Renaissance Literature

AN ANTHOLOGY OF POETRY AND PROSE

Second Edition

EDITED BY JOHN C. HUNTER

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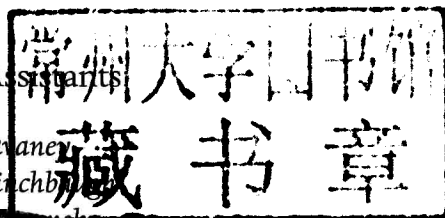
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Alphabetical List of Authors

Preface to the Second Edition: Representing the Renaissance in the Twenty-First Century

This anthology is a survey of English Renaissance poetry and prose for students and general readers, containing writing that was published or circulated between the accession of Henry VIII in 1509 and the Long Parliament of 1640 that preceded the English Civil War. As a designation for a specific historical period, the term "Renaissance" has always been hard to pin down: it occurred at different times in different places, and recent scholarship has stressed the continuities between Renaissance cultures and their medieval precursors that the people of the Renaissance discounted, repressed, or ignored. As a result, scholars have increasingly adopted the even more protean and ambiguous term "early modern" to designate a chronological period running from the end of the Middle Ages (sometime in the fifteenth century) to the beginning of the nineteenth century.[1] I have chosen to retain the word "Renaissance" for the title of this book for two reasons. First, practically all of the writers included in it believed in the distinctiveness of their historical moment from the "Middle" or "Dark Ages"; it was during the Renaissance that these terms, along with the pejorative associations that go with them, were coined, and they remain (unfortunately) robustly present in our everyday clichés of medieval culture today. Second, they would all have believed that it was the rebirth of classical standards of learning (in art, science, technology, medicine, and many other fields) that most strongly marked the distinctiveness of post-fifteenth-century Europe. Used this way, the term "Renaissance" allows us to read the texts in this book in a context which *they* helped to establish; the term "early modernity," on the other hand, implies that the most important thing about this period is that it is part of the process which leads to the contemporary Western world (though it is retained here for describing phenomena that pertain to the medieval and Renaissance periods). Rather than minimize the differences between the present day and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this book will try to call attention to them and provoke you to think about them. In the end, all period classifications are arbitrary and suspicious; they survive mainly because we cannot seem to think historically without them. Even Jacob Burckhardt, the nineteenth-century Swiss historian who almost single-handedly established the dominant concept of the Renaissance for the modern West, admitted that "[i]t is the most serious difficulty of the history of civilization that a great intellectual process must be broken up into single, and often into what seem arbitrary, categories in order to be in any way intelligible."[2]

Selecting Texts

The task of selecting texts for a period anthology has in some ways been radically changed by the rise of the World Wide Web and the evolution of scholarly and pedagogic approaches to Renaissance culture; in other ways, it has changed remarkably little. Fifty years ago, historical anthology editors were conscious of the fact that their selection decisions had a decisive impact on what was available for students and the general public to read. Scholarly editions of specific writers were (and still are) expensive and intimidating to the non-specialist, and editors had to create their teaching anthologies with the heavy responsibility of embodying an entire historical period. As a result, older anthologies tend to include smaller excerpts from many individual writers than do recent ones: the literary canon was defined more by matters of style than of content, so it was deemed important that students read widely across the period's many stylistic possibilities.

The past decade and a half, however, has seen an enormous proliferation of websites devoted to early modern literary study and many feature editions of previously unavailable authors. The Brown University Women Writers Project (www.wwp.brown.edu/), and Early English Books Online (eebo.chadwyck.com/home) are remarkable troves of texts that would have been very difficult for a general reader to obtain or even (in some cases) learn about twenty years ago. Not all websites are as editorially scrupulous as one would wish, but the quality and quantity of online editions have relieved printed anthologies of some of the eternal and intractable problems of selecting from an enormous number of works available. More and more, the printed book is not the limit of what is available to be read, and this has freed students, instructors, and general readers alike. If you find yourself intrigued by an issue, literary form, author, or historical problem that you find here, then you can and should find more elsewhere – use the secondary readings in the head notes for bibliographical help and explore them for yourself.

Coupled with this and under the influence of several modes of historicism, post-colonial studies, and studies of race, class, gender, and sexuality, the past twenty-five years have seen courses in Renaissance literature change to focus around cultural and historical issues and how they are manifested in literature rather than on literature as a self-sufficient cultural artifact. Along with the ever-increasing availability of online editions of texts, this has greatly multiplied the possibilities for representing the Renaissance in high school and university courses (as well as on stage, on screen, and in literature) and has led to a scholarly and pedagogic emphasis on the many contexts around and contingent specificities within a text rather than its participation in a unitary tradition or shared cultural ideal. A representative example of this shift can be seen in the differences between two hugely influential and widely debated critical works: E. M. W. Tillyard's *Elizabethan World Picture* (published in 1943 and extensively read for thirty years thereafter) presumes a broad unity in the views of Elizabethan people about the universe and its workings; Stephen Greenblatt's equally iconic *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), however, insists upon the dialectical complexity and instability of the forces that shaped people and ideas. In teaching practice and anthology editing, this shift in emphasis is often manifested by a stronger representation of women writers from the period and more non-fictional material, especially about European colonial exploration and contact with indigenous peoples. In approaching the traditional canonical figures from the period (William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, John Donne, etc.), on the other hand,

there have been many changes in interpretive emphasis but comparatively few in terms of what is read and taught – broadly speaking, the same poems and prose works by these figures are anthologized now as before; it is the way they are read that is different.

The first edition of this book strove to represent both canonical and non-canonical figures and to include texts that are at the center of current scholarly debates. This new edition, which is reduced in size in order to provide fuller annotations and a more readable text, will preserve the first goal and instead aim to offer instructors, students, and general readers as many options as possible for approaching Renaissance literature. Its imagined reader has had little or no previous contact with the Renaissance, and the book is thus designed to communicate the variety of forms, themes, and cultural impact of Renaissance writing. While the ideal of having complete texts (such as including all of Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, as the first edition did) has had to be abandoned in favor of greater selectivity, the revised and expanded annotations and head notes will encourage readers to be as alert as possible to the different ways in which the texts can be approached and read against one another. All anthologies are limited and, as a result, frustrating (not least to their editors), but frustration can be a very powerful spur to learning if it is productively channeled. Again, I urge you to approach this book not as a summary of the English Renaissance but as a door into its complexity and variety. If it encourages and enables you to explore beyond its limits, then it will have achieved its goal.

One important selection criterion was the inclusion of an adequate representation of the familiar writers of the English Renaissance. Works by figures such as Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, William Shakespeare, Philip Sidney, and Edmund Spenser are still given considerable space because their work has been crucial for all formulations of English Renaissance culture and because of their resonance for later writers in the English-speaking world. Equally important, they were all recognized as important writers in their own day, so they can help us to understand what Renaissance England valued about itself, as opposed to what we value about it.

The second criterion for inclusion was to include texts or forms that were popular in their own day, even if they have become difficult or obscure in ours. As odd as a text like John Lyly's *Euphues* can seem to twenty-first-century readers, it was a much-imitated (and, later, much-derided) best-seller in the 1580s and after. Studying it can tell us a lot about sixteenth-century English prose writing, how Lyly's contemporaries thought about the relations between book learning and everyday life, and a great deal more. Another example is Myles Smith's "Preface to the Reader" from the Authorized Version of the Bible (better known as the "King James Bible"). This was the official justification of the scholarly, linguistic, and theological principles behind the production of one of the most influential books in the history of the English language; it appeared at the beginning of almost all editions of the text in its day. Strangely, given the insights it offers into the process by which this text was produced and into translation theory in general, it rarely appears in either Bibles or Renaissance literature anthologies now. Beyond the specific goal of introducing readers to the more challenging aspects of Renaissance writing, learning how to sympathetically approach modes of writing that resist easy assimilation is a vital life skill in the twenty-first-century world – the easy portability and reproducibility of writing, music, film, and advertising in the digital world have made contact with unfamiliar modes of expression almost inevitable. In a modest way, this book hopes to give its readers a sense of the possible rewards for overcoming the alienation that makes us resist what is unfamiliar.

Lastly, texts were chosen as representatives of the variety of cultural trends, modes of writing, or historical concerns in ·Renaissance culture that readers can go on to explore in more detail themselves. Writing by women is given considerable attention not because of superficial tokenism but because, as scholars have explored more and more recently, women read and wrote a lot, even allowing for the disparity with men in their formal education, literacy, and access to publication. Although such names as Anne Askew, Elizabeth Cary, Æmilia Lanyer, Martha Moulsworth, and Mary Wroth have only recently become familiar to students of the English Renaissance, their work can profitably be read not just as previously marginalized women's writing but also as participants in the wider contexts of writing from this period as a whole. Thomas Nashe's "Choice of Valentines," to cite a very different example, was not widely read in its day, but is included to represent the enormous production of openly erotic writing that circulated (usually in manuscript) at this time but which is almost never taught to students. Still other works are included precisely because they contravene our familiar stereotypes of a writer. Ben Jonson's "On the Famous Voyage" is the longest poem and concluding work in his *Epigrams*, but its gleefully excremental vulgarity has kept it out of other anthologies, despite the prominent place accorded it by its author. Many Renaissance writers could produce both refined and coarse works and many contemporary readers enjoyed both stylistic registers, yet it is only the refined version of the Renaissance that most students encounter. Among the other issues this book hopes to bring out are: the status of English as a literary and scholarly language (in the selection from Mulcaster); Europe's relations with the wider world, especially the New World, the slave trade, and Islam (Hakluyt and Hariot); the presence of cheap popular forms of literature that do not get a lot of critical attention (the carols and broadside ballads); and the impact of the Reformation on all aspects of English life and cultural production. What has been very unwillingly omitted has been a proper representation of Scottish, Irish, and regional English literary production from this period – there simply was not space in which to do it justice.

Editing Texts

The arrangement of the collection is chronological, based usually on the date of birth of the author or date of publication for texts with corporate authorship. Although this is principally an anthology of prose and poetry originally written in English during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, some translations are also included because of their cultural importance. In each case, the source text used is listed, along with some suggestions for secondary reading; all bibliographical references in the text are in short form, with full details in the bibliography.

The form of the texts in this anthology reflects an important change that has been taking place during the past twenty years in editing practice. Based on the assumptions of the New Criticism and related nineteenth-century conceptions of lyric poetry, the editing of Renaissance texts once assumed that it was the editor's task to recover from the vicissitudes of textual transmission as pure and accessible a form of the author's original as possible. The unstated presumption behind this view is that literature begins with an act of free, imaginative creation and results in a discrete, self-contained artistic product. This assumption has been systematically challenged by New Historicist and cultural materialist critique, which emphasizes instead the inescapable connections between social power, the economic conditions of cultural production, and artistic processes (see Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy*, and Fernie et al., *Reconceiving the Renaissance*, pps. 18–83). Historical research has also made it clear that,

especially in the case of works that circulated in manuscript, authors accepted that each written or printed production of a work was prone to local variations. Efforts by an author to fix a permanent version of his or her work, such as Ben Jonson publishing his *Works* in 1616, were very rare.

This change in assumptions underlying editing practice has important but somewhat untidy implications for the modernization of spelling and grammar in Renaissance texts. On the one hand, the practice of modernization has been seriously questioned on the grounds that it substitutes a twentieth-century set of presuppositions concerning spelling, punctuation, and grammar for the more fluid conditions of textual production during the Renaissance, when spelling, punctuation, and the rules of grammar were not standardized, when poetry was closer to oral rhetoric, and when "publication" often meant that an author (such as Wyatt, Lady Mary Wroth, or Donne) circulated manuscripts among his or her friends, who were then free to copy and to alter what their authors had written. On the other hand, a unilateral retreat from the problems of modernization, back to old spelling and irregular punctuation, puts obstacles in the way of modern readers, often simply perpetuating printers' or copyists' practices that have nothing to do with authorial composition. There are no tidy compromises that solve these dilemmas, but the literary academy as a whole is coming more and more to accept that every edition of a text is, in effect, a performance of it and that no one performance can ever be definitive.

Rather than imposing a uniform system of modernization, this anthology retains a more strategic procedure that responds to the conditions of each text. Some are in old spelling, others are not. The only consistent change has been to transpose the letters "i/j" and "u/v" in old-spelling texts when modern spelling would require it; the usage of "than" and "then" has also been modernized. Sometimes my approach results in inconsistent editorial practice between different authors in order, for example, to avoid losing a syllable and thus a rhythmic poetic pattern by changing from old to new spelling; in each case, the requirements of the text at hand have ruled over fixed procedures. The salient modernization problem with Renaissance texts is punctuation, because Renaissance punctuation is typically more a rhetorical than a syntactic marker, and modernizing punctuation changes often resolve ambiguities that were quite deliberate in the original texts. I have tried to be as sensitive as possible to this problem, while recognizing that this book is being read largely by non-specialists. The best reading procedure is, as always, to go beyond this book: look at facsimile or scholarly editions of the works in this book in comparison with what is presented here and think about how texts are changed by the processes of editing and printing. Doing so will illustrate just how sanitized and transformed all literary texts are by being made ready for publication and how very material are the processes that make possible the imaginative work of reading. Lastly, I have used the words "England" and "English" to refer to the nation of England and Wales during the entire period covered by this book. The unification of the English and Scottish thrones did *not* unite them as nations (as the Bishops' Wars of 1638–9 illustrate very clearly) and few people at this time referred to "Britain" as a political entity. England's colonial relations to Wales and Ireland will be made clear whenever they are relevant to ensure that readers know when the writers in this book are conflating "England" with "all the lands within the British Isles which the English crown claims."

Lastly, this edition offers many more glosses for unfamiliar words, proper nouns, and concepts than its predecessor. A gazetteer of commonly used references is included at the back of the book to offer more details than footnotes usually can. Some readers will inevitably find such a large editorial apparatus distracting, but fifteen years of university teaching experience have taught me that many

contemporary readers are unlikely to take the time to look these things up, so I have erred on the side of excess in the hope that readers will be more encouraged to persevere with the texts. This is, of course, partly at odds with my goal of presenting Renaissance texts on their own terms rather than through ours, but so be it: if readers are inspired to learn to read secretary hand or to read facsimiles of the original editions of theses texts and to transcend this volume entirely, then no one will be more delighted than this editor. The head notes are *not* designed to emphasize the dominant issues in the scholarship on a given writer at present; the responses from readers of the first edition indicate that opinion can vary widely about what the "important issues" are and the bibliographies of the works listed at the end of each head note will lead you to these scholarly debates very quickly. Rather, the head notes are written to help situate the texts for readers who have probably never encountered them before and to offer some suggestions for reading strategies that might help such a reader to approach them. They are an attempt to channel the mystification that reading something like Spenser's *Faerie Queene* for the first time inevitably provokes into a productive curiosity rather than a bored dismissal.

Notes

1   See Euan Cameron's editor's introduction to *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
2   Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, 21.

Acknowledgments

Timeline: The Tudor and Stuart Monarchs, 1509–1642

Tudor Dynasty

King Henry VIII (reigned 1509–47)

1509 Henry marries Catherine of Aragon, the widow of his late brother Arthur.

1511 Birth and death of Henry and Catherine's infant son, Henry.

Henry joins the alliance known as the Holy League with Pope Julius II, Venice, and Aragon against France.

1513 England invades France.

To divert England's attention, Scotland (a French ally) invades England, but is defeated at the Battle of Flodden Field (James IV of Scotland killed).

1514 Thomas Wolsey created Archbishop of York, continuing his rise to power and influence under Henry VIII.

Peace treaty signed with France.

1515 Wolsey becomes Lord Chancellor and a cardinal of the church.

1516 Birth of Princess Mary.

1517 Outbreak of plague.

1519 Bad harvests for the next two years.

1520 Rebellion in Ireland.

Henry VIII meets Francis I of France at the Field of Cloth of Gold.

1521 Martin Luther's writings publicly burned in the presence of Wolsey and the papal nuncio.

Henry VIII publishes *Assertio septem sacramentorurm* ("Assertion of the Seven Sacraments") condemning Lutheran ideas; the pope rewards him with the title of Defender of the Faith.

1522 Wolsey tries unsuccessfully to be elected pope.

1523 England invades France again.

1524   Wolsey implements the Amicable Grant, a forced loan to help pay for the French war.

1525   Rebellion against the Amicable Grant breaks out in East Anglia; Amicable Grant withdrawn.

1526   Thousands of smuggled copies of William Tyndale's English New Testament are burned.

1527   Henry announces his intention of divorcing Catherine of Aragon and seeks papal support.

        Bad harvests for the next two years.

1529   Wolsey is replaced as Lord Chancellor by Sir Thomas More.

        Thomas Cranmer appointed royal chaplain.

        Parliament passes acts limiting clerical immunity from criminal arrest, forbidding holding more than one church office at a time ("pluralism"), nullifying papal dispensations, and other measures aimed at reducing the church's independence from secular control.

1530   Wolsey arrested for treason, but dies before his trial.

        Universities of Oxford and Cambridge assert legitimacy of the royal divorce; Henry sends an envoy to the pope to formally request one.

1531   Henry extorts an enormous fine from the clergy after charging them with *praemunire* (appealing to a power outside the realm for the resolution of a matter under the crown's control).

1532   Law passed demanding submission of the clergy to royal authority.

        Resignation of More as Lord Chancellor because of his opposition to the divorce; he is replaced as chief minister by Thomas Cromwell.

1533   Henry secretly marries Anne Boleyn; the marriage to Catherine is annulled by Archbishop Cranmer; Anne is crowned; birth of Princess Elizabeth.

1534   Parliament passes Act of Supremacy (making Henry VIII head of the Church of England); Act of Submission of the Clergy (acknowledging the change); and Act of Succession (legitimizing Henry's heirs via Anne Boleyn and making it a treasonable offense to dispute the succession).

1535   Thomas More and Bishop John Fisher executed for treason (opposing the split with Rome).

1536   Queen Anne indicted for high treason and beheaded.

        Act of Ten Articles, laying out the doctrinal basis of the Church of England – only three sacraments (baptism, penance, and the eucharist) are specifically mentioned.

        Pilgrimage of Grace, a rebellion in northern England against the dissolution of the monasteries, the Act of Ten Articles, and the break with Rome (along with economic grievances); it is swiftly put down and its leaders executed.

        Beginning of the dissolution of the monasteries, by which all of the monasteries and nunneries in the realm are seized for the crown.

1537   Publication of the Matthew Bible (based on Tyndale's translation) in Antwerp with royal permission.

1538   Cromwell orders an English Bible placed in every parish church; royal injunctions ban "superstitious worship" and rituals; the shrines to saints and the Virgin Mary are destroyed.

1539   Act of Six Articles confirms traditional Catholic doctrine in the Church of England in such matters as transubstantiation, priestly celibacy, and the importance of auricular confession,

backed by severe penalties for those who disobey; heresy is equated with treason, thus making it a capital offense.

Publication of the Great Bible, Miles Coverdale's revision of the Matthew Bible (designed to make it less expressly Calvinist).

1540   Henry VIII marries Anne of Cleves; the marriage is annulled later that year.

Henry VIII marries Catherine Howard.

Thomas Cromwell executed for treason.

1541   An English Bible is again ordered in every parish church.

1542   Queen Catherine Howard executed.

1543   Henry VIII marries Catherine Parr.

Act for the Advancement of True Religion, endorsing all religious doctrine published since 1540, tries to restrict the reading of the Bible to the upper classes, with women only allowed to read it in private.

1544   Royal command requiring the English liturgy to be used in every church.

Bad harvest.

1546   Outbreak of the plague.

Edward VI (reigned 1547–53)

1547   Henry VIII dies; Edward VI becomes king at the age of 9.

Earl of Hertford (later, Duke of Somerset) is appointed Lord Protector.

First act of new parliament repeals Act of Six Articles and Act for Advancement of True Religion.

1549   Act of Uniformity introduces the Book of Common Prayer, recasting the liturgy in English.

Rebellions against the new liturgy break out in Cornwall and Norfolk.

Beginning of three successive bad harvests.

1550   Duke of Somerset deposed as Lord Protector by Earl of Warwick (later Duke of Northumberland).

Outbreak of the plague.

1551   Epidemic of "sweating sickness" (influenza).

1552   Second Act of Uniformity introduces a new prayer book and removes many of the remaining Catholic elements in the liturgy under influence of Calvinist reformers.

1553   Thomas Cranmer issues Forty-Two Articles, laying out the official doctrine of the Church of England.

Edward VI dies of tuberculosis; the Protestant Lady Jane Grey, Henry VIII's grand-niece, is proclaimed queen in place of the Catholic Princess Mary by Northumberland and his followers.

Mary successfully asserts her claim and is proclaimed queen in London.

Northumberland executed.

Queen Mary (reigned 1553–8)

1553 Mary renounces her title as supreme head of the church and informs parliament that she will marry Prince Philip of Spain.

First Act of Repeal revokes the Acts of Uniformity and begins reconciliation with the papacy.

Beginning of the officially sanctioned destruction of Bibles in English.

1554 Wyatt's Rebellion against the Spanish marriage is put down.

Lady Jane Grey and several of her supporters executed; Princess Elizabeth imprisoned in the Tower of London for three months.

Second Act of Repeal.

Outbreak of plague and a bad harvest.

Mary marries Philip of Spain by proxy.

1555 Philip leaves England.

Papal bull declares Ireland an independent kingdom.

1556 Philip II becomes king of Spain and the Netherlands.

Dudley conspiracy discovered; Cranmer executed.

Worst harvest of the sixteenth century – widespread famine and inflation.

1557 King Philip visits England.

War declared with France.

"Sweating sickness" epidemic off and on for the next three years.

1558 Mary I dies childless; Elizabeth I becomes queen.

Queen Elizabeth I (reigned 1558–1603)

1559 Coronation of Elizabeth I; parliament assembles.

Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy restore Anglican church.

Revised 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* introduced.

1560 Scots parliament passes Protestant legislation – the question of whether the Scottish church should be Episcopal or Presbyterian is begun.

Restoration of royal supremacy in Ireland.

Anglo-Scottish Alliance in Treaty of Edinburgh.

1561 Return of Mary to Scotland (August).

Mary, Queen of Scots (Catholic) begins rule in Scotland.

1563 Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican church introduced, laying out the key doctrinal positions of the English church in a middle ground between Roman Catholicism and Puritanism.

Outbreak of plague.

1567   Abdication of Queen Mary of Scotland (driven from throne by Calvinists); succession of James VI (July); Mary later imprisoned in England.

1568   Publication of Bishops' Bible, designed to replace the Great Bible.

        Seizure of Spanish ''treasure ships'' at south coast ports.

1569   Northern rebellion (of Catholic nobles hoping to replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots).

        First of the Desmond rebellions against English rule in Ireland (until 1573).

1571   Ridolfi plot to assassinate Elizabeth and replace her with Mary uncovered.

1572   Anglo-French Treaty of Blois.

        Execution of the Duke of Norfolk for treason.

        St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of several thousand French Protestants by their Catholic countrymen.

        Publication of a revised version of the Bishops' Bible.

1573   Sir Francis Walsingham created secretary of state.

        Earl of Essex launches his Ulster plantation scheme.

1576   Geneva Bible first published in England.

1578   Outbreak of plague.

1579   Second Desmond rebellion against English rule in Ireland (until 1583).

1580   First Jesuit missionary priests arrive in England.

        Sir Francis Drake completes circumnavigation of the globe (September).

        Massacre of Irish, Italian, and Spanish troops at Smerwick (November).

1581   Severe legislation against Catholic recusants.

1582   Outbreak of plague.

1583   Discovery of Throckmorton conspiracy for the French to invade England and replace Elizabeth with Mary, Queen of Scots.

1584   Expulsion of Spanish ambassador for his part in the Throckmorton conspiracy.

        Bond of Association drafted, which, as a statute, obliges all citizens to execute anyone attempting to kill Elizabeth or usurp the throne.

        Outbreak of plague.

1586   Execution of Anthony Babington and fellow conspirators for plotting the overthrow of the queen.

        Bad harvests for two years.

1587   Elizabeth beheads Mary, Queen of Scots for conspiring against her.

1588   Defeat of the Spanish Armada (July–August).

        Marprelate pamphlets disseminated in London (October).