

The 'wits' who beset Sir Richard Blackmore

During the current project to catalogue pre-1701 books in the Old Library at St Edmund Hall a number of discoveries have been made. Among them, a copy of *Commendatory verses, on the author of the two Arthurs and the satyr against wit* (London: Printed in the year MDCC)¹ was found to include manuscript attributions for the forty anonymous poems which make up the text. The Teddy Hall copy was presented to the library by Alfred Brotherston Emden (1888–1979), Principal of the college from 1929 to 1951. Emden was a great benefactor, and champion, of the college Library and was interested especially in authors with connections to Teddy Hall, especially those who had studied there (for example, the Library's excellent collection of the works of John Oldham (1653–1684) owes much to Emden's generosity). In the present case, however, Emden acquired the book because its subject, rather than any of its authors, was an Aularian.

Sir Richard Blackmore (1654–1729) matriculated at St Edmund Hall in 1669 and proceeded BA in 1674 and MA in 1676, continuing to teach at the Hall for a few years longer. Having inherited wealth in 1682, he travelled to Europe and studied medicine at Padua before settling in London to practice, becoming one of the physicians to William III in the early 1690s. His great passion, however, was for poetry and he is best remembered today as a prolific versifier of doubtful talent. He was puritanical by nature and held that much contemporary literature was decadent, immodest and impious, a tendency he hoped to correct by the example of his own works. He published a number of substantial poems, including the epics *Prince Arthur* (1695) and *King Arthur* (1697), which were derided by contemporary critics and fellow poets for their clumsy prosody and simplistic allegory in support of William III (who rewarded the author with a knighthood in 1697).² Apart from his literary pretensions, Blackmore set himself up for attack by his stance against the immorality he perceived in his fellow authors, who inevitably took pleasure in ridiculing him, both as a poet and as a quack. His main opponents were a group of 'wits' who gathered at Will's Coffee House in Russell Street, Covent Garden. John Dryden was the central figure here, surrounded by lesser poets, dramatists, critics, dilettanti and hangers-on.³

¹ ESTC R29312. In 1702 the sheets were reissued as a 'Second edition' with the variant title *Commendatory verses: or, a step towards a poetical war betwixt Covent-Garden and Cheap-Side*, and an additional final leaf bearing an extra poem (ESTC N2250). This new final leaf also bears an advertisement for books sold by J. Nutt, J. Baker, T. Harrison, J. Chantry and J. Fosset, who probably sold copies of this second issue (and may also have stocked the first).

² Blackmore's entry in the ODNB suggests that *Prince Arthur* was popular success, since it went into three editions.

³ See Richard C. Boys, 'Sir Richard Blackmore and the wits: a study of "Commendatory verses on the author of the two Arthurs and the Satyr against wit" (1700)' in *University of Michigan contributions in modern philology* 13 (1949), pp. 1–144. Boys gives a very full account of the literary battle between Blackmore and the 'wits'. He remarks (p. 17) that 'It is tempting to speculate on what his [Dryden's] part in the collection was', but admirably resists this temptation; there is no evidence of any direct involvement from Dryden, albeit he no doubt knew of and probably approved the preparation of *Commendatory verses*. Dryden died in May 1700, so

In 1696 one of the Coffee House circle, John Dennis, wrote a lengthy, and serious, critique of *Prince Arthur*.⁴ Blackmore replied to this and other attacks in the preface to *King Arthur*. In 1699 another of the wits (and another medic), Samuel Garth, published *The dispensary*, a satirical poem which supported the proposal for dispensing free medicines to London's poor (a plan which Blackmore vehemently opposed) and lampooned various contemporaries, including Blackmore, who responded to this and other criticisms with *A satyr against wit* (1700), in which he used the blunt instrument of his own poetry as if it were a rapier against his enemies.⁵ The *Satyr* was anonymous, but the wits easily recognized Blackmore as the author and themselves as the objects of his attack, and the inevitable result was a riposte, the *Commendatory verses* published later in 1700.⁶ This was not quite the end of the paper war. Blackmore put together a series of replies and published them later in the same year as *Discommendatory verses, on those which are truly commendatory, on the author of the two Arthurs, and the satyr against wit* (London: Printed in the year, MDCC).⁷

The ring-leader who rallied the wits of Will's Coffee House against Blackmore was Thomas (Tom) Brown, remembered today chiefly for his sentiments about Bishop Fell.⁸ He is believed to have edited the *Commendatory verses* and evidently wrote the foreword, which is signed with the initials 'O.S.', standing for Owen Swan, one of Brown's *noms-de-plume*.⁹ The poems in the work are all

probably did not live to see the work published. Some of the Coffee House circle were also members of the Kit-Kat Club (see the biographical list below).

⁴ *Remarks on a book entituled, Prince Arthur* (London: Printed for S. Heyrick and R. Sare, 1696). ESTC R35663.

⁵ *A satyr against wit*. London: Printed for Samuel Crouch ..., 1700 (see ESTC R15352). It was Blackmore's most successful work, with second and third editions, and a Dublin piracy, appearing in the same year (see ESTC R1140, R170672 and R170673). The victims of the *Satyr* are often accused in the text with dashed-out names, Dryden and Garth being named most often, with Dennis and Smallwood close behind.

⁶ There were other attacks on Blackmore at this time. For example, Dryden lampooned him several times, notably in the prologue to Vanbrugh's new production of Beaumont and Fletcher's play 'The pilgrim', presented in 1700 as a benefit for Dryden, and in the preface to his *Fables* (1700). An anonymous *Satyr upon a late pamphlet entituled, A satyr against wit* (1700; ESTC R23190) was published, no doubt by one of the Will's Coffee House set. Later Blackmore was ridiculed again, and still more memorably, as one of the subjects of Pope's *Dunciad* (1728).

⁷ ESTC R29732. The ESTC attributes the text to Blackmore alone, but it is clear that some at least of the verses are by his friends, and some are said to be 'By a Lady'. Daniel Defoe and Samuel Wesley have been suggested as contributors, and both certainly wrote about the dispute, broadly taking Blackmore's part (see Robert M. Krapp, 'Class analysis of a literary controversy: wit and sense in seventeenth century English literature', *Science and society* 10:1 (Winter 1946), pp. 80–92).

⁸ 'I do not love thee Dr Fell | The reason why I cannot tell; | But this I know and know full well, | I do not love thee, Dr Fell', written around 1680 when Brown was up at Christ Church.

⁹ The cancel title-leaf to the 'second edition' of *Commendatory verses* describes it as 'By several Hands' and bears a dedication signed 'By Mr. O.' followed by the rebus of a swan.

anonymous, but there must have been fairly widespread knowledge of the literary feud at the time, in London, Oxford and Cambridge (almost all the wits were university men), and many of the authors were known, or supposed, from the first. Indeed, the identification of the authors began at once, with the *Discommendatory verses*, some of which were direct responses to specific lines in the *Commendatory verses*, naming, or implying the names of, the writers Blackmore believed to be responsible.¹⁰

A few years later, a further series of attributions was published in Tom Brown's collected *Works*. The first edition of the first volume of 1707¹¹ included those poems from the *Commendatory verses* which the editor and publisher, Samuel Briscoe (ca. 1670–1727?), believed to be by Brown. In the second edition of the fourth volume, dated 1711,¹² Briscoe included all but two of the remaining poems, all but four with attributions to other writers. However, this was a posthumous collection, issued more than a decade after *Commendatory verses* had appeared, and while the editor evidently had access to Brown's papers,¹³ family and friends, the attributions which appear here are neither complete, nor agree in every case with those in *Discommendatory verses*.

In addition to these two printed sources, other copies of *Commendatory verses* survive with contemporary, or near-contemporary, manuscript additions naming the

¹⁰ Boys (see note 3) transcribes the poems in both collections, and provides some discussion of the likely authorship. I have followed Boys' convention of referring to the poems in *Commendatory verses* as CV1, CV2 etc. and those in *Discommendatory verses* as D1, D2 etc.

¹¹ *The works of Mr Thomas Brown* (2 volumes, London: Printed for Sam. Briscoe and sold by B. Bragg, 1707). ESTC T52781. The first volume ascribes CV14, 19–23, 28–31, 33, 34 and 38 to Brown. The frontispiece shows an allegorical scene in which Brown's portrait is paraded by a satyr while a female personification (Fame, perhaps) looks him in the eye and a crouching Blackmore (penning his *Satyr against wit*) looks angrily askance.

¹² *The fourth volume of the works of Mr. Thomas Brown* ([2nd edition], London: Printed for Sam Briscoe, and sold by J. Morphew ... and Ja. Woodward, 1711). ESTC T183795. Here attributions are made for CV1–3, 6–12, 15–18, 26, 32, 36, 37 and 39. CV5 is attributed to Samuel Garth only in later editions (from 1730, after Briscoe's death), while CV4, 13, 27 and 35 are included without any, or a clear, attribution, and CV24 and 25 are omitted altogether. The first edition of volume IV, published in 1708 and reissued in 1709, includes the poems but not the attributions. Further editions of this volume appeared as follows: 'second edition', 1713 (actually a re-issue of the 1711 edition?), also issued as *The last works*; 'third edition', 1715; 'fourth edition', 1720; unnumbered edition, 1721; 'seventh edition', 1730; 'eighth edition', 1744; 'ninth edition', 1760. There was also a Dublin 'eighth edition' in 1779.

¹³ Briscoe signs the address to the reader in volume I of Brown's *Works* (1707), saying that Brown's manuscripts could be examined at the shop of the bookseller/printer Benjamin Bragg in Paternoster Row. He also invites readers who have 'any piece or pieces of Mr. Brown's by 'em, not yet printed, to send 'em to Mr. Bragg' in return for the promise of a complete copy of the *Works*. Briscoe was probably friendly with the 'wits' and may indeed have been one of them; during 1693 and 1694 he gave the address of his bookshop as 'over against Will's Coffee-House' (he later gave a different address in Russell Street, which must have been close by, if it was not the same building under a different appellation).

authors. Two have been traced for certain, in addition to the Teddy Hall copy (though there may well be others).¹⁴ One of these is now in the Fisher Library at the University of Sidney (part of a collection made by Hugh Macdonald)¹⁵ and the other is in the British Library.¹⁶ The latter was part of the collection of Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), though the annotations do not appear to be in his hand.¹⁷ What becomes clear from a comparison of the annotations in the British Library and Fisher Library copies is that they are, essentially, the same. Of the forty poems, thirty-seven are attributed to the same authors, very often using the same forms and spellings of the names. Two of the three cases of divergence are slight. CV26 is attributed in the BL copy to ‘Mr Vanbru[gh]’ (evidently John Vanbrugh, not knighted until 1714) while the Fisher Library copy has an illegible squiggle here. CV40 is ascribed to ‘[M or D]r. Smith’ in the Sloane copy, while the Fisher copy gives this final poem to ‘Th. Brown and Mr Smith’. The only substantive difference in attributions between the two copies is in CV33 which is said to be by ‘Mr Mainwaring’ in the BL copy and by Francis Manning in the Fisher copy (the form of the latter is uncertain, but if it is ‘Mr Manning’ then the two could clearly be careless copies of the same attribution). Thus it seems highly likely that these two copies derive their attributions from the same source, either one from the other, or both from another common ancestor. These attributions all agree, where agreement is possible, with those in *Discommendatory verses*, and it is thus possible that they originate from Blackmore himself; the annotators may well have been members of his London circle.

The Teddy Hall annotations

How then do the annotations in the Teddy Hall copy compare with the other attributions known? All forty verses are annotated with names in this copy, but the first attribution had been heavily scored through and is now illegible, suggesting that the writer changed his mind about the likely author of the piece, or discovered later

¹⁴ The Folger Shakespeare Library and Harvard University Library also have copies with contemporary annotations, but these appear only to identify Brown as the editor, and to supply some of the missing letters for those referred to in the text with dashed-out names (such as ‘Bl----re’ for Blackmore).

¹⁵ See W. J. Cameron, ‘The authorship of “Commendatory verses”, 1700’ in *Notes & queries* 10:2 (February 1963), pp. 62–66. Cameron concludes that the Fisher copy’s annotations are the most reliable, though this is not wholly borne out by the evidence he presents.

¹⁶ Shelfmark 643.1.24.(17).

¹⁷ The British Library copy was known to Boys, but he had an imperfect account of the annotations at the time of his study (see note 3) and only learned the details of the annotations in 1950 (see *The philological quarterly* 30 (1 January 1951), pp. 221–222). Cameron (note 15), for his part, seems not to have been aware of Boys’ later corrective note, and bases his knowledge of the BL annotations on Boys’ earlier, incomplete account. Although Sloane appears not to have been the annotator of the copy he possessed, he may have known something of the truth, or likelihood, of the attributions in his copy. He was in London at the period and may well have known Blackmore (both men were physicians to Queen Anne) and quite possibly his views on the authorship of the *Commendatory verses*. I am most grateful to James Freeman and Alison Walker of the British Library for confirming that the annotations in the British Library are unlikely to be in Sloane’s hand.

that the attribution was wrong (it would be interesting indeed to know what name had been written here, but it is neither legible nor complete, the margins of the book having been trimmed, probably when the book was rebound in the nineteenth century, cutting away the latter part of the attribution). Of the remaining thirty-nine attributions (some of which have been similarly cropped but remain largely legible), a comparison with the published and other manuscript sources mentioned reveals the following:

Source	Number of attributions which agree with those in the SEH copy	Number of attributions which disagree	Number of unattributed, or ambiguously attributed, names in the source
Brown's <i>Works</i> (1707 and 1711)	26.5 ¹⁸	6	6.5
<i>Discommendatory verses</i> (1700)	9	9	21
Manuscript attributions in the British Library copy	17	22	0
Manuscript attributions in the Fisher Library copy	16.5 ¹⁹	21.5	1

The closest agreement is therefore between the Teddy Hall annotations and the attributions in Brown's *Works*, while agreement with the other sources is never better than 43 percent. There is good reason to suppose that the annotations in the Teddy Hall copy of *Commendatory verses* were made some years before the first publication of Brown's *Works* in 1707 and 1711, so that the former are unlikely to have been copied from the latter. The chief evidence for this dating comes from the fourth poem²⁰ which is attributed in Teddy Hall copy to 'Mr. Boyle'. The Fisher and British Library copies give the same name, and in *Discommendatory verses* the author is apparently addressed as 'B---le'. He is called 'B--l' in the *Satyr upon wit*. This is almost certainly the politician and writer Charles Boyle. In 1703 he succeeded to the title of the fourth Earl of Orrery. Had the attribution been made much after this date one would have expected our writer to call him 'Orrery' rather than Boyle. In Brown's *Works* from 1711 this poem is attributed only to 'the Right Honourable the Earl of -----' which may (or may not) be taken to agree with this attribution, but is certainly not in opposition to it.

¹⁸ The half here is generated by CV5. In the early editions of Brown's *Works* this is unattributed, but it was given to Samuel Garth (agreeing with the SEH copy) from at least the 1744 edition, presumably after Briscoe's death.

¹⁹ The half is generated here by CV40, which is attributed in the Fisher copy to two authors (Tom Brown and 'Mr Smith'), one of which (Smith) agrees with the SEH attribution.

²⁰ CV4. 'The Quack Corrected ...'.

That the Teddy Hall attributions are unlikely to have been copied from Brown's *Works* after 1711, and that they do not agree significantly with any of the other known sources, suggests that their writer attributed the poems based on personal knowledge of the controversy and the denizens of Will's Coffee House (or perhaps copied them from another source, as yet untraced). The extensive agreement with the attributions printed in the fourth volume of Brown's *Works* from 1711 suggests the intriguing possibility that Briscoe, the editor of that work, took his information from this same copy. This cannot be proven, but is a possibility worth examining a little more closely. Suppose Briscoe, having collected Brown's manuscripts from his heirs and prepared their texts for publication, knew which of the *Commendatory verses* were by Brown, or believed he did, basing this on his knowledge of poems written in Brown's hand (albeit they might have been copied by him from manuscripts supplied by friends and the editor may have been keen to accept as Brown's any text written in his hand). When Briscoe came to prepare the fourth volume of the *Works* around 1708, he included almost all the other poems from *Commendatory verses*, as having been 'collected by Mr. Brown' (described thus on the title-page), but without having any manuscript sources to work from. He printed them in the original sequence, omitting only two (CV24 and 25). The reason for this omission can only be guessed at. Perhaps Briscoe thought these two inferior (though they seem to me no worse than the others), or considered CV25 obscure and dated (referring as it does to '*a late Pamphlet call'd, The Transactioneer*') and not a little coarse. However, it is perhaps more likely that he carelessly jumped a page when transcribing the texts from the published volume, moving swiftly from page 12 to page 16 to omit a series of verses already published as Brown's (on pages 12–14) and missing two by other authors on page 15 in the process.²¹ It was only with the second edition of the fourth volume of Brown's *Works* in 1711 that attributions were added to the poems. For this edition, Briscoe not only revised his text but prepared a new dedication and address to the reader, in which he noted the pains he had taken to acquire the texts published and the 'Expence to Purchase many of them of their Proprietors'.²² Could the copy of *Commendatory verses* now at Teddy Hall have been part of the material he acquired, or consulted, at this time?

Looking at the twenty-six attributions which agree, we find the wording of the Teddy Hall annotations very similar to those printed in 1711. For example, both attribute CV36 is to an otherwise unknown 'Col. Johnson' (the BL copy attributes this verse to Vanbrugh and the Fisher copy's name is illegible, but is probably not Johnson). The two often agree against the BL and Fisher attributions and sometimes also against *Discommendatory verses*, as in the case of CV6 which both Briscoe and the Teddy Hall annotator ascribe to Christopher Codrington²³ (the BL and Fisher

²¹ Whatever the cause, he could easily have noticed the omission when editing the 1711 edition. But these two verses were never re-instated in the eighteenth-century editions of Brown's *Works*.

²² *The fourth volume of the works of Mr. Thomas Brown* ([2nd edition], London: Briscoe, 1711), 'The bookseller to the reader', A4v.

²³ In the Teddy Hall copy only 'odrington' remains of the attribution. On this gentleman, see Vincent T. Harlow, *Christopher Codrington 1668–1710* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928; reprinted London: Hurst & Co.; New York: St Martin's Press, 1990). In his appendix B (pp. 230–232), Harlow quotes extracts from some of the texts in *Commendatory verses* and attributes CV1, 4, 9 12 and 16, while on pages 95

copies follow the reference in D6 to one 'P----ck' by naming 'Mr Portlock'). Similar patterns can be found for CV5, 8, 15–18, 22, 23, 28, 33 and 37, with the SEH and Briscoe attributions agreeing, against those in the BL and Fisher copies.

What is perhaps more revealing, however, is the relatively few instances where the Teddy Hall annotations and Briscoe's attributions disagree. The Teddy Hall owner gives CV13 and 24 to Tom Brown, but these poems were, respectively, printed without attribution and omitted from Brown's *Works*, perhaps because Briscoe knew that they were not among Brown's manuscripts so could not be safely ascribed to him. Conversely, while Teddy Hall gives CV29–31 to Thomas 'Cheeke' and CV40 to 'Dr Smith', Briscoe attributes all four to Brown, presumably because the manuscripts *were* among those he had used when compiling volume I of the *Works*. Of the unattributed or differently-attributed poems, this leaves only four which might be called problematic. The details are as follows:

CV10 is attributed by the Fisher and BL annotators to 'Mr [Anthony] Henley', agreeing with a reading of *Discommendatory verses*. The Teddy Hall attribution is to Arthur Annesley, fifth Earl of 'Anglesey', while Briscoe ascribes the text to Codrington. The reason may be that Briscoe had direct knowledge of Codrington's contributions to the *Commendatory verses* (in every other case in which he ascribes a verse to Codrington there is agreement with the Teddy Hall annotator).

CV26 is an interesting case, in which *Discommendatory verses* names 'C----' and 'C--k', both of which the BL and Fisher annotators take for 'Mr [Thomas] Cheek'; they are no doubt right that Cheek was intended, at least for the second name. Briscoe, however, names a 'Mr [Henry?] Mildmay', while the SEH copy names '[C]ondon' (the first letter has been cropped away, but the C is suggested by *Discommendatory verses*; however, the name could conceivably have been 'London' or some other construction). 'Condon' has not been identified, but is very likely the same 'Mr. Condon' who has been suggested as the writer of pamphlet *To the author of The Englishman*, addressed to Sir Richard Steele and published around 1714 (see ESTC N53910).²⁴ If he was working from the copy now at Teddy Hall, it is possible that Briscoe ignored this attribution because he could not match it to a known frequenter of Will's Coffee House. His giving the text to Mildmay rather than to Cheek, or any other author beginning with 'C', may be an example of personal knowledge of the affair, or a guess based on that knowledge.

CV27 is attributed by Briscoe only to 'Lord ---', while the Fisher and BL copies suggests Sir Henry Sheeres and the SEH annotator 'Mr Andrews'. Andrews has not been identified, and it is possible that Briscoe ignored this attribution for the same reason suggested above for CV26.

CV35 is ascribed to Henry Blount by the Fisher, BL and Teddy Hall annotators, but Briscoe published the poem without attribution, perhaps in error, or conceivably because he knew the piece could not be by Blount.

and 232 he lists the other writers. Although he does not say so, Harlow apparently bases all his attributions on a reading of the marginalia in the British Library copy.

²⁴ 'Condon' may perhaps also be the mysterious 'Dr Condom' (see below).

The evidence is imperfect, but the possibility that Briscoe copied the bulk of his attributions from the copy of *Commendatory verses* now at Teddy Hall remains. However, both Briscoe and our unidentified writer of marginalia could have been working from another common source, as yet unidentified, or perhaps from nothing more than a similarly good knowledge of the book and the circle of wits at Will's Coffee House.

The authors of *Commendatory verses*

Who then were the authors of the *Commendatory verses*? From the existing evidence, I think we can say only that those verses attributed by Briscoe to Tom Brown are likely to be by him, while all other attributions remain uncertain.²⁵ However, there is a weight of evidence from the other sources discussed – which clearly fall into two groups (the Briscoe/Teddy Hall attributions and the BL/Fisher/*Discommendatory verses* attributions) – especially when all the sources agree. On the basis of this, I have put together a list of the most likely attributions, and a biographical list of the probable authors (see Appendix I and II below). From these, it seems that Brown was responsible for between fourteen and sixteen of the verses, more than any other writer (as one might expect from his position as commander-in-chief of the war against Blackmore and editor of *Commendatory verses*). Brown's attacks on Blackmore are varied and versatile, and show clear signs of pleasure in the use of language to belabour his victim. For example, in CV34 he uses the two carved wooden horses which once stood outside Saddler's Hall (which was evidently adjacent to Blackmore's residence in London's Cheapside) as a symbol, concluding:

'Twas kindly done of the good-natur'd Cits
To Place Before thy Door a Brace of Tits.
For *Pegasus* wou'd ne're endure the weight
Of such a Quibbling, Scribbling, Dribbling Knight:
That generous Steed, rather than gaul his Back
With a Pedantic Bard, and Nauseous Quack,
Would kneel to take a Pedlar and his Pack.²⁶

The second most active author was evidently Brown's fellow agitator Codrington, who probably wrote five verses, possibly seven. Looking at the other authors in the list one is struck by one statistical pattern – with the sole exception of Henry Blount (to whom two verses have been given), every remaining author has only one verse attributed to them as 'first choice' (represented above in bold type) or at all. Could it be that Brown and Codrington made the simple decision to invite their fellow wits to submit one poem each for the collection? If so, it would make decisions between authors rather simpler in cases where there are multiple possibilities, so that CV12

²⁵ Robert M. Krapp names the poet Luke Milbourne (1649–1720) as another contributor. This is possible, but Krapp does not present his evidence (possibly a misreading of one of the British Library annotations) and I have not considered Milbourne among the authors. See Krapp (note 7), p. 89.

²⁶ CV34. *Commendatory verses* (1700), pp. 22–23. A 'tit' is of course an inferior or broken-down horse, but Brown was no doubt employing and enjoying another meaning too.

should be given to Lady Sandwich but not CV31, CV18 to Francis Manning but not CV33, and so forth.

Other patterns may be detected. Of the forty-six individuals identified as possible authors above, all but seven attended Oxford or Cambridge (twenty-eight wore dark blue ribbons, ten pale blue, one both); of the Oxford men, at least sixteen attended Christ Church, with a large group (including Codrington, Maynwaring, Henley and Norton) being up during the early 1680s. Of those with no known Oxbridge attendance, two were nobles and two were medics educated at Leiden. Only Sheeres, Tidcomb and Vanbrugh fit none of these patterns precisely, though in all three cases their education is largely unknown. At least nine of the potential authors were members of the Kit-Cat Club. Youth and age are represented, with a small group (mostly of the more unlikely authors) in their early twenties, and a similar group in their sixties (among the latter only Sedley may be called likely). There is a small cluster of writers in their late twenties (Boyle, Burnaby, Manning, Lady Sandwich, Stanhope, Steele), but the majority fall into the age-range 32–42 (including Brady, Brown, Cheek, Codrington, Dennis, Drake, Henley, Markham, Maynwaring, Norton, Walsh and Garth); naturally, many of these were thus contemporaries at Oxford or Cambridge. The few older authors (in their fifties) include the ‘outsiders’ Tidcomb and Sheeres, as well as Baynard and Chetwood. While these patterns may be interesting, they prove little more than a certain concentration of wit in Oxford, centring on Christ Church, during the early 1680s. Since this was Brown’s college and period of study, this may come as no surprise.

Conclusion

The copy of *Commendatory verses* now at Teddy Hall gives every appearance of having been annotated in, or shortly after, 1700 by someone who knew a good deal of the book’s background, and something of the authors who wrote it. The extensive overlap with the attributions published by Samuel Briscoe in the fourth volume of Brown’s *Works* (1711) suggests the possibility that this copy was used by Briscoe to supply the names of the authors of the verses, or at least that the two sets of attributions may derive from a common source. The truth of these ascriptions remains uncertain and, in the end, those in the Teddy Hall copy cannot be said to have any stronger claim to accuracy than those in copies at the Fisher Library or British Library. But they are highly suggestive, and cast more light than shadow on the authorship of the forty anonymous verses published against Sir Richard Blackmore in 1700.

Paul W. Nash

APPENDIX I

Likely attributions for the forty poems in *Commendatory verses*.

The most or more likely attributions are given first, with the very likely ones to Tom Brown in bold type. I have added codes for the sources, B for Brown’s *Works* (1707

and 1711), BL for the British Library copy (largely followed by Harlow, see note 23), D for *Discommendatory verses*, F for the Fisher copy, and SEH for the St Edmund Hall copy):

- CV1** Christopher Codrington (B, BL, D, F). Boys notes that some later sources attribute the poem wrongly to James Drake (Boys (note 3), pp. 137–138).
- CV2** Sir Charles Sedley (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
- CV3** Henry Blount (B, BL, D, SEH); ‘Mr. Ch. Blount’ (F)
- CV4** Charles Boyle, before being made Lord Orrery (BL, D, F, SEH). Lines 9–10 (‘Let the Quack scribble any thing but bills, | His Satyr Wounds not, but his Physick Kills.’) in the SEH copy are annotated as ‘p’ (i.e. ‘pro’ or ‘per’, for or by) ‘D. Th. Kit---ng’, suggesting these lines may have been penned by, or about, this otherwise unknown medic. (A Dr Thomas Kit is recorded as working in Plow Yard, Grays-Inn Lane, where he sold quack remedies in the early 1690s, but this is probably a different doctor). This annotation does suggest, at least, a certain level of knowledge in the writer.
- CV5** Dr Samuel Garth (B (from 1730), SEH); ‘Dr Morley’ (BL, F)
- CV6** Christopher Codrington (B, SEH); ‘Mr Portlock’ (BL, F)
- CV7** Sir Richard Steele (B, BL, F, SEH)
- CV8** John Dennis (BL, D, F); William Burnaby (B, SEH).
- CV9** Dr Smith (B, BL, F, SEH)
- CV10** Anthony Henley (BL, D, F); Christopher Codrington (B); Arthur Annesley, Lord Anglesey (SEH)
- CV11** Arthur Annesley, Lord Anglesey (B, BL, F, SEH)
- CV12** Countess Elizabeth Wilmot, Lady Sandwich (1674–1757) (B, BL, F, SEH)
- CV13** ‘Geo Markham’ (BL, F); Tom Brown (SEH)
- CV14** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
- CV15** ‘Coll. Stanhope’ (BL, F); Christopher Codrington (B, SEH)
- CV16** Christopher Codrington (B, SEH); ‘Mr [William] Walsh’ (F); ‘Mr Welsh [i.e. Walsh?]’ (BL)
- CV17** Christopher Codrington (B, SEH); Knightly Chetwood (BL, D, F)
- CV18** Francis Manning (B, SEH); ‘Capt. Mordant’ (BL); ‘Capt. Mordaunt’ (F)
- CV19** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, F, SEH)
- CV20** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
- CV21** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
- CV22** **Tom Brown** (B, SEH); Nicholas Brady (BL, D, F)
- CV23** **Tom Brown** (B, SEH); John Sheffield, ‘Marquis of Normanby’ (BL, D, F)
- CV24** ‘Mr Adam’ or ‘Mr Adams’ (BL, F); Tom Brown (SEH)
- CV25** Dr Edward Baynard (BL, D, F); Christopher Codrington (SEH)
- CV26** Thomas Cheek (BL, F); ‘Mr [Henry?] Mildmay’ (B); ‘[C]ondon’ (SEH)
- CV27** Sir Henry Sheeres (BL, F); ‘Mr Andrews’ (SEH)
- CV28** **Tom Brown** (B, SEH); ‘Ld Carburry’ (BL, F)
- CV29** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F); Thomas Cheek (SEH)
- CV30** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F); Thomas Cheek (SEH)
- CV31** **Tom Brown** (B); ‘Mr [James] Smalwood’ (BL, F; Cameron (see note 15) mistakes the BL attribution for ‘Lady Sandwich’ and Boys (note 3) suggests that D39, the answer to CV31, refers to Smallwood, although this is by no means clear); Thomas Cheek (SEH)
- CV32** Dr James Drake (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
- CV33** **Tom Brown** (B, SEH); ‘Mr Mainwaring’ (BL); Francis Manning (D, F)

- CV34** **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
CV35 Henry Blount (BL, F, SEH)
CV36 ‘Col. Johnson’ (B, SEH); ‘Mr [John] Vanbru[gh]’ (BL)
CV37 Thomas Cheek (B, SEH); ‘Mr Tidcomb’ (BL, F)
CV38 **Tom Brown** (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
CV39 Richard Norton (B, BL, D, F, SEH)
CV40 **Tom Brown** (B, F); Dr Smith (B, BL, F; the Fisher copy attributes the verse to ‘Th. Brown and Mr Smith’)

APPENDIX 2

The authors of the *Commendatory verses*.

The likely (and unlikely) authors of the verses may be disposed into a simple biographical index as follows (in alphabetical order by the name given in surviving attributions):

Adams or Adam, Mr. Unidentified, but just possibly John Adams (1662–1720), college-head and preacher, educated at Eton and King’s, Cambridge (see the *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, hereafter *ODNB*). CV24.

Andrews, Mr. Unidentified. Just possibly William Andrews (b. 1678?), educated at Christ Church, Oxford. CV27.

Anglesey, Arthur Annesley, fifth Earl (1678?–1737), politician, educated at Eton and Magdalen College, Cambridge (see *ODNB*). CV10, **11**.

Baynard, Dr Edward (1641?–1717), medic and poet, educated at Aberdeen and Leiden (see *ODNB*). Despite his evident involvement with the Will’s Coffee House circle and friendship with Brown, Baynard was an opponent of Garth and sided with Blackmore in his opposition to the proposal for a London dispensary for the poor. **CV25**.

Blount, Mr or Colonel. Boys and Cameron (notes 3 and 15) both identify this writer as Colonel Henry Blount (1676?–1704), soldier, educated at Christ Church, Oxford, and killed at the Battle of Schellenberg. However, the Fisher annotator names ‘Mr. Ch. Blount’, possibly Henry’s brother Charles (1681–1729), who was still at Magdalen College, Oxford, in 1700. Neither Henry nor Charles had a great literary reputation, however, and the attribution is uncertain. **CV3, 35**

Boyle, Charles (1674–1731), politician, scholar and playwright, educated at St Paul’s School, London, and Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*). The fourth Earl of Orrery from 1703. He added a laudatory verse to the second edition of Garth’s *Dispensary*.²⁷ **CV4**

²⁷ Samuel Garth, *The dispensary ...* Second edition. London: Printed and Sold by John Nutt, 1699, a5r–v. ESTC R6737. The same poem was printed in subsequent editions, of which there were many between 1699 and 1768.

Brady, Nicholas (1659–1726), priest, poet and translator (he was co-translator of an influential edition of the *Psalms*), educated in Ireland and London, at Christ Church, Oxford, and Trinity, Dublin (see *ODNB*). CV22.

Brown, Thomas (Tom) (1662–1704), translator and satirist, the ring-leader of the ‘wits’, educated at Christ Church, Oxford (see Benjamin Boyce, *Tom Brown of facetious memory: Grub Street in the age of Dryden* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1939) and *ODNB*). CV13, **14**, **19–23**, 24, **28–31**, **33**, **34**, **38**, **40**.

Burnaby William (1673–1706), playwright and translator, educated at Merton College, Oxford (see *ODNB*). CV8.

Carburry, Lord, i.e. John Vaughan, third Earl of Carbery (1639–1714), politician, educated at Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*). Member of the Kit-Cat Club. CV28.

Cheek (Cheke or Cheeke), Thomas (ca. 1658–1713?), author and friend and supporter of Garth (q.v.), educated at Queens’ College, Cambridge. Attributions of CV37 to ‘Tho’ Creeck’ in the 1730, 1744 and 1760 editions of Brown’s *Works* are no doubt typographical errors, the name being given as ‘Cheek’ in the table of contents in 1730 and 1744, though some have taken the misprinted name to represent Thomas Creech (1659–1700), a rather better-known author and Oxford wit (see *ODNB*), but probably not the writer of this verse; he was mentally unstable at this period and died by his own hand in the summer of 1700. CV26, 29–31, **37**.

Chetwood, Knightly (1650–1720), author and clergyman, educated at Eton and King’s College, Cambridge (see *ODNB*). CV17.

Codrington, Christopher (1668–1710), colonial governor, author and benefactor of All Souls College, Oxford, Educated at Christ Church, Oxford; later a Fellow of All Souls (see Harlow (note 23) and *ODNB*). CV1, **6**, 10, **15–17**, 25.

Condon. Unidentified. Apparently a minor poet, active around 1700–1715. However, there is an interesting possibility that this is the obscure ‘Dr Condom’ who may have given his name to the prophylactic. A satirical poem of 1708 discusses the subject and refers to the inventor and his sheath as ‘Condon’ (for example, ‘... a Gut the Learn’d call, Blind; | Till Condon, for the Great Invasion fam’d, | Found out its use, and after him ‘twas nam’d’.²⁸ This Dr Condon or Condom (there were other variations of the name) was said to be an habitué of Will’s Coffee House and may perhaps be the same man identified by the Teddy Hall annotator.²⁹ CV26.

Creech, Thomas *see* Cheek, Thomas.

²⁸ *Almonds for parrots ... with a word or two in praise of condons: inscribed to the worthy gentlemen at Wills*. London: Printed ..., 1708, p. 6. ESTC T116630 and T116630 (the quotation is taken from the latter edition, which is said to be a piracy of the former). The poem is an anonymous answer to Joseph Browne’s *St James’s Park* (1708).

²⁹ See William E. Kruck, ‘Looking for Dr. Condom’, *Publication of the American Dialect Society* 66:7 (1988), pp. 1–105.

Dennis, John (1658–1734), critic, playwright and poet, educated at Harrow and Gonville and Caius and Trinity Hall, Cambridge (see *ODNB*). He was supported in his career as a playwright by Codrington (q.v.), but had difficult relations with many other authors of the period and was satirized by Pope in the *Dunciad*. He was attacked explicitly by Blackmore in his *Satyr upon wit* (see note 5). **CV8**.

Drake, Dr James (1666–1707), medic and author, educated at Eton and Gonville and Caius, Cambridge (see *ODNB*). Unlike most of the wits he was a Tory and wrote in support of the Tory cause. **CV32**.

Garth, Dr (later Sir) Samuel (1661?–1719), medic and author, educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and at Leiden (see *ODNB*). Member of the Kit-Cat Club. Garth was an active physician and Whig polemicist, the main proponent of a London dispensary for the poor (against Blackmore and others) and author of *The dispensary* (1699), which celebrated the opening of the first charitable dispensary and satirised its opponents. He was attacked explicitly, both as a medic and a ‘wit’, by Blackmore in his *Satyr upon wit* (see note 5). **CV5** .

Henley, Anthony (1666?–1711), Whig politician and author, educated at Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*). **CV10** .

Johnson, Colonel. Unidentified. **CV36**.

Mainwaring, Mr. Probably Arthur Maynwaring (1668–1712), author, critic and Whig politician, educated at Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*). Member of the Kit-Cat Club. However, Cameron (see note 15) thinks this an error for ‘Manning’ (q.v.), **CV33**.

Manning, Francis (1673–1716?), poet, lawyer and diplomat, educated at Trinity College, Oxford. **CV18**, 33.

Markham, Sir Geo. Probably Sir George Markham (1666–1738), Whig politician, educated at Trinity College, Cambridge. **CV13**.

Mildmay, Mr. Possibly Henry Mildmay (ca. 1633–1704), lawyer, educated at, and benefactor of, Emmanuel College, Cambridge. **CV26**.

Mordaunt or Mardant, Captain. Cameron (see note 13) thinks this a likely attribution for **CV18**, despite failing to identify him. He was no doubt thinking of a member of the noble family of soldiers and politicians, traditionally educated at Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*), perhaps Lord Charles Mordaunt (1658?–1735), his brother Harry Mordaunt (1663–1720), or Charles’s son, John Mordaunt (1680?–1710), who was still at Christ Church in 1700. None of these held the rank of Captain in 1700, but Harry is perhaps the best fit for this rank, having been a Captain until 1694, when he was made a Colonel. **CV18**.

Morley, Dr. Unidentified. There are several doctors of medicine, law and divinity named Morley at this period and a precise identification has proved elusive. The two most likely are perhaps Christopher Love Morley (*fl.*1676–1700), medic, educated

(like Baynard and Garth) at Leiden and later in practice in London (see *ODNB*), and Francis Morley (1656?–1732), clergyman, educated at Christ Church, Oxford. **CV5**.

Norton, Richard (1666–1732), playwright and politician, educated at Christ Church, Oxford. His play *Pausanias the betrayer of his country* (1696) was championed by Garth and Dennis (qq.v.). **CV39**.

Portlock, Benjamin (*fl.* 1682–1722), lawyer, educated at Westminster School, and Peterhouse and Trinity College, Cambridge, later at Oxford. At one time Secretary to the Duke of Ormond. **CV6**.

Sandwich, Countess Elizabeth Wilmot, Lady (1674–1757), wit and socialite, daughter of the libertine poet Lord Rochester and wife of the 3rd Earl of Sandwich. **CV12**, **CV31**.

Sedley, Sir Charles (1639–1731), author and Whig politician, educated at Wadham College, Oxford (see *ODNB*). **CV2**.

Sheeres (Sheres or Sheers), Sir Henry (1641–1710), translator, playwright and military engineer (see *ODNB*). His education is uncertain. His translation of Polybius' *Historiae* was published by Samuel Briscoe in 1693 and 1698. **CV27**.

Sheffield, John, Marquis of Normanby (1641–1721), author and politician, privately educated (see *ODNB*). **CV23**.

Smallwood (or Smalwood), James (d. 1719), clergyman, educated Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He had been explicitly attacked by Blackmore in the *Satyr upon wit* (see note 5) as 'S-----d, the Divine' (p. 8) and, coupled with Brown, 'Their Captain Tom does at their Head appear | and S-----d in his Gown brings up the Rear' (p. 6), and implicitly in *Discommendatory verses* as 'an Epigrammatic Parson' and a 'leud Priest'. **CV31**.

Smith, Dr. Boys (see note 15) follows Harlow (note 23) in identifying this writer Thomas Smith (1638–1710), scholar and nonjuror, educated at Queen's College, Oxford. However, 'Dr Smith' is a vague enough appellation. Thomas was in poor health by 1700 and, though arguably bitter about earlier events in Oxford which Blackmore might have been seen to represent, his literary reputation was not for satire, nor was he obviously a member of the Will's Coffee House circle (though he was a friend of Codrington, and thus the attribution may be correct). Other possibilities include: Henry Smith (ca. 1635–1702), clergyman, educated at Christ Church, Oxford; John Smith (1660–1715), medic, educated at St John's College, Oxford; Offley Smith (1670–1708), medic and lawyer, educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford; Lawrence Smith (1656–1728), lawyer, educated at St John's College, Oxford; and Richard Smith (1647?–1714), medic, educated at Merton College, Oxford, and Leiden. **CV9**, 40.

Stanhope, Colonel. Almost certainly James Stanhope (1673–1721), soldier and politician, educated at Eton and Trinity College, Oxford (see *ODNB*). He is said to have been befriended by Codrington at Oxford, and thus is a good candidate for the authorship of **CV15**, which defends Codrington. He was a founder-member of the Kit-

Cat Club. Stanhope was not made a Colonel until 1702, but the abbreviation 'Coll.' may be shorthand for Lieutenant-Colonel (his rank from 1695–1702). **CV15**

Steele, Sir Richard (1672–1729), author, soldier and politician, educated at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford (see *ODNB*). Member of the Kit-Cat Club. **CV7**

Tidcomb, Mr. Cameron (see note 15) reads this as 'Tidcumb' and thinks the attribution likely, though does not identify the author. He was no doubt thinking of John Tidcomb (1642–1713), wit and soldier, of uncertain education (though later granted a Doctorate in Civil Law at Oxford). He was a member of the Kit-Cat Club, and was no doubt the 'T---mb' attacked in *Discommendatory verses* (D6). **CV37**.

Vanbrugh, Sir John (1664–1776), playwright and architect, probably privately educated (see *ODNB*). Member of the Kit-Cat Club. **CV36**

Walsh, William (1662–1708), dramatist and poet, educated at Wadham College, Oxford (see *ODNB*). A member of the Kit-Cat Club and an early supporter of Pope. The BL annotation looks more like 'Welsh' but is probably a reference to the same person. **CV16**