

THE DATE OF THOMAS MARTYN'S THE ENGLISH ENTOMOLOGIST: 1792 OR 1793? — S. C. S. Brown (91: 64), commenting on my bibliographical description of Martyn's book (90: 263-264), is the latest to call attention to a significant anomaly. Although the engraved titles (English and French) bear 1792 dates, the English dedication is dated 21st March 1793. My study of many copies of the English and French editions and their combinations led me to summarize a tangled problem in short space by suggesting that the work had a "complex printing history." In fact I was unable to determine precisely when each of the various lingual editions was issued, although we know from watermark dates that copies of Martyn's book were still being printed (with the "1792" engraved titles unchanged) early in the nineteenth century. Since Mr. Brown's query I have conducted a much wider search in eighteenth-century newspapers and other contemporary sources, but I still have not found a precise date of first appearance of *any* of the Martyn editions.

There is, however, a likely explanation. The copperplates for Martyn's title-pages were certainly finished and dated in 1792, but at least some of the components were not completed and ready for publication until the following year. We know that this was true in the case of the English material because of the 1793 dedication date. The French preface contains some evidence; although it is undated, it includes a discussion of Martyn's publication plans "dans le cours de l'annee 1793," which, significantly, did not materialize. Martyn, who was no more concerned about absolute bibliographical precision than most other eighteenth-century authors, may not have been inclined to 'redo' his title-pages, which saw service with unamended date for at least a decade. (In copies printed at a later time, the 1792 titles are sometimes printed on paper with later watermark dates.)

At least at present, there appears to be no evidence that the lingual editions of Martyn's book were issued in parts or fascicles. So, in citations to wholly English copies, or to copies with English and French components combined, bibliographers may wish to follow the 1792 title date with a bracketed [1793], reflecting what seems to have been the date of first publication of such copies. In deference to the absence of evidence about the French edition, with its undated dedication and differing preface, the more cautious student might choose to retain the 1792 date alone until more data are at hand.

The English Entomologist is not the only one of Martyn's works to have provided scholars with headaches; it was preceded by the once notoriously difficult *The Universal Conchologist*, frequently cited as (London, 1784 [-92]) but now interpreted to have had its first edition completed by 1787; and some of the questions raised by the bibliographically fascinating *Psyche: Figures of Non descript Lepidopterous Insects* (London, 1797) are still unanswered. — R. S. WILKINSON, The American Museum of Natural History, New York City, New York 10024.



Wilkinson, Ronald S. 1981. "The date of Thomas Martyn's *The English Entomologist*. 1792 or 1793?" *The entomologist's record and journal of variation* 93, 135–135.

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