the fact that the poem is not included in the list of Skelton's works recorded in *The Garland of Laurel*, published in 1523 have necessary weight; other poems accepted into his canon do not appear there.

Lant's (and Stow's) intention was clearly to produce an author specific collection of Skelton's verse. It seems reasonable to suppose that one (or both) had some grounds for believing Skelton wrote this poem. Its earliness would seem to imply either an extended tradition of circulation to which Lant had access and/or some privileged information as to text and attribution. His edition is sufficiently close in time to Skelton's death in 1529 that the possibility that it draws its attribution from some authoritative source cannot be discounted. In sum, the arguments against Skelton's authorship have little cumulative weight. The lack of attribution in the two early manuscripts does not provide evidence that Skelton did not write the poem, but simply that the compilers did not know who did. Indeed, none of the early forms of Skelton's verse, in manuscript or print, ascribed his English poems to him. Hence, there do not appear to be any compelling grounds for rejecting the poem from his canon.

<div style="text-align:right">A. S. G. EDWARDS</div>

University of Kent

SKELTON'S *BOWGE OF COURT*, LINE 186

LINE 186 of Skelton's *Bowge of Courte* reads in the first [1499?] edition printed by Wynkyn de Worde (STC 22597): 'Twyst (qd suspecte) goo playe hym I ne reke.'[1] In the most recent scholarly edition of the poem Julia Boffey (the only modern editor to discuss the problem of this line) succinctly outlines the difficulty of the opening word 'Twyst': 'here possibly an exclamation (although no usage of this sort is cited in *MED*, the use of 'twyss' as an

[1] I quote from the unique copy of the first edition in the National Library of Scotland, Inc. 333, fol. [Av"]; the opening round bracket is omitted there.

exclamation is cited in *OED*.)'[2] In fact, 't**wish** *int., obs. rare*', is cited once as an expression of contempt in 1577 in *OED*. The form does not appear elsewhere in Skelton's corpus.[3]

In the *c*. 1510 edition of Skelton's poem, also printed by de Worde (STC 22597.5), the word *Twyst* is replaced by *Whisht*. The *Middle English Dictionary* gives several instances of **whist** (interj. or v. impv.) and its variant forms **whisht**, **qwist**, as an interjection or imperative form ('hush!', 'be silent!') in the fifteenth century. Skelton himself uses the adjectival form, in the sense of 'hushed', 'silent' in his *Garland of Laurel*, 267: 'Anone all was whyste, as it were for the nones.'

There are few variations between the two editions: in the 593 lines, there are just over forty variants in the later one that seem substantive. While a few of those in *c*. 1510 are manifestly new typographical errors, a quite large number of these readings, about thirty, involve the correction of typographical errors in [1499?] in what seems to have been a quite systematic attempt to recover the text as originally intended. It is tempting to suppose that such an attempt could have extended to this reading in line 186, which seems to offer superior sense to that in the [1499?] edition.

<div style="text-align:right">A. S. G. EDWARDS</div>

University of Kent

[2] Julia Boffey (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century English Dream Visions: An Anthology* (Oxford, 2003), 246.
[3] See Alistair Fox and Gregory Waite (eds), *A Concordance to the Complete English Poems of John Skelton* (Ithaca, NY, 1987), s. v. TWYST.

A RE-APPRAISAL OF THE ICONOGRAPHY OF THE CHOIR SCREEN AT KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE

THE choir screen in the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge was installed during the period of King Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn, and it has long been thought that it was commissioned to celebrate their marriage. However, a closer inspection of the carvings indicates that the screen may well

have been intended to served a more serious political purpose; that is, to proclaim Henry's God-given right to absolute power in his realm and total authority over the Church in England, and to issue a warning to all those in opposition.

It is clear that much thought and expense went into the creation of the screen. Nikolaus Pevsner considered it to be 'the purest work in the Early Renaissance style in England [whose] quality is not excelled in any contemporary wood carving anywhere N[orth] of the Alps.'[1] The screen's carved surfaces display Henry and Anne's heraldic devices, with ciphers proclaiming their union,[2] interspersed with classical decorative motifs of armoury, fertility and harmony.[3] There are however several noteworthy references to religion,[4] and two other images that stand out in particular. The first, placed on its own above the organ pipes, is a three-dimensional sculpture of a king holding a harp. The second, a prominently-placed panel depicts a dismembered head, strung up by its hair, its face distorted in agony. These two carvings are worthy of further attention.

It is not difficult to identify the harp-playing king as the Biblical theocrat King David. The head, often interpreted as that of a woman guilty of adultery, can more plausibly be seen as that of David's rebellious, luxuriantly-haired son Absalom.[5] A contemporary viewer would have been familiar with this Old Testament story and known that Absalom's fate was due to his acting out of personal ambition, and against the Will of God. The use of this imagery fits well with Henry VIII's political philosophy. Since the early 1530s the example of the Old Testament kings of Israel had been used to justify Henry's break with Rome, and the Collecteana satis copiosa of 1534 cited David and Solomon to justify his absolute authority over the priesthood.[6]

Pamela Tudor-Craig has documented Henry's increasing empathy with King David, pointing out that in Coverdale's 1535 English translation of the Bible[7] King David was depicted by Henry's side 'in the position of Royal Supporter in chief', whereas by 1539 in the Great Bible David has 'subsumed into Henry, the Lord's Anointed'.[8] This concept is reinforced in Henry VIII's Psalter,[9] commissioned in 1540, in which scenes of King David's life are enacted by Henry in full Tudor dress. The sculpture above the organ pipes fits with this merging of the two identities—the upper half of the sculpture is similar to Coverdale's King David, whereas the short tunic is more Tudor in appearance.

Whilst the references to King David in the screen are easy to understand, the gruesome depiction of Absalom is less so. The prominence of this image needs to be considered in the light of the political situation at the time; Henry's 1533 Act of Succession required all adults to accept his marriage to Catherine of Aragon as illegitimate and his marriage to Anne Boleyn as legitimate, or else to face life

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[1] Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Cambridgeshire* (Harmondsworth, 1954), BE10, 87.

[2] Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (Oxford, 2004), 243. See Ives' interpretation of this cipher with reference to a similar one in Anne's French psalter of 1529–32. The same cipher can be seen as a ceiling boss in the Gatehouse at Hampton Court.

[3] For a detailed index of the screen's carved imagery see: <http://wp.me/p3gcgj-bTN04>

[4] (1) A high-relief depiction of God banishing sinners is an exception to the shields decorating the main tympana on the west face. Pevsner referred to this as 'the Descent of the Rebel Angels'. Pevsner, *The Buildings of England*, 88. (2) On the east side of the screen, flanked by numerous ciphers of Henry and Anne's initials and Tudor insignia, the rear of the Provost's Stall is richly decorated with high-relief carvings. God is depicted with his hand raised in benediction, and below him a soldier on a horse, most likely St George, overcomes a dragon. The stall contains other detailed images but it is not yet understood whether these make Biblical or secular references. (3) Two roundels depict a monk wearing a cowl with a cabbage on his head. According to The Online Etymology Dictionary 'The comparison of a head of cabbage to the head of a person (usually disparaging to the latter) is at least as old as Old French *cabus* '(head of) cabbage (mid 15th C); nitwit, blockhead'. Moreover, the French *Robert Dictionary* shows 'caboche' as head, and then as a term for obstinacy. (4) Two inscriptions refer to God: 'Sola salus servire deo' ('Our only salvation is in serving God') and 'Dieu et Mon Droit' ('God and my right shall me defend').

[5] 2 Samuel 14:25–26, 2 Samuel 15:1–6, 2 Samuel 18:9–15.

[6] Richard Rex, *Henry and His Church*, <http://gracewood0.tripod.com/henryrex.html> accessed 3 April 2014.

[7] Myles Coverdale, *The Bible* (William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale, 1535).

[8] Pamela Tudor-Craig, 'Henry VIII and King David', in D. Williams, *Early Tudor England: proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium* (Woodbridge 1989), 192–3.

[9] Jean Mallard, *The Psalter of Henry VIII* (1540–1541), British Library, London, Royal MS 2 A XVI.

imprisonment. The Act of Supremacy of 1534 went further in stating that the king was 'the only Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England' and, under the Treasons Act of that same year, it became an act of treason punishable by death not to acknowledge this. Catherine and her daughter Mary had become the focus of disenfranchised Catholics, creating the very real threat of rebellion at home or a foreign invasion. Henry refused to back down, and in 1535 ordered the beheading of Bishop Fisher and his former friend and Chancellor Sir Thomas More for going against the Law of God by refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy.

Considering the carvings in this context it is reasonable to believe that the intention behind the screen went far beyond a celebration of the marriage of Henry VIII and his anointed queen Anne Boleyn, or even just a forthright proclamation of their omnipotent authority.[10] The images of King David and Absalom suggest that by 1536 Henry was already identifying himself as the Biblical theocrat, in support of the notion that his will was indeed the Will of God.

LUCY CHURCHILL

Cambridge, UK

[10] Henry and Anne's heraldic devices and ciphers are all presented beneath an Imperial Crown symbolizing their Divine Right to rule, and supremacy over the English Church.

BESS OF HARDWICK AND ELIZABETH ST LOE

For Seintloe doth she say / So stable shall shee stand /
as rock within the sea / or hudge hill on the land /
dye rather with the mace / From mightie Hercules hand /
then once her truth degrace / yf she theare in do stand /

THUS John Harington the elder describes the attributes of St Loe, one of Princess Elizabeth's Maids of Honour in 'The prayse of six gentle Women attending of the Ladye Elizabeth her grace at Hatfield then'.[1] This description of the stable gentlewoman appears, at first, to identify the indomitable Bess of Hardwick, wife of Sir William St Loe. However, the Mistress Elizabeth St Loe compared here with the mighty Hercules is not Bess of Hardwick, but her sister-in-law Elizabeth St Loe.[2] These two women have been confused with each other, stemming from the similarity of their names and from inattention to their title of address. A bit of further confusion came from an attempt to identify this maid as Sir William St Loe's daughter, Mary, instead of his sister, Elizabeth.

The distinction between these three St Loes—two Elizabeths and a Mary stems from their titles. 'Mistress' was a form of address indicating rank, courtesy, or office. In the sixteenth century this title did not indicate marital status. It was used for both single and married women holding the rank of gentlewoman. 'Mrs' was the standard abbreviation for 'Mistress', in the same manner that 'Mr' was the abbreviation for 'Master', which differs from today's abbreviated addresses for missus and mister. The peerage ranks of lady—baroness, viscountess, countess, lady marquess, and duchess—were usually acquired by marriage to their male counterparts. Women also acquired the title of lady by birth as a peer's daughter or when they became a knight's wife.

A woman with the rank of 'lady' or higher, attained either by marriage or by birth, continued to hold this rank throughout the remainder of her life. If she subsequently married a man of a lower rank, she retained her superior title. For instance, Lady Anne Clinton, daughter of Edward Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, married Master William Askew, but was still addressed as 'Lady' while taking on her husband's surname, becoming Lady Anne Askew.[3] In 1567 Mistress Catherine Knyvett married Lord Henry Paget (d.1568), becoming Baroness Paget. She continued to hold the rank of baroness following her 1575 marriage

[1] R. Hughey, *John Harington of Stepney: Tudor Gentleman His Life and Works* (Columbus, 1971), 103.
[2] I am grateful to Marion Colthorpe for pointing out the existence of this confusion between these two women in her unpublished work, 'Queen Elizabeth, a day by day account'.
[3] J. A. Lawson, *The Elizabethan New Year's Gift Exchanges, 1559–1603* (Oxford, 2013), 607; BL Lansdowne MS 25, f.48, 'Lady Anne Asku, to Lord Burghley'.