristocracy, de Worde seemed fundamentally concerned with commercial viability. Where Caxton served as his own translator and editor, de Worde seemed content to either re-use Caxton's work, or to farm these responsibilities out to others. To interact with a Caxton edition, then, was a fundamentally different experience than holding a de Worde. The acquisition of, for example, Caxton's *Morte D'Arthur* would likely have involved the reader having some familiarity with Caxton and his work. His reputation for printing high-quality, folio volumes of works like *The Canterbury Tales* would have helped to influence the prospective buyer that his new *Morte D'Arthur* would be of similar quality. De Worde, however, could not sell his *Morte D'Arthur* on the same principles, given his prolific output of popular works. Instead, his text would have appealed to those who, for instance, were engaged by his popular romances and wanted something similar, or perhaps to those who were familiar with the Caxton brand and its reputation. In his *Old News: Caxton, de Worde, and the Invention of the Edition*, William West discusses these two texts:

> I had wanted to compare a variety of texts produced by Caxton and those so-called copies, or reprints, produced by de Worde; what the card told me, at first glance, was that my project did not really exist—that there was no difference between Caxton's original and de Worde's copy, or in fact that the relation between de Worde's 1498 *Le Morte D'Arthur* and Caxton's 1485 *Le Morte D'Arthur* was precisely that of a duplicate—one could provide an adequate substitute for Caxton, since the substitution would never occur the other way…But while the value of the de Worde edition is as a *copy* of Caxton's edition, at the same time it has its own particular identity…(2006, 242)[60]

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[60] The card in question is from the Newberry Library catalog, and references a volume in "…Case YA 145.562, filed under Worde, Wynkyn de, *Le Morte D'Arthur* (1498)" (West 2006, 241).

West's description of the two texts – the Caxton and the de Worde – appropriates the discourse of the brand to suggest that the two editions – seemingly identical as products – remain different because of some ephemeral quality. This is a significant moment, which highlights the brand's current, subsurface role in literary criticism. Moreover, it is reflective of a perceived difference that is significant enough as to cause West to categorize two, self-admittedly identical copies of *Morte D'Arthur* as being fundamentally different on account of their original publisher.

One of the fundamental challenges of Caxton scholarship, particularly from the perspective of the brand, is precisely this sort of disentanglement from de Worde. While it has been commonplace for scholars to speak of "Caxton and de Worde," as if they were a permanent partnership, the simple fact of the matter is that the two did operate in considerably different modes, and in remarkably different eras. While they shared a printing house, were long-time friends, and had an interest in similar markets, their ambitions were notably different. Therefore, it should follow that studies of their brands should reflect these realities. On the face of it, such a claim is both simple and obvious; naturally, different people should be discussed as if they are, *in fact*, different people. Yet, as this section will show, many critics have failed to do this with Caxton and de Worde, and, I contend, the actions of the latter have directly altered critical reception of the former. Such is the nature of a brand's "afterlife," perhaps, but it should not be the totality of the discussion. What Caxton scholarship lacks, I believe, is an elegant way to discuss the evolution of Caxton's career and brand without subsuming his artistic practices within his commercial ones. This is, as I have discussed in the previous two chapters, because much of Caxton scholarship is affected by polarizing beliefs about the antithetical interrelation of Commerce to Art. Therefore, I will use the brand to lay out a more

flexible, hybridized model for Caxton – and, in so doing, work to leave two discrete brands – a Caxton and a de Worde – behind.

The connectedness of Wynkyn de Worde and William Caxton in histories of the book is, on the one hand, perfectly reasonable given their working relationship, and I will now lay out a few examples of this. One of the earliest examples of de Worde's career being used to inform us about Caxton's is, perhaps, found in Blades' *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton*: "Wynken de Worde, his immediate successor, printed several books in the same place and dated them from 'Caxton's house in Westminster.' This phrase was considered, by the early biographers of Caxton, as proving that he had migrated from the side chapel, where they assumed he first set up his press…" (1882, 75) This sort of textual archaeology is a perfectly legitimate use of de Worde's colophons, and serves only to provide insight into the final state of Caxton's affairs. It has no critical implications with respect to Caxton's brand, and illustrates the difficulty in assessing things over a distance of so many years. Other types of scholarly inquiry, such as comparative textual studies like that conducted by Tsuyoshi Mukai in his "De Worde's 1498 Morte Darthur and Caxton's Copy-Text," can serve to enhance the distinctness of de Worde from Caxton. In that article, Mukai writes:

> A textual collation of the two printed editions definitely proves de Worde's general dependence on Caxton, with innumerable variants. Apart from the ones attributable to the typesetter's errors, these textual changes are made in an aesthetic attempt to present the story in a different style, or to improve corrupt and difficult passages, or for the technical purpose of making printed lines the desired length near the end of each column. The latter alterations, as a conventional practice in early printings, may well have been carried out at the compositor's discretion, while the former suggest the possible existence of someone in the capacity of editor who took up a copy of Caxton's edition, looked through its text, and made running corrections on it as he read. An idea of his conscientious activity can be gained from the statistic that in 166 out of 320 substantial emendations Spisak had to make in editing his Caxton's Malory, the editor of the de Worde text (or perhaps an alert compositor in some cases) noticed the corrupt text and made some sort of editorial adjustment, successful or otherwise. Considering the nature of the textual correction, it is highly probable that he worked it out on most occasions from the context alone. (2000, 26)

Such passages manage to denote the dependence of de Worde, earlier in his career as publisher, on the work of his former master, without succumbing to the tendency to note, as those who wrote the library card that West references did, that de Worde and Caxton's texts are "identical." As with West's work, Mukai's article reinforces the distinct working habits of Caxton and de Worde, and helps to build a system for detecting their imprint on a given text.

Yet this sort of work is not the general thrust of Caxton scholarship, as much of that work relates to his role in shaping a reading public, the development of vernacular print culture, or, as with scholars like Eisenstein and Johns, the nature of a fundamental shift in the transmission and reception of knowledge and culture. Such studies, as we have seen previously in this dissertation, tend to mark the work of de Worde and Caxton as being cut from the same cloth, and do not take into account the significant differences that both men had towards the acts of printing and publishing. This is, perhaps, because these overarching narratives of print history lack the elbow room for individuals to truly stand out, or, perhaps more appropriately, because there exists a greater interest in effects than causes. However, by contrast, a brand-oriented approach forces us to be mindful of the agents of change, even as we discuss the consequences of the changes they wrought.

Caxton and de Worde are easily separated, through an inversion of the aforementioned dichotomy of the scholar-printer (Caxton) and the mercantile-publisher (de Worde). While such a narrative is reductive, it nonetheless suggests important features of the two brands that, once discussed, allow for them to be easily distinguished from one another. This narrative is simplistic, inasmuch as it stipulates that the quality of the literary output is contingent on the publishers' attitudes towards business, but it can be beneficially tweaked if we invert this relationship.

Instead of a commercially-driven enterprise, could it be that the editions that de Worde and Caxton produced reflected their understanding about the social/cultural potential of literary works? After all, it is difficult to fault Caxton for not attending to the needs of a wider readership he was only just discovering. Likewise, it is difficult to fault de Worde for producing "cheap" editions of works that had hitherto remained unprinted – and, so, logically, were of little popular interest. Of course, in the face of the likelihood that both men eventually recognized that both of these assumptions were false, it is then interesting to speculate as to whether or not an attempt to uphold one's own perceived brand kept either publisher from truly innovating in terms of literary content and style. However, since such an argument relies on the kind of personal testimony that is lost to history, it is perhaps best to leave this line of inquiry for the time being. Even so, before moving ahead with a more historiographical analysis, it bears noting that the possible truth in the aforementioned inversion requires us to reevaluate blanket pronouncements on the character and intentions of de Worde and Caxton. Brand-centric analysis is more grey than black or white, and relies on the denotation of a constellation of activities – full of relative positions and attributes – which allow us to discuss historical acts in more fluid terms without forfeiting the historical record.

Let us begin such an analysis of de Worde's career in this spirit, and begin with a familiar analysis of de Worde's era:

> The only fifteenth-century English printers who flourished were de Worde and Pynson, the two who were to refound the industry in the City in 1500, on the basis of speculative book publication, in advance of articulate demand, driven by market creation and husbandry, among a bourgeois population that was as animated as the printers themselves were by prospects of maximized immediate return on investment, markets of persons already in part habituated to book use, for whom book buying and book using were required to pay an immediate dividend. The aesthetic quality of English printing in the period dominated by de Worde and Pynson may well have suffered. Certainly, masterpieces of the craft – the sort of thing that ruined Mansion and seems always to have tempted Caxton – disappeared after 1500. But English printing acquired the countervalent benefits of maximized efficiency, exploiting markets instead that wanted, not luxury objects, but "the maximum of reading matter for the minimum of outlay," in H.S. Bennett's phrase. (Carlson 2006, 60)

Carlson sets de Worde's era of printing in direct opposition to the Humanist movements of the previous century, and suggests that the consumption of reading material was a purely immediate, commercially-driven activity for "bourgeois" readers. Implicit in such a statement is a belief that works cannot be popular, immediately profitable, or speculative and still retain any sense of cultural sophistication. Such a model necessitates that the printers of these works remain as unliterary, barbaric agents of cultural regress. And yet, despite this, consider the canonical status of Caxton's *Morte D'Arthur* and *Canterbury Tales*, as well as the necessity of de Worde's editions to those wishing to study many popular romances. On the latter point, Moran (1976, 48-9) offers the following defense of de Worde: "He printed fifteen romances in all and of these twelve appear for the first time under his imprint and three of these – *Apollonius of Tyre* (1510), *Melusine* (1510?), and *Olyuer of Castylle* (1518) – are unique. He had little literary judgment of his own and relied on his friends and helpers such as Robert Copland and Henry Watson for advice, but whatever his methods, his solid contribution to our literature cannot be gainsaid." On the specific charge that no masterpieces were printed after 1500, Moran suggests that this is of little overall importance: "As far as he (Bennett) can judge, by an examination of a sample of de Worde's output at various times, 70 per cent of the books printed by him were printed for the first time. Their names recall a number of items famous in literary history while many have survived only in de Worde's edition. More than 200 works printed by de Worde were never reprinted before 1640 and most of them have never been reprinted at all. While many of the works are of small value as masterpieces they are important items of evidence in the history of taste and in the investigation of the growth and appetite of the early reading public" (48).

Clearly, there is room for argument on the nature of de Worde's lasting impact on the printing, and reading, of literary works. However, perhaps more importantly, is the question of whether or not it is right to ask such questions in the first place. After all, Caxton and de Worde are often lumped together because they are considered by critics to be printing for very similar, unsophisticated reading publics. Such arguments trump detailed analyses of actual output, and rely instead on broadly conceived narratives of the history of printing and reading in early modern England. In some cases, as in the following excerpt from Plomer's *Wynkyn De Worde & His Contemporaries*, this similitude between Caxton and de Worde is seen as a benefit:

> The output of Wynkyn de Worde alone might easily fill a volume; but it is not so much the number of books he printed (upwards of 800), but rather the character of that output that makes his work attractive. He has been well termed "the popular printer." In this respect he followed the example of his old master, and gave the public what would either move it to tears or laughter, cure its ailments both of mind and body, show it how to fish, to hawk, or to cook, or teach it how to speak Latin correctly. Further, he printed these books in a handy form, rendering them as attractive as he could by the use of quaint initials, title-pages within woodcut borders, and a plentiful use of illustrations. At the same time, De Worde did not neglect the larger size books, and some of his folios, such as the *Bartholomæus de Proprietatibus Rerum,* the *Vitas Patrum*, and the various *Missals* and *Hour Books* that came from his press were amongst the best specimens of typography to be met with in this country. ([1925] 1974, 8)

Norman Blake likewise makes allowances for de Worde's individuality, but this tends to be situated within the areas of textual selection and preparation:

> Another possibility open to de Worde was to imitate Caxton by producing editions of courtly English poems. He did follow his master in this, but once again he made significant departures. Thus he reprinted many poems like the *Canterbury Tales* which Caxton had been first to publish, but he also issued poems by Chaucer and Lydgate like the *Siege of Thebes* which Caxton had not printed. He interpreted what was acceptable as English poetry much more generously than his master had done. […] He issued Skelton's *Bouge of Court* almost immediately after it was written, and though Skelton had a reputation by this time it seems as though de Worde was prepared to print something on a man's reputation rather than on the work's proven popularity. In this he looks forward to modern publishing practice. (1976, 188)

However, for all of this, Blake seems to attest de Worde's individualism more to circumstance than premeditating publishing practice: "There was not so clear a homogeneity in the works published by de Worde as in those issued by Caxton; he

was forced to seize whatever opportunities came his way. It is by considering de Worde's output that we can come to a more just appreciation of Caxton and his publishing policy and realise how far in advance of his time he was" (191).

What emerges, even in this brief snapshot, is the idea that Caxton and de Worde differ, when they happen to, largely because circumstances have forced them to differ. By and large, de Worde's choice to expand his wares to incorporate living authors (a first in England) is a decision that is motivated by the desire for enhanced revenue. Additionally, de Worde's lack of patronage, and reliance on a reading public for survival, meant that his choice of texts was, at least in part, dictated to him by that public. But just how did de Worde see himself, and his work, in relation to Caxton? Consider this collection of his printer's marks (fig. 12):

Fig. 12

In the first of these marks, we are presented with an ornate pair of initials to serve as representative for Caxton, and a simple, text-only de Worde. If one were to look at this from the perspective of contemporary branding, then it would be fair to conclude that de Worde was merely a subsidiary of Caxton, and that the relationship was that of dominant and subsidiary. Wynkyn de Worde was not a known entity in England at the time of Caxton's death, and so the addition of his name would likely serve no other purpose than to refer people to his printing house. This first sign speaks to no specific identity for de Worde, and even fails to reference his location. By contrast,

the second of these two devices (the one bracketed by a double-lined border) buffers the Caxton presence with two references to de Worde. The first of these is the "Sign of the Sun," which references de Worde's location on Fleet Street, and the second is a familiar depiction of his name. Though the relationship between Caxton and de Worde is clearly an important one, it is now presented as a more equal partnership. Of course, this is likely to do with de Worde's newfound confidence in his publishing ability (or, possibly, the continued goodwill towards his former master), as Caxton had long since ceased any collaboration with de Worde. Beyond this, it is worth asking how many of de Worde's new clientele – coming, as it has been suggested they did, largely from a different social strata than Caxton's readership – would be familiar with this mark at all. In terms of the brand, then, such a device is more a statement of values and notional relationships, rather than a qualitative statement of actual output.

The final device in the above illustration presents us with a brand relationship that is more in keeping with the kinds of criticism we have already seen. De Worde's desire to make explicit his former working relationship with Caxton is clear, in the use of the latter's initials, but de Worde's own portion of that device contains the illustrations that Caxton's lacks. There is a visual reminder here – and most likely a serendipitous one at that – that Caxton was the man of letters, and de Worde the man of images. It is here that we see a relationship that would play out time and again in scholarship, and it is also here that we are presented with the first evidence that de Worde conceived of his work as the marriage of two separate entities – or brands, in our case – that were connected either through, or because of the work of, Wynkyn de Worde. In de Worde's case, his output was the union of an ever-evolving aesthetic sensibility and the best texts that others could provide him.

In this sense, perhaps, de Worde was the first admirer of the Caxton brand, inasmuch

as he believed that Caxton was an appropriate mark of quality in both style and

content, and an endorsement worth having.[61]

It is clear that de Worde thought of the printer's mark as the correct place to

represent systems of relations between printers and publishers, as we can see in his

dealings with other printers in England. Plomer ([1925] 1974, 250) describes the

work of Ursyn Milner who, in 1511, "…was living in the parish of St Michael le

Belfry, but afterwards moved to an address in the Precincts of York Minster." Duff,

writing in *Early Printed Books* comments on the relationship between de Worde and

Milner (also, Hugo Goes, another printer from York): "The connexion between the

early York stationers and Wynkyn de Worde is very striking and has yet to be

explained" (179). Duff also notes something more important from a branding

perspective:

> The second book [which Milner printed in York], the *Grammar*, is a quarto of twenty-four leaves, made up in quires of eight and four leaves alternately, a peculiar system of quiring much affected by Wynkyn de Worde. Below the title is a cut of a schoolmaster with three pupils, which was used by Wynkyn de Worde in 1499, and which he in turn had obtained from Govaert van Ghemen about 1490…Below the colophon, which tells us that the book was printed in 'blake-strete' on the 20th December 1516, is the printer's device, consisting of a shield hanging on a tree supported by a bear and an ass, the bear being an allusion to his name Ursyn. On the shield are a sun and a windmill, the latter referring to his surname Milner. Below this device is an oblong cut containing his name in full on a ribbon, his trade-mark being in the centre. (1893, 179)

If we are to take the representation of the Sun in Milner's device to be reflective of

his business partnership with de Worde, then we must once again consider that de

Worde's business model operated, at least in part, on the principle of franchising. As

I have noted, this is indeed a key separation between de Worde's work and Caxton's,

as Caxton never collaborated with a single English printer. Granted, few

opportunities existed for such a collaboration (particularly after 1486), but,

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[61] For a thorough examination of de Worde's fourteen permutations of his printer's device, see R.B. McKerrow's *Printers' and Publishers' Devices in England and Scotland, 1485-1640*.

nonetheless, it is this aspect of de Worde's activity that notably distinguishes him from Caxton.

On the one hand, "franchising" speaks to a reality faced by fledgling entrepreneurs in most industries: diversification will often mean the difference between survival in changing times, or the demise of a business venture. On the other hand, such diversification might speak to de Worde's sense that publishing was an activity quite distinct from printing, and that it carried with it a separate system of risks and rewards. While Caxton was in the advantageous position of being the sole printer of English books in England, de Worde faced considerable competition from natives like Pynson, as well as Continental imports. It might be said that Caxton's device, arriving at a time when all other printers had ceased, was nothing more than a textual keepsake – an icon of personal significance that had little bearing on his success or failure in the English print trade. By contrast, de Worde's device(s) served as advertisement, endorsement, and a representation of a growing network of printers and publishers in England – a sort of distributed, proto-corporation of individual workers and financers. The appearance of de Worde's device in such far-flung places as York spoke to his ambition to help shape the English print trade, while Caxton's device spoke primarily to his place and person. These different uses of the printer's device are reflective, perhaps, of the aristocratic and trade origins of Caxton and de Worde respectively. Yet, despite these differences, I believe that the continued use of Caxton's device by de Worde, coupled with the less sophisticated nature of his literary work, has led many critics to view Caxton and de Worde as identical operators in the early modern print trade. However, by breaking down their respective activities into brand-oriented categories – franchise, brand consciousness,

etc. – we are better able to separate the fruits of Caxton and de Worde's labor from the visions driving that labor.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Beyond distinguishing de Worde from Caxton, this chapter has worked to demonstrate that branding is an ongoing process of negotiation, even with entities that are less commercially-aligned than traditional brands. It is important that we begin to recognize that the similar backgrounds, professional activities, and abilities of de Worde and Caxton are not sufficient cause to overlook the other components of their brands: reception, marketplace, and the centrality of the brand's identity to the body of work it stands for. It is absolutely certain that de Worde and Caxton operated with vastly different sets of concerns, as well as different reading publics, and that these differences are evident in their working habits, making it impossible to rely on implied relationships in the final analysis. It is, therefore, my hope that this chapter has demonstrated that those who seek to synonymize two distinct personages such as Caxton and de Worde face the same overwhelming challenge as those who would seek to do this with the United States and the United Kingdom based only on their language. To look at Caxton and de Worde as combined entities is to ignore the reality of the brand, as well as that of History, and to concentrate only on an artificial narrative of Print's origins.

Therefore, as a final comment on Wynkyn de Worde, and with particular respect to his distinctness from Caxton (and so the distinctness of his brand), Blake's *DNB* entry offers the following:

> Wynkyn's various qualities need emphasizing: after Caxton's death he had sufficient vision to embark on a new publishing policy; to imitate his former master might have led to financial ruin. He was personable enough to get on with patrons from many classes and to run a heterogeneous household. No evidence of his involvement in litigation has been found. He was willing to give his helpers the credit they deserved, and he did not ignore their contribution as Caxton did. He probably knew several languages, and there is no reason to

underestimate his learning and acumen. Previous assessments fail to give him due credit for his achievements.

Epilogue

This dissertation began with a fundamental premise: that the publishing career of William Caxton had not been fully, and critically, explored, because of a tension that exists between the commercial and the artistic. I argued that the current critical habit, as seen in Carlson, is to subsume Caxton's artistic (and aesthetic) habits within his commercial practices. Yet, analyses such as these overlook Caxton's many talents; namely, his work as translator, editor, and curator of a set of English and French stories that William Kuskin refers to as the "Worthies Series" – these being the first serialized printings in England. The complaints about his commerciality and lack of literary finesse that critics like Blake and Carlson bring against Caxton might well be transposed to any printer of the period – Gutenberg being an obvious example – and, yet, they seem peculiarly fixed to Caxton. So, in order to ameliorate these concerns, I introduced the brand as a model that we might use for patterning the history (or biography) of a publisher like Caxton.

The brand, in turn, I have contended, is a natural consequence of the kind of public-sphere production and transmission that Caxton engaged in. Through the use of similar models of transmission and reception as seen in the work of Darnton, Barker, and Adams, I have worked to demonstrate how culture – specifically in the realms of publishing and textual production – is created, modified, reinforced, and then ultimately splintered before beginning anew. Throughout this process, cultural capital is transferred between consumer and producer – in our case, Caxton and his readers – and this capital is used by those engaged in the marketplace to assess what Johns calls "credit." This entire system of signification, I argue, is made incarnate in the printer's device. This "visual poetic of commerce," to paraphrase Kuskin, unites

the processes of reception and transmission, as well those of consumption and production, and bears the constellation of meanings that is forged in these points of contact. For these reasons, I have elected to reevaluate Caxton's career through the lens of the brand, in the hope of demonstrating the wealth of historical and biographical complexity that can be mined via this methodology.

Through the analysis of Caxton's prologues and epilogues, his printer's device, and his physical texts, I have worked to demonstrate the expressive and interpretive potential that existed within his work. In order to better see how Caxton's work contrasted with that of manuscript producers, I have discussed the areas in which print was distinct. Additionally, a discussion of patronage, the emergent readers in the middle classes, and the rise of the vernacular has been provided as a backdrop for a discussion of the ways that Caxton's brand could take root in the broader marketplace. All of this has led to the work of Caxton's successor, and the inheritor of his brand, Wynkyn de Worde. What is crucial to the understanding of early modern branding, and one finds this in de Worde's publishing career, is that its visual component – the printer's mark – represents a transfer of the locus of reputation from patron to public. The brand is built through an interaction with the public sphere, and, as such, is an inherent function of capitalism. Indeed, one might argue, branding is an implicit component of any social network.

Through my work, then, I have striven to demonstrate the utility of applying the model of the brand to the work of early modern publishers. Liberated from the modern sense of "registered trademark," we can begin to see the printer's mark as a point of reference – social, cultural, economic, and, particularly in the sense intended by Girling and Davies, *personal* – within the literary marketplace of the incunable. This intersection of the earlier identification principle found in merchants' and

traders' marks with the new marketplace for "mass"-produced books produced a climate where Caxton's device, particularly through its continued appropriation by de Worde, took on the life of a brand as we might recognize it today. This, I have argued, is the "afterlife" of the Caxton brand, but we might also come to think of it as a "rebirth," as the brand really begins a second life once it is deployed connotatively rather than denotatively.

And yet, Caxton and de Worde represent simpler, easier brands in one way: they stand at the beginning, and remain as standards for literary branding. Caxton is the publisher by which all those who ran a publishing firm in England after him would be compared. His brand is forever synonymous with pioneering originality, and the viability of print in England. Where other Englishmen failed, Caxton thrived. And so it is that the Caxton brand, depleted even as it can be by critics who diminish him to the status of "merchant printer," remains relevant. All others who would follow are either innovators on Caxton's themes, implementers of his unrealized ambitions, or followers in his footsteps. Such is the story told of Wynkyn de Worde by Plomer, Blake, and others. De Worde, however, is more than this. He represents a new era of wide-scale speculative printing: the printing of living authors, of unknown stories, and of obscure tracts and treatises. Calibrated, or not, to a perceived public taste, de Worde's brand of publishing is now the norm. And despite Carlson's suggestion that there is some prosaic quality to speculative printing, or that such work only served to satisfy de Worde's financial appetites, we must pause to recognize the plaudits heaped upon those publishing houses that give "unknowns" their shot at the big time (cf. J.K. Rowling and a little series of books involving a wizard named Harry). If Wynkyn de Worde can lay claim to such a shift

in business attitudes, then he is responsible for a formidable improvement in the production and transmission of cultural artifacts.

This study of the Caxton brand then represents a novel approach in the realm of literary criticism, as well as a significant extension of brand and business history. It is my contention that the model I have outlined via my study of Caxton and de Worde would be profitably applied to any number of figures, but especially those working with issues of early modern commerce. The brand's ability to combine aesthetic and commercial concerns without reduction is particularly beneficial for studies dealing with periods like early modern England, as these are moments where the networks of artistic patronage and commercial production are beginning to intersect. As these moments of contact are necessarily asymmetrical – with different modes of production and consumption gaining and losing prominence among differing publics – the model of the brand, which is designed to contain and express the effects of these varied changes, is a useful entity for creating a narrative. Therefore, in the Caxton brand, we see not just a thickened description of Caxton's own career, but a model for the thickening of literary history.

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