The Needles Excellency: John Taylor in Perspective

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ABSTRACT

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The Needles Excellency is one of the few books widely considered to have been published specifically for British women during the seventeenth century. As such, it is regularly referred to by historians of topics such as women's history, textile history, art history, and book history. This thesis takes on the task of filling out the history of and around *The Needles Excellency*, including exploring the context of its author John Taylor's sexism, the popularity of needlework pattern books, and his intended audience(s). England was a deeply patriarchal society and that influenced everything from the formation of Taylor's views, to his approach to his audience, and their reception of his writing. As one of the first English authors to make his living by his pen, he intentionally wrote to reach a wide audience, but also to target those he thought might become new patrons. Success in these strategies allowed him to rise from his life as a labourer to move in circles with aristocracy.

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INTRODUCTION

> If any aske to whom these lines are writ,
> I answere, unto them that doe inquire:
> For since the worlds creation none was yet,
> Whose wants did not the *Needles* helpe desire.
> And therefore, not to him, or her, or thee,
> Or them, or they, I doe not write at all:
> Nor to particulars of her or shee,
> But generally, to all in generall.[1]

The Needles Excellency is one of the few books widely considered to have been published specifically for British women during the seventeenth century.[2] As such, it is regularly referred to by historians of topics such as women's history, textile history, art history, and book history. The author, John Taylor, was a prolific writer between 1612 and his death in 1653, and his works have been examined by historians interested in news, politics, literature, and travel writing. Above are lines from the close of Taylor's prologue in his 1631 book of needlework patterns and designs. If we take them at face value, it seems clear that as a working author he was interested in profiting from anyone who would buy his books. Taylor's language in the prologue to *The Needles Excellency* is at times sexist and patriarchal, a characteristic also found in other pattern books. Although some scholars have argued that Taylor's purpose was explicitly patriarchal – using the needlework to put women in their place – I argue that Taylor's motivations were a less ideologically motivated admixture of his entrepreneurial appeal to a market and a flippant, outspoken personality.

To date, no one has made more than a passing effort to place *The Needles Excellency* in context of who, what, where, when, how, and why it was written, a lacuna this thesis seeks to rectify. Statements have been made regarding the book that are based on skewed or vague understanding of its unique story. For example, psychologist Rozsika Parker influentially argued in the early 1980s that his playful introductory poem (the primary text in an otherwise image-only publication), "The Praise of the Needle," was rather "praise of the needle as an instrument

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[1] John Taylor, *The Needles Excellency* (London: Printed for Iames Boler and are to be sold at the Signe of the Marigold in Paules Church yard, 1631), [15], *Early English Books Online*.

[2] I am not here using "British" as a synonym for "English": Taylor had family in Scotland and regularly traveled to Scotland and Wales. He was known for peddling his own books on his travels, so it is reasonable to consider all of Britain as his potential market.

of suppression."[3] That is too simplistic and leaves no room for the complexities of Taylor's personality or the society in which he functioned. Seventeenth-century English society was structured according to deeply seated patriarchal beliefs, but that does not make Taylor's views, or the needlework he promoted, inherently misogynist or oppressive, as Parker explicitly suggests. Applying relevant ideas from social theorists such as Michel Foucault allows us to also see the social cracks that created opportunities which Taylor and women navigated to their best advantage.[4]

By looking closely at *The Needles Excellency*, its author John Taylor, and the intended audience, my paper more completely places it in its historical context. Specifically, it evaluates this needlework pattern book within the context of the print culture of seventeenth-century England, within the general history of the genre of pattern books, as well as within the nexus of women's roles and shifting socio-economics in urban centres. Scholars on Taylor have not focused on his sexism in relation to his courting of female patronage, or readership, and it merits discussion. *The Needles Excellency* was a commercial product of its time, marketed to an emerging class of successful tradesmen, merchants, and artisans, *as well as their wives and potential patrons*, and its sometimes-sexist language still played within social norms regarding the roles of women in English society.

There is growing interest in the dialogue between texts and women's material culture as the boundaries of traditional text have expanded. The ancient trope of the pen versus the needle has been converted to the notion of the needle *as* a woman's pen, thanks to scholarship on textiles as text, and the thoughts and emotions represented in embroideries that correlate to print culture.[5] Needlework pattern books are at the junction of text and textile, the one being used to create the other, but have been largely overlooked as a unique lens.

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[3] Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 87. First published in 1984, I refer to a copy reprinted in 2010.

[4] Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 36-37.

[5] For examples of object-based studies that place them in textual context, but offer little analysis of specific embroideries, see: Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010); Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (London: Women's Press, 1984); Ann Rosalind Jones, and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Study of the text-based embroideries of Bess of Hardwick: Nicole LaBouff, "Writing on the Walls: Women's Embroidered Texts in the

Book history aims to help fill a void in scholarship regarding the very texts that scholars rely on for their research; a void that I encountered, in part, as a paucity of information on the physical properties of pattern books in libraries' catalogs. By building up the connecting influences that affected the materiality and contents of the books, and their makers and users/readers, we can better understand the culture in which they functioned.[6]

My study of *The Needles Excellency* seeks to participate in this dialogue, by offering the missing analysis of an influential text. Here I explore the context of Taylor's sexism, the popularity of needlework pattern books, and his intended audience(s). England was a deeply patriarchal society and that influenced everything from the formation of Taylor's views, to his approach to his audience, and their reception of his writing. As one of the first English authors to make his living by his pen, he intentionally wrote to reach a wide audience, but also to target those he thought might become new patrons. Success in these strategies allowed him to rise from his life as a labourer to move in circles with aristocracy.

Chapter 1: *THE NEEDLES EXCELLENCY,* A Seventeenth-century Pattern Book

John Taylor's *The Needles Excellency* (ca. 1631) is the best-known title in a popular genre of design books for needlework that spanned Europe during approximately a two-hundred-year period. I use the term needlework to mean the group of textile arts that pattern books are typically intended for, such as embroidery, lace-making, and small-loom weaving. *The Needles Excellency* was only one title out of 150 titles of this particular form of pattern book printed between 1523 and early 1700, in Western Europe, and as profiled in the only comprehensive bibliography.[7] Yet it is consistently the primary or only example cited by scholars when discussing pattern books and early modern attitudes towards women's domestic needlework.[8]

Elizabethan House of Memory" PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2013, ProQuest UMI 3597434.

[6] Robert Darnton was the pioneer in book history who introduced the "Communications Circuit" model, which includes a visual representation of influences on book production: Robert Darnton, "What is the history of books?" *Daedalus* 111 (1982): 65-83.

[7] Arthur Lotz, *Bibliographie der Modelbücher* (London: The Holland Press Ltd, 1963).

[8] Parker, *The Subversive Stitch;* Fry, *Pens and Needles*; Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory;* LaBouff, "Writing on the Walls;" Stacey Shimizu, "The Pattern of Perfect Womanhood: Feminine Virtue, Pattern Books and the Fiction

This has happened due to a convergence of factors. The dominance of English texts used by Anglophone scholars, particularly in literary studies, meant there was only a small pool of pattern books to draw from (*The Needles Excellency* was one of only four pattern books printed in England), and Taylor has a certain familiarity because he was so prolific as a writer in other genres. The paucity of English-printed pattern books is due to the slow development of England's print industry and its relatively small market, and then the Civil Wars transformed print culture as authors, printers, and readers shifted their attention to news, politics, and religion. In addition, because Taylor engages his readers emotionally (any emotion would do for him, and I think he would be proud to know that he could still rile an audience 350 years later), discussions of his preface to *The Needles Excellency* have often ended in over-simplified, derogatory conclusions about pattern books in general.

In order to re-examine conclusions regarding Taylor's book, the following sections take a close look at *The Needles Excellency*, its place in early modern book history, and compare it to other needlework pattern books that may have competed with Taylor's in the book markets of England.

—MEET THE BOOK

The Needles Excellency a New Booke Wherin Are Diuers Admirable Workes Wrought with the Needle ; Newly Inuented and Cut in Copper for the Pleasure and Profit of the Industrious was published in early seventeenth-century London with a preface written by the popular author John Taylor, and to be sold by James Boler.[9] The date of the first edition is unknown, but it first appears in the Stationers' Register on November 24, 1629.[10] There appears to have been at least twelve editions between 1631, the year the second edition was published,

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of the Clothworking Woman," 75-100, in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara Whitehead (New York and London: Garland, 1999); Katherine U. Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540-1640* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1985); Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1982). This is not an exhaustive list.

[9] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency* (London: Printed for Iames Boler and are to be sold at the Signe of the Marigold in Paules Church yard, 1631), *Early English Books Online.*

[10] See the English Short Title Catalogue entry for *The Needles Excellency* (1631).

and 1640, though few survive, likely due to their ephemeral and workaday purpose. Sold without a bound cover, and only about forty pages in length, it was much like a modern booklet. The copperplate-printed pictorial title page doubled as a cover, followed by Taylor's preface, then the printed patterns designed for a variety of forms of needlework. There was some diversity between the different editions, seen in the layout of the preface and the particular patterns included. We cannot be sure if the existing books are complete as originally printed, and therefore whether some differences between editions were due to the nature of their physical use and the rebinding practices of later collectors, or new editions as we know the term today. In some cases, the printer Thomas Harper implies that they were re-printings rather than new editions, by repeating the edition number with a new year. I will make a few observations when I discuss each of these parts of the book (title page, preface, patterns), but the primary focus of this thesis is on the preface material, which did not change in content, and its author.

There are not many copies remaining of *The Needles Excellency*, even though its popularity resulted in multiple editions and re-printings. It is included in Arthur Lotz's German-language book *Bibliographie der Modelbücher.*[11] First published in 1933, the numerical system used in Lotz's book persists amongst art historians, librarians, and museum curators, because it remains the most comprehensive bibliography of the needlework pattern books. Compiled prior to World War II, its pages hold the only remaining evidence we have for some of the books once in European collections, but that were lost in the war. As for *The Needles Excellency,* Lotz records only two known editions: the tenth edition published in 1634 and reprinted in 1636 (the former kept in the collection of the Huntington Library, the latter noted from a Sotheby's auction catalogue), and the twelfth edition of 1640 found in the rare books collections of Cambridge University Library, the John Rylands Library, and the British Library.[12] Lotz footnotes an 1877 transcript of the Stationers' Register, so he would have had access to the entry of *The Needles Excellency* in 1629, but for some reason does not note it.[13] Thanks to digitization and increased ease of access to widely spread book collections and their catalogues, new copies have come to light that Lotz was unaware of. Harvard University's Houghton Library has what may be the earliest remaining versions of *The Needles Excellency* with two copies bearing the date 1631,

[11] Arthur Lotz, *Bibliographie der Modelbücher* (London: The Holland Press Ltd, 1963).
[12] Lotz, 156a and 156b.
[13] Lotz, 258.

and noted as being second editions. Its appearance in the *English Short Title Catalogue (STC)* would have been in 1989 at the earliest, since this was the year that libraries in the United States contributed to the database from their holdings. The 1631 version is the one referred throughout this thesis, unless otherwise noted, as it is the closest to the origin-point of the book, the publication date of the first-edition being uncertain.

Most printed material in the seventeenth century was sold unbound, meaning without a well-stitched separate cover as we would normally expect to see with our modern books. They were only bound and securely sewn when a collector or a book seller decided to make the investment at their own additional expense, often putting many together into a single binding. This was especially true of short ephemeral works such as pamphlets and the needlework pattern books, and I have seen several examples of this. At the Bibliothèque nationale de France I requested a list of about a dozen books from their catalog, but I was brought many fewer. After some investigation, I realized that one volume was actually several of the books I was looking for bound together, in an original sixteenth- or seventeenth-century vellum soft-cover. Some had been printed in Venice and others in Lyon, but all were from the mid to late sixteenth century.[14]

Joad Raymond defines a pamphlet from the early modern period as printed material up to the size of a small book which "typically consisted of between one sheet and a maximum of twelve sheets, or between eight and ninety-six pages in quarto."[15] Quarto means that the sheets of paper were printed four pages per sheet, double sided, and then folded twice before being simply stitched along the folded spine. The pages may not even have been cut to separate them for turning.[16] Our understanding of pamphlets today as print-material in the form of a stapled booklet or folded brochure is generally applicable. Even though I did not come across pattern books being *called* pamphlets, they technically could have fallen under that category during this period because they had less than ninety-six pages, their topic touched on fleeting fashion trends, and their use made them highly consumable. Some authors acknowledged the small size of their pattern books by calling them booklets or little books, such as Johann Schönsperger's *Ein ney*

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[14] Untitled collection, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Arsenal 4-S-4545.

[15] Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.

[16] Jason Peacey, "Pamphlets," in *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660,* ed. Joad Raymond, The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 454.

Furmbüchlein (1529).[17] Counter to our modern propensity for exact definitions, the emerging seventeenth-century print industry was much more fluid, and still defining itself. However, understanding the needlework pattern books as pamphlets sheds light on how they were perceived, produced, and used.

There are several explanations for why the once-common pattern books are so rare today: an ephemeral nature, workaday damage, not deemed collectable, or hidden in collections. For starters, seventeenth-century buyers may have had little regard for their preservation or recirculation, causing them to vanish shortly after their appearance. Book collectors may have been less interested in adding pattern books to their collections for their own reasons, but one thought is that their unbound form did not meet modern definitions of "books." Some collectors who did include them bound them in contemporary covers so that they did conform to the definition, as I describe below regarding *The Needles Excellency* (1640) in the British Library. A significant reality is that the pattern books deteriorated dramatically over time. They took a lot of abuse in the process of transferring certain types of designs, which destroyed pages and perhaps also reduced the collectability of the book. The eleventh design-page in *The Needles Excellency* at the Houghton Library has been "pricked" at some point prior to entering their collection, which is evidence of someone perforating the pages with a needle or awl as part of a process for transferring the image. Some museum print collections, such as that at the Victoria and Albert Museum, have single pages as all that remains of a pattern book.[18]

My own rare-book and print-collection experiences showed me that "damaged" books such as these are not prioritized for digitization and linger forgotten in storage. Their existence is also obscured by being scattered to both print and rare book collections, such as at the National Arts Library and Victoria and Albert Museum, both housed in the same building, based on individual collection manager's classifications. The Francis Douce collection was split between the Ashmolean Museum and the Bodleian Library when they received it in the nineteenth century.

Taylor's work was originally sold in this flimsy format, but many library catalogs fail to note binding or other physical information about their copies of *The Needles Excellency,* much

[17] Johann Schönsperger, *Ein ney Furmbüchlein* (Augsberg: 1529), Lotz 5, Metropolitan Museum of Art accession no. 18.66.1

less any historical data regarding binding/rebinding history. This seems to be changing with a current interest amongst bibliographers in addressing the material aspects of books. His works were amongst the unbound collection of the seventeenth-century English gentlewoman Frances Wolfreston. Unfortunately, specific mention of the pattern book was not made in the nineteenth-century auction records which sold them.[19]

My first encounter with a pattern book was the British Library's copy of a 1640 edition of *The Needles Excellency.* It was bound in flawless brown leather with gold accents and gilded edges. Even though I was at that time unfamiliar with seventeenth-century binding practices, I was suspicious that it had been rebound. In talking to a collection manager about the shortage of such information in the catalog, I learned that it did indeed look like a nineteenth-century binding, done at a time when preserving the original state of the book was not a priority for most collectors. You can see in the image below, that the pages of Harvard's copy were at some point remounted onto the pages of a more modern bound-book.[20] This material evidence regarding the original publication is noted but not easy to find in their online catalog.

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[18] Thomas Geminus, *Morysse and Damashin Renewed and Encreased Very Profitable for Goldsmythes and Embroderars* (London: n.p., 1548).

[19] Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector," *The Library* 11.3 (1989), 207.

[20] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency* (London: James Boler, 1631). Houghton Library, Harvard University. https://ids.lib.harvard.edu/ids/view/51993772?buttons=y.

—TITLE PAGE

Harvard University, Houghton Library, hyde_stc_23775_5_title

image 1: Title page of *The Needles Excellency* (1631). Permission not required for non-commercial use.

The ornate and detailed image that makes up the title page of *The Needles Excellency* was made possible by the latest copperplate print technology called out by Taylor in the subtitle as "Newly Invented and Cut in Copper." Promoting the newer type of print on what was originally the cover would have alerted bookstall browsers that it offered something exclusive and innovative, with more elaborate designs than his competitors. The new printing method created sharper, more detailed images than the woodblock-printing method others still used, and achieved quite intricate designs with good clarity.

The rich detail of the title-page image is also rich as a visual record, and scholars have made varying interpretations. Three women in the foreground appear to be well-off, even without distinct insignia of nobility or gentility. Their jewelry, long dresses, substantial trimmings, and

exaggerated sleeves, cuffs, and collars are subtle but telling markers of wealth and leisure. On the left, a stately woman, in the elegant but slightly outdated English fashions of the end of the sixteenth century, points to a small book she is holding. She has been labeled "Wisdome" and may represent the older, wiser generation who either draws our attention to the prudent study of small devotional books, as Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass think,[21] or as Nicole LaBouff proffers, she may be pointing at a pattern she has chosen, perhaps for "Industrie" to help her prepare, and implying a time in the past when women had a more active role in choosing and creating needlework designs.[22] I offer a third interpretation, based on my knowledge of John Taylor, which is that he may have been being self-referential. She is looking out at us and pointing out the wisdom of choosing designs from Taylor's pattern book.

The middle woman is the most modestly dressed, befitting the practical notion of "Industrie" she is meant to portray. Jones and Stallybrass and LaBouff agree that she is busy at work - being industrious - but LaBouff touches on an interesting idea. Being "at work" could be meant to represent the working embroiderers who received direction from mistresses or employers with wisdom and education. I say yes to all of these possibilities, plus more complexity. One, she is sitting at the feet of the others - literally of lower station. This visual portrayal of hierarchy illustrates another layer of meaning. "Industrie" and her conservative dress could also be the typical woman of the growing group of people commonly from the artisan and craft communities, a sort that differentiated itself from the labouring poor as their wealth grew. If the gentlewoman is making the educated and cultured choice for others to work to create, and the middle woman is hard at that work either for herself or others, it codifies the social hierarchy, but also implies the opportunity lower working groups had to imitate the wealthy, leisured, land-owners. After 1604, sumptuary laws no longer regulated public display of consumption practices as markers of social hierarchy, and "taste" and "distinction" became the cultural capital that the elite used to differentiate themselves from those of lower standing who could nonetheless afford the fashions that had previously set the elite apart.[23]

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[21] Jones and Stallybrass, 138.

[22] Nicole LaBouff, "Writing on the Walls: Women's Embroidered Texts in the Elizabethan House of Memory" (dissertation, University of California Irvine, 2013), 53-54.

[23] Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 375.

The final woman to consider is the one on the right labeled "Follie." Her empty hands could imply idleness as she tries to distract the others.[24] Or is she reaching in frivolous expectation of the embroidered work that "Industrie" is creating?[25] Her style of dress reflects the current trends of the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and the more flamboyant application of trims and pearls and excess fabric seem to indicate a woman younger and more fashionable than the more somber "Wisdome."

Together the words "Wisdome," "Follie," and "Industrie" refer to Bible proverbs. Proverbs 14 reads, "Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.[26] Proverbs 31 tells of the virtuous woman who "seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands."[27] The image suggests that *The Needles Excellency* will help women be wise and virtuous by helping to keep them from the folly of idleness, while at the same time offering itself as a tool to be used by industrious hands to build up her household - an activity also pursued by upwardly mobile groups such as tradesmen, merchants, and artisans.

The fenced garden, seemingly a benign backdrop, but one that frames and contains the women, is both a religious emblem and a literary motif that would have been familiar to at least Taylor's more educated readers. Victoria Larson describes the *hortus conclusus* as "a motif of biblical origin that images the Virgin Mary herself as a cloistered garden."[28] It was also closely associated with courtly ladies in popular medieval romance tales, in which their heroines are often conflated with Mary to create the ideal woman.[29] In 1620, Taylor wrote a poem in praise of Mary as a role model, which I will discuss more later, but I mention it here because his use of a Marian emblem is in alignment with his traditionalist religious views, and those of the Catholic women he praised in the preface. More generally, the image applied to women as a symbolic enclosure of their eroticism and intellect. It circumscribed their thoughts and actions, and protected them from sin. The message from Taylor was in his typically multivalent style: the

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[24] Jones and Stallybrass, 138.

[25] LaBouff, 53.

[26] *Bible*, King James Version, Proverbs 14:1.

[27] *Bible*, Proverbs 31:13.

[28] Victoria Larson, "A Rose Blooms in the Winter: The Tradition of the *Hortus Conclusus* and its Significance as a Devotional Emblem," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 52.4 (2013), 303.

[29] Liz Herbert McAvoy, "The Medieval *Hortus conclusus*: Revisiting the Pleasure Garden," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 50.1 (2014), 6-7.

garden was both a nod and a wink to his fellow traditionalists, an appeal to his literary audience, and a pretty, but restrained space for Reformed readers.

Mary, as the Mother of Jesus, continued to play a part in Christian worship, even within Protestantism (Luther was quite warm toward Mary; Calvin and Latimer were not,)[30] and including the Church of England. According to George H. Tavard, the English Reformation was largely shaped by sixteenth-century Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, who adopted a liturgical approach to faith and devotion which was less rigid than continental Protestantism. His softer approach left room for a range of personal beliefs, allowing for and reflecting English ambivalence toward the Virgin,[31] and is echoed in Queen Elizabeth's tolerance of *external* conversion when the Church of England was restored. The violence against shrines and holy places associated with Mary dwindled to forgetting or dissociating them so that they became "wishing wells" and other superstitious settings.[32] That Marianism maintained some place in English culture is evident in published works such as Taylor's poem of praise, and those of his contemporaries, including John Donne's sermons and poetry,[33] and the resurgence of Christmas carols after the turn of the century.[34] Donne may have come from a Catholic family, but in 1615 he was ordained as an Anglican priest.[35] The publication date of Taylor's Virgin Mary poem also aligned with the growth of Arminianism in England.[36] Elissa Auerbach shows a similar persistence of Marianism in Dutch culture via her analysis of Mary as a common subject of Dutch art *after* Calvinists seized political control in 1572.[37] Imitation is a Christian strategy: "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."[38] The Blessed Virgin Mary was an example of

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[30] Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Mary and Sixteenth Century Protestants," *Studies in Church History* 39 (2004): 201, 203-204.

[31] MacCullock, 191; George Henry Tavard, *The Thousand Faces of the Virgin Mary,* Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 134-39.

[32] Gary Waller, *The Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and Popular Culture (*Cambridge*:* Cambridge University Press, 2011), 183.

[33] Tavard, 134-39.

[34] MacCulloch, 214, 216.

[35] David Colclough, "John Donne (1572-1631)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2011.

[36] MacCulloch, 217.

[37] Elissa A. Auerbach, "Re-Forming Mary in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints," (dissertation, University of Kansas, 2009), 1-5.

[38] *Bible*, 1 Corinthians 11:1.

obedience and humility worthy of imitating, whether or not church doctrines agreed on the proper level of veneration.

The garden-context of the women on the title page is not addressed by Jones and Stallybrass, or LaBouff, nor had I seen it mentioned elsewhere in connection with Taylor's book until a recent chance encounter. W. Reginald Rampone mentions title-page image from *The Needles Excellency* very briefly in *Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* in regards to the line, "Go ply thy needle," from the earlier work *The Taming of the Shrew,* in order to place the line in context with greater cultural attitudes about needlework.[39] The image of the garden is an important part of interpreting the motivations of both the author and his potential audience. Without it, the title-plate background seems arbitrarily bucolic.

But before we start congratulating Taylor for his clever marketing of the latest technology, and sophisticated layering of meanings in an image meant to capture the varied motivations of book-buyers, there is a little twist to this tale. When I was researching in the rare book collection of the Getty Museum Research Institute library in Los Angeles, California, I was surprised by a pattern book that greeted me with what I recognized as Taylor's title plate. I took a photo for comparison and further research when I got back home to my full notes and resources. Sure enough, they were a virtual match. But I had not identified an imitation of *The Needles Excellency*'s cover image, it was the other way around. This copy of *Newes Modelbuch in Kupffer (New Pattern book Made with Copper[plate])* was a second edition printed in 1604 in Nuremberg, predating Taylor's work.[40] Entrepreneurially-minded Taylor had gotten a copy of Johann Siebmacher's popular pattern book, probably not seen much in English circulation, considering he would not have wanted direct competition, and had an English engraver duplicate, in essence, the whole book. The primary difference between these two title-images, to my eye, besides updated English fashions rather than Germanic, is that Taylor's woman "Wisdome" gazes at the viewer directly and points at a book she is holding. She reflects Taylor's boldness and invites the viewer to look at the book, leaving his trademark of forthrightness in an image that otherwise did not originate within his own imagination.

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[39] W. Reginald Rampone, Jr., *Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Denver: Greenwood, 2011), 13.

[40] Johann Siebmacher, *Newes Modelbuch in Kupffer Gemacht* (Nuremberg: Balthasar Caymox, 1604). Getty Research Institute assession no. 84-B22200. Author's photo. Another copy can also be viewed on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's website: 29.59.3(1-70).

image 2: Title page of *Newes Modelbuch in Kupffer Gemacht* (1604). Author's photo from Special Collections, Research Library, Getty Research Institute. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

And how about Taylor's catchy title, *The Needles Excellency*? Could it be a riff on a title from a century earlier that was printed in Antwerp for English customers? *A Neawe Treatys as Concerning the Excellency of the Needle Worcke* was published some time during its publisher's active dates of 1514-1542.[41] It is not a discredit to Taylor that he replicated the work of other authors without attribution. It was common practice in the seventeenth-century to imitate others, and therefore gives us an idea of which strategies were considered successful at the time. In Taylor's case, his large body of work and fairly well-documented life shows a pattern of consistently leveraging popular culture to his career-advantage. As a working author dependent on his next sale, he favoured the sure-thing over big risks.

[41] Guillaume Vorsterman, *A Neawe Treatys as Concerning the Excellency of the Needle Worcke* (Antwerp, ND): as recorded in *History of Lace* by Mrs Bury Palliser (London: S. Low, Son & Marston, 1865), p. 428. Palliser also noted that the only known copy is in the Arsenal library of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (p. 118), though I've been unable to locate it.

The likelihood of Taylor, a struggling London labourer-cum-author, having access to imported books does not require a stretch of the imagination. There are a couple of reasonable scenarios. Taylor may have come across them in used-book circulation within the London metropolis or at a regional book fair, but in the case of Siebmacher's *Newes Modelbuch*, I think it more likely that he picked it up on his trip to Prague in 1620. The outbound trip went through Amsterdam and Leipzig, cities with thriving international trade, and the voyage back to England stopped in Hamburg.[42] Of course, it is possible that his bookseller James Boler had influence over this aspect of creating the book, but as I said before, Taylor's career shows that he capitalized on current trends and repeated winning strategies.

--*PREFACE*

Moving next to the preface, it - like the title page - offers both the virtues of needlework and the lure of upward mobility. Taylor's fourteen-page introduction is structured much like Siebmacher's, with ornate frames around the text on each page, and a rhyming poem. Siebmacher's is directly related to the cover image of the three women, and is introduced as "A Dialogue or talk between people about sewing."[43] It is not known whether Taylor understood the content of the German-language poem, but a hasty perusal verifies that Taylor goes his own way for his text. Further study of the German preface may reveal new information about the meanings in the title image, but we don't know to what extent or if Taylor knowingly adopted Siebmacher's messages inherent in the images. "The Praise of the Needle" is Taylor's title for his introduction and it is a word-play about the work done by a needle: "A Needle (though it be but small and slender) / Yet is it both a maker and a mender."[44] He describes the needle as a tool used by both men and women, and plied by a skillful user, "There's nothing neere at hand, or farthest sought / But with the Needle, may be shap'd and wrought."[45] As the excerpt at the very beginning of this thesis shows, Taylor addresses both sexes, and he also specifies "all dispersed

[42] Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor the water-poet (*London: James Boler, 1630), iii, 90-100.

[43] Siebmacher, *Newes Modelbuch*, 3. Author's translation of "Dialogus oder Gesprech drener Personen/ die Nahkunst betreffend."

[44] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [3] sig. A2.

[45] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [4].

sorts of Arts and Trades."[46] The poem incorporates six sonnets about exemplary noblewomen who had taken up the needle, increasing their renown and immortalizing themselves through the resulting needlework. He implies that the same awaits those who imitate Mary, Countess of Pembroke, who "wrought so well in Needle-worke, that she / Nor yet her works, shall ere forgotten be."[47] Taylor's sonnets about six commendable women portray needlework as a connection between the reader and nobility – lifestyle marketing that we are familiar with in modern times.

Parker stated that when pattern books began to appear, they were "invariably dedicated to a great lady to confirm the art's association with social standing and to attract those who aspired to aristocratic distinction."[48] If we substitute "often" for her use of "invariably," then I agree with her statement, but there are many examples against her. Schönsperger's first pattern book published in Augsburg,[49] in what is now Germany, has only a title page. The first pattern book published in France, *La Fleur de la science de Pourtraicture et patrons de broderie, facon arabicque et italique,* by Francisque Pelegrin in 1530,[50] has an introduction which simply introduces Pelegrin as a premier artist from Florence. Using a definitive term such as "invariably" to describe the prefaces of the entire genre of pattern books denies the actual variety, and the driving social and economic complexities, and regional variations, all of which shaped producers and consumers.

The Needles Excellency is one of the few books widely considered to have been published specifically for British women during the seventeenth century. As such, it is regularly referred to by historians of topics such as women's history, textile history, art history, and book history. Although, as we have seen, scholars have usually interpreted Taylor's motivations as ideologically patriarchal, if we look at everything he said and not just his sexist remarks, he promotes developing skill in needlework as a way for women and others to improve their reputations (their public personas), and benefit from the power of the needle as "an instrument of

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[46] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [1] sig. A.
[47] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [13] sig. B3.
[48] Parker, 63.
[49] Johann Schönsperger, *Furm oder Modelbüchlein* (Augspurg, 1523).
[50] Francisque Pelegrin, *La Fleur De La Science De Pourtraicture Et Patrons De Broderie Façon Arabicque Et Italique* (Paris: Jacques Nyverd, 1530). Bibliothèque Nationale De France.

profit, pleasure, and of ornament."[51] The activity of needlework provided occasions for female homosociality, a fact which Taylor acknowledged in saying, "The Mothers taught their Daughters."[52] More recent scholarship on early modern women's textile production, such as that done by Stallybrass and Jones, and Susan Frye in her critically received *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England*,[53] has highlighted women's active voice in political, religious, and social matters through making together, sharing, gifting, and displaying meaningful items that they have wrought. Abigail Shinn makes an insightful association between Taylor's militaristic analogy of the needle as a "Soldier" and a "Taylors javelin," and the image with the sword-bearing man walking out of the picture and the woman "Industrie" with her needle held high, as recognition that a woman could do harm with the weapon she was allowed.[54]

Parker's book *The Subversive Stitch* was first published in 1984, drawing on her background in art history and written "under the impetus of Second Wave feminism."[55] Even though she wrote a new introduction for the 2010 edition to "bring the book up to date,"[56] I have to agree with Eileen Boris that it feels like an after-thought.[57] She discusses some of the new trends in needlework, but doesn't address developments in women's history or cultural studies, or take advantage of the digital age to refresh her research. As a result, to modern students in this field, it reads as an artifact of its time, despite Parker's insightfulness as an art historian examining the visual elements. My biggest issue with the "updated" edition of *The Subversive Stitch* is that the average reader who picks it up from Amazon or the local library will think that it represents modern scholarship. It perpetuates old ideas and incomplete data under the guise of enlightening the modern generation. There is nothing next to it on the shelf for those seeking to learn about the history of women's domestic needlework. The work used in this thesis comes

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[51] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [3] sig. A2.

[52] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [4].

[53] Susan Frye, *Pens and Needles: Women's Textualities in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2010).

[54] Abigail Shinn, "Cultures of Mending," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Culture in Early Modern England,* eds. Andrew Hadfield, Matthew Dimmock, Abigail Shinn (New York: Routledge Press, 2016), 235.

[55] Parker, xi.

[56] Parker, back cover.

[57] Eileen Boris, "Review: *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, by Rozsika Parker," *Journal Of Modern Craft* 5 (2012), 121.

from academic sources that are obscure for the average book-buyer and often difficult to access once discovered. Eventually, I want to offer an alternative to *The Subversive Stitch*.

Taylor's poetic introduction to *The Needles Excellency* has been given a lot of weight in feminist scholars' conclusion that the genre of needlework pattern books were not art and craft books, but rather fell in the category of conduct books, and as such, were tools of patriarchy, morally rooted in shaping women's thoughts and behaviour. Drawing on Parker's work, these critics focused on his sexist language and generally patriarchal depiction of the world. Scholars such as Stacey Shimizu gave the group of books credit for inculcating women in their subservient, silent, and solitary role in the home.[58] Like Parker and others, her argument hinges on the textual content of the pattern books' front matter, but Shimizu and Parker both lean particularly on Taylor's. Unfortunately, because these authors looked with a narrow lens at very few other pattern books, and applied modern values regarding gender roles, they failed to recognize the complexity, variety, and fluidity of early modern women's experiences. This also resulted in Taylor's pattern book being evaluated out of context, and over-stating it as representative of a large genre that spanned Europe and hundreds of years. This thesis places him and *The Needles Excellency* back in the context of his time, place, and humanity.

The books themselves give us a clue as to the contemporary reception of Taylor's preface. In the 1631 second-edition, the poems are printed on both sides of the sheets, across fourteen pages. In 1634, Taylor and his publisher printed the tenth-edition preface as two-columns per sheet. This would seem to be a cost-saving measure, because even though it did not reduce the overall page count (only one side of each sheet was printed in this case), it would likely have reduced production costs via time saved reloading the plates of movable type and operating the printing press (i.e.: the press was set up only seven times versus fourteen). The twelfth edition (1640) made an additional cut to cost by printing the two-column poem on both sides of the sheet - paper being the most expensive commodity in the process. I am inclined to interpret these changes as indicative of reduced importance or interest in Taylor's poetry compared to the needlework designs themselves, since as his poetry became more cramped into the beginning of the book, more pages of designs were added. It is entirely possible that his

[58] Stacey Shimizu, "The Pattern of Perfect Womanhood: Feminine Virtue, Pattern Books and the Fiction of the Clothworking Woman," in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara Whitehead (New York and London: Garland, 1999), 75-100.

bookseller Boler worked solo on the later editions, responding to reader interest rather than Taylor's ambitions, and shrinking his real estate in the book.

The 1640 printing of his twelfth edition heralded the end of the golden-age for needlework pattern books, with only a trickle of continental reprints coming after. In England, the turn away from this type of book was presumably due to the turmoil of the start of the English Civil War, a time in which printers turned to developing newspapers, and took government contracts to publish parliamentary documents, influencing reallocation of resources, including valuable paper supplies. Readers too felt the effects of the war, and shifts in social and civic structures from religious and political conflicts.

--*PATTERNS*

And finally we come to the patterns, the purpose of the book. Taylor describes them as offering a variety of designs so that those who are "skillfull, or unskilfull, each may take / This Booke, and of it, each good use may make."[59] The two dozen or so designs are printed on one side of the page and, as Taylor said, they range in complexity from simpler counted-thread work like needlepoint or cross-stitch, to an incredibly intricate cut-work lace design that includes the figures of a man and a woman in fashionable dress. Taylor did not create the designs himself, nor does he claim to. In fact, his own words seem to notify the reader of this. The closing stanza to his preface in *The Needles Excellency* includes the lines, "So fare-thou-well my wel-deserving Booke / (I meane, the workes deserts, and not my lines) / I much presume that all that on it looke / Will like and laude the workemans good designes."[60] If only he were magnanimous enough to credit where the designs actually came from, I thought. But that is a modern judgement of a time before it became uncouth, or illegal even, to take advantage of another's work. Taylor chose well with Johann Siebmacher, benefiting not only from his beautiful and meaning-laden title page with the three women, but also the structure of the book with a framed, rhyming poem of about equal length in the beginning, and enough designs from two of his books that they form the basis of the successful *The Needles Excellency.*

[59] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [6].
[60] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [16].

The argument of this thesis does not centre on the fact of Taylor's emulation, offering a page-by-page comparison of Taylor's and Siebmacher's books, but it is an important fact when discussing Taylor's intention in publishing the book. This is a fact that many past scholars have overlooked and in so doing have perhaps misrepresented *The Needles Excellency* as the brain-child of a single man. It *is* useful to my argument to describe a few distinctive examples from Siebmacher's *Newes Modelbuch* (1604 - available to view online at the Metropolitan Museum of Art),[61] and Taylor's 1631 edition at the Houghton Library (which I access through EEBO). The quality of the facsimile is not very good, but it is sufficient to acknowledge the unmistakable replication, and to thereby better understand Taylor's strategy and creative participation in the book.

The very first design plate in *The Needles Excellency* has a large scrolling floral motif meant as a repeating band with the title number "LXVII." It is a reversed duplicate of the 25th plate in Siebmacher's 1604 pattern book and even has the same numbered title. The unicorn motif below it is a match for the one on page 35 of Siebmacher's 1597 pattern book, *Schön Neues Modelbuch* - reversed but with the same title number.[62] It is possible that this design is missing from the MMA's copy of his 1604 edition, but it is also not found in the partial copy at the Clark Art Institute Library,[63] and a quick comparison of the distinctive figural designs in the 1597 and 1604 pattern books picks up no duplication in 1604 of his previous work. The same is true for a pattern for two parrots which is on the second page of Taylor's designs, originating from the fifth page of designs in Siebmacher's 1597 pattern book. Closer study of the patterns could reveal more of Taylor's sources for those not matched to the available copies of *Newes Modelbuch,* but it appears that Taylor used designs from at least these two pattern books by Siebmacher.

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[61] Siebmacher, *Newes Modelbuch* (Nuremberg: Balthasar Caymox, 1604). Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession no. 29.59.3(1-70). Lotz 38c.

[62] Siebmacher, *Schön Neues Modelbuch* (Nuremberg: Caimox, 1597). Bibliothèque nationale de France [RESERVE 4-LH-125]

[63] Siebmacher, *Newes Modelbuch* (Nuremberg: Caymox, 1604). Clark Art Institute Library, NK9205 S5 1604, Archive.org.

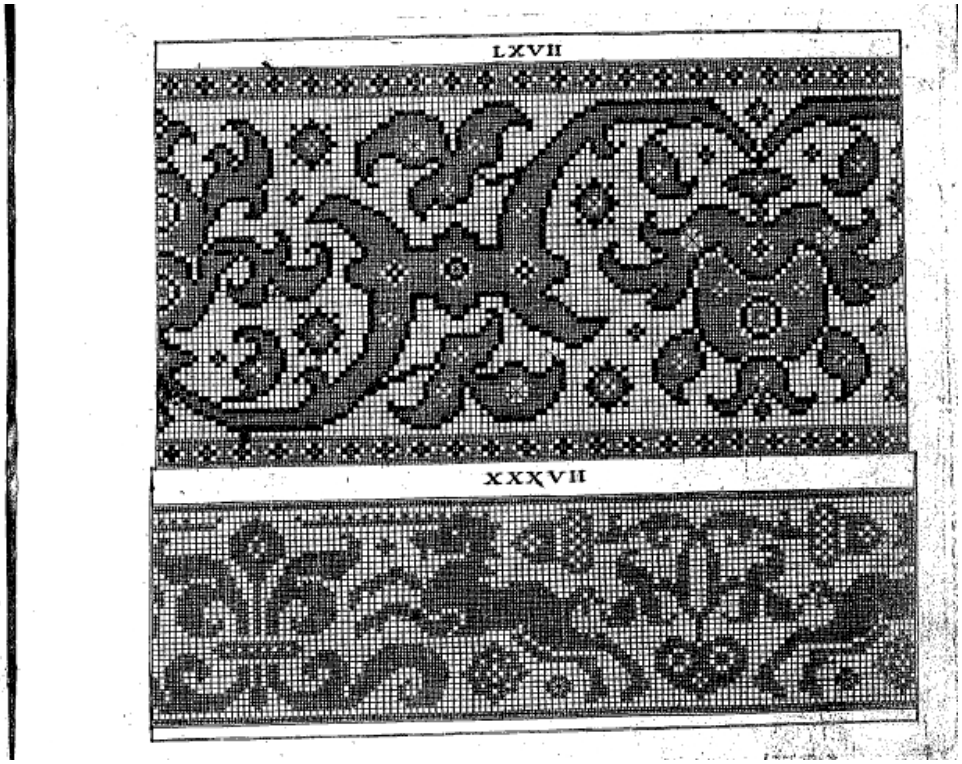

image 3: First design in *The Needles Excellency* (1631). [23775.5]. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Reproduction from Early English Books Online. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

image 4: Design found in *Newes Modelbuch* (1604). [9927133020001551] Special Collections, Research Library, Getty Research Institute. Image from archive.org. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

Extant embroideries reflect Taylor's reversal of Siebmacher's plates. An English sampler in the Victoria and Albert Museum dated 1660 is topped by a wide band of filet lace that is an exact match for Taylor's unicorns and fleurdelys.[64] Another English sampler from the first half of the seventeenth century has *two* motifs from Taylor's book - a dog chasing a rabbit from a hunting scene and the two parrots mentioned above, which are also worked in filet lace (a lace affect created by using a needle to weaving a thread around a net foundation).[65] A few facts support my conclusion that these came from *The Needles Excellency*. One, the designs are directional (with the exception of the parrots which is a mirror-image) and the samplers match the direction of Taylor's patterns. Two, the stitches are placed exactly as in the pattern. And three, regarding accessibility, the likelihood is greater that a recent copy of a popular English book was used rather than a very old book from Nuremberg.

[64] English sampler dated 1660, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.217-1970.
[65] English lace sampler from first half of 17th century, V&A 742-1899.

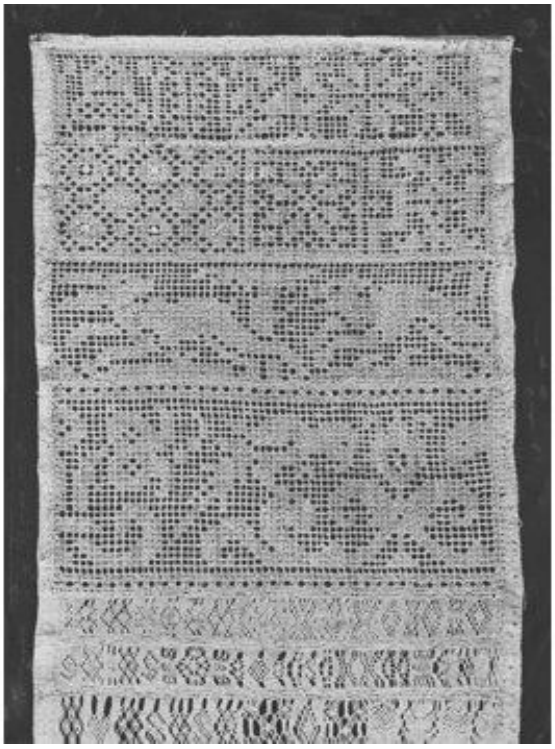

image 5 (left): Embroidered English sampler with unicorn design matching *The Needles Excellency* (1631). T.217-1970. image 6 (right): Linen lace sampler with two motifs matching *The Needles Excellency* (1631). 742-1899. Both images © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

Page 27 in *The Needles Excellency* is a design for needlelace of two fashionable figures similarly copied from *Newes Modelbuch* (1604) page 55.[66] When looking at the back of the page from *The Needles Excellency*, there is evidence that the pattern was used by some previous owner/borrower prior to it entering the collection of the Houghton Library. The outlines of the two people have been pricked through the page as part of a process for transferring the image to another surface (fabric, in the case of embroidery). The holes in the page are visible when viewing the backside of the page. Besides being reversed like the other duplications, Taylor also swapped half of the repeating motif below the couple in order to fit more designs while minimizing page-count, and thereby costs. He took the pattern at bottom right of the page from a set of three lace designs (meant for the vertical neckline-slit of a shirt) on Siebmacher's page 36. Diamonds have been sketched into Taylor's book, in the gap of the neckline slit.

image 7: Two fashionable figures from *Newes Modelbuch* (1604). [9927133020001551] Special Collections, Research Library, Getty Research Institute. Image from archive.org. Permission not required for non-commerical use.

[66] Needlelace is made by working series of knots using a threaded needle onto a ground of linen fabric that has had most of its threads removed to create a grid foundation. Since each knot is made individually, great detail can be attained in the resulting lace.

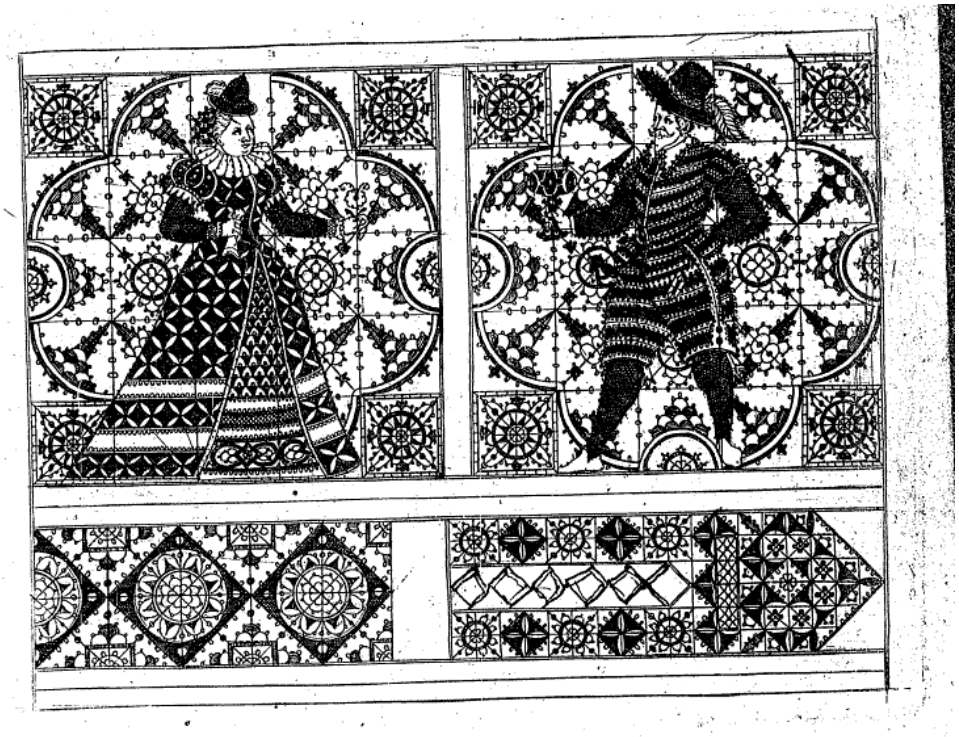

image 8: Two fashionable figures from *The Needles Excellency* (1631). [23775.5]. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Reproduction from Early English Books Online. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

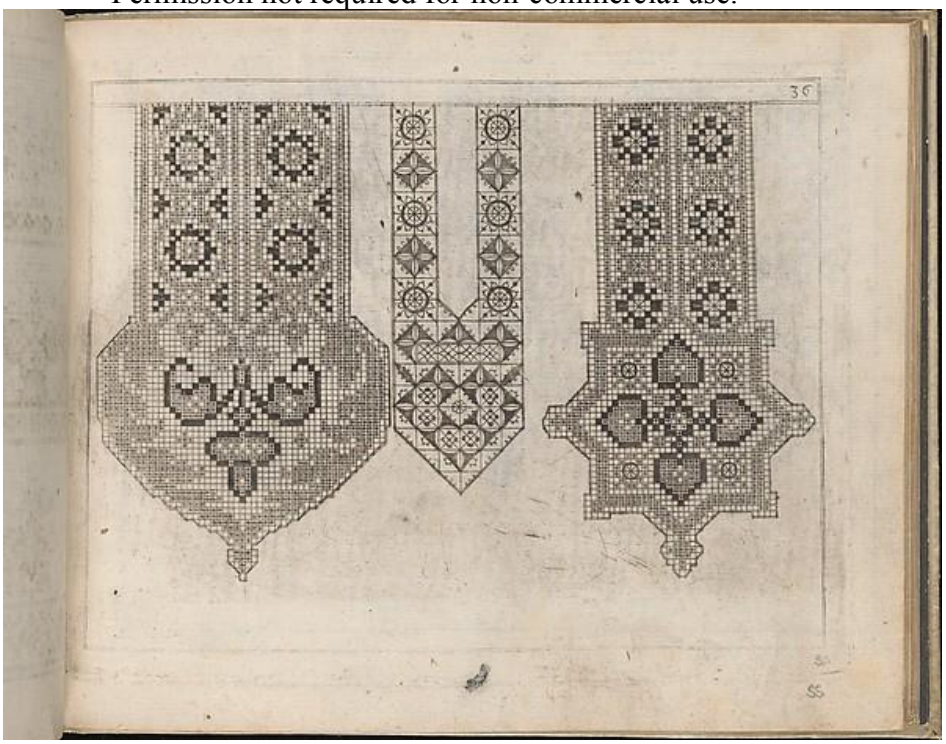

image 9: Siebmacher's middle pattern was copied for *The Needles Excellency* (1631). [9927133020001551] Special Collections, Research Library, Getty Research Institute. Image from archive.org. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

As I continue to discover matches, I begin to think about future research focusing on the textile outputs of women using these pattern books. The thrill of discovery I felt when I recognized from *The Needles Excellency* a crowned-swans motif in a whitework sampler in the *Sampled Lives* exhibit at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, England, is addictive!

Taylor's book was the end of an era of needlework pattern books in England. The English Civil Wars interrupted the publishing of fanciful texts, but not completely, thanks to perennial demand for pattern books offering the latest trends in needlework designs. Stitched samplers became more popular, and Continental pattern books became more elaborate, with some designs hand-painted, and some publishers including stitched examples.[67] To better understand what Taylor was offering in his book, the next section goes back to the beginning of the genre, to lay the framework that *The Needles Excellency* stood upon.

—PATTERN BOOK HISTORY

John Taylor did not invent printed picture books with the publication of *The Needles Excellency*. The history of his career shows that he often spotted a trend or moment in popular culture on which to capitalize. Needlework pattern books were born of this same innovative capitalism. The following will introduce the first needlework pattern books, which changed little over the intervening hundred years.

Amongst the first popular art books that developed with the spread of printing-press technology in the early sixteenth century, the pages of needlework pattern books were filled almost exclusively with designs of widely varying complexity and style. I use the term "needlework" to represent the group of decorative textile-arts which these books target. This includes a range of techniques that use a needle alone or with other tools, such as embroidery, lacemaking, knitting, and tablet and small-loom weaving. As in Taylor's case, the innovation that created needlework pattern books came from a *business* idea, and publishers developed the genre because it turned out to be a *profitable* idea. Early Modern Europe had a burgeoning capitalist economy, and book-publishing was a growing industry that depended on steady sales to the

nobility and the rising fortunes of gentry, merchant, and middling classes. Literacy rates were rising (although how quickly is a subject of much debate), but books could also be useful for the illiterate. Pattern books for all kinds of artisan crafts, such as woodcarving, metal-etching, and needlework, were so image-laden that they did not rely on their audience being able to read. In fact, the earliest pattern books were almost strictly designs, perhaps indicating industrial purpose in their origins. Their rapid expansion to domestic use is hinted at in early books like *A Neawe Treatys as Concerning the Excellency of the Needle Worcke* (ca. 1514-1542), which points out that they are "not only for craftsmen but also for gentlewomen and idle damsels."[68] Publishers printed new volumes and extra editions of needlework designs in response to demand and in pursuit of profits. Between 1523 and 1700, over 150 individual titles were published in an estimated 400 editions, with unknown numbers of print-runs, demonstrating an active and on-going interest.[69] Their popularity dwindled as stitched samplers became a more common way of recording and sharing stitches and patterns amongst the less privileged, and later pattern books became more elaborate and refined as their target audience shifted. Johann Friedrich Netto's hand-coloured design books of the late eighteenth century, which also include some stitched samples, are works of art themselves.[70]

It is not a surprise then, that the pattern books originated in regions with developed printing industries and international trade relationships rather than important centres of embroidery and lace production. This clarifies why it is logical that the earliest books came out of Germany, the birthplace of the printing press, and coincidental that Venice produced both needlework for export and illustrated books. Pattern books were being printed in France prior to their lace industry attaining an international reputation, whereas Flanders was a celebrated lace

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[67] Johann Friedrich Netto, *Zeichen-Mahler und Stickerbuch zur Selbstbelehrung für Damen, Zweiter Theil* (Leipzig: Voss und compagnie, 1798). Metropolitan Museum of Art, accession no. 32.121.3. See also note 70.

[68] Vorsterman, *A Neawe Treatys as Concerning the Excellency of the Needle Worcke:* in *History of Lace* by Palliser, p. 428.

[69] Lotz, 7.

[70] Johann Friedrich Netto. Five specimens have been collected by Winterthur Museum Research Library dating between 1795-1802, which I have seen in person, I can say that they are quite stunning. See bibliography.

centre which only produced one pattern book.[71] The Plantin family in sixteenth-century Flanders was well established in both publishing and the lace business, yet they did not publish any needlework pattern books. And Spain - with its moorish designs that were highly influential in Western Europe, its reputation for the highest quality printed books, its international standing that inspired Italian publishers to dedicate pattern books to the Spanish nobility, and which gave its name to black-thread embroidery alternately called Spanish-work or blackwork - seems to have produced no pattern books at all.[72] The rhetoric that authors such as Taylor used to address their pattern books to artisans and craftspeople, was either to impress domestic audiences with the professional quality of their designs, or they meant independent artisans. Professional embroidery workshops hired trained artists for designs on-demand and would not have had a need for mass-distributed ones. I discuss crafts-people in more detail at the end of this paper.

Printing press technology was well suited to documenting and spreading needlework designs, and one printer in particular saw the potential for expanding his business in this way. The earliest recorded pattern book was printed in Germany about 1523 by Johann Schönsperger, titled *Furm und Modelbüchlein*, though the earliest *dated* pattern book was his second one printed October 22, 1524 and titled *Ein New Modelbuch*.[73] The son of a book publisher, Schönsperger owned a paper mill and also manufactured printed textiles using woodblock designs,[74] perhaps something like examples found in the textile collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Budapest Museum of Applied Arts.[75] Schönsperger created the genre of needlework pattern books when he acted on the inspiration to merge his combined industry experiences from publishing, paper manufacturing, and textile printing. In 1523, Schönsperger got his book-printing license, and his first pattern book came very soon after.

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[71] Vorsterman, *A Neawe Treatys as Concerning the Excellency of the Needle Worcke*: Sarah Randles cites the publication date as 1527 and suggests that this may have been the first pattern book to reach England.

[72] Santina M. Levey, *Lace: A History* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1983), 6.

[73] Margaret [Abegg] Daniels, "Early Pattern Books for Lace and Embroidery," 2; Daniels, "Early Pattern Books Lace, Embroidery, and Woven Textiles: A Special Exhibition," 70-71.

[74] Michael Snodin and Maurice Howard, *Ornament: A Social History since 1450* (New Haven: Yale UP in Association with The Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996), 27.

[75] Anon, printed linen textile, German, 16th c., accession no. 8611, Museum of Applied Arts, Budapest; anon, printed linen textile, Spanish, 16th c., accession no. 34.41.12, Metropolitan

It is hard to call Schönsperger an author, though, because he, and the early publishers who followed, did not create the artwork they printed. They were curators with a finger on the pulse of the market. They sought designs that they felt would be good sellers, and occasionally hired anonymous artists to add original new designs. Schönsperger may have adapted textile-printing blocks for printing the books. Design similarities can be seen between a quatrefoil border design in Schönsperger's 1529 pattern book and an ochre printed linen textile from the fifteenth-century in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum.[76]

image 10 (left): A quatrefoil design in Schönsperger's 1529 pattern book. 18.66.1, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public domain CC0.
image 11 (right): A quatrefoil design printed on linen. 8303-1863 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Permission not required for non-commercial use.

Museum of Art, New York; anon, printed linen textile, German, 15th c., accession no. 09.50.1092, MMA, NYC.

[76] Johann Schönsperger, *Ein ney Furmbüchlein* (Augsberg, 1529), 2, Lotz 5, accession no. 18.66.1, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC; anon, printed linen textile, German, ca. 1400-30, accession no. 8303-1863, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Taylor's copying of Siebmacher's designs was almost standard practice with pattern books. Publishers collected images from patterns and artwork that needleworkers were already using. For example, other pattern books (by outright duplication or by buying other printers' engravings), bestiaries (which were books filled with images of flora and fauna – both real and imagined), emblem books whose images wrapped meaning within meaning, loose-leaf designs sold individually in print-shops, herbals - considered early botany books, and wherever else in the environment they found inspiring images, including earlier architectural elements and carved-wood furnishings.[77]

One popular image that I found in many forms of English visual culture was the pelican in her piety. A pelican is portrayed pricking her breast with her beak so that drops of blood can nourish her young offspring gathered at her feet. It is a popular Christian emblem representing charity and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.[78] It does not appear in Taylor's book, and in fact, his choices from Siebmacher's designs are mostly geometric in style, with only a few figural ones which include fashionable couples, a rabbit hunt (metaphor for life evading evil), flowers, parrots (associated with the Virgin Mary), and unicorns (representing the purity of Christ). Taylor's traditional religious beliefs, which I will discuss in more depth in a later chapter, often punctuate his writing, but in *The Needles Excellency* he seems to have chosen to use a light hand. The notable women in the introduction are aligned with Protestantism and Catholicism both, as we will see below, and the images represent universal Christian values. So why didn't he include the popular pelican? Simple. It is not included in Siebmacher's books.

Schönsperger was quickly followed by other publishers who saw the potential for profits to be made, the first of whom was his own printshop manager Jorg Gastel. In 1525 he took publishing credit for a model book titled *Formenbuch fur Bortenwerkerei* [*Pattern book for Border-work*]. Did he have an agreement with Schönsperger regarding the byline? Unfortunately, it seems the only known original, which was in the Dresden library prior to the bombings of World War II, no longer exists for further study. However, thanks to Lotz's comprehensive research for his pattern book bibliography, we know that this appears to be a second edition of

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[77] Kathleen Epstein in Nicolas Bassée's *German Renaissance Patterns for Embroidery: A Facsimile Copy of Nicolas Bassée's New Modelbuch*, edited and Translated by Kathleen Epstein (Austin: Curious Works, 1994), 4.

[78] Albarta Meulenbelt-Nieuwburg, *Embroidery Motifs from Dutch Samplers* (London: Batsford, 1974), 26.

Schönsperger's 1524 edition. It was printed during a six-month period when Gastel was running Schönsperger's print shop.[79] Also fortunately, the Dresden library took photographs of the title pages and those have been made available through their website.[80] This example shows that right away there was a culture of appropriation, imitation, and adaptation surrounding the rapid iterations of pattern books, and print culture in general. Taylor may not have been aware of this history of the pattern books, but he was well suited to the practice.

When I first started investigating the chronology and migration of the genre of needlework pattern books in the early modern period, I saw them as the German pattern books, the Italian pattern books, the French pattern books. But as I focused on England for this thesis and investigated more critically, I realized that they were really very multinational. Taylor's silent use of German sources, for example, gives the casual observer the impression that those are "English" designs. Some books may have been voluntarily collaborative efforts, bringing together artists and publishers from different countries to create a volume, but more often they were amalgamations pieced together by a printer/publisher who wanted to capitalize on a popular trend and who did not share our modern concerns for plagiarism when he copied the work of others. As the genre spread from Germany to Italy and to France, some publishers marketed the foreign designs as exotic and desirable, and others made no comment on their multi-national aspects. Taylor may not have given credit to Siebmacher as the source of the designs he used in *The Needles Excellency*, but he did play up that his patterns had been painstakingly gathered from far and wide, implying exclusivity and novelty - two attributes that have always driven fashion.

> And for this Kingdomes good are hither come,
> From the remotest parts of Christendome.
> Collected with much paines and industry,
> From scorching *Spaine*, and freezing *Moscouye*,
> From fertill *France*, and pleasant *Italy*,
> From *Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany*.

He goes on to include places "beyond the bounds of faithlesse *Mahomet*" - China, Mexico, and the West Indies, attempting to tantalize readers' imaginations with the idea of patterns "farre fetchted, and deerely bought."[81]

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[79] Daniels, "Early Pattern Books for Lace and Embroidery", 5; Lotz, 37.
[80] Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, http://www.bildindex.de/
[81] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [7].

From this review of some of the first pattern books, and German influences on *The Needles Excellency*, I will jump ahead to ones printed in England, since the focus of this thesis is on the English author John Taylor.

—CONTEMPORARY WORKS IN ENGLAND

As the phenomenon of the pattern books moved west, England too started printing them around 1548. Publishing credit, though, goes to a Frenchman, which both complicates the idea of this as an "English" pattern book, and highlights what I said before about the books being very multi-national. Thomas Geminus settled in England and published *Morysse and Damashin renewed and encreased Very profitable for Goldsmythes and Embroderars.*[82] Sold out of London, it turned out to be very influential with the elite, according to Maria Hayward.[83] The designs he advertises in his title are neither English nor French. "Morysse" means moresque, an old form of "moorish" or in the style of the Moors of Spain - like the interlacing, intricate style seen in textiles, carpets, and ironwork. And "Damashin" means damascene, which refers to the metalworking technique developed in the Middle East, of inlaying gold, silver and copper into base metal.

The Needles Excellency does not bear much resemblance to *Morysse and Damashin* except in form. Geminus did not offer a preface or lace designs, and his intricate and delicate offerings for either goldsmithing or embroidery are more sophisticated than Taylor's. Geminus' exotic designs may have been popular in the court of King Henry VIII,[84] but his pattern book would have allowed upwardly mobile merchants, tradesmen, and artisans with embroidery skills to also participate in these styles. Obviously goldsmithing is not a domestic activity, so can we presume Geminus intended his book for professional workshops? How does that fit with our ideas of those workshops having or hiring professional artists to create original designs? It would

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[82] Thomas Geminus, *Morysse and Damashin Renewed and Encreased Very Profitable for Goldsmythes and Embroderars*, London, 1548, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster Digital Collection. Lotz's 1933 *Bibliographie der Modelbücher* does not include Geminus. With the access challenges of the pre-digital age that Lotz was researching in this is not a huge surprise. Or perhaps it did not meet his criteria because it was not dedicated solely to embroidery designs.

[83] Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII* (Leeds: Maney, 2007), 361.

[84] 1548 is a year after the death of Henry VIII, but the title states that it is "Renewed and Encreased," so Hayward must be referring to an earlier edition that circulated during his reign.

be interesting to look at needlework pattern books in the context of other books for artisans and makers (ie: cooks, gardeners), which, as does *The Needles Excellency*, assume their audience has a significant amount of skill already.

The next pattern book printed in England (and the first listed by Lotz, was not until 1591, which is a long delay after *Morysse and Damashin.* English bookshops may have met their consumers' needs with imports, or perhaps other books like Geminus' have yet to come to light. Either way, the end of the sixteenth century marked the beginning of increased demand for needlework books in England, pressured by the rapidly growing population after 1580, as well as the cultural penchant for elaborate needlework, both of which would have made the books more cost effective to produce, and in turn lower prices increased affordability to a wider audience.

The book of 1591 that used to be considered the first printed in England is *New and Singular Patternes & workes of Linnen* by Adrian Poyntz.[85] The patterns it contains are reprints of those done by the Venetian artist Federico Vinciolo, whose work was first published in Paris in 1587.[86] According to Margaret Abegg, Vinciolo was the first to pattern *reticella* lace.[87] This novelty fuelled its being reprinted many times by different publishers in France and Germany, so Poyntz was just jumping on the bandwagon by making them more easily available to an English audience. In his Epistle to the Reader, he says that he "devised with all dilligence and industruous studie to satisfy the gentle mindes of virtuous women, by bringing to light thinges never before as yet seene, nor committed to print."[88] Except, well, these were Vinciolo's patterns! But perhaps he meant "never before seen by Englishwomen." His language towards women is patriarchal and strikes a nerve with modern readers, but may have been considered flattering in the sixteenth-century. By "gentle minde" Poyntz meant the mind of a gentlewoman, and may have literally meant those women of elevated rank, but also those who *aspired* to be of

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[85] Adrian Poyntz, *New and Singular Patternes & workes of Linnen* (London: John Wolfe, 1591).

[86] Vinciolo, *Les singvliers et novveavx povrtraicts* (Paris: Jean le Clerc, 1587). Lotz 110a-h.

[87] Abegg, 79; *Reticella* lace starts with a fabric ground. Threads are removed from the weave of the fabric until a grid is formed. Stitches are made on this grid foundation to create the design. This early form of lace is an intricate extension of embroidery.

[88] Poyntz, 1. Reprinted in Frances Morris, "An Elizabethan Pattern Book," *Bulletin of the Needle and Bobbin Club* 3.1 (1919), 10.

"gentle minde" - life-style marketing as Taylor later did. The association of virtue and textile arts is centuries old, as discussed earlier.

Another duplication was brought to market in 1596 by William Barley. *A Booke of Curious and strange Inuentions, called the first part of Needleworkes* took its patterns from Giovanni Ciotti,[89] and though Ciotti is uncredited, Barley does state that they were "first imprinted in Venice."[90] The preface by Barley is a one-page dedication that has none of the literary merits of Taylor's. It is a little more unusual though, in that he included instructions on how to transfer, enlarge, or reduce the patterns.

And since England did not print very many pattern book titles, we already arrive at the last before Taylor's. In 1624, Richard Shorleyker published *A Schole-House, for the Needle* in London. It is possible that he was targeting home-embroiderers, using "school house" in the title to tell readers that it is a book of domestic instruction that offers a metaphorical place of learning, similar to the conduct books of the time. The title could also take advantage of a familiar title from a popular pamphlet *Schole house of women* which was written in rhyme to warn men about women's cunning and deceits.[91] But when Shorleyker says that his patterns "according to the skill and understanding of the work woman; will no doubt yeeld profit unto such as live by the Needle, and give good content to adorne the worthy,"[92] it reads to me as addressing working women who embroidered piece-work for their livings. The phrase "give good content" could be interpreted with a dual meaning: the combination of needlework skill and

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[89] William Barley, *A Booke of Curious and strange Inuentions, called the first part of Needleworkes* (London: 1596). Lotz 154; Giovanni Ciotti, *Prima Parte de Fiori, e disegni* (Venice: 1591). Lotz 121.

[90] Abegg, 118.

[91] Edward Gosynhyll, *Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women wherin euery man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women* (London: Thomas Petyt, 1541). Reprinted by other printers in 1560 and 1572, and a rebuttal in 1560, we can not say whether the title was still familiar at the time of Shorelyker's publication 50 years later. It is interesting though that these are the only books in the English Short Title Catalogue sharing "scole-house" or "schole-house" as their titles. *EEBO*.

[92] Richard Shorleyker, *A Schole-House, for the Needle* (London: 1624), 1. Quoted from the only place I have found the fullest record of the introductory text: *History of Lace*, by Palliser, page 499, with a note that the original is in a private collection.

good designs will result in a quality product for customers of status, and/or a promise that they will receive good payment for using these patterns to adorn their social superiors.[93]

Servants and maids did needlework for their mistresses, often with her, and since they were not paid directly for that work, their embroidery would not have fallen under the jurisdiction of labor guilds in large cities. "And as a squirrell skips from tree to tree, / So maides may (from their Mistresse, or their Mother) / Learne to leave one worke, and to learne another."[94] From Taylor's words, it is imaginable that the mistress of a house may have had a book (or books) like these available for the needleworkers in her service. With most people in England living beyond city-limits, Shorleyker may have had in mind working women like the "25-year-old from Preston (Lancashire) who responded in 1628 that 'she liveth with her mother & teacheth children to weave lace',"[95] or Alice Waigate, married and aged 29 in 1600, who reported that ever since arriving in Cambridge she "hathe lyved by hir needle & seweinge."[96] Outside of the reach of the urban guilds, women often engaged in piece-work that fit well with the various demands on their time, and did earn a living by their needles, just as Taylor earned his by his pen.

Chapter 2: JOHN TAYLOR

John Taylor was amongst the first professional writers in England who earned their livings from their writing. During the seventeenth century, he published prolifically across multiple genres. Due to this large body of work and his popularity, we actually know quite a bit about him. One result of that is that Taylor is often mentioned by scholars studying women's participation in domestic needlework, and by those writing on seventeenth-century print culture. This chapter looks at who he was and how that was expressed in his written work, especially

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[93] The Middle-English Dictionary defines "content" in three ways, one of which means payment. I found the phrase "give good content" in contemporary documents in this context of profit, payment, and tax collection. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/

[94] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [8].

[95] Canterbury Cathedral Archives, DCb/PRC 39/7, fo. 13, quoted in Alexandra Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself: Worth, Status, and the Social Order in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), 209.

[96] Cambridge University Library Archives, V.C.Ct.II.2*, fos 48-49, quoted in Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself,* 176.

leading up to writing the preface of the pattern book *The Needles Excellency.* I also place this particular book in the context of the seventeenth-century English print culture of which Taylor was a part. By taking a comprehensive view of his writing career, it becomes clear when considering *The Needles Excellency* that Taylor was full of contradictions. Of particular interest for this thesis, are his contradictory opinions about women, and his primary agenda and motivations, which were those of a fleet-footed pen-for-hire looking for increased sales.

—THE WATER-POET

Taylor was unusual. He was one of many popular writers during his time, but not many were professionals who earned their living as wordsmiths in the seventeenth century.[97] It was also uncommon for someone to move up socially as far as he did from a labor-class level to socializing with the elite.[98] On the other hand, he was an everyman, making himself likeable to a wide audience. His royalist and paternalistic views were not uncommon, nor was his entrepreneurial spirit, outspokenness, and dedication to winning an argument (even after his opponent had died), but his success at employing them in the newly emerging public sphere of print culture was unique. Taylor wrote prolifically from his life experience on a wide range of topics, leaving behind an unusually large body of attributable work. His style was always trying to *engage* an audience - whether what he wrote pleased them or riled them up, because both helped sales and he depended on those sales for his livelihood. "Thus (free from feare or flattery) on I runne, To please or displease, when my taske is done."[99] Parker's interpretation of Taylor's authorship focused on his negative extremes, rather than the dichotomous nature of his polarized views on women, calling his "'lectures' full of fear of women."[100]

Bernard Capp's book, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet 1578 - 1653*, gives a detailed account of his life and work, as well as shining a light on the tradesman/artisan life-experience. The span of his life (1578 - 1653) overlapped the period of massive social movement that occurred between 1540 and 1640, and his later writings give historians some insight into

[97] Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 57.

[98] Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet 1578-1653* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1.

[99] Taylor, *A Juniper Lecture* (London: I[ohn] O[kes], 1639), [10]. EEBO

[100] Parker, 87.

ordinary royalist perspectives going into the Civil War.[101] Taylor's ambitions were timely and he was able to take advantage of the loosened social structure to break out of his rough life, though he never quite attained his desired fortune and status. His interest in climbing the social ladder is reflected in his commissioning of a painted-portrait, something uncommon for people of humble origins, but not surprising from a man who succeeded in many ways.

As a teen he left his native Gloucester for employment as an oarsman on the London waterways, working hard as a water-taxi for hire. He also spent time serving in the Navy during the 1590s, returning to being a waterman again afterward.[102] It was there on the rivers and canals of London that Taylor regularly engaged with gentler-folk and entertained them during their passage. He leveraged his natural talent for rhyme, his charisma, and his awareness of social norms of the upper-class to create a career as a popular writer. Despite his popularity, many of his contemporaries saw him as "no more than a humorist and madcap adventurer."[103] Critiques disdainfully called his work "ribble rabble."[104] That he embraced the dual-nature of the role he had created for himself is evident in his monicker "Water-Poet,"[105] and his genuineness in owning his past as well as his aspirations, helped him develop the persona that earned him celebrity and public affection, especially from royalists.

Taylor was warm-hearted, gregarious, and moved about quite often - sometimes with the purpose of gaining subscribers for his travel-writing.[106] He educated himself through reading and conversation, and had a hearty appetite for food, drink, and company. Those who knew him - he made friends everywhere he went - thought him very facetious and a lively story teller.[107] Taylor's awareness of material differences between classes helped him manipulate the material culture of the rich, such as wearing quality, fashionable clothes, to gain entrance to the men he

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[101] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 168.

[102] Bernard Capp, "John Taylor 'The Water-Poet': A Cultural Amphibian in 17th-Century England," *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989): 538.

[103] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 23.

[104] Henry Walker, *An answer to a foolish pamphlet entituled A swarme of sectaries & schismaticks*, (London: 1641), 3.

[105] Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor the water-poet,* (London: James Boler, 1630), A5.

[106] Taylor's subscribers were people who pre-paid him a sum for a future written work. He used the money to pay himself and to help finance the writing and publishing costs. For his travel-writing, this included the costs of travel. He was a pioneer of the subscription model.

[107] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 2.

sought to socialize with. In the introduction to his book of his life's work, he wrote, "World, I have two requests to thee, which if thou grant mee I will never thanke thee: the first is good cloathes, (for those beare a monstrous sway) because I have occasion to speake with great men, and without good cloathes (like a golden sheath to a leaden blade) there is no admittance."[108] His second request was that readers not be prejudiced against the works he was presenting. Asking for welcome admittance for himself and his work, Taylor importantly understood the power of money, "for Gold can doe anything"[109] and it motivated him to write for his audience, and royalist patronage.

The political views he voiced may have been unflaggingly royalist, and his personal beliefs more aggressive as he aged,[110] but he was otherwise full of contradictions that came out in his quick-temper, cockiness, and bluntness. On one of his many voyages, his friendly disposition evaporated in a flare of angered entitlement. After walking twelve miles on a summer day, the village he stopped in for lodging had no room for him. Perceiving that no one had a care for his needs, his anger quickly rose and he refused to leave the inn until he was given a room. A "young saucy knave" threatened to toss him out, "at which words my choller grew high, my indignation hot, and my fury fiery." The hostess, "with feare and trembling," yielded and "my wrath was appeased, and my ire asswaged."[111] Taylor could flip between amiable and furious and back again.

Happy to style himself as a jester to the commonwealth,[112] he found intermittent patronage and a place in high circles, yet was independent and spoke his mind using his sharp wit and satire. On the one hand, he expressed to the Marquis of Buckingham his hope for "my poor muse to shelter herself under the shadow of your honorable patronage."[113] And on the other hand, disdaining the act:

> And 'twixt the boat and pen, I make no doubt,
> But I shall shift to pick a living out,
> Without base flattery, or false coined words,

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[108] John Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor*, A4.
[109] Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor,* A3.
[110] Taylor, *Iohn Taylor being yet unhanged…* (Oxford?: L. Lichfield, 1644), 1.
[111] Taylor, *John Taylors wandering, to see the wonders of the west* (London, 1649), 16.
[112] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 102.
[113] Taylor, *The Pennyles Pilgrimage* (London: Edw. Allde, 1618), 1.

To mouldly Madams, or unworthy Lords.[114]

His traditionalism made him nostalgic, and yet he was personally invested in economic progress. Cynicism and bitterness opposed the jovial side of his nature that he preferred to present to the public.[115]

Taylor held typically sexist seventeenth-century views about women, but on this topic too, he expressed opposing viewpoints. *Misogyny* is a word coined in Taylor's lifetime to mean "hatred of women," and sometimes his writing went to that extreme, particularly when talking about shrewish women. "Dub a dub, kill her with a club."[116] It is these flares of misogyny that he aimed at the stereotypical shrew and their brow-beaten husbands, that feminist writers like Parker, Shimizu, and Henderson/McManus clung to as representative of Taylor's complete view on women. Their over-use of his phrase that women should "use their tongues lesse, and their Needles more,"[117] has made it an unintentional trademark of *The Needles Excellency* and coloured their analysis of pattern books in general.

The strength of his vehemence was rooted in his traditionalism. Shrews and the men who "allowed" them to rule them upset the social order commanded by God. Taylor did not write often of his wife, with whom relations had cooled by 1621, but it can be concluded that he had married with affection and did not consider her a shrew.

> But I have by my long experience found,
> I had beene undone, had I not beene bound.
> I have my bonds of marriage long enjoy'd,
> And doe not wish my obligation voyd.[118]

Even after the childless-marriage had lost its excitement, he still only wrote of her honesty, faithfulness, and positive contributions to their marriage.[119] His patriarchal sexism raises alarm-bells today, but it was not necessarily written from a hatred of women, rather a belief in order.

> Our Parents first in Paradice began,
> Which hath descended since from man to man:
> The Mothers taught their Daughters, Sires their Sons,
> Thus in a line successively it runs.[120]

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[114] Taylor, *A verry merry wherry-ferry-voyage* (London: 1622), [23].

[115] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 3.

[116] Taylor, *A juniper lecture* (London: Printed by I O [John Oakes] for William Ley, 1639), 229.

[117] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

[118] Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor*, ii. 50.

The other woman whom Taylor always described in positive terms was the Virgin Mary, whom I discussed in relation to the title image of the pattern book. He writes of her in a poem based on a prose book he picked up in Antwerp, that he selectively edited to match his own beliefs.[121] Introducing his poem about the Blessed Virgin, he expresses his opinion that "Romanists" dishonour her with their superstitiousness, as do those who forget her (addressing the common silence in England regarding Mary),[122] and states his wish that *all people* should pattern their lives to her example.

> As amongst women she was blest above all, being above all, full of Grace, so amongst Saints, I beleeve she is supreme in Glory… So wishing all hearts to give this holy Virgin such honour as may be pleasing to God, which is, that all should patterne their lives, to her lives example, in lowlinesse and humility.[123]

The Blessed Virgin Mary is a major fixture of Catholicism, but as the Mother of Jesus Christ, she has a role in all Christian denominations. In Taylor's introduction to the poem, he wrote that he hoped it would be accepted by "pious Protestants and charitable Catholikes," (offensive) "luke-warme Neutralists," and "schismatical Separatists" whose "opinionated ignorance" rejects theological leadership.[124] Religious views in England in the early seventeenth century were varied and difficult to categorize precisely, but Taylor's explicit praise of Mary aligns with his traditionalist stance, and his desire to appeal to a wide audience. Luther held Mary in the highest esteem, expressed in his 1521 *Magnificat,* which entered English circulation as a translation in 1538.[125] Whether or not Taylor read Luther's teachings, Taylor's beliefs were shaped at the turn of the seventeenth century when the divide between Catholicism and Protestantism in England was not as aggravated, and his personal assemblage of faith resembled early Anglicanism and evangelical Protestantism.[126] This helps explain contradictions in his own writing and between

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[119] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 36-37.

[120] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

[121] Taylor, *The Life and Death of the most blessed of women, the Virgin Mary Mother of our Lord Jesus* (London: GE, 1620), [7].

[122] Taylor, *The Virgin Mary*, [12].

[123] Taylor, *The Virgin Mary,* [13].

[124] Taylor, *The Virgin Mary*, [8-9].

[125] Martin Luther, *An exposicion vpon the songe of the blessed virgine Mary, called Magnificat Where vnto are added the songes of Salue regina, Benedictus and Nu[n]c dimittis*, translated by Ihon Hollybush, (Southwark: J. Nicholson, 1538). EEBO.

[126] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 138.

his views and Protestant beliefs, and points to his early anti-Catholic rhetoric that became fairly vitriolic at the end of his career.

I have shown that Taylor's writing was influenced by both his emotional state and his desire to engage an audience. His pendulum of opinion swung fully both ways, though we cannot be certain how deeply he felt these views personally. His personality and religious beliefs contributed to his writing style, topics, and voice, often adopting what came to be identified in the 1640s as a "ranting" tone which could be set off by one of his emotional outbursts or a calculated effort to rally a response from his readers. When he published *The Needles Excellency* around 1631, he already had a reputation as a prolific and inflammatory writer.

—TAYLOR'S EARLIEST WORK

How did Taylor's career lead him to writing the preface for a needlework pattern book that is considered to have been marketed to women? *The Needles Excellency* fell in the middle of Taylor's writing career. This section will place the book in context with his writing that came before, and which may have had an influence on its tone and content, as well as what came after, because looking at his work as a whole helps us identify overarching strategies and themes. Taylor was forward-thinking and inventive when it came to creating or taking advantage of new ways to reach his desired audiences. He was tenacious in keeping enemies engaged in feuds, but in his struggle to achieve his ambition, he became bitter in the second-half of his career.

Taylor acted inventively as he tried diverse ways of engaging his audience. Initially, it was by taking advantage of a captured audience as he moved them down the London waterways reciting his poetry and entertaining them with his spontaneous word-play. He used pamphlets, a trendy new form of printed material, to inexpensively publish his poems and satirical essays - conscious, however, of keeping the sales-price high enough that only those in his target audience, those of greater means than his own labouring peers, could afford them.[127] Taylor also engaged live audiences via readings of his work,[128] staged public trials of wits with other popular

[127] Capp, "John Taylor 'The Water-Poet,' 540.

[128] Richard Hatton, in *An Arrant Thiefe* by John Taylor (London: Edw:All-de, for Henry Goffon, 1622), A2.

writers,[129] and performed audacious stunts. One time he rowed a brown-paper boat down the Thames River, and another he pledged to walk to Scotland without a penny in his pocket. Another ingenuity was his way of covering publishing (and living) expenses by getting people to pay for something that he had not yet written through a subscription system.[130] As he started succeeding with his pamphlets, he moved on to longer pamphlets and book publishing - not hesitating to copy the ideas of other writers. His *Motto* followed close on Wither's by the same name. *Bull, Beare, and Horse ... with Tales of Buls, Clenches and Flashes* came out after Heywood's *Mistakes, Clinches, Tales.*[131] Whether it was Taylor's idea to publish *The Needles Excellency* using mostly designs from Siebmacher's pattern books,[132] or his publisher's, it was still one of the first to be printed in England and yet another example of Taylor's inventive and opportunistic ambition.

Early in his career, Taylor demonstrated his inability to let a quarrel die, by vocally participating in the public feuds that were a common part of literary life in London[133]. A feud with Thomas Coryate that he started in about 1612 lasted Taylor's lifetime, beyond Coryate's, and showed his ability to be calculating in his use of well-known rhetorical and literary conventions as part of his performance toward attracting an audience of his social superiors.[134] *The Needles Excellency* "stirs the pot" with a similar strategy by including a few misogynist jibes, such as his wish that women "use their tongues lesse and their Needles more."[135]

Another strategy was to highlight his literary knowledge as an appeal to his desired educated audience. When he calls the needle, "Yet like a Pigmey; *Polipheame* in fight,"[136] he is saying it is small, but in doing its work, it is as effective as the giant son of Poseidon in a fight - who also only has one eye like a needle! Taylor's Greek mythology metaphor would have been understood and appreciated by only a selection of society.

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[129] Richard Preiss, "John Taylor, William Fennor, and the 'trial of wit,'" *Shakespeare Studies* 43 (2015): 2.

[130] Capp, "John Taylor 'The Water-Poet,' 537.

[131] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 60.

[132] Margaret Abegg, *Apropos Patterns: For Embroidery, Lace and Woven Textiles* (Bern: Abegg-Stiftung Bern, 1978), 124.

[133] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 13.

[134] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 13-14.

[135] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

[136] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

1612 was also the year that Taylor published his first work, a short volume of "Sonnets, Satyres, and Epigrams" titled *The Scvller*.[137] Capp says that Taylor's aim was always to amuse an audience of "educated and genteel readers without shocking them. At the same time he was trying to reach the much larger audience of respectable 'middling sorts', in particular urban tradesmen."[138] His pamphlet of 1622 titled *A Common Whore* was addressed "To no matter who. Lord, Maister, Gaffer [old man], or Knave, Lady, Mistress, Goodwife, Gammer [old woman] or Whore -> Readers."[139] Taylor's preface is reaching for and/or acknowledging the wide variety of people, male and female, who read his offerings. The work itself is a self-referential word-play on whores and books as cheap entertainment.

> As one *whore,* may be common unto many,
> So one *Booke*, may be dedicate to many.
> And sure I say, and hope I speak no slander,
> To such a *Booke*, the *Poet* is the Pander.[140]

By this date Taylor was a dedicated bachelor estranged from his wife and this piece both derides and celebrates prostitutes, while also poking fun at his own chosen profession.

In general, Taylor's poem in *The Needles Excellency* speaks patronizingly of women. The wittily worded taunts are made in the tongue-in-cheek spirit of satire which was a common literary device of the time, and it suited his penchant for stirring up trouble to get attention. His patronizing language reached even the highest women. In his respectful but back-handed praise of Queen Mary I, he says that she took the needle "in her Royall hand: / Which was a good example to our nation, / To banish idlenesse from out her Land,"[141] and rather implying that her act of renown was the needlework she left behind. Taylor's writing was not unusual in its duality that both jabbed hard at shrewish women and spoke respectfully of those who fit his patriarchal model.

According to Capp, by 1630, maybe earlier, Taylor was able to leave his job on the river and live on his writing income.[142] But 1630 was also the year that he published his complete works with a dedication that sounds bitter and disappointed with that success. He addresses his

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[137] Taylor, *The Scvller* (London: E.A., 1612), title page.
[138] Capp, "John Taylor 'The Water-Poet,'" 541.
[139] Taylor, *A Common Whore* (London: Edward Allde for Henry Gosson, 1622), A2.
[140] Taylor, *A Common Whore*, 27.
[141] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [11] sig. B2.
[142] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 78.

dedication to the World, whose "gifts are so mischievously mixed," who "never favored me," and in whom there is no trust.[143] Perhaps he *could* make a living, but he tired of struggling to satisfy his own ambition. This pessimism leaked into his preface for *The Needles Excellency*.

> Nor let any one presume to prate,
> And call these lines poore trifles, by me pend:
> Let not opinion be prejudicate,
> But mend it, ere they dare to discommend.[144]

The 1630s also marked a time when Taylor turned away from primarily writing poetry and satires, and started writing political pieces as the new form of print media - the newspaper - helped bring political debate into the public sphere. He was in his fifties when he published *The Needles Excellency*, sometime before 1631. Writing the preface for the pattern book may have been a unique opportunity offered to him by his publisher, or perhaps Taylor was exercising his talent for spotting a popular trend to capitalize on.

His early works offer themselves to a diverse audience of men and women, as does the "Praise of the Needle" in *The Needles Excellency,* by addressing at both beginning and end, the broad audience of "middling" and better sorts that Taylor expects to reach. He starts, "To all dispersed sorts of Arts and Trades / I write the Needles praise (that never fades)," offering his work to men and women doing needlework domestically and commercially.[145] His metaphorical word-play calls the needle a "Taylors Javelin" (tailoring was sewing of clothing done by men) and regales its many uses as an "Instrument Of profit, pleasure, and of ornament."[146] The majority of the preface is targeting the upwardly-mobile wives of tradesmen, merchants and artisans, but he returns attention to the crafts-people by concluding the preface with a section that begins by reminding his readers that this book is also for others: "To all degrees of both sexes, that love or live by the laudable imployment of the needle."[147]

Going forward in time from the publication of *The Needles Excellency*, I offer a look at more of his best-known work to complete the context of Taylor's career. He became much more pointed in his language about women, and these writings seem to have influenced scholars interpretations of his work that came before. I think it is a stretch to apply his attitude

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[143] Taylor, *All the workes of John Taylor*, A4-5.
[144] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [15-16].
[145] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [1] sig. A.
[146] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2], [3] sig. A2.
[147] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [15].

retroactively to an early body of work. His later pamphlet writing, which came as he was transitioning to political writing, was part of a cultural phenomenon that played to his satirical strengths and allowed him to stretch his sexist opinions to extremes. At that point he was almost sixty years old, a widower following his failed marriage who never remarried, and frustrated by his limited success in his career. He was still grasping at fleeting cultural moments to fuel his next payout. One of those moments which Taylor found promising was the late 1630s revival of the debate over 'the woman question.' In the initial pamphlet war of the late sixteenth century, Taylor had played only a small part, and this renewed debate gave him a new chance to run with it.

—CONTEMPORARY PRINT CULTURE AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

The merits of women and their proper role in society was one of the social debates that emerged during a time of political crisis in England at the end of the sixteenth century. It found outlet through conduct books, plays, ballads, sermons, and pamphlet wars about the "woman problem." This section looks at how John Taylor's work intersected print-culture influences on public ideas about women, his greater engagement with the topic in his late career, and how the rhetoric employed reflected Taylor's intention and expressed cultural vulnerability. Taylor's pattern book preface had much in common with the pamphlet wars on women, so they will be the primary focus of the seventeenth-century print culture that bookended *The Needles Excellency*. The publishing industry itself was a profit-driven business, and will be discussed to support my assertion that Taylor's motivation was to make money, rather than to silence women.[148]

—BEFORE THE NEEDLES EXCELLENCY

Medieval writers revived classical Greco-Roman strictures that women should be confined, and politics be reserved for men, despite these views being even more restrictive than traditional Christian principles. Christianity considered both men and women equally capable on

[148] Shimizu, 79.

at least two points - either could attain salvation and sainthood.[149] An early debate on the "woman question" was instigated by the *Roman de la Rose* (1277), in which Jan de Meung wrote a section that echoed previous thirteenth-century polemics against women. A significant English literary figure of the fourteenth century, Geoffrey Chaucer, brought the incendiary stories into the English vernacular a century later. About the same time Christine de Pizan in France began to write quite successfully against the misogyny she saw spreading. In 1399, she wrote a piece against *Roman de la Rose* that started a *querelle de la Rose* in the form of letters and poems between her and others in the upper reaches of society.[150] By 1405 she had completed her most accomplished work *City of Women*, in which she defended the virtues of women, and sparked the significant *querelle des femmes*, or "woman question," amongst her growing audience. The necessarily slow transmission of texts in manuscript culture kept the debate localized, and it once again subsided.

Both the social and gender tensions of the first decades of the seventeenth century and the new forms of publishing provided fertile ground for a revival of the "woman question."[151] Taylor grew up during this cyclical resurgence of debate over the proper place of women in society. When the argument flared up again this time, the printing press helped it reach a much wider public, and allowed much greater participation, including some women.[152] Bryan Anslay translated Christine de Pizan's *City of Women* in 1521,[153] refreshing her viewpoint of a hundred years earlier with an English audience. In the early 1540s, pamphlets began to emerge that disputed the status and nature of women.[154] Edward Gosynhyll's *Here Begynneth the Scole House of Women* (1541) was mentioned in an earlier chapter in relation to Shoreleyker's *Schole House of the Needle*. Pamphlets were quick to produce, short and inexpensive, and therefore could mimic the exchanging of letters that had driven the quarrel in the past. This round lasted until the early seventeenth century, and overlapped the start of Taylor's writing career.

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[149] Joan Kelly, "Early Feminist Theory and the 'Querelle des Femmes', 1400-1789," *Signs* 8.1 (Autumn, 1982): 8, 12.

[150] Kelly, 10.

[151] For more on the *querelle des femmes*, see: Alcuin Blamires, *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended* (Oxford: OUP, 1992); Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 1998).

[152] Kelly, 16.

[153] Christine de Pizan, *The Boke of the Cyte of Ladys*, trans. Bryan Anslay (London: 1521).

The pamphlet wars were called wars because both sides volleyed their opinions in response to each other within the public sphere. The most famous woman to enter the battle was Jane Anger with *Her Protection for Women* (1589). There was a lively exchange of ideas as readers became authors in order to respond to what they had read. As a literary exercise, many contributors played with words and meanings and the boundaries of understanding. They followed the conventions of pamphlets on other topics, and the rhetorical style of the period, deploying arguments and counter-arguments.

For example, in 1615 Joseph Swetnam published his incendiary anti-feminist treatise, *The arraignment of lewd, idle, froward, and unconstant women*. In little time there was "a series of rebuttals and replies; Daniel Tuvalu's *Asylum veneris; or, a sanctuary for ladies* (1616); Rachel Speght's *A mouzell for Melastomus* (1617); two pseudonymous works, Esther Sowernam's *Esther hath hang'd Haman* (1617) and Constantia Munda's *The worming of a mad dog* (1617); as well as an anonymous play, *Swetnam the woman-hater* (1620)."[155] Sowernam's full title was, *Ester hath hang'd Haman: or An answere to a lewd pamphlet, entitled, The arraignment of women.* It demonstrates a classic example of one form of animadversion - the embedding of Swetnam's title into her own to help a bookstand-browser identify a thread that they wanted to follow.[156] This strategy shows one way that authors were conscious of serving their audiences and of co-opting rivals' readerships.

The fact that women engaged in this public exercise brought it close to a true dialogue, but the use of female pseudonyms by both genders complicates understanding authorship. "When women's voices, alongside the rhetoric of gendered urban experience in texts by both women and men, are added to the clamour emerging from pre-modern London, it becomes possible to envision a much more flexible relationship of writer, gender, text and urban space."[157] *Flexible, mutable relationships*. Helen Wilcox reflects a shift in women's studies that more and

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[154] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 279-80.

[155] Stephen Dobranski, "Reading Strategies," in *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*, ed. Joad Raymond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 110.

[156] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 209-212. Animadversion was a formal and elaborate rhetorical response that quoted extensively from an opponent's tract - partly to attract their opponent's sales for themselves. The most common form used the quoted material to analyze and respond to the other's work.

[157] Helen Wilcox, "'ah Famous Citie': Women, Writing, and Early Modern London," *Feminist Review* 96 (2010), 38.

more considers the complexities of societies, with women as participants in the push-pull of gender relations, rather than as passive victims of patriarchy, or empowered agents. Even though current feminist scholars have moved away from generalizing in over-simplified ways, older works are still read by people who do not realize that, and those perspectives remain alive.

In particular, I am thinking of my own experience of being outside of academia and reading everything I could find on the topic of early women and their needlework (which was not much). Without the benefits of an advanced education, I read those presentations of the past as "truths" from experts, rather than as interpretations made through out-dated lenses. How was I to know that *The Subversive Stitch* (re)printed in 2010 did not represent the most current philosophies of women's studies? Let alone that theoretical approaches have and do change over time? Without knowing it then, my approach to interpreting *The Needles Excellency* as being at the intersection of multiple pressures, is similar to today's feminist intersectionality theory. I feel sad and frustrated that people who are trying to learn on their own most likely do not have training in historical analysis, or even know about all the scholarship that they are missing, since it is hidden behind pay-walls, in expensive books and journals, or beyond locked doors they cannot pass. No wonder history repeats itself, and cultures change slowly.

Most likely Taylor would have been familiar with the majority of the tracts from the pamphlet war on women, since he was an avid reader and actively engaged with his early career at this time, and since the rhetorical strategy of animadversion appears sometimes in his own titles. The tone and popularity of this early part of the pamphlet war on women set the stage for Taylor's publication of *The Needles Excellency.* Its preface offered a few misogynist jests along the lines of the pamphlets, which may have been meant for male readers, but could equally as well have been jokes appreciated by women - as satire often is. The fact that he also wrote inspiration for women to ply their needles, creating a duality, was not out of character for him or the satirical humour of the seventeenth century. The rhetorical convention of arguing by example was common between the pamphlets and his own writing, which is why they both describe specific women - real or metaphorical.

Satire plays with fire in that it includes a seed of truth of real enough concern to the audience that it creates the comic tension of the joke. Biting satire is more pointed and invites rebuttal. Readers of the seventeenth century left some traces of "their encounters with inexpensive, topical publications," such as pamphlets, which suggests that "they were charged

with precisely the kind of emotional intensity that critics suspected."[158] The authors who debated the virtues of women capitalized on the emotions born from an uncertain time and by playing on satire and stereotypes. The rhetoric "employed was to rouse women's irritation in order to provoke mirth, and thus increase sales," amongst a male readership.[159] Though that does not discount the existence of a female readership of Taylor's work. Frances Wolfreston was a seventeenth-century gentlewoman who had at least a dozen of Taylor's published tracts inventoried in her library.[160] With the regular intention of rousing his audience, Taylor's own feelings and opinions may or may not have been amongst those he wrote about in *The Needles Excellency*. As a professional writer who was struggling to achieve his ambition, a pamphlet was "no more a transparent window onto its author's opinion than a sonnet."[161]

Taylor's early work, up to publishing *The Needles Excellency,* shows his trademark satire and engagement with creative and timely means of drumming up an audience. Despite the fact that his body of work to this time showed a broad range of interests - travel journals, eulogies of noblemen, histories, and political criticisms -[162] second-wave feminist scholars focused on his pattern book with its "poem in praise of the needle as an instrument of suppression" as if his contributions to the debate about women encapsulated his authorial intention.[163] Henderson and McManus consider Taylor a misogynist and use language such as "attacking women" in describing his work. They also use the divisive language "antifeminists" and "feminists" when explaining that sexual puns were were used on both sides of the pamphlet war.[164] Focusing selectively on a single thread from the varied and complex body of his work and judging it out of

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[158] Joad Raymond, "Irrational, impractical and unprofitable," in *Reading, Society and Politics in Early Modern England*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 188.

[159] Joy Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women and Female Power in the Street Literature of Early Modern England and Germany* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 40.

[160] Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector," *The Library,* September (1989), 207; Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 70.

[161] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 214.

[162] Taylor, *Taylor his trauels: from the citty of London in England, to the citty of Prague in Bohemia* (1620); *A funerall Elegy for the Earle of Nottingham* (1625); *A briefe remembrance of all the English monarchs* (1618); *The subjects joy for the Parliament* (1621).

[163] Parker, 87.

[164] Henderson and McMannus, 41.

context resulted in *The Needles Excellency* being catagorized with conduct books, and judged as a didactic tool of patriarchy for inculcating women with domestic virtues.[165]

Their arguments also draw conclusions about Taylor's motivations that are overly broad generalizations based primarily on the later pamphlet war revival. Taylor vocally participated in this round, but it was after the pattern book was published, and in the second half of his career when he had become disillusioned and bitter about his ambitions coming to fruition. *The Needles Excellency* has more in common with the first half of his career and should be understood in the context of where and who Taylor was at that time, rather than labeling the pattern book (and others like it) as tools of patriarchy.

—TAYLOR'S LATE CAREER

Taylor got his chance to participate in the next wave of pamphlet wars about women. It is relevant to discuss these works, even though they came after *The Needles Excellency*, because of the scholars who made an association between his pattern book and these later pamphlets. They extrapolated the patriarchal intention that they found there to universally disparage the entire genre of pattern books. The conclusion of Parker, Shimizu and others is too broadly cast from too narrow a sample which was particular to the context of its time and place. The previous section on Taylor's work discussed the print culture and the public debate about women leading up to *The Needles Excellency*. Here I will break down some of the connections others have made when they use his later work to reflect backward to the pattern book, and explain some of the complexity that they overlooked or ignored.

A moment arrived around 1637 when Taylor found a spark to fan into a flame.[166] When his friend Thomas Heywood revived the debate about women with his satirical look at married life in *A Curtaine Lecture*,[167] Taylor added his voice anonymously with *Divers Crab-tree*

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[165] Shimizu, "The Pattern of Perfect Womanhood," 77.

[166] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 13-14.

[167] Thomas Heywood, *A curtaine lecture as it is read by a countrey farmers wife to her good man. By a countrey gentlewoman or lady to her esquire or knight. By a souldiers wife to her captain or lievtenant. By a citizens or tradesmans wife to her husband. By a court lady to her lord. Concluding with an imitable lecture read by a queene to her soveraigne lord and king* (London: Printed by Robert Young for Iohn Aston, 1637 (2nd ed).

Lectures (1639) and *A Juniper Lecture* (1639 2nd ed.).[168] Using "lecture" in the titles of his own titles would have helped attract the same audience that had picked up Heywood's pamphlet in great numbers. But Taylor is not just alluding to Heywood's work, in the introduction to *A Juniper Lecture*, Taylor says, "I know you have heard of a *Curtaine Lecture* before now."[169] Though he does not use Heywood's name, there is no mistaking that Taylor meant Heywood's piece. A database search of Early English Books Online (EEBO) for titles in the 1630s containing "lecture," brings up only twenty-one possibilities. Of those, Heywood and Taylor are the only ones that use it in the main title with this kind of phrasing, and no others are called *A Curtaine Lecture*. Taylor's full titles read (in all their inflammatory language):

> *A iuniper lecture With the description of all sorts of women, good, and bad: from the modest to the maddest, from the most civil, to the scold rampant, their praise and dispraise compendiously related. Also the authors advice how to tame a shrew, or vexe her*.[170]

And the second:

> *Divers crabtree lectures Expressing the severall languages that shrews read to their husbands, either at morning, noone, or night. With a pleasant relation of a shrewes Munday, and shrewes Tuesday, and why they were so called. Also a lecture betweene a pedler and his wife in the canting language. With a new tricke to tame a shrew*.[171]

Shrews and scolds! Lectures, tricks, and vexing! Taylor used very provocative language indeed. Capp describes them as "essentially misogynist jest-books."[172] While the title of *A juniper lecture* implies that there will be a balanced accounting of good and bad women, Taylor's cynical account is heavily weighted, for "as millions may bee bad, there's thousands good."[173] In claiming to speak only against bad women, Taylor echoes Gosynhyll's *The Scole House of Women*, which, as Raymond points out, suggests that women who are bold enough to speak out against him will only prove his point.[174]

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[168] John Taylor, *Divers crabtree lectures* (London: J. Okes, 1639); *A juniper lecture* (London: J. Okes, 1639). *A Juniper Lecture* states in its extended title that it is a "Second Impression, with many new Additions" which reduces the gap in time between Heywood's and Taylor's publication dates to the tempo seen in response tracts.

[169] Taylor, *Juniper Lecture*, sig. A4 [1-2].

[170] Taylor, *Juniper Lecture*.

[171] Taylor, *Divers crabtree lectures* (London: J. Okes, 1639).

[172] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 117.

[173] Taylor, *A juniper lecture*, [11].

[174] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteers*, 280.

In Taylor's introduction, he sets the theme for the rest of the book, describing most women as scolds. "But as every woman is not a patient Grissel, so she is a rare Wonder amongst women, that neither hath the skil, or the desire to scold."[175] "Patient Grissel" was a variant of "Patient Griselda," a well-known folklore character of patience and obedience who originated in Giovanni Boccaccio's 1353 *Decamerone*. Print media made it easier to keep favourite archetypes alive. Taylor's friend Thomas Dekker wrote a play about "Patient Grissel" that was republished in 1603, and maybe she was a topic of conversation for these two writers. A popular ballad printed in 1635 (2nd ed.), called "A most excellent and vertuous ballad of the patient Grissell,"[176] would have been one of the contemporary sources keeping her in the public mind. Usually derisive of balladeers, Taylor could nonetheless have been playing to his audience with a familiar theme.

In one poem in *A Juniper Lecture,* Taylor describes a woman's bitter tongue.[177] Another advises young men to woo and wed rich old widows.

> A widow that is rich, and wondrous old,
> Wooe her, and stew her tender in her gold:
> If she be cold, a yong mans flame will toast her,
> Or else his fire of youth will rotten roast her:
> But let him day and night himselfe apply
> To please her still, and shee'le the sooner dye.[178]

Through and through, Taylor is witty and sarcastic, and his misogyny shows discomfort with the power women wield over men. Theology, law, and common praxis placed men in authority over households, but they were also "uneasily dependent on women who also played influential roles in economic and social life."[179]

"Lecture" could have implied that these works were intended to be read aloud, but it was also a rhetorical convention of the time that indicated a "popular and humorous form for the dramatization of marriage relations."[180] The fact that he published the *Juniper* and *Crabtree* lectures anonymously may be interpreted as reflecting a desire to have more freedom in speaking

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[175] Taylor, *A juniper lecture,* [8].

[176] Thomas Deloney, "A most excellent and vertuous ballad of the patient Grissell" (London: Printed for Iohn Wright, [ca. 1635?]). EEBO

[177] Taylor, *A juniper lecture,* 27.

[178] Taylor, *A juniper lecture,* 26.

[179] Hughes, 199.

[180] Henderson and McManus, 19.

with more aggressively misogynist language. But Taylor's body of work to this point consistently indulged "in facetious banter."[181] Capp describes Taylor's sexist writing as expressing his own and the culture's "insecurity lurking beneath the surface."[182] If we consider his history of creatively taking advantage of popular trends, we can interpret these lecture-tracts as written with the intention of setting the stage for writing his own rebuking tracts under pseudonyms.

Taylor's attempt to rekindle the old debate about women through his *Lectures* was quickly challenged by Mary Tattlewell and Joane Hit-him-home with their pamphlet *The Womens Sharpe Revenge*.[183] The playful names are obviously pseudonyms, and scholars have debated whether the authors were male or female. Henderson and McManus concluded that there was nothing in the tradition of the literary debates to indicate that men would write under female names, that there was much to suggest that men would *not* do so, and that the internal evidence of the pamphlets themselves pointed to female authorship, so it "seems reasonable to take these women at their word."[184] They were not alone in their view. However, Capp's close study of Taylor has produced the stronger and more recent evidence that shows Tattle-well and Hit-him-home were none other than John Taylor himself.[185] In direct opposition to Henderson and McManus, Capp says that the internal evidence makes it plain that the piece was written by Taylor.[186] So with two of the primary females who responded to the debate about women actually being pseudonyms for the single male author who wrote the pamphlets they were responding to, the small group of authors debating the merits of women got even smaller. Not much of a dialogue after all - rather a monologue debating different viewpoints.

Capp's revelation nullified *The womens sharpe revenge* (1640) as first-hand proof of women's responses to Taylor's public ranting, but it may still reflect some of their views since he was writing to capture them as an audience on that side of the "debate." He made quite

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[181] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 115.

[182] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 118.

[183] Parker, 87; Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home, *The womens sharpe revenge* (London: J.O., 1640).

[184] Henderson and McManus, 24.

[185] Capp footnotes several in addition to Henderson and McManus.

[186] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 118-19. Capp points out that *Juniper Lectures* announces the response pamphlet, *The womens sharpe revenge* to come the following year, as

empathetic observations about the experiences of women in response to his own pamphlets, and he did so by using "the most accomplished literary device of the pamphlet," the authorial persona of the Angry woman who speaks with blunt honesty.[187]

> Some through extreame want and poverty have beene forced to make more bold with that which is their owne, then to begge, steale, or borrow from others: Some (by the harsh usage of their too unkinde husbands) have been driven to their shifts hardly.[188]

Parker may have correctly described Tattle-well and Hit-him-home as writing about Taylor "derisively,"[189] but Capp calls its acceptance as female-authored a real tribute to Taylor's authorial skills, a feat that would have truly pleased him.[190] Writing under his female pseudonym, Taylor demonstrated empathy and mental agility by composing a believable reproach from a female perspective. "He was as much concerned to fan the flames and make money as to win the argument."[191] For example, he (as she) both criticized efforts to keep women docile by excluding them from education, and took Taylor to task for his short-comings. Tattle-well called him the

> Master Satyrist, the passionate Author of those most pittiful pamphlets called the Juniper Lectures, and Crab-tree Lectures; who by your meere Knavery, ambitious to purchase Knight-hood, & to adde a sir-reverence to your name, are now arrived to the height of your Aime, and from plaine *Seldome Sober*, are now come to the Title of Sir *Seldome Sober*.[192]

Taylor was not afraid to poke bitter fun at himself and his ambitions in the effort of winning over audiences on both sides of the debate. The perceptive criticisms of his female alter-egos were, in the end, "far more concerned about male insecurity than about the plight of women."[193] Understanding that Taylor wrote both sides, instead of just the misogynistic and rather dark side of the argument, makes it clear that he was a more sophisticated author than critics gave him credit for. Their transference of incorrect assumptions drawn from his late work

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well as how Taylor is unable to maintain the feminist persona for long, soon revealing himself. Capp doesn't go into more detail regarding his analysis.

[187] Raymond, *Pamphlets*, 282.

[188] Mary Tattle-well and Joane Hit-him-home, *The womens sharpe revenge* (London: J.O., 1640), 7.

[189] Parker, 87.

[190] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 119.

[191] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 34.

[192] Tattle-well and Hit-him-home, 2-3.

[193] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 118-119.

to his earlier work, *The Needles Excellency*, interfered with their understanding of his tone and intention in its preface.

His literary ambitions behind him, he ended his career in the 1640s with a brief flare of "renewed favour as a cavalier satirist," but in the end, as Capp says, his "wit was too rough, his morality too intrusive, his style too dated for Restoration tastes."[194] The hope he had expressed in the preface of *The Needles Excellency*, when he said, "To cherish vertue, banish idlenesse / For these ends, may this booke have good successe,"[195] had not been borne out and he ended his days ranting.

—ENGLAND'S PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

So far, we have looked closely at how Taylor shaped his writing for his audience, and in response to the writing of others around him, with a focus on Taylor's well-known participation in the seventeenth-century pamphlet war about women. This next section will look more generally at the publishing industry itself, and other influences on his writing of *The Needles Excellency* and its preface "The Praise of the Needle." The publishing industry engaged in a wide range of subjects, resulting in a deluge of new reading materials, and trends and conventions quickly emerged. Rhetorical strategies were used to engage an expanding reading public with this new medium, and as a form of authorial performance, their content cannot truly be taken at face value.[196]

Taylor read widely and was active in literary and theatre circles, both of which contributed to the print culture of England. There is plenty of evidence that he was aware of trends, popular publications, and themes. Taylor had on more than one occasion "borrowed" a title and/or structure from a contemporary work. This was a rhetorical strategy, similar to animadversion, that was common across the publishing industry of the seventeenth century. George Wither published *Wither's motto Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo* in 1621,[197] just days before his friend Taylor registered his own for publication as *Taylor's motto Et habeo, et careo, et*

[194] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 196.
[195] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [8].
[196] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 279.
[197] George Wither, *Wither's motto Nec habeo, nec careo, nec curo.* (London: Printed [by Augustine Mathewes] for Iohn Marriot, 1621).

curo.[198] He clearly got a look at what his friend had been working on and thought it clever! Between 1620-30, Martin Billingsley published *The Pens Excellencie*, a book on penmanship for male secretaries.[199] There is no evidence that Taylor knew of this book, but the popular argument of the era that pens were for men and needles were for women would have been familiar to him and it would have suited his love of word-play to take the title from Billingsley for *The Needles Excellency* so that these titles spoke to each other in the public sphere.[200]

The fact that "borrowing" from other authors was common at this time does not implicitly mean that it was universally accepted as good practice. Taylor himself engaged with the topic in rebuking accusations that his best work was lifted from other authors.

> Because my Name is Taylor, some doe doubt,
> My best invention comes by stealing out
> From other Writers workes, but I reply,
> And give their doubtfull diffidence the lye.
> To close this point I must be very briefe,
> And call them Knaves, that calls me Poet Thiefe.[201]

Nascent ideas about intellectual property were clearly being discussed in the literary community that Taylor was a part of. His bravado is in stark contrast to the fact that it was something that he obviously did do, because it was a profitable strategy.

Popular conduct books, such as Richard Brathwaite's *The English Gentleman* (1630) and *The English Gentlewoman* (1631),[202] which both published at the same time as Taylor's pattern book, prescribed proper conduct for men and women of the middling sorts - tradesmen, artisans, and merchants. Brathwaite, like others, advised women to spend time in silence doing their needlework: "Be it in the exercise of your Needle, or any other manuall employment : attemper that labour with some sweet meditation tending to Gods honour."[203] In the published sermon *A Preparative to Marriage* (1591), Henry Smith instructed that "Husbands must hold their hands

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[198] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 44; Taylor, *Taylor's motto Et habeo, et careo, et curo*. (London: Printed by Edward Allde for I T[rundle] & H G[osson], 1621).

[199] Martin Billingsley, *The Pens Excellencie* (London : W. Jones? solde by G. Humble, 1620-1630).

[200] Frye, 23. For discussion of seventeenth-century usage by men and women.

[201] Taylor, *An arrant thiefe, vvhom euery man may trust* (London: Printed by Edw: All-de, for Henry Gosson, 1622, 2nd ed.), [22].

[202] Richard Brathwaite, *The English gentleman, and English gentlewoman both in one volume* (London: Printed by John Dawson, 1641).

and wives their tongues."[204] In similar fashion, Taylor's instruction to women to "use their tongues lesse and their Needles more,"[205] reflects the familiar dialogue on the prescribed roles of women. Since the vast majority of written sources came from elite men, the dialogue is more a reflection of the insecurities those men had about the power of women's voices than it is a representation of common beliefs across the culture. Scholars such as Buxton caution against reading these sexist, prescriptive passages as indicative of actual familial relations, since their very presence could demonstrate weak cultural norms of marriage and household structure, or a discord between the ideal and reality.[206]

My approach to viewing *The Needles Excellency* as an intersection of influences draws on Robert Darnton's "Communications Circuit."[207] This is a map that shows the interrelatedness of actors in the publishing industry which Darnton created at a time when the interdisciplinary field of book history was fairly new and growing, and which continues to be a useful model in book history. The influences this paper primarily examines regarding *The Needles Excellency* are author, publisher, and readers. Publishers and readers made demands of authors, authors wrote in order to engage particular reading audiences, and reader's purchases affected the business of publishers. As an example, the topic of the "woman question" was so popular that most any pamphlet or broadsheet that addressed it was a big seller, which motivated writers and publishers to keep the fires of controversy stoked. According to Sara Mendelson, there was a cause-and-effect relationship between the social debate about the genders and the entrepreneurs of popular print - "subversive or outrageous works proved to be a stimulus to sales, and the prospect of

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[203] Brathwaite, *The English gentlewoman* (London : Printed by B. Alsop and T. Fauucet, for Michaell Sparke, dwelling in Greene Arbor, 1631), 49.

[204] Henry Smith, *A Preparative to Marriage*, (London : By R. Field for Thomas Man, dwelling in Paternoster row, at the signe of the Talbot, 1591), 54.

[205] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

[206] Antony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England,* Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History (Boydell Press, 2015), 75.

[207] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?," in *Book History Reader,* eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9-11. Reprinted from the 1982 original essay. When he he revisited his essay in 2007, he reflected on the "impressive advances in the history of books," calling out a few scholars like John Barnard and Peter Blaynay. Darnton, "'What is the History of Books?' Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4.3, (2007): 505-506.

commercial profit in turn encouraged potential authors to come up with counter-attacks and sequels in different formats to attract readers with varying levels of literacy."[208]

The English culture of writing and reading was based in London, where the "book trade had long been a remarkably vibrant, variegated, specialized, and commercially responsive industry."[209] There are obvious reasons why 97% of books printed in sixteenth-century England were printed in London.[210] Number one, it was a thriving urban hub at the centre of international trade, due to its port. London was also the social and political centre. It was by far the biggest city in England with about 400,000 people in 1642, when the population of the entire country was around five million.[211] Taylor's tracts would have been easily available in London. It was where his publishers were and where he lived when he was not travelling. He was a public figure in the city which may have raised demand for his work, or made his name on the cover recognizable.

This does not mean that Taylor's success was exclusively an urban London phenomenon. Satellite print centres in other important cities also developed substantial networks of book-trade.[212] There were a variety of channels of print distribution out to these and other areas. John Barnard gives us the example of the independent provincial bookseller Thomas Parkhurst who had a reputation of being able to sell a whole print-run almost before it had been heard of in London.[213] There were annual fairs where booksellers could have picked up Taylor's and others' writings, such as one near Cambridge, in Stourbridge, which was large enough to be frequented by London publishers with their newest titles.[214] Taylor also acted as his own distributer, taking copies of his works on his travels. In an account of his travels in *A very Merry Wherry-Ferry-*

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[208] Sara Mendelson, "Women and Print," in *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660*, ed. Joad Raymond,289.

[209] Jason McElligott, "1641," in *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660,* ed. Joad Raymond, The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 602.

[210] Andrew Pettegree, *The French Book and the European Book World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 249..

[211] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering,* 90.

[212] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering,* 89.

[213] John Barnard, "London Publishing, 1640-1660: Crisis, Continuity, and Innovation," *Book History* 4, no. 1 (2001), 5.

[214] Peter Clark, 'The Ownership of Books in England, 1560-1640', in *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education,* Lawrence Stone (ed.) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 107.

Voyage, he writes about taking a boat to a mart in York and the trunk of books he brought along. Questioned en route about his purpose, he showed "Bookes of Chronicles and Kings / Some Prose, some Verse, and idle Sonettings."[215]

There are other ways his books could have found their way out to more rural areas, not least of which is London visitors who took purchases with them back to country homes or their provincial businesses. There is plenty of evidence of book collecting in the Midlands of England, as shown by land-owners' probate records and wills.[216] These print-distribution routes collectively imply the likelihood that needlework pattern books and literature on the "woman question" were being read outside of London and other urban centres.

Of course, the publishers that Taylor worked with specifically deserve some mention. The distinction between publisher and printer was not as clear then as it is now, and the spotty information given in the books themselves challenges bibliographers. In the first half of his career, Taylor worked with a variety of printer/publishers. Edward Allde, who appears to have been a very typical London printer, worked with Taylor regularly from 1612 to his death in 1627/28. The fact that he is sometimes listed without a separate publisher or bookseller named, may indicate that he acted in both capacities for Taylor on occasion.[217] His wife Elizabeth Allde took over the printing business on his death, but it is possible that some of the "E. Allde" credit prior to 1628 was also her work during a time when they may have run the business together.[218] In 1630, she printed three works for Taylor to be sold by bookseller Henry Gosson. As "Elizabeth Allde," she was one of several printers who prepared *All the Workes of John Taylor*, as "Eliz. Allde," she was the solitary printer for *Christian Admonitions against the two fearefull sinnes of cursing and swearing*, and she got lone credit by her full name again for *The great eater, of Kent*.[219] It is very interesting that Taylor was willing to work with a woman, and that her name appeared with his in print. If he were a dyed-in-the-wool woman-hater, it seems unlikely

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[215] Taylor, *Workes*, ii, 9.

[216] Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector," *The Library* 11.3 (1989), 209-10.

[217] R. B. McKerrow, "Edward Allde as a Typical Trade Printer," *The Library* Vol. X. No. 2 September 1929, 137.

[218] Carole Levin, Anna Riehl Bertolet, Jo Eldridge Carney editors, *Biographical Encyclopedia of Early Modern Englishwomen: Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts, 1500-1650* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 238.

[219] Data gathered from the *Early English Books Online* database.

that he would have been willing to do that. At the very least, it is another example of how paradoxical Taylor could be, as opposed to Parker's view that his work showed a "fear of women."[220]

To conclude, John Taylor was a powerful personality, ambitious, and clever. Those qualities found expression in his authorial work - both written and performed. The preface of his pattern book *The Needles Excellency* was no exception. It had a place in seventeenth-century English society along with conduct books, ballads, pamphlets, and plays. Taylor did not publish the pattern book as part of a patriarchal agenda or misogynist vent. Viewing his writing career as a whole, it is clear that Taylor was full of contradictions which he put to use on both sides of arguments. He was an entrepreneurial pen-for-hire trying to increase his sales.

Chapter 3: TAYLOR'S AUDIENCE

Thus far, this paper has looked closely at the pattern book *The Needles Excellency*, and its author John Taylor. In this final chapter, the focus will be on the audience of the book. It investigates the women and craftspeople whom Taylor addressed, and how the preface intersected with literacy. Susan Frye's book, *Pens and Needles*, placed a few specific pattern books, including Taylor's, within early modern women's textualities and the context of a society experiencing and desiring social mobility.[221] I build on her work to more fully develop the examination of Taylor's preface as marketing to the upwardly mobile, and what forms of "text" some of his patterns offered women for self-expression and demonstrating household identity.

—THE TARGET MARKET

The intended audience of *The Needles Excellency* has come up throughout this thesis. Women interested in being better Christians by being industriously employed at a virtuous domestic occupation; those who wanted or needed to contribute to building up the value of the household, perhaps fuelled by a desire for upward mobility; but also artisans and craftspeople of both sexes. My interpretation of the composition of Taylor's audience conflicts with previous

[220] Parker, 87.
[221] Frye, *Pens and Needles*, 126-130.

scholarship, so this next section will talk about those differences in more depth. There are clues in his own writing, in conventions of the time, in literacy patterns, and the affordability of his book.

There are five "famed needlewomen" whom Taylor celebrated in individual sonnets as part of the introductory text to *The Needles Excellency*. Presented in chronological order, he first wrote of Katherine of Aragon, Queen to Henry VIII, then her daughter Queen Mary, followed by Queen Elizabeth, and after, Mary, late Countess of Pembroke, and ending with Lady Elizabeth Dormer, "Wife to the late Right Honourable, the Lord Robert Dormer deceased."[222] Taylor does use examples of great ladies in the way that Parker describes, offering the upwardly mobile, as Helen Smith says, "imaginative access to gentry circles and a culture of elite needlework,"[223] but his purpose is more sophisticated than Parker makes it seem. For example, Jones and Stallybrass identify one of Taylor's motives as nationalistic, creating a patriotic link between his audience and great English women.[224] I agree with these findings, but add that, at the time of publication, one motivation would have been very obvious to Taylor's readers. It was directed, as many book dedications of the period were, at one person who was, or had potential to be, a patron.

[222] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [14].

[223] Helen Smith, '*Grossly Material Things': Women and Book Production in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 80.

[224] Jones and Stallybrass, 137.

image 12: Possible portrait of Lady Elizabeth Dormer ca. 1600s. Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

"The Right Honourable and religious Lady, Elizabeth Dormer" was still living in November 1629, when *The Needles Excellency* was entered into the Stationers' Register. A portrait considered likely to be of her,[225] shows a pious widow from the period circa 1600 (give

[225] Anon., *Portrait of a member of the Browne and or Dormer family* (ca. 1600), Wikimedia Commons, originally Woolley & Wallis, Lot: 43 Sale: Fine Old Masters & 19th Century Paintings - 10 Dec 2014.

or take a decade),[226] wearing sober black, trimmed with delicate, white, lace, sleeve cuffs, cross jewelry (a rosary?), and sharing the frame with an angel holding a cross. Her husband, Robert Lord Dormer, bought his peerage in June 1615, and he became the first Baron Dormer of Wenge for a brief time before his death in 1616. Including Lady Dormer in the company of recent queens of England may have been meant to stroke her ego, as well as inspiring nostalgia. Her father had served under both Queen Mary I and Queen Elizabeth I, her husband Robert's half-sister had been Queen Mary's closest companion, and Queen Elizabeth had knighted Robert while visiting the country house of Elizabeth Dormer's father, Viscount Anthony Browne in 1591.[227] Despite the Catholic sympathies of the Dormer and Browne families, they outwardly conformed and were successful in English government and in advancing their families' socio-economic statuses. The inclusion of Catholic Queens Mary I and Katherine of Aragon as exemplary women was not a neutral choice in seventeenth-century England and they may indicate Taylor's efforts to cater to Lady Dormer and other Catholic-sympathizers.

Did Taylor send Lady Dormer a copy of *The Needles Excellency*, hoping that his compliment to her in her twilight years would inspire her to give generously as a patroness of his work? The notable woman just prior to Lady Dormer in the preface was Mary Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. An accomplished author herself, she was also known for her literary patronage. Was that Taylor's way of saying, "Hint, hint!"?[228] It could also have been a familial reference, since Elizabeth Dormer's grandson married into the Herbert family.[229] Did he think that the Dormer-family's relatively recent elevation would make her more sympathetic to his

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[226] The portrait is considered to be of either Elizabeth Dormer (née Browne) or Mary, her sister-in-law twice-over: Elizabeth's husband's sister *and* her brother's wife. Elizabeth was widowed in 1616, and Mary in 1592. Anon, Mary Dormer/Browne or Elizabeth Dormer/Browne as widows, c. 1592 or c. 1616, *Wikimedia Commons,* originally Woolley & Wallis, Lot: 43 Sale: Fine Old Masters & 19th Century Paintings - 10 Dec 2014.

[227] Roger Virgoe, "DORMER, Robert (1551-1616), of Wing, Buckinghamshire," Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603*, ed. P.W. Hasler, 1981, available at http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/dormer-robert-1551-1616; Alex Coles, "Dormer," and "Dormer Family Tree," *Wing Buckinghamshire One-Place Study*, http://wing-ops.org.uk/

[228] Margaret P. Hannay, "Herbert [née Sidney], Mary, countess of Pembroke (1561–1621), writer and literary patron" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 2 Mar. 2018.

[229] The marriage presumably took place before Elizabeth died, since their child was born in 1632, but there is no record of their marriage date. http://wing-ops.org.uk/explorations/families/dormer/dormer-family-tree/

own ambitions? We do not have the answer to those questions, but until the 1630s, Taylor was still actively seeking patronage.[230] Just as Taylor was not above working with a female printer when it profited him, he was not against seeking patronage wherever he thought he might gain it, so it is unlikely that her faith deterred him. He must have hoped or assumed that his anti-Catholic works were not deeply offensive to his Catholic patrons, since he never made apologies and continued to mix company. His biggest complaint was the way they exercised their faith.

> You that for pomp, and Titles transitory
> Rob your Mighty maker of his Glory,
> And give the Honour due to him alone
> Unto a Carved block, a stock or stone,
> An Image, a Similytude, or feature
> Of Angell, Saint, or Man, or any creature,
> To Alters, Lamps, to Holly Bread, or Waters,
> To shrines, or tapers, or such Jugling matters,
> To Relliques, of the dead, or of the living
> This is the most supreamest kind of Theiving.[231]

I think the mix of religious backgrounds of the exemplary women allowed Taylor to show that how morally a woman acts is more important than their religious affiliation – "workes showes her worth."[232] The use of "famed needlewomen," especially Lady Dormer who had herself risen in status, was also a literary strategy to attract an audience of upwardly-mobile wives. Bernard Capp recognized that Taylor "was usually aiming at readers in more than one category."[233] As a writer living by the words he sold, patrons helped keep him afloat, brought him into their circles, and gained him more subscribers, but he also needed to attract as many retail-buyers as possible.

Taylor's aim at multiple types of readers included artisans and merchants in his book address: to all "sorts of Arts and Trades."[234] By directly stating, "If any aske to whom these lines are writ," he could counter attempts to railroad the marketing of the book at only one audience. He really intended the book to be for *anyone* who works with a needle - "not to particulars of hee or shee /But generally to all in generall."[235] But Parker's argument seems to disregard these

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[230] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 196.
[231] Taylor, *An arrant thiefe,* [12].
[232] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [14].
[233] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 67.
[234] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [3] sig. A2.
[235] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [16].

direct statements that seem to indicate that Taylor knew who would be interested in what the book offered. After only brief examination of Taylor's introduction,[236] she says, "his real praise is reserved for the fact that it renders women powerless, silent and still," and uses as evidence the lines which I discussed previously, about his charge that women use "their tongues lesse, and their needles more."[237] What about all "sorts of Arts and Trades," "to […] hee or shee," "to him or her or thee," "to all in generall," "To all degrees of both sexes, that love or live by the laudable imployment of the needle?"[238] Sure Taylor got in a jab with his personal opinion that women, especially shrewish ones, talk too much for his tastes, but Parker's choice of lines seems to have been chosen to support her view. Her proclamation that these are the most telling lines of the entire poem lacks a discussion of their context in the poem, in Taylor's life, or in seventeenth-century England. Taylor was more complex than that. Women were more complex than that. Just because he said that women should be quieter, did not mean that they internalized his words, or that they themselves made a connection between silence and needlework. And doesn't offering women a tool for improving their craft (paid or not), make them *more* powerful and active? Contrary to Parker, Shimizu, and others, I argue that Taylor addressed a wider audience than just domestic women, and that he did not believe needlework would transform women in any way, rather it was wishful joking on Taylor's part because he knew he was powerless to change them.

Parker's conviction regarding the entire genre of needlework pattern books was influential when other scholars wrote about the pattern books. Shimizu took the stance that pattern books sought to teach women the domestic skill of needlework in order to "craft them into the cultural image of the ideal woman," with the goal not being the textiles produced, but

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[236] When discussing *The Needles Excellency* specifically, there are several issues with Parker's data, regarding publication dates and editions, which cast doubt on how closely she examined the book and its author, or understood its place in seventeenth-century book history. In the end note referencing the book, she says that it was first published in 1624 and was in the third edition by 1634. In the text of page 86 she says that it was in its tenth edition by 1631. She has no reference for these dates. According to the Houghton Library at Harvard University, their copies of the 1631 printing are second editions. Per Lotz, the 1634 printing was the tenth edition. The 1636 printing was still the tenth edition, and the twelfth edition came in 1640. There is no way to predict when the first edition came out. Even Bernard Capp, who researched Taylor extensively, offers no first-edition date for the pattern book.

[237] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].

[238] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [1] sig. A, [15].

rather "the production of feminine women and good wives."[239] I recognize that *The Needles Excellency* and its poetic opening were published at a time when society was even more strongly structured to support patriarchal order, however, I have shown that it is too simplistic to reduce Taylor's intended audience to the unwilling recipients of a didactic text.

Literacy levels of *The Needles Excellency*'s readers is one area of inquiry that has not been probed when trying to define the book's audience and its impact. Granted, it is the most challenging to take on, since reading is an activity that does not usually leave evidence that we can recover.[240] Growing interest in the history of reading, as well as in women's engagement with print culture, has engaged new dialogues and research which help open the discussion.[241] Did Taylor expect that most of his audience could read his introduction, or that they would have it read to them? Most of the pages are just pictures - the needlework patterns - but they too require a certain kind of literacy to read them.

We can conclude that somewhere between ten- to thirty-percent of women could read Taylor's poem, "The Praise of the Needle," and the other seventy- to ninety-percent never knew what it said, or only knew due to being told or having it read to them.[242] However, the potential market for this kind of book was likely to have a higher proportion of literate readers than the general population, because those who had disposable income to buy books and needlework materials, and the time to dedicate to either, were also more likely to be able to read. Literacy rates dropped even lower outside of major cities, so it may even have been one of Taylor's

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[239] Shimizu, 76.

[240] Andy Kesson and Emma Smith, "Introduction: Towards a Definition of Print Popularity," in *The Elizabethan Top Ten* (Farnham; Burlington: Ashgate, 2013), 11.

[241] For some material on this topic, see: Helen Wilcox, "'ah Famous Citie': Women, Writing, and Early Modern London," *Feminist Review* 96 (2010): 20–40; Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker, eds. *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660,* ed. Joad Raymond, The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Helen Smith, "'More Swete Vnto the Eare / than Holsome for Ye Mynde': Embodying Early Modern Women's Reading," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73.3 (2010): 413-32.

[242] Reformation belief that people should read the Bible for themselves, coupled with advances in printing technology meant that literacy (the ability to read and write) was on a dramatic rise during Taylor's time. Reading literacy rose from a minimum of ten-percent in 1600s England, to thirty-percent in 1700 for women, and thirty to fifty-percent for men. Reading was taught before writing so more people could read than write, and since print-type was easier to learn that hand-written script, printed materials helped increase literacy. Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 89-91.

motivations for participating in publishing *The Needles Excellency.* Since it is mainly a "picture book," it would have had the potential to reach an audience that most of his other works did not. The images would have had the greatest value to those who could decipher their meanings. Which patterns were for woven, knitted or counted-stitch work? Which were for bobbin-lace or needle-lace? What is the meaning of the rabbit-hunt scene? The cliché that a picture speaks a thousand words is particularly relevant here when discussing visual literacy.[243]

Book historian Matt Cohen describes "mulling over of books, society, consciousness, and power" as leading to powerful "questions about literacy, the relationship between orality and literacy, the existence of a 'public sphere'—even the definition of the 'book' and of 'culture.'"[244] Expanding the boundaries of literacy to include the spoken word and visual symbolism, both in public and private spaces, increases our understanding of the cultural awareness of seventeenth-century people. Oral traditions in England at this time, such as reading aloud to family and friends, church sermons, and popular ballads, means that all sorts of people could be familiar with what was circulating in print, without having read it themselves. According to Capp, "Taylor certainly wrote with listeners as well as readers in mind. He even gave readings himself: young Richard Hatton said he had heard him reciting his compositions in person."[245]

Another way that *The Needles Excellency* was very accessible, helping fuel its good sales and multiple editions and reprinting, was its relatively low cost.[246] The form in which it was actually sold would have been the same as most printed material in the early modern period; unbound, just pages without a separate cover and held together with a few simple stitches. They

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[243] Smith, *'Grossly Material Things,'* 200-201.

[244] Matt Cohen, "The History of the Book in New England," *Book History* 11 (2008): 301.

[245] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 72.

[246] For those who do not study early book history, or have a chance to handle them in their original format, there is a misconception that all early books were rich treasures. I believe this modern misunderstanding about the prevalence and quality of book bindings may come from curatorial practices of early collectors, including libraries and museums. Catalogues rarely make note of modern rebinding or what its original form would have been, leading those not knowledgeable about such things to think that all seventeenth-century books were leather-bound with gilt-edge pages. I had this realization during my first visit to a rare book collection at the British Library. My suspicion, mentioned earlier, of the pristine cover of a 1640 edition of *The Needles Excellency* which I was examining, turned up no information or even notation regarding the much newer binding. I had to do tangential research about bookselling practices to

were only bound and carefully sewn when a collector or a publisher put many together into collection, at their own additional expense. This was especially true of short ephemeral works such as pamphlets and the needlework pattern books. Joad Raymond defines a pamphlet from the early modern period as printed material up to the size of a small book,[247] so while pattern books often referred to themselves as books or "little books," they would have fallen in the pricing category of pamphlets.

A penny in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could buy a ballad, admission to the pit of the Globe theatre, or a pot of ale. Chapbooks (short pamphlets) could go as high as three or four pence. Based on carpenter wages around 1630 of twelve pence per day (London wages being even higher), ballads and small pamphlets would be within reach of workers who thought the luxury of such an entertainment worth the cost of a few drinks.[248] These cheaply printed materials were read largely as a random act of ephemeral pleasure, whereas a pattern book had more lasting value beyond the witty lines of the introductory poem.

*The Needles Excellency'*s short length of about forty pages would have qualified it as a pamphlet, but Taylor was shooting for an upper-middling audience, as evidenced by the copperplate prints and his marketing pitch in its introduction, so it would likely have been priced higher. Intentional higher pricing is mentioned in his pamphlet *A Common Whore,* which was a play on words using the metaphor of a prostitute to describe his pamphlet as cheap entertainment. He seems to have based the idea on an early sixteenth-century usage of 'pamphelet' which meant a prostitute.[249] "For five pence honest man or knave may have her."[250] Five pence was significantly more than most short pieces, and would have set his work beyond the reach of labour workers. He also used a disingenuous rhetorical ploy to gain credibility with his target audience, distancing his work from the labouring class he was pulling away from. He affected to despise popular forms like ballads, but, intentionally or not, his work remained within popular idioms.[251]

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understand the binding differences, something that not all researchers may be able to do when presenting information to the public about pattern books.

[247] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 5.

[248] Wiltenburg, *Disorderly Women*, 30.

[249] Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 9.

[250] Taylor, *A Common Whore* (1622), republished in *Workes* (1630), ii, 106.

[251] Raymond, ed. *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, Volume I: Cheap Print in Britain and Ireland to 1660* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), 84.

So on the one hand, *The Needles Excellency* would have been in financial reach for a wide range of people, Taylor really cast the net wide in addressing the book to "all sorts," and its picture-heavy contents meant a wider audience than usual for Taylor's work. But on the other hand, there were limitations on how big the readership of his preface could really be. Most households were working and struggling, and would not have had time, inclination, or skill to make use of the decorative designs or to read Taylor's clever rhymes. Only 10,000-20,000 families accounted for the ruling elite of the early modern period, of which, in 1600, approximately 60 families were titled aristocracy.[252] Even adding the emergent "middling-sorts," made-up mainly of the artisan and merchant households to whom pattern books were primarily marketed, *The Needles Excellency* would still have only reached a small fraction of England's millions. Nonetheless, for those elite women, the pattern books (Taylor's included) provided expanded opportunities for agency and self-expression.

—WOMEN

Susan Frye promoted the concept of needlework textiles as an alternate form of text, one through which women could express themselves and share in that expression. Her influential work on the intersection of visual and verbal textuality, as expressed materially through needlework, considers the literary and historical portrayal of needleworkers and their wares, as well as the historical practice, within the context of practice theory. My analysis of women's engagement with Taylor's book builds on Frye's argument that "thousands of early modern English women, regardless of their degree of lettered literacy, exercised textualities that changed the everyday even as they lived it."[253]

There are a couple of important theories to keep in mind when considering early modern women's engagement with their patriarchal society. When Parker said that the practice of embroidery inculcated femininity in needleworkers, I believe she may have been making reference to Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice, which includes the idea that individual and

[252] Henry French, "'Gentlemen': Remaking the English Ruling Class," in *A Social History of England 1500-1750*, ed. Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 269-270.

[253] Frye, 12.

collective practices perpetuate cultural norms.[254] *Habitus*, or deeply habitual ways that people almost intuitively live their lives, can imbue objects with the same social values, or cultural capital, embedded in those practices.[255] Parker also recognized that women's practice of embroidery could lead them to "an awareness of the extraordinary constraints of femininity, providing at times a means of negotiating them, and at other times provoking the desire to escape their constraints."[256] However, even as she called this the saving grace of needlework's role in women's lives, she down-played this important aspect and diminished women's efforts by portraying these acts as covert, "indissolubly linked to their powerlessness," and opposing an oppressive force that should not be underestimated.[257] If we also bring to this discussion the practice theory of Michel de Certeau, then Parker underestimated the power of the idea that early modern people also acted consciously toward desired outcomes.[258] We cannot assume that women were shaped by the products imposed on them (conduct books, pattern books, fashions, etc). "To assume that is to misunderstand the act of 'consumption' This misunderstanding assumes that 'assimilating' necessarily means 'becoming similar to' what one absorbs, and not 'making something similar' to what one is, making it one's own, appropriating it or reappropriating it."[259] Women of the past are no longer seen as victims, nor as completely free-agents, but as participants in a complicated, multi-layered, patriarchal society where individual experiences could be vastly different.

Designs rich in meaning gave women a voice through their textiles, but they also understood how to read them. Even "illiterate" women (by modern standards) had a rich vocabulary in a language where a picture spoke a thousand words. The seventeenth-century consumer of *The Needles Excellency* was able to read the images, identify with certain meanings or fashion trends, and then use them to express her sense of self and identity within a social context where clothes and hand-made gifts spoke loudly.

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[254] Parker, 11; Parker wrote for a public audience in *The Subversive Stitch*, without footnotes and few endnotes. Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977), 82.

[255] Bourdieu, 52-55.

[256] Parker, 11.

[257] Parker, 11.

[258] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

[259] de Certeau, 166.

Practice theory is integral to *gender performance,* a concept developed by Judith Butler.[260] It offers a new angle for reinterpreting gender issues presented by needlework pattern books such as *The Needles Excellency*. The performance of gender (practices socially acceptable for, in this case, women) both constructed and reinforced the definition of femininity, an idea consistent with Parker's approach. But because it was constantly being constructed, performances varied, and therein lies both the essence of gender-relations instability, and *opportunities for agency*. The theory of gender performativity makes it possible to consider early modern women strategically performing their needlework within the expectations of women in their socio-economic class in order to validate their economic, intellectual, spiritual, and creative activities. Perhaps Parker saw the degrees of agency as too slim to afford women any power at all, or maybe she simply over-generalized the experiences of past women. It was socially acceptable for women to own or have access to Taylor's book, but whether or not they read the preface, agreed with it, or ignored it altogether was within their realm of influence. How they used the patterns was too.

Using as a lens Butler's theory of *agency in oppression*, we reopen space for finding ways that women made choices around needlework, and counter the didactic and oppressive labels attached to the pattern books. Even within overtly patriarchal seventeenth-century England, "oppression could become the condition of your agency."[261] Regardless of Taylor's sexist jibes in the first handful of pages, the images spoke to his audience more loudly, and as Frye puts it, "women were conscious of exercising agency as they performed embroidery."[262] Lady Mary Mildmay embroidered designs of her own making along, and took pride in her ability to invent them from her own imagination. Forms of the words "wrought," and "work," were commonly used to mean embroidery, so here she writes of not only her active choice of subject for her needlework, but also of her embroidery as an exercise equal to her botany drawings.

> Also every day I spent some time in works of mine own invention without sample of drawing or pattern before me, for carpet or cushion work and to draw flowers and fruits to their life with my plummet upon paper. All which variety of exercises did greatly recreate my mind, for I thought of nothing else but that I was a doing in every particular

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[260] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, (New York: Routlege, 1999). First published in 1990.

[261] Butler, "Judith Butler: As a Jew, I Was Taught It Was Ethically Imperative to Speak Up," *Haaretz*, February 24, 2010, http://www.haaretz.com/news/judith-butler-as-a-jew-i-was-taught-it-was-ethically-imperative-to-speak-up-1.266243.

[262] Frye, xviii.

one of these said exercises.[263]

Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690) shared and managed the embroidery work of her maids. She taught her servants to read, she wrote a lot, and was responsible for teaching her children.[264] Instructing and directing her maids' needlework would have involved a lot of freedom of choice in what they wrought. Women had a lot of control over where, when, what, with whom, how, and why they plied their needles. Lady Margaret Hoby wrote many times in her diary of working on her embroidery, sometimes in a social context, and noting different times of day.[265] On one occasion, she included her maids in listening to someone read as they stitched: "After prairs [prayers], I wrought, as I was accustomed, with my maides, and hard [heard] Mr Ardington read : and, after I dined and had slept a Litle, I went to my worke againe, and hard [heard] Mr Ardington againe."[266]

By finding and telling the micro-histories of women who left traces of their needlework practice and their engagement with the needlework pattern books, it reveals that they "were not bound by, or obeyed only partially, the strictures of conduct books," and that they were active participants in the economic and social rise of the household. It shows that reading and needlework were both practiced and appreciated as valuable activities for women. In the memoirs of Sir Hugh Chomley, he "proudly recalled that when his wife was 'first a house keeper she imployed her selfe and mades much with their needles but her chiefe delight was in her booke being addicted to reade and well versed in history'. Good housekeeping and voracious reading are here presented as complementary 'imployments' for a new wife."[267]

Seventeenth-century gender roles were unstable, providing cracks in the patriarchal foundation for women to fashion "complex and creative identities as they worked with their

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[263] Lady Grace Mildmay, *Autobiography* (1617), in *With Faith and Physic: the Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620*, ed. Linda Pollock (New York: St Martin's Press, 1993), 35.

[264] Elizabeth Walker, Diary 1623-1690, N.d. Orlando.cambridge.org, Great Britain.

[265] Margaret Hoby, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby 1599-1605*, ed. Joanna Moody (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 157-165.

[266] Hoby, 159. Day 11 of unknown month in 1601.

[267] Smith, 177.

needles."[268] Women, in the context of the material spaces they acted in, produced meaning "through, rather than being simply preserved in, the processes of making, use, and exchange."[269]

Women also had a voice in who received the fruits of their labors. In addition to doing needlework for the household, they created embroidered gifts for others. Lisa Klein's important article on Elizabethan gifts of needlework elucidates the ability of hand-made works to evoke the giver, and thus they had more power in forging relationships and supporting a family's social rise.[270] She invokes Foucault's definition of power when explaining the function of social relations in the sixteenth century, validating the power she imbues gifts with,[271] and thus how embroidered gifts worked to "foster mutual obligation."[272] Taylor's curation of the elaborate designs offered in his pattern book enabled the middling sorts to elevate the quality of their needlework and make more memorable and valuable gifts. This made "women active participants in cultural exchange" and allowed them a more powerful role in forging alliances.[273]

There has not been much study of average women's use of gifts, as records of gift-giving are very scarce. Alexandra Shepard suggests that this is an overlooked area of economic exchange, and that the gifts and favours between women would have had a significant impact.[274] Gifts were a strategy used by women of all ranks, so perhaps we can extrapolate from their example. Mary, Queen of Scots, lived before *The Needles Excellency* was first printed, but she is famed for her needlework done while in captivity and for her political use of it, and as someone with a life very well documented, she is a rare source of insight. Mary was thoughtful and inventive about the gifts she made for others, either as political messages or in hopes of gaining favour from recipients in her social and familial networks. Around 1572 she devised an embroidery for Ann Dacre, with a cryptic design that sent a message of understanding and hope to her Catholic friend. Sometime in 1574, Mary succeeded in sending a gift to Queen Elizabeth. The French ambassador in England informed his King that, "The Queen of Scots, your sister-in-

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[268] Lisa Klein, "Early Modern English Embroideries: Contexts and Techniques," *Bulletin of the Detroit Institute of Arts* 75.2 (2001): 41.

[269] Smith, 11.

[270] Klein, 476.

[271] Klein, n462.

[272] Klein, 471.

[273] Klein, 462.

[274] Alexandra Shepard, "Creating Women in the Early Modern English Economy," *History Workshop Journal* 79 no. 1 (2015) 15.

law, is very well, and yesterday I presented on her behalf a skirt of crimson satin, worked with silver, very fine and all worked with her own hand, to the Queen of England, to whom the present was very agreable, for she found it very nice and has prized it much; and she seemed to me that I found her much softened towards her."[275] Lisa Klein discussed the difficulty in finding gift-giving documented, and so she also relied on women of great status for examples. But the intention behind the gift can be considered universal. "A hand-wrought gift has a particular intimacy, authority, and efficacy that other gifts, like money or plate, lack." Imbued with personal investment, the gifts more readily signify the giver.[276]

I rely on indirect evidence and theoretical principles, because primary sources documenting women's opinions and experiences of Taylor's pattern book are yet to be discovered in the archives. We can conclude that Taylor did attract at least a portion of the female audience he sought, because he did work with a woman printer several times as pointed out earlier, he regularly wrote about women who supported him, including those who freely hosted him,[277] and there are records of women owning some of his other works. The Bodleian Library has a copy of one of his pamphlets which is inscribed "Elizabeth Evans Her Book 1710."[278] Francis Wolfreston (d. 1677), a seventeenth-century gentlewoman, had collected at least a dozen of Taylor's published tracts.[279] They were part of an extensive library kept at her home Statfold Hall near Tamworth, where she took up residence upon her marriage in 1631. She thought well enough of them to inscribe them "frances wolfreston hor bouk,"[280] signifying that they were part of her personal collection (within the whole) of over one hundred books.[281] Not all the titles of Taylor's she had can be recovered, but ten are known, thanks to her inscription. *The Needles Excellency* is not amongst them, but this is not entirely surprising. The large lot of her books that Paul Morgan researched were all in their original unbound form and many had water and rodent

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[275] Margaret Swain, *The Needlework of Mary Queen of Scots* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1973), 78; quoted in Swain, 83.

[276] Lisa M. Klein, "Your Humble Handmaid: Elizabethan Gifts of Needlework," *Renaissance Quarterly* 50.2 (1997): 471, 479.

[277] Taylor, *The Pennyles Pilgrimage* (London: Printed by Edw: All-de, at the charges of the author, 1618), [17].

[278] Capp, *The World of John Taylor*, 69.

[279] Paul Morgan, "Frances Wolfreston and 'Hor Bouks': A Seventeenth-Century Woman Book-Collector," *The Library,* September (1989), 11; Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 70.

[280] Morgan, 211.

[281] Morgan, 199, 201, 207.

damage. Additionally, we must consider that pattern books took heavy damage from being used to transfer the designs. So if Wolfreston ever did own Taylor's pattern book, it is entirely possible that it was destroyed.

Taylor's direction that women use "their tongues lesse, and their needles more,"[282] clearly stated his opinion that women should not talk so much, but not quite the total silencing that Shimizu and Parker heard in his words. Their bigger error was in assuming that women took to heart his admonishment. Just as Taylor acknowledged women would pick and choose from his patterns, they also could have read his introduction selectively (or skipped it altogether).

> So Maides may (from their Mistresse, or their Mother)
> Learne to leave one worke, and to learne another.
> For here they may make choyce of which is which,
> And skip from worke to worke, from stitch to stitch.

He recognized the fact that needlework was a homosocial activity, and I think he knew that it was wishful thinking on his part to expect them to be quiet, because witty tongue-in-cheek rhyme was his forte. Sewing together offered groups of women opportunities to listen to texts read aloud, to talk, sing, and share their life-stories.[283] Even the cover of *The Needles Excellency,* depicting women working together, shows that Taylor was aware of and *promoting* the social aspect of women's needlework. Women seeking upward mobility also would have read and chosen designs selectively for that which resonated with their own values and motivations.

—THE UPWARDLY MOBILE

In his appeal to England's more genteel and upwardly-mobile women, Taylor employed persuasive word-play making references to noble women who did needlework, such as Queen Elizabeth I.[284] He also listed the foreign origins of the designs, alluding to their exclusive and desirable exoticism, calling them "farre fetched, and deerely bought / and consequently, good for Ladies thought."[285] The first of his marketing strategies in the pattern book is right on the cover, where he entices buyers with a beautifully detailed copper-plate print of the three women in a garden, and their fashionable dress, which was discussed at the beginning of this thesis. What has

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[282] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [2].
[283] Frye, 129.
[284] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [11] sig. B2.

not been examined in-depth, thus far, is the idea of advancing socially in a society that was very hierarchical and prescriptive, yet unfixed.

Practice theory, introduced above with *gender performance*, is also the basis of Susan Crane's concept of *performance of the self,*[286] which offers a useful way of thinking about social mobility and instability. People who bought *The Needles Excellency* may have used the patterns to create or improve textiles (such as clothing, accessories, and household goods) as part of a performance of improved respectability and social grace. In this way, embroidery was also a commodity in upward mobility. During a time when household wealth was determined by the store of goods it held, value could be added to the family worth through beautifully crafted items of needlework, allowing women an active role in the household economy.

Antony Buxton evaluated domestic culture in Thame through wills and probate records, and found large numbers of textile items listed, such as cushions, table linens, curtains, and bedding.[287] All of these would have been candidates to embroider or embellish with lace to increase their perceived and actual monetary value. Household wealth for the highest levels of society was determined by land held, but urban mercantile groups calculated theirs by the value of their chattels. Households possessing cushions (a popular vehicle for decorative needlework) indicated not only the greater comfort provided, but also marked elevated status, with increasing numbers of cushions in inventories correlated to increased status levels. A high proportion of gentry and clerical households had cushions, but they were also found in a fair number of yeomen's, traders' and artisan-traders' dwellings. Records show none found in the residences of husbandmen and agricultural labourers.[288]

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[285] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [7].

[286] Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity during the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[287] Antony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England,* Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History (Boydell Press, 2015).

[288] Buxton, 147-48.

image 13: Embroidered linen cushion in a style similar to designs in pattern books. T.79-1946. Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC. Public domain CC0.

Embroidered cushions could be quite elaborate, and a number of them can still be found in museum collections. The Victoria and Albert Museum has one dated circa 1600 that is made of silk satin with canvas-work motifs applied like patches.[289] The cushion above, in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has a scrolling floral design very similar to ones in several pattern books. It is also English from circa 1600.[290] Decorated textiles such as these would have been used in the social areas of households as a form of hospitality to guests, but also as a display of status. In the seventeenth century, earlier in London, the organization of domestic

[289] Canvas-work is a term for a type of embroidery done by counting the threads like working on a grid, such as cross-stitch or needlepoint, with canvas being a fabric which has ; Embroidered cushion, English, unknown maker, ca. 1600, Victoria and Albert Museum no. T.79-1946.

[290] Embroidered cushion, English, unknown maker, ca. 1600, Metropolitan Museum of Art no. 64.101.1251.

space underwent some changes. Like enclosure happening in the fields, focus on a central hall or great room was broken into more distinct spaces for specific activities, and the parlour became the new zone where the householder could create a space that aligned with his social and economic peers.[291] For example, in 1598, Thomas Striblehill, the gentrified descendant of a family of butchers, possessed two embroidered stools found in the room over his parlour, an even more selective space.[292] Buxton found that the furnishing value between the principal chamber and secondary ones was considerably different. As the principal chamber was used for socializing, this suggests that comfort and display were both part of social engagement.[293] Needlework pattern books, such as Taylor's, could have been used to improve the quality of decoration on important social textiles, and therefore also the perceived quality of the household.[294] The desire to economize on the presentation of value is evident in a popular household guide of the 1670s that seems to reflect long-standing advice and values. The author Hannah Woolley describes a do-it-yourself project to make a frame for drawings or needlework, and closes by saying, "It will look like a frame of great price, but it will not cost any great matter."[295] At the end of another project for embroidering upholstery for a chair, she says that her technique is "much better and not common; therefore to be more esteemed."[296]

Taylor himself was one who benefited from unstable social roles, using the proceeds and reputation brought by his pen to fashion a desired identity higher on the social ladder. His visions of grandeur motivated him to act in ways that he expected would improve his social standing, such as dressing similarly to those he came to mix with. He capitalized on his humble beginnings as a ferryman on the river Thames and self-styled himself as the Water Poet. It was there, with

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[291] Buxton, 273, 275; Laura Gowing, "'The freedom of the streets': Women and Social Space, 1560-1640," in *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London*, ed. Paul Griffiths and Mark Jenner (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 135.

[292] Buxton, 144.

[293] Buxton, 222-23.

[294] The textiles listed in the records that Buxton refers to rarely mention if the item is embroidered or trimmed with lace. This does not necessarily mean they were undecorated, as descriptive terms were most often not used at all.

[295] Hannah Woolley, *A supplement to The queen-like closet, or, A little of everything,* (London: Printed by T.R. for Richard Lownds, and are to be Sold at the Sign of the White Lion, 1674), 2nd ed., 70.

[296] Woolley, 77.

his elite audience held captive while they crossed the river, that he performed his poetry and rhymes until he eventually won enough patronage that he could leave behind that rougher life.

Taylor's situation was very unique, but he could relate to the "middling sort," because as an author he was no longer a poor laborer, but neither was he one of the richest merchants within his local urban setting, nor a member of the gentry.[297] Historian Henry French did the most comprehensive research on this emergent early-modern group, striving to apply contemporary terms to people who had until then been termed according to modern ideas of class and functional socio-economic classifications.[298] "Middling sort" is a useful term in this paper, because Taylor and many of his audience were part of this group. Formed in the cracks of an unstable society, they worked to differentiate themselves from the poor, and created a current of upward mobility. The phrases more often used by contemporaries were "the better sort" or "chief inhabitants," since they better suited people's shifting statuses (up *and* down), but "middling sort" has stuck thanks to its useful descriptiveness.[299]

Some of Taylor's strategies that were discussed earlier bear mentioning again in the context of targeting the upwardly mobile. One was his emphasis on the fact that copperplates had been used for printing *The Needles Excellency.* By highlighting the application of the latest technology, he offered novelty and innovation - both of which have universal appeal to those working to rise in esteem within their current peer group, and move farther from the "meaner sorts." The higher production cost would have given him a good reason for making his book a little more expensive, and therefore more exclusive and desirable. His use of sophisticated language served the same purpose, putting it beyond the abilities of laborers, farmers, and servants,[300] while simultaneously appealing to the "better sort" who also had leisure time for

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[297] Craig Muldrew, "The 'Middling Sort': An Emergent Cultural Identity," in *A Social History of England, 1500-1750*, ed. Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 291.

[298] Keith Wrightson, "'Sorts of People' in Tudor and Stuart England," in *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550-1800*, eds. J. Barry and C. Brooks (London: Macmillan, 1994); Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England 1600-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Ch. 4; French, "Social Status, Localism and the 'Middle Sort of People' in England 1620-1750," *Past and Present* (2000): 166.

[299] Muldrew, 291.

[300] Jeremy Boulton, "The 'Meaner Sort': Labouring People and the Poor," in *A Social History of England, 1500-1750*, ed. Keith Wrightson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017): 311.

reading to impress their peers. These were also tactics for distancing *himself* from contemptuous balladeers who catered to the humblest readers.[301] Even so, he offered the possibility of self-improvement by including simpler designs as an entryway.

> And as this Booke, some cunning workes doth teach,
> (Too hard for meane capacities to reach)
> So for weake learners, other workes here be,
> As plaine and easie as are A B C.[302]

The Needles Excellency is representative of Taylor's savvy for playing to an audience. In his classically contradictory approach, his title page illustration and introduction both praised Christian virtues, *and* promoted vanity and luxury. The women that he chose as examples of virtue were fabulously wealthy, elite, and famous. The needlework patterns and images of fashionable women appealed to those who appreciated the latest elaborate styles, and Taylor's book offered a way for more people to participate in the noble activity of fine needlework, as well as enviable stylishness. In short, he made promises of lifestyle enhancement.

The authors of conduct books regularly rejected decorative needlework as serving vanity or folly, rather than industry, suggesting that they witnessed women adopting the needlework practices of wealthier families. Fine needlework could be expensive, due to the costs of silk thread and quality tools, so moralists sensitive to "class hostilities" targeted it as a vice, or "follie," to use Taylor's term. Jones and Stallybrass point out that in *Treasure of Ancient and Moderne Times* (1613), Thomas Mille rejects the vanity of fashionable needlework as "idle samplery or silken folly."[303]

Conduct books also used the common rhetorical convention of argument-by-example which described exemplary women, and this is a convention that Taylor includes in *The Needles Excellency,* as well as other works, and has been previously discussed. As an example for contrast, in his 1641 conduct book, Richard Brathwaite speaks of Dorcas from the Bible and her industriousness stitching coats and garments.[304] Taylor, on the other hand, features five "Queens and great Ladies, who have bin famous for their rare Inventions, and practice with the Needle."[305] His choice of elite women, described as pious, but still not biblical, is a marketing

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[301] Capp, *The World of John Taylor,* 67-69.
[302] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [6].
[303] Jones and Stallybrass, 143.
[304] Brathwaite, *The English gentlewoman,* 31.
[305] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [9] sig. B.

spin that justifies luxury as virtuous in order to attract the custom of upwardly-mobile middling-sorts such as the female household members of tradesmen, merchants, and artisans.

Rich embroideries and laces were socially accepted - and even sometimes legally coded via sumptuary laws - as badges of the wealthy elite.[306] But subtleties of fashion, such as added embellishments of passementerie, embroidery, and lace, could be used as a strategy to maneuver within an imposed system of governance. Michel Foucault's discourse analysis helps us understand that although social expectations and structures appeared to be rigid, they actually created opportunities for individual acts of agency such as these.[307] His analysis of power also explains how small changes or acts of resistance over time within an approved system (and that don't directly counter it) are able to have a large impact.[308] Just like the ways individuals adapted their apparel within the context of attempted social control, their pursuit of fashionable dress and self-expression tested the boundaries, created change, and contributed to the end of legislated systems of dress.

The tract *A Debate Between Pride and Lowliness,* first published in 1577 but still being reprinted in 1635, shows that the ambivalence over the meaning of fashion was on-going. People have always been concerned about what defines vanity and pride in order to avoid committing any of the seven deadly sins. The story is a dispute between two pairs of breeches - one of plain cloth and one of velvet.[309] At one point in an earlier period, the luxurious velvet would have symbolized the nobility and the plain-cloth the common man, because as Crane explained with *performance of self*, medieval English people expressed on the outside how they saw themselves on the inside and within the socially-agreed hierarchy. But in this morality tale, written at the peak of sumptuary legislation, the velvet breeches represent the pride and vanity of status gained by wealth, and the cloth breeches embody the humility of virtue and inherited status. "Worthiness" was an evolving concept under debate at the end of the sixteenth century as the

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[306] Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, *Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1926); Alan Hunt, *Governance of the Consuming Passions: A History of Sumptuary Law* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996).

[307] Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 36-37.

[308] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison,* ed. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 195-228.

[309] Claire Bartram, "Social Fabric in Thyme's *Debate Between Pride and Lowliness*," in *Clothing Culture, 1350-1650*, ed. Catherine Richardson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2004): 137.

elaborate fashions that were once the domain of the aristocracy no longer served to set them apart as gentility.

And while the worthiness of one's status may have been debatable, it did not stop people from changing their circumstances via growing wealth and performing their new role via fashionably embroidered dress and home textiles. Remember Lady Elizabeth Dormer, one of Taylor's exemplary women. Her husband's grandfather had been a prosperous wool merchant who was knighted after accumulating land.[310] Her husband Lord Robert purchased his peerage at the end of his life, elevating the family even further.[311] The social order was seen to be threatened by the growing number of successful merchants like the Dormers, and while the distress of the aristocracy is most often the one voiced in Parliament and in print, there is evidence that concern was also expressed by the House of Commons advancing petitions about apparel, perhaps encouraged by their constituency, or perhaps by those who wished the law to back their desire to "dress down" enemies who had fallen from grace.

—CRAFTS-PEOPLE

The other group of people that Taylor explicitly addressed in his introduction to *The Needles Excellency* are the crafts-people who plied their trade with a needle. He starts with, "To all dispersed sorts of Arts and Trades," then later speaks of how the needle yields "profits, pleasure, and ornament." The term "profits" can be taken to mean several things: the personal/spiritual growth of a virtuous person, the benefits of obligations earned from needle-worked gifts given to well-placed people, or actual payment for labours - which could be direct or indirect.

Servants (male and female) did needlework for their households under the direction of their mistresses, often with her, and were not paid directly for that work. I used the example

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[310] M. K. Dale, "DORMER, Robert (1485/6-1552), of West Wycombe and Wing, Bucks. and London," Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603*, ed. S. T. Bindoff, 1982. available at http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/dormer-robert-14856-1552

[311] Roger Virgoe, "DORMER, Robert (1551-1616), of Wing, Buckinghamshire," Published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603*, ed. P.W. Hasler, 1981, available at http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/dormer-robert-1551-1616;

earlier of Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690), who wrote in her diary about how she shared and managed the embroidery work of her maids, taught her servants to read, as well as teaching her children.[312] Needlework exchanged in barter was also a way of profiting indirectly. Alexandra Shepard found that for women outside of big cities, "it is likely that much of their spinning, sewing, and knitting was produced as piecework for others rather than directly for market exchange."[313] While women in these poorer areas were not likely to go out and sell their work, piecework could have been exchanged for something of like-value, in payment of an obligation owed, or to gain an obligation of a return favour. While one woman might have been contracted by an urban middle-man to produce piece-work, she in turn might informally farm that work out to others, making those sub-contractors an invisible part of the economic network. These kinds of exchanges between women would have been discrete, private, and motivated by personal relationships. Shepard suggests that women's economically valued work became more visible from the later seventeenth century, but that the networks of exchange existed long before.[314]

Piecework became a popular way to employ the poor. Marjorie K. McIntosh found that in 1625 Salisbury, there were thirty women employed to teach poor children the crafts of spinning, knitting, or making bone lace (bobbin lace), with button-making also an option for women and children.[315] In this way they were crafts-people, but not in the entrepreneurial artisan sense. A 30-year-old Chester woman who declared in 1641 that she was 'a spinster and a bonelace weaver,' and worth little besides her clothes, may have been supported by poor relief, or someone eking out a living on her own.[316] She may not have been able to afford *The Needles Excellency*, but there are other ways that pattern books could have been available to women like her. There was the second-hand book trade, and maybe single pages of an already damaged book could be bought. Pooled purchase of a used or partial pattern book, or even borrowing, were all ways that they may have benefited from the patterns available in print. These women would be very unlikely to be able to read Taylor's poetry and his prescription for quieter women would have gone unacknowledged.

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[312] Elizabeth Walker, Diary 1623-1690, N.d. Orlando.cambridge.org, Great Britain.

[313] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 177.

[314] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 274.

[315] Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Working Women in English Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005, 231-32.

[316] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself,* 221.

According to Shepard, daughters in working homes almost always qualified their work as assisting their mothers, but their statements could also be interpreted as meaning they worked independently or in partnership. For example, a 25-year-old woman from Preston (Lancashire) responded in 1628 that "she liveth with her mother & teacheth children to weave lace."[317] In the seventeenth century, the nature of women's apprenticeships became focused on training for domestic labour. Of the nine to ten girls per year who entered apprenticeships in Bristol during the 1610s-20s, "25 percent were hired solely as domestic maids, another 50 percent were to work as a servant plus helping with knitting or spinning, and a few were to do domestic service plus sewing or shopkeeping. Only 11 percent were taken on to work in craft areas alone, and those were mainly poorly paid but labor-intensive activities like spinning, lace making, and stocking knitting." Craft-work became even less of an occupation for women and more of a domestic activity, one of many labours done in the running of a household.[318] A book like Taylor's would have been useful in a household with amateur needleworkers.

All of these women above were working outside the control of guilds. Medieval guilds were the original labor unions and they struggled to maintain quality and economic control over their jurisdictions in big, growing cities.[319] Because there was an embroiderers' guild in London during Taylor's time, I am obliged to at least briefly discuss how they may have impacted those who "lyved by hir needle & seweinge."[320] The Worshipful Company of Broderers lost their records in the 1666 Great Fire of London, and again in 1940, due to the bombings of World War II.[321] Historians have pieced together a rough history, drawn from legal documents and other

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[317] Shephard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 209; Canterbury Cathedral Archives, DCb/PRC 39/7, fo. 13.

[318] McIntosh, 136.

[319] Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin, "Crafting Artisanal Identities in Early Modern London: The Spatial, Material and Social Practices of Guild Communities C.1560-1640" (PhD diss., Royal College of Art 2013).

[320] Cambridge University Library Archives, V.C.Ct.II.2*, fos 48-49, found in Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 176.

[321] "History of the Broderers," *The Worshipful Company of Broderers*, Web, 16 June 2017; EGV, "Broderers´ Company," Leiden Textile Research Centre, 29 Oct 2016, Web, 16 June 2017.

sources not housed at the guildhall. The Broderers Company received a Royal Charter from Queen Elizabeth in 1561,[322] and published by-laws dated 1562, 1582, 1609, and 1710.[323]

Gaining membership in the Company was a status move, and as such, the Company was selective. Over time the list of requirements grew, so that by 1609, someone who had completed their apprenticeship and wanted to set up on their own had to be a householder of good repute with a significant net-worth of 40 marks (1609 by-laws, article 7).[324] Membership was exclusively male, since acceptance came with citizenship as a freeman of London, but even so, women were active participants as family members, widows, and employees. It was not until the 1609 by-laws that women were barred from apprenticeship (article 8). Article 13 of the same year requires that journeymen only work within the system of member workshops.[325]

The existence of a governing body does not preclude that people were operating outside of its governance. As discussed earlier regarding the dynamics of power, people found ways, both legally and in the shadows of the law. Most people practicing embroidery did not become guild members, due to the requirements, but licensing was allowed under the guild. And, of course, not all needlework was embroidery. Weaving narrow wares, knitting, lace-making of several techniques, and the embroidery done on linen garments such as coifs and shifts, were all non-embroidery applications of the patterns in books like *The Needles Excellency*. The silk stocking industry of the early seventeenth century was largely controlled by men, but Anne Tatsall, a London widow of a hosier, maintained her husband's business making, mending, buying and selling. In the early 1620s, she was assisted by several female servants and a man who had been a journeyman-apprentice with her husband.[326] Shepard's review of London records found that over a fifth of married women who specified the tasks they undertook for employment "referred to making or mending clothes ranging from caps, gloves, stays, mantuas, and perriwigs,

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[322] It is believed that in some form or another, the embroidery guild dates back to the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

[323] The text of the charter and the by-laws were included in *A Chat About the Broderers' Company* by Christovher Holford (London: George Allen & Sons, 1910).

[324] Holford, 270-71; Forty marks was about equivalent to 520 shillings, with forty shillings a common annual wage for a domestic servant in the early 1600s. Two-hundred shillings was enough to rebuild a simple peasant or suburban residence after the mid-seventeenth-century civil war. Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 99.

[325] Holford, 270-71.

[326] McIntosh, 225.

alongside more general needlework, embroidery and plainwork."[327] But again, it is not clear how or if they engaged with the Mercers' or Embroiderer's guilds.

The same is true of Esther Inglis (1571-1624), an artisan who created manuscripts and miniatures for the court, and sometimes encased her work in embroidered book covers. Between 1606-1615, when she lived in London, she stitched a cover for a tiny book for Henry, Prince of Wales.[328] It is unclear what, if any, relation she had to the Embroiderer's Guild. Following the Great Fire of 1666, during which the company's archives were lost, records can be found again. Holford cites some specific examples from the 1681 Company Minutes of women embroiderers who were working outside the system, but who were only lightly reprimanded when brought before the court of the Guildhall. Being policed by the small pool of guild officers implies that many more went unnoticed or were merely chastened off the records. On October 25:

> Margaret Wadding also appeared and 2 pieces of brodered work for petticoats being upon the last search taken, were now produced, and shown, and adjudged in-sufficiently wrought, and ordered to be cut and burnt, but on her humble request, and promise not to work any more (she being an unlawful worker) the Court set only a fine of 2s. 6d. upon her, and the work returned to her.

And on December 31, "A piece of work taken in search from Elizabeth Coleman, she being found to be an unlawful worker, and one who employed others not qualified according to the ordinances, was fined 40s. and work ordered to be destroyed, but returned on fine."[329] Being unlawful workers did not mean that they were violating membership, since that was reserved for men, but it would have meant that they had perhaps not paid their quarterly dues for licensing.[330] If these examples are also representative of earlier in the century, then it is possible that when Taylor addressed the men and women in the arts and trades, who profit by their needles, he could

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[327] Shepard, *Accounting for Oneself*, 220.

[328] Frye, 103.

[329] Holford, 21.

[330] The original by-laws of 1562, articles 15 - 19, state that all persons exercising the trade in London and its environs must appear to hear the ordinances, swear an oath, and pay quarterage. Article 29 specifies that foreigners cannot be employed until they too take the oath and pay, with article 35 stating they must be licensed, as must journeymen seeking to work on their own (article 27). People are permitted to teach embroidery to their children without violating the apprentice ordinance, according to article 30; Holford, 269.

have meant these women who did not work in the large workshops that had the resources to hire professional artists.[331]

Even though the guild was named the Company of Broderers, and it claimed control over embroidery done in London, it was not exclusively for people who made their living in the needle-arts. One could join without following the path of apprenticeship by claiming "patrimony" if a parent belonged, or by paying a "redemption" fee. Once accepted, members of all guilds had the right to practice any trade or craft under the custom of London. The effect of this was leadership that was not necessarily proficient at or interested in the work they were enforcing, and a membership list of freemen in a surprising variety of occupations, amongst them: threadmaker, butcher, laceman, ironmonger, haberdasher.[332] Evidence that control slipped beyond enforceability over the course of the seventeenth century is found in a legal statement of 1710, that declared the charter had fallen into such disuse that it was no longer enforceable.[333] The treatment of the women above seems to support that a precedent of laxity had been set over the 1600s.

The regulations of the guilds reflect the gendering of commercial needlework as a male-controlled activity, and social pressures promoted domestic needlework as a feminine pastime. But those are gross generalizations. Early modern views on the division between men's and women's work were complex, often contradictory, and as much about the needs of an individual household as they were about societal expectations. When we look at the thoughts of real people, we discover unexpected perspectives. For example, Sir Thomas Elyot, an English courtier and writer, complained in 1531 about the prevalence of hiring foreign artists, saying that "…if we wyll haue any thinge well paynted, kerued [carved], or embrawdred [embroidered], [we are

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[331] Despite having exclusive artwork at their disposal, there is evidence that professionals held needlework pattern books like Taylor's in some regard. Pierre Vallet, embroiderer for the Duke of Nevers in mid-sixteenth-century France, was a court liaison running his own workshop. At his death, the inventory of his well-developed library of picture books included two pattern books. Astrid Castres, "Pierre Vallet, brodeur du duc de Nevers, et l'art de Fountainbleau", *Documents d'Histoire Parisienne* 16 (2014): 5-6.

[332] Kilburn-Toppin, 19; Holford, 289-90. Due to the loss of records in the London fires, the earliest rolls are after 1694, but they seem to indicate that there was a trend leading up to the variety of membership that is evident in 1694, and shown by efforts to reinforce guild controls, there was a history of uncertain control over both the members and the embroidery done in the jurisdiction of the guild.

[333] Holford, 11-12.

wont] to abandone our owne countraymen and resorte unto straungers…" His following defence of English-trained artists includes embroidery as an art that boys should learn.

> For how many men be there that hauyng their sonnes in childhode aptly disposed by nature to paynte, to kerue, or graue [engrave], to embrawder, or do other lyke thynges, wherin is any arte commendable, concernynge inuention, but that, as sone as they espie it, they be therwith displeased, and forthwith byndeth them apprentises to taylours, to wayuers [weavers], to towkers, and somtyme to coblers, whiche haue ben the inestimable losse of many good wittes, and haue caused that in the said artes englisshmen be inferiors to all other people…[334]

Elyot includes embroidery with the other arts that made admirable careers for boys rather than losing creative potential to the trades. This contemporary account, added to evidence of embroidery guild activities, and illustrations of men doing embroidery, shows that early modern ideas about the gendering of needlework were conflicted, but generally split along the lines of commercial/male and domestic/female, even though women could make economic contributions to the household through their needlework. All of which is in alignment with understanding Taylor's preface as widely targeted to the men and women of "To all degrees of both sexes who live and love by the laudable imployment of the needle."[335]

CONCLUSION

> And therefore, not to him, or her, or thee,
> Or them, or they, I doe not write at all:
> Nor to particulars of her or shee,
> But generally, to all in generall.[336]

This thesis has shown that while *The Needles Excellency* is widely understood as a pattern book for domestic needlewomen in seventeenth-century England, its author John Taylor had a much wider audience in mind. The dominance of English texts used by anglophone scholars, particularly in literary studies, combined with the significant amount of information about John Taylor, helped make *The Needles Excellency* a popular target, and as a result, over-represented as archetypical of the genre.

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[334] Thomas Elyot, *The boke named the Gouernour* (London: Tho. Bertholeti, 1531), 55.
[335] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [15].
[336] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [15].

His sometimes inflammatory and patriarchal language was reflective of his personality, ambition, and writing style. Taylor's own anxieties echoed his society's regarding women's roles, social mobility, luxury, and patronage. As the Water Poet, he embraced the dichotomy that he represented - the labouring ferryman and the creative bard. The enterprise of his career flew in the face of social norms, and his writing both embraced and promoted the upward mobility of others as a justification of his own elevation, and reinforced hierarchy and societal norms to protect what he saw as English tradition and proper expression of faith.

I have presented *The Needles Excellency*, its author John Taylor, and the potential audience in order to evaluate it as a phenomenon within a specific historical context. I was motivated to re-examine past conclusions regarding the work and its author, knowing that there have been new turns in historical theory. My analysis placed Taylor's work in the context of seventeenth-century English print culture, within the general history of the popular genre of pattern books, as well as within the nexus of women's roles and shifting socio-economics in urban centres. Taylor was a commercial artist of his time, and therefore, so was *The Needles Excellency.*

In an ironic reversal of women using their needles like pens to create new textualities, Taylor's pen was like a tailor's needle that could mend opinions,[337] and "a Taylors javelin,"[338] because he could cleverly stitch together a weapon from his own ideas and those of others. At the first-ever John Taylor conference in 2017,[339] Anthony Ossa-Richardson talked about how Taylor found new meanings in the words of others through this act of stitching together ideas and prose. In stitching together this thesis, it has been my hope to show new meanings in Taylor's work, *The Needles Excellency*.

[337] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency*, [16].

[338] Taylor, *The Needles Excellency,* [2].

[339] *Newes from no place. A Conference on the Workes of John Taylor the Water Poet*. Caius College, Cambridge University, September 14-15, 2017.

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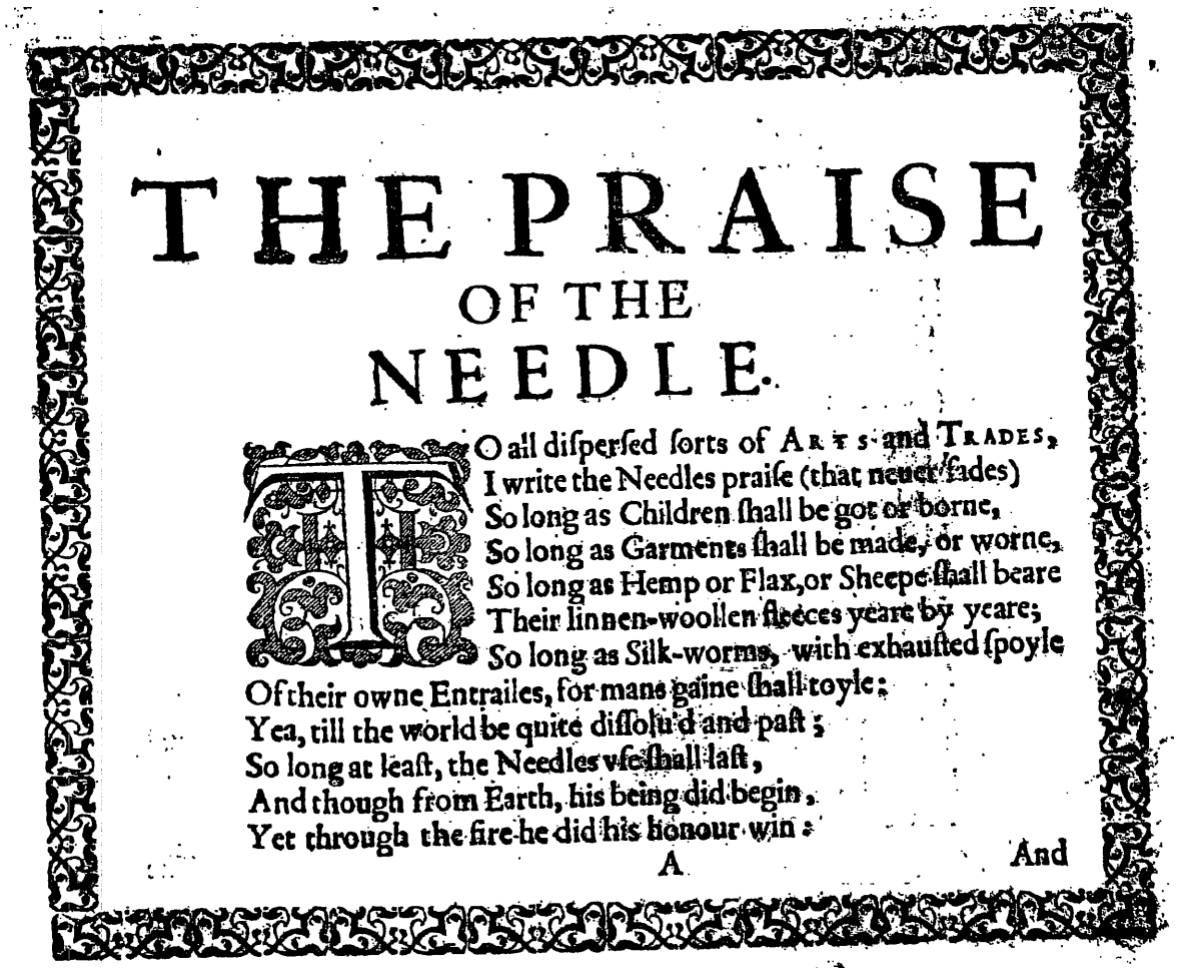

THE PRAISE
OF THE
NEEDLE.

TO all diſperſed ſorts of ARTS and TRADES,
I write the Needles praiſe (that neuer fades)
So long as Children ſhall be got or borne,
So long as Garments ſhall be made, or worne,
So long as Hemp or Flax, or Sheepe ſhall beare
Their linnen-woollen fleeces yeare by yeare;
So long as Silk-worms, with exhauſted ſpoyle
Of their owne Entrailes, for mans gaine ſhall toyle:
Yea, till the world be quite diſſolu'd and paſt;
So long at leaſt, the Needles vſe ſhall laſt,
And though from Earth, his being did begin,
Yet through the fire he did his honour win:

The Praiſe of the Needle.

And vnto thoſe that doe his ſeruice lacke,
Hee's true as ſteele, and mettle to the backe.
He hath I perſe eye, ſmall ſingle ſight,
Yet like a Pigmey; *Polipheame* in fight:
As a ſtout Captaine, bravely he leades on,
(Not fearing colours) till the worke be done.
Through thicke and thinne he is moſt ſharpely ſet,
With ſpeede through ſtitch, hee will the Conqueſt get.
And as a Soldier (Frenchefyde with heate)
Maim'd, from the warres is forc'd to make retreate:
So when a Needles point is broke, and gone,
No poynt Mounſier, hee's maim'd, his worke is done.
And more the Needles honour to aduance,
It is a Taylors Iauelin, or his Launce.
And for my Countries quiet, I ſhould like,
That Women-kinde ſhould vſe no other Pike.
It will increaſe their peace, enlarge their ſtore,
To vſe their tongues leſſe, and their Needles more.

The

The Praiſe of the Needle.

The Needles ſharpeneſſe, profit yeelds, and pleaſure;
But ſharpeneſſe of the tongue, bites out of meaſure.
A Needle (though it be but ſmall and ſlender)
Yet is it both a maker and a mender;
A graue Reformer of old Rents decayde,
Stops holes and ſeames; and deſperate cuts diſplayde.
And thus without the Needle we may ſee,
We ſhould without our Bibbs and Biggings be;
No ſhirts or ſmockes, our nakedneſſe to hide,
No Garments gay, to make vs magnifyde;
No Shadowes, Shapparoones, Caules, Bands, Ruffes, Cuffes,
No Kerchiefes, Quoyfes, Chin-clowtes, or hairy-Muffes,
No Croſ-cloathes, Aprons, Hand-kerchiefes, or Falls,
No Table-cloathes for Parlours or for Halls.
No Sheetes, no Towels, Napkins, Pillow-beares,
Nor any Garment man or woman weares.
Thus is a Needle prou'd an Inſtrument
Of profit, pleaſure, and of ornament:

A 2 Which

The Praiſe of the Needle.

Which mighty Queenes haue grac'd in hand to take,
And high-borne Ladies ſuch eſteeme did make,
That as their Daughters Daughters vp did grow,
The Needles Art, they to their children ſhow.
And as 'twas then an exerciſe of praiſe,
So what deſerues more honour in theſe daies,
Then this? which daily doth it ſelfe expreſſe,
A mortall enemy to idleneſſe.
The vſe of Sewing is exceeding old,
As in the ſacred Text it is enrold:
Gen. 3.7. Our Parents firſt in Paradice began,
Which hath deſcended ſince from man to man:
The Mothers taught their Daughters, Sires their Sons,
Thus in a line ſucceſſiuely it runs
For generall profit, and for recreation,
Embroydery antient. From generation vnto generation.
Exod. 26.1. With worke like Cherubims Embroidered rare,
The Couers of the Tabernacle were.

And

The Praiſe of the Needle.

Chap. 28. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. And by th' Almighties great command, wee ſee,
That *Aarons* Garments broydered worke ſhould be;
And further, God did bid his Veſtments ſhould
Be made moſt gay, and glorious to behold.
Thus plainely, and moſt truely is declar'd
The Needles workes hath ſtill bin in regard,
For it doth ART, ſo like to NATVRE frame,
As if IT were HER Siſter, or the SAME.
Flowers, Plants, and Fiſhes, Beaſts, Birds, Flyes, & Bees,
Hils, Dales, Plaines, Paſtures, Skies, Seas, Riuers, Trees:
There's nothing neere at hand, or fartheſt ſought,
But with the Needle, may be ſhap'd and wrought.
In clothes of Arras I haue often ſeene
Men figurde, counterfeits ſo like haue beene,
That if the parties ſelfe had bin in place,
Yet ART would vye with NATVRE for the grace.
Moreouer, Poeſies rare, and Annagrams,
Signifique ſearching ſentences from Names,

True

The Praiſe of the Needle.

True Hiſtorie, or various pleaſant fiction
In ſundry colours mixt, with Arts comixion,
All in Dimenſion: Ouals, Squares, and Rounds,
Arts life included within Natures bounds;
So that Art ſeemeth meerely naturall,
In forming ſhapes ſo Geometricall.
And though our Country euery where is fil'd
With Ladies, and with Gentlewomen, skil'd
In this rare Art, yet here they may diſcerne
Some things to teach them, if they liſt to learne.
And as this Booke, ſome cunning workes doth teach,
(Too hard for meane capacities to reach)
So for weake learners, other workes here be,
As plaine and eaſie as are A B C.
Thus skilfull, or vnskilfull, each may take
This Booke, and of it, each good vſe may make.
All ſorts of workes, almoſt that can be nam'd,
Here are directions how they may be fram'd:

I ſay here are the grounds and directions for many more workes then are in this Booke.

And

The Praiſe of the Needle.

And for this Kingdomes good are hither come,
From the remoteſt parts of Chriſtendome.
Collected with much paines and induſtry,
From ſcorching *Spaine*, and freezing *Moſcouye*,
From fertill *France*, and pleaſant *Italy*,
From *Poland*, *Sweaden*, *Denmarke*, *Germany*,
And ſome of theſe rare Patternes haue bin fet
Beyond the bounds of faithleſſe *Mahomet*:
From ſpacious *China*, and thoſe Kingdomes Eaſt,
And from great *Mexico*, the Indies Weſt.
Thus are theſe workes, *farre fetcht, and deerely bought*,
And conſequently, *good for Ladies thought*.
Nor doe I derogate (in any caſe)
Or doe eſteeme of other teachings baſe,
For *Tent-worke*, *Raiſd-worke*, *Laid-worke*, *Froſt-worke*, *Net-worke*,
Moſt curious *Purles*, or rare *Italian Cut-worke*,
Fine *Ferne-ſtitch*, *Finny-ſtitch*, *New-ſtitch*, and *Chain-ſtitch*,
Braue *Bred-ſtitch*, *Fiſher-ſtitch*, *Iriſh-ſtitch*, and *Queene-ſtitch*,

The

The Praiſe of the Needle.

The *Spaniſh-ſtitch*, *Roſemary-ſtitch*, and *Mow-ſtitch*,
The ſmarting *Whip-ſtitch*, *Back-ſtitch*, and the *Croſ-ſtitch*:
All theſe are good, and theſe we muſt alow,
And theſe are euery where in practiſe now;
And in this Booke, there are of theſe ſome ſtore,
With many others, neuer ſeene before.
Here Practiſe and Inuention may be free,
And as a *Squirrell* skips from tree to tree,
So Maides may (from their Miſtreſſe, or their Mother)
Learne to leaue one worke, and to learne another.
For here they may make choyce of which is which,
And skip from worke to worke, from ſtitch to ſtitch,
Vntill in time delightfull practiſe ſhall
(With profit) make them perfect in them all.
Thus hoping that theſe workes may haue this guide
To ſerue for ornament, and not for pride:
To cheriſh vertue, baniſh idleneſſe,
For theſe ends, may this booke haue good ſucceſſe.

Here

The Praiſe of the Needle.

Here follow certaine Sonnets in the Honourable memory of Queenes and great Ladies, who haue bin famous for their rare Inuentions, and practiſe with the Needle.

1

Pſal. 45. King *Dauid* by an apt ſimilitude
Doth ſhew, with Maieſty the *Church* her worth:
And to a Kings faire Daughter, doth alude,
Where to her Spouſe, he brauely brings her forth,
In Garments wrought of *Needle-worke* and Gold,
Reſplendent and moſt glorious to the eye:
Whoſe out-ſide much more glory did infold,
The preſence of th'ternall-Maieſty.
Thus may you ſee Records of holy Writ
Set downe (what Death or Time can nere deface.)
By theſe compariſons, comparing fit,
The noble worth of Needle-workes high grace.
Then learne faire Damſels, learne your times to ſpend
In this, which ſuch high praiſings doth commend.

Katharine

2

Katharine, *firſt married to* Arthur *Prince of* Wales, *and afterward to* Henry *the* 8. *King of* England.

I Read that in the ſeauenth King *Henries* Raigne,
Faire *Katherine*, Daughter to the *Caſtile* King,
Came into *England* with a pompous traine
Of *Spaniſh* Ladies, which ſhe thence did bring.
She to the eight King *Henry* married was,
And afterwards diuorc'd, where vertuouſly
(Although a Queene) yet ſhee her dayes did pas
In working with the *Needle* curiouſly,
As in the Tower, and places more beſide,
Her excellent memorials may be ſeene:
Whereby the *Needles* praiſe is dignifide
By her faire Ladyes, and her ſelfe, a Queene.
Thus for her paynes, here her reward is iuſt,
Her workes proclaime her praiſe, though ſhe be duſt.

Mary

The Praiſe of the Needle.

3

Mary, *Queene of* England, *and wife to* Philip *King of* Spaine.

HEr Daughter *Mary* here the Scepter ſwaide,
And though ſhe were a Queene of mighty power:
Her memorie will neuer be decaide,
Which by her workes are likewiſe in the Tower.
In *Windſor* Caſtle, and in *Hampton* Court,
In that moſt pompous roome cal'd Paradice:
Who-euer pleaſeth thither to reſort,
May ſee ſome workes of hers of wondrous price.
Her Greatneſſe held it no diſ-reputation,
To take the Needle in her Royall hand:
Which was a good example to our Nation,
To baniſh idleneſſe from out her Land:
And thus this Queene, in wiſedome thought it fit,
The Needles worke pleaſ'd her, and ſhe grac'd it.

Eliza-

The Praiſe of the Needle.

4

Elizabeth *Queene of* England, *and Daughter to King* Henry *the eight.*

VVHen this great Queene, whoſe memory ſhall not
By any tearme of time be ouercaſt:
For when the world, and all therein ſhall rot,
Yet ſhall her glorious fame for euer laſt.
When ſhe a Maide, had many troubles paſt,
From Iayle to Iayle, by *Maries* angry ſpleene:
And *Wood-ſtocke*, and the *Tower* in priſon faſt,
And after all, was *Englands* Peereleſſe Queene.
Yet howſoeuer ſorrow came or went,
She made the Needle her companion ſtill:
And in that exerciſe her time ſhe ſpent,
As many liuing yet, doth know her skill.
Thus was ſhe ſtill a Captiue, or elſe Crown'd,
A Needle-woman Royall, and renown'd.

The

The Praiſe of the Needle.

5

The Right Honourable, Vertuous, and learned Lady, Mary, *late Counteſſe of* Pembrooke.

A Patterne and a Patroneſſe ſhe was
Of vertuous induſtry, and ſtudious learning:
And ſhe her earthly Pilgrimage did paſſe,
In Acts, which were high honour, moſt concerning.
Braue *Wilton*-houſe in *Wiltſhire* well can ſhow,
Her admirable workes in Arras fram'd:
Where men, and beaſts, ſeeme like, trees ſeeme to grow,
And Art (ſurpaſſ'd by Nature) ſeemes aſham'd.
Thus this renowned Honourable Dame,
Her happy time moſt happily did ſpend:
Whoſe worth recorded in the mouth of fame,
(Vntill the world ſhall end) ſhall neuer end.
She wrought ſo well in Needle-worke, that ſhe,
Nor yet her workes, ſhall ere forgotten be.

The

The Praiſe of the Needle.

6

The Right Honourable and religious Lady, Elizabeth Dormer, *Wife to the late Right Honourable, the Lord* Robert Dormer *deceaſed.*

THis Noble Lady imitates time paſt,
Directs time preſent, teacheth time to come:
And longer then her life, her laud ſhall laſt,
Workes ſhewes her worth, though all the world were dumbe.
And though her Reuerend ſelfe, with many dayes
Of honourable age is loaden deepe,
Yet with her Needle (to her worthy praiſe)
Shee's working often, ere the Sunne doth peepe.
And many times, when *Phœbus* in the Weſt
Declined is, and *Luna* ſhewes her head:
This antient honour'd Lady reſts from Reſt,
And workes when idle ſloath goes ſoone to bed.
Thus ſhe the Needle make her recreation,
Whoſe well-ſpent paines are others imitation.

To

The Praiſe of the Needle.

To all degrees of both ſexes, that loue or liue by the laudable imployment of the Needle.

IF any aske to whom theſe lines are writ,
I anſwere, vnto them that doe inquire:
For ſince the worlds creation none was yet,
Whoſe wants did not the *Needles* helpe deſire.
And therefore, not to him, or her, or thee,
Or them, or they, I doe not write at all:
Nor to particulars of hee or ſhee,
But generally, to all in generall.
Then let not Pride looke ſcuruily a-ſcewe,
Without the *Needle*, Pride would naked goe:
Nor yet let *Scorne* cry piſh, and tuſh, and mew,
Scorne is forgetfull much in doing ſo.
Nor yet let any one preſume to prate,
And call theſe lines poore trifles, by me pend:

Let

The Praiſe of the Needle.

Let not opinion be preiudicate,
But mend it, ere they dare to diſcommend.
So fare-thou-well my wel-deſeruing Booke,
(I meane, the workes deſerts, and not my lines)
I much preſume that all that on it looke,
Will like and laude the workemans good deſignes.
Fooles play the fooles, but 'tis through want of wit,
Whilſt I to wiſedomes cenſure doe ſubmit.

FINIS.

Iohn Tayler.