
Lewes Lewkenor’s *Resolved Gentleman* is, like Stephen Bateman’s *The Travayled Pylgreme* (1569; STC 1585) a translation of Olivier de La Marche’s *Chevalier Délibéré*. Unlike Bateman, Lewkenor clearly acknowledges his direct source, Hernando de Acuña’s Spanish version, *El Caballero Determinado*. Spanish is also the source language of another translation of Lewkenor’s, *The Spanish Mandevile of Miracles*, or, *The Garden of Curious Flowers*, a juvenile work only published at a later date by Ferdinando Walker (1600; STC 24135). Lewkenor’s ties to Spain go far beyond the mere knowledge of the language. He had spent a number of years in the service of the Spanish Crown during the 1580s, and appears to have cultivated his Spanish sympathies thereafter, despite his return to England. In order to shed light on his ideological affinities, it is necessary to read Lewkenor’s literary production in parallel with his often perplexing biography. Son of the politician Thomas Lewkenor (c. 1538–1596), Lewes Lewkenor (1560–1627) entered the Middle Temple in 1579. The following year, however, he found himself forced to leave the country due to his Catholicism, and sought refuge in the Netherlands. He then earned a captaincy in Spanish service, but his military career appears to have been cut short by a serious arm injury. Severe financial problems ensued, due to the loss of his pension and litigation over his wife’s dowry. These difficulties eventually forced Lewkenor to return to England, seeking a safe conduct through his relative Sir Robert Sidney in 1590. On returning to England he reported to Burghley on the English in Spanish service, and is generally accepted as the author of *A Discourse of the Usage of the English Fugitives, by the Spaniard* (1595, reprinted 1596; STC 15562–3, reprinted and expanded as *The estate of English fugitives under the king of Spaine and his ministers*, 1595–6; STC 15564–5), where he discusses his Spanish experience in detail. Lewkenor’s career seems to have finally taken off towards the end of the decade, as he was made a Gentleman Pensioner in 1599, and became involved in supervising the reception of foreign diplomats and ambassadors. With the accession of James I in 1603 Lewkenor’s efforts were finally rewarded. He was knighted in the same year and soon appointed Master of Ceremonies, thus continuing to supervise arrangements for the reception of foreign representatives until his death in 1627.

*The Resolved Gentleman* is usually taken to be a straightforward panegyric of Elizabeth and her reign. The work undoubtedly does contain highly eulogistic passages, but such a univocal reading is complicated and unsettled by the wider framework of the allegory, and the latent presence of a skilfully dissimulated but unmistakably critical, dissenting voice. The course of the narrative closely follows the pattern provided by La Marche and Acuña, and recounts the inconclusive allegorical wanderings of a questioning knight. Various instructive encounters with figures such as Memory, Understanding, and Old Age prepare the knight for the clash with Accident and Debilitie, emissaries of Death. The work must be seen as participating in the long-lived and highly adaptable tradition of the ‘pilgrimage of life genre’, ultimately going back to Guillaume Deguileville’s *Le Pèlerinage de Vie Humaine* (1331–55). Following the lead of Olivier de La Marche, the pattern of the pilgrimage allegory is here turned into a semi-autobiographical meditation on human mortality. For La Marche, writing in 1483, the knightly errance of his hero had been the figure for his own condition, witnessing the deaths of his patrons, the Dukes of Burgundy, at the end of his life. The wasteland crossed by his hero thus becomes a complex figure, representing personal loss but also the wider context of the death of the Dukes and the fall of the Burgundian Empire.
problem of cultural and political decline as a result of dynastic extinction. In the midst of his hero’s meanderings, La Marche had thus staged an extended tournament opposing the Valois Dukes to the emissaries of Death, turning the middle section of the work into a protracted lament for the decline of Burgundy and the associated chivalric culture. Acuña, the Spanish translator, had already altered the tone of the allegory, by turning the decline of the House of Burgundy into a mere prelude to the rise of the Habsburgs, and thus clearly shifting the mood of the allegory from melancholic lament to triumphalist celebration. Lewkenor ostensibly plays with both of these moods, and adds a new epilogue to this extended tournament by making the Tudors the heirs of the chivalric and imperial spirit previously embodied by Valois and Habsburgs.

The celebration of the rise of the Tudor dynasty in the midst of an allegory largely obsessed with mortality is problematic. It suggests that the triumphalism of the middle section of the work cannot be taken at face value. Lewkenor ostensibly hails the invincibility of Eliza triumphans, exalting the permanence of her reign and dynasty after having sketched the decline of Valois and Habsburgs:

she, I say, shall by her princely care, and prudent foresight, maynteine her Subiectes in this calme securitie of vntroubled peace; so shal they againe, with so quiet and unmurmuring a course of faithful obedience, loue and honour her, that she, if euer any Prince, shalbe blessed in her Subiectes, and they, yf euer any Subiectes, blessed in their Prince. (sigs 43r–44v)

In the light of the invincibility of Death, however, obsessively reiterated in Lewkenor’s work, the reader is certainly invited to question the typical Tudor mythology of the Elizabethan Golden Age, along with its claims to permanence, stability, and immortality. While the tournament remains openended, and Elizabeth is not yet engaged in a struggle with Accident and Debilitie, her imminent defeat appears as inevitable given the demise of all her predecessors. Particularly in the context of the 1590s, with the succession crisis in full swing, an ageing regime, and no dynastic or other political renewal in sight, such praise of stability and security often functioned as a covert warning of imminent catastrophe. The idealising celebration of the allegorical tournament – in all likelihood an allusion to the Accession Day Tilts – is in fact systematically and cleverly undercut to expose the tensions, dangers, and anxieties glossed over by the Elizabethan courtly mythology. It is not just the general framework of the allegory that undermines its ostensibly celebratory intent, but Lewkenor’s own oblique comments, allusions, and criticisms that punctuate the entire work. In order to appreciate the full complexity and seriousness of Lewkenor’s thought, layer after layer of the allegory needs to be peeled back, digging ever deeper into the contradictions lurking underneath its triumphalist surface. As Lewkenor makes clear at the end of his work, the whole undertaking is ultimately not so much a panegyric as a memento mori: ‘For in fine, all worldly pompe, Beautie, magnificence, and what els soeuer the world hath goodly or admirable, turneth to rottenness and corruption: and Death, enemie to nature, equalleth sceptres with mattocks, and kings with beggers’ (sig. 53r).

Lewkenor ostensibly presents his work as a politically neutral, self-effacing humanist translation, undertaken in the interest of learning and moral virtue: a ‘poore Treatise (whose harmlesse innocencie shalbe a sufficient shielde agaynst whatsoever calumniation)’ that ‘finally teacheth nothinge more, then how to lyue vertuously, and dye blessedly’ (sig. A4v–B1r). By stressing the


10. A similar dynamic is at work in Lewkenor’s translation of Gaspare Contarini’s De Magistratibus et Republica Venetorum as The commonwealth and government of Venice (1599; STC 5642), where the juxtaposition of the English monarchy and the Venetian Republic, seemingly celebratory, in fact underscores the instability of a political order entirely dependent on the survival of the person of the Queen. See the analysis of Andrew Hadfield, Literature, Travel and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545–1625 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 47–58.

11. ‘I owe you many other dueties, aswell in regarde of your many honorable fauours, and continuall redinesse to do me good in Court, since my first commyng to her Maiesties seruice [...]’ (sig. A3r). On Anne of Warwick’s role within the court, as one of the women of the ‘inner sanctum’ of Elizabeth’s privy chamber, and a frequent dedicatee, see Christopher Haigh, Elizabeth I (2nd edition, Harlow: Pearson, 2001), pp. 121–4; and Natalie Mears, Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 54–57. See also Simon Adams, ‘Dudley, Anne, countess of Warwick (1548/9–1604)’, ODNB <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/69744/> [accessed 29 January 2008].


Lewkenor mentions Spenser’s epic on sig. 45v.

13. This rhetoric of evanescence and ambivalence is shared by a number of contemporary figures involved with the court to varying degrees, among them Gascoigne, Lyly, Leicester, Sidney, Essex, and Spenser. For a study of their uses of the multivalent and oblique language of courtship to articulate an unstable mixture of encomium, advice and criticism, see Catherine Bates, The Rhetoric of Courtship in Elizabethan Language and Literature (Cambridge University Press, 1992).


17. The literature on the subject is enormous. On the political function of gender patterns, particularly the adaptation of Petrarchism, see Philippa Berry, Of Chastity and Power: Elizabethan Literature and the
universal, timeless validity of the message conveyed by his allegory, Lewkenor thus immediately adopts a defensive attitude, rejecting a priori all accusations of any specific historicopolitical topicality. A closer look at his dedication to Anne of Warwick, however, suggests that Lewkenor also conceives the Resolved Gentleman as a witty exercise in self-advertisement and self-fashioning, designed to establish Lewkenor’s own suitability for advancement within the court. Lewkenor in fact takes care to paint the exemplary picture of a ‘Resolved Gentleman’ under the veil of an allegorical quest, an undertaking only too clearly reminiscent of Spenser’s own intention ‘to fashion a Gentleman’ as it was expressed in his Letter to Raleigh. Yet Lewkenor goes one step further than Spenser, and rather than limiting his skills to producing a theoretical, programmatic portrait of the ideal gentleman under the veil of an allegorical narrative, casts himself in the leading role of the questing knight. While ostensibly maintaining the identity of the narrator found in his source, and thus effectively hiding behind the identities of La Marche and Acaña, Lewkenor also inscribes his text with more precise personal and political meanings. Lewkenor thus creates a character whose ‘I’ is in fact constantly shifting, moving between different referents, and therefore remains ultimately elusive. Hiding behind the shifting identity of the knight as ‘Acteur’, Lewkenor dissimulates a subtle yet often scathing criticism of a court he is also trying to impress and flatter. Thus, Lewkenor is in fact also displaying his mastery of the most prized of the courtier’s qualities, namely his dexterity and tact in dissimulating political counsel and criticism under the veil of flattery.

Lewkenor’s work, despite its status as a translation, reverberates with a number of autobiographical echoes. The aims of this autobiographical inflection are twofold: firstly, Lewkenor is casting himself as a wandering knight on a quest for preferment; secondly, he is also representing and denouncing the abuses and difficulties to which he has been personally subjected since his return from Spain. The errance of his knight reverberates with more universal meanings, but becomes for Lewkenor largely a representation of his own travails, difficulties and wanderings on a quest for political favour, ‘travailing farre from my natuye home & country, solitarie & sorrowfull all alone’ (sig. 1r). These wanderings allude to Lewkenor’s own youthful attempts to find favour and advancement abroad, serving in the forces of Catholic Spain. Lewkenor represents his knight’s initial errance as signifying a state of ‘Lethargie’:

First, quoth [Memory], Whosoeuer is forgetfull, or carelesse of himselfe and his estate, flyeth not the pitch of true honor, neyther shall at any tyme see hymselfe beautified with the glorious bryghtnesse of her perfection: in which miserable lethargie yf he perseuere, then is his case most lamentable, and vtterly desperate, as not onely depriued of this worldes honor, but also of that euerlasting glorie and eternall health, to which, blessed myndes with the wings of a vertuous industrie do aspire (sigs 1r–1v).

This may be conveniently applied to Lewkenor’s time in Spain and suggests a change of mind, a return to his home country that is cast as an ‘awakening’, a redemption or even a conversion: ‘Herewith my thoughtfulness ending, I awaked, as it were out of a drowsie traunce or dreame [...] I was redy to performe as much as to a true resolved Gentleman did appertaine’ (sig. 3r). The language interestingly mixes secular and religious values, ‘worldes honor’ as well as ‘euerlasting glorie and eternall health’, in a manner highly characteristic of the official Tudor discourse and its conflation of the notions of political obedience and religious orthodoxy. This conflation is particularly relevant in the light of Lewkenor’s exile and service for the King of Spain, by contemporary standards a twofold betrayal in the forms of both treason and heresy.

Such references to juvenile ‘errance’, ‘lethargie’, and ‘awakening’ must be read in parallel with Lewkenor’s Estate of English Fugitiues, a complex work that mixes anti-Spanish propaganda with a defence of Catholic loyalism and pleas for leniency towards English expatriate Catholics. On the personal plane, the Estate is equally an urgent personal apology and a confession of youthful folly, leading in turn to a declaration of renewed allegiance, and an expression of Lewkenor’s...
desire to serve Queen Elizabeth (Estate, sigs Sii –Si iii ), themes that resurface in a more oblique manner in the Resolved Gentleman. Thankful for the possibility of returning to England, Lewkenor is however far from showering unconditional praise on the Queen and her realm in The Resolved Gentleman. His sketch of Gloriana’s Golden Age acquires an altogether more complex and ambivalent colouring if read against the background of his own experience of exile, return, and quest for forgiveness and favour. So, one is certainly invited to question the exact nature of the Queen’s ‘Mildnesse’ (sig. 44’) when a mere page later Lewkenor invokes ‘the name of great ELIZABETH, written in the blood of those that resist, and the pardoned lyues of those that yeele’ (sig. 44’). Is Lewkenor referring obliquely to his own precarious status? Or to the Queen’s mercy in allowing him back to England, and to court – as he will do a year later by writing the Estate? Or is Lewkenor in fact playing with his own mixed experience of exile and return, expressing both bitterness and gratitude?

After his initial awakening, obliquely referring to Lewkenor’s return to England, the knight’s quest is far from straightforward. Entering ‘a very greene and florishing Medowe, the name whereof was Worldly pleasure’, the knight is quickly seduced and diverted from his active quest: ‘The outwarde shew whereof presented vnto my senses such pleasure and delight, that rauished with contentment, forgetfull of my iourny and vndertaken enterprise, I euen determined to remayne there’ (sig. 3’). The evils encountered by the knight may no longer be associated with Hispanophile Catholicism, but they are characterised as strictly courtly vices: ‘maynteyned with ryches, norished in delices, and hyghly esteemed in the court of Princes’ (sig. 3’); ‘mightie blowes of banquettes, bathings, quaffings, watchings, wantonnessse, and such lyke: wherein Time, the treasure of life is consumed’ (sig. 4’). Unlike either Acuña or La Marche, Lewkenor gives his allegory a distinctively anti-courtly flavour, reflected in the advice of Old Age, in a lengthy passage that constitutes Lewkenor’s most extensive and significant alteration of his source (sigs 13’T–16’e): ‘But aboue all experience: the courtly picture sketched by Old Age are rich with allusions to Lewkenor’s own situation and suggest first-hand

But many there are of my acquaintance, who hauing ouergon, and spent the poasting yeeres of vnmistrustfull youth, either in the vniuersities at home, or in trauayles, or the warres abrode, and by long and paynefull diligence obteined such vertues and qualities do come at length to make shew of themselues, in this most fayre and magnificent market of the worlde, the Court, flattering themselues with great hope of rewarde, honor, and aduancement. (sigs 13’T–13’v)

However, ‘such [is] the multitude of flatterers, deceiuers, supplanters, vnderminers, espialles, and such like vermine, that attende vpon their court and table, all couering their villainous pretences, vnder the maske of vertue, fidelitie, and officious duetie’ (sig. 14’v) that the well-disposed aspiring courtier is ignored, scorned and maligned:

Despite Old Age’s advice to forsake the court and go on to premature retirement in ‘the barren desert of Olde Age’ (sig. 16’v), the knight is again seduced by the allurements of the courtly world, and is diverted onto the path of Deceit until he reaches the Palace of Love, a transparent allegory of the Elizabethan court: in ‘the most sense-pleasing and delightfull place […] stooed a gorgious & stately royal pallace, whose exterior pompous and delectable shewe, made me verily perswade myselfe, that neuer death, or any of his champions, could be able to approch vnto a place so beautifull and delitious’ (sig. 17’v). The amorous games played in the palace function as allusions to the ‘game’ of political courtship practised by Elizabeth, in reality an effective political tool exploited by both the Queen and her ambitious favourites.

The knight, again alluding to Lewkenor’s exclusion from royal favour, is cast as a rejected suitor: ‘And there I tooke my farewell of Loue, and withall of her, for whose sake (while I was Loues enthralled subiect) the paynes and tormentes I endured, seemed to be but pleasures and comfortes’ (sig. 19’v). It is certainly significant that Lewkenor makes his knight advance into the ‘desert of old Age’ as a direct result of his frustrated attempt to develop an amorous relationship at the Palace of Love. Signifying his failure to secure patronage, the choice of the metaphor of abortive courtship has wider implications: it evokes at once the metaphorical sterility generated by the impossibility of political debate, and alludes to the literal sterility of the Virgin Queen, unmarried and without direct heirs. The barrenness of the desert, chillingly
described in an extended passage (sigs 19r–19v), thus clearly signifies at once the advancing age of the Queen, dynastic barrenness, and the sterility of the body politic. Suggestively, 'Infirmitie is there enthronized as princesse, and regent of the whole territorie’ (sig. 19v), insinuating that far from being beyond the reach of mutability and Death, the Queen is the very image of infirmity. Even more disturbing is another image that is equally taken over from La Marche but put to a chillingly effective new use:

I espied sundry people both men and women, that did busie them selues in the practise of strange and cosening sleightes: some to hide and dissemble their yeeres, filled vp the wrinkled furrowes of their face with payntinges, some died their heades and beards with waters of their owne mingling, some pulled quite out the gray heares that appeared in them, thinking so to rid them selues of those hafefull messengers of decaying life. (sig. 20v)

Rather than being a merely conventional description of decay, the passage may be applied to Elizabeth herself, alluding to her well-known efforts designed to dissimulate the ravages of age in the interest of maintaining the cult of the ageless Virgin Queen, reflected also in the 'mask of youth' period of royal portraiture.19

After these adventures the knight again takes up his quest, but moves progressively further away from the centre of power. He witnesses the tournament opposing Death’s champions to the Valois, Habsburg, and Tudor rulers, which rather than a triumphal celebration functions as yet another memento mori. The knight leaves the scene accordingly confused and uncertain about both personal and political future: 'leauing mee in a strange confusion, betwenee sorow of that which was past, & wonder of that which was to come' (sig. 45v). Tellingly, the knight does not accomplish his quest, and never returns to court. Rather, he abandons his quest for royal favour and replaces it, following the advice of the hermit Understanding, with a spiritual, contemplative quest. The final section of the work (sigs 45v–53r) clearly redefines the knight's priorities, and can be read as a miniature spiritual manual extolling the benefits of secluded contemplation, an ideal that clearly smacks of unregenerate Catholicism. While this spiritual apotheosis does to some extent provide a satisfactory epilogue for the knight’s wanderings, it sits uneasily with the avowedly secular aspirations of the Resolved Gentleman, which is after all presented as a programmatic sketch of a humanist ideal of counsel and political action. The fact that the final section of the work is put under the aegis of a hermit is symptomatic, and points back to Castiglione, who uses the figures of the monk and hermit to represent an older, medieval idea of vita contemplativa which needs to be superseded by the new, hybrid ideal of the courtier, embracing both learning and calculated worldliness.20 Thus the spiritual epilogue also functions as an admission of the failure of the humanist ideal of political counsel, and sketches a situation where well-meaning, competent and experienced young men are excluded from power, given the increasing contraction of royal favour throughout the 1590s.21 More precisely, the epilogue denounces the alienation of Catholic loyalists from courtly circles, and represents their retreat into contemplation and political irrelevance as the only available option.22 Lewkenor thus creates with the Resolved Gentleman a complex, multivalent allegory that is at once political commentary, dynastic celebration, personal confession, moral instruction, political warning, and an exercise in self-advertisement. The work is remarkable for its openness to interpretation and the subtlety with which it balances multiple, often contradictory narratives and points of view, asking its readers to extrapolate a latent undercurrent of carefully articulated criticism.

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