



The Anonymous Renaissance: Cultures of Discretion in Tudor-Stuart England

Marcy L. North

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"*The Anonymous Renaissance* offers a paradigm-shifting look at print culture in early modern England. North demonstrates through sound historical discussions and readings that anonymity was one of the defining practices of Renaissance authorship. It is difficult to overstate the originality and importance of this new study."-Jennifer Summit, Stanford University

The Renaissance was in many ways the beginning of modern and self-conscious authorship, a time when individual genius was celebrated and an author's name could become a book trade commodity. Why, then, did anonymous authorship flourish during the Renaissance rather than disappear? In addressing this puzzle, Marcy L. North reveals the rich history and popularity of anonymity during this period.

The book trade, she argues, created many intriguing and paradoxical uses for anonymity, even as the authorial name became more marketable. Among ecclesiastical debaters, for instance, anonymity worked to conceal identity, but it could also be used to identify the moral character of the author being concealed. In court and coterie circles, meanwhile, authors turned name suppression into a tool for the preservation of social boundaries. Finally, in both print and manuscript, anonymity promised to liberate an authentic female voice, and yet made it impossible to authenticate the gender of an author. In sum, the writers and book producers who helped to create England's literary culture viewed anonymity as a meaningful and useful practice.

Written with clarity and grace, *The Anonymous Renaissance* will fill a prominent gap in the study of authorship and English literary history.

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