

PRESENTING CHAUCER TO THE READER:
PRINTING THE *CANTERBURY TALES* IN ENGLAND, 1477-1830

A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies,
Drew University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree,
Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2019

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ABSTRACT

Presenting Chaucer to the Reader:
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PhD Dissertation by

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Through analysis of more than 140 printed editions of Geoffrey Chaucer's work, this dissertation surveys and discusses the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales* in England during the handpress period. Since the days of William Caxton, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* have passed through printing presses with more longevity than any other English author. This dissertation looks at how Chaucer was presented to English readers in printed form, and explores the ways in which Chaucer and his work is introduced within the printed text and how he is placed within the reader experience. It provides an overview of major shifts and changes to paratextual material in Chaucer publications, with particular attention paid to prefatory material, biographical sketches, language, and illustrations.

By assessing these paratextual elements, the dissertation demonstrates how readers engaged with Chaucer long after his death and how editors helped develop an image of the poet. This approach shifts the focus of textual interpretation out of the author's domain and into a more democratic arena. Through a close study of the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*, this dissertation demonstrates that the creation of this "arena" lay within the hands of the printers, publishers, and editors who presented

Chaucer to readers. Presentation of the *Canterbury Tales* during the handpress period was squarely in the hands of men and women who massaged and manipulated the text to match their own vision of the text and its author. This abundance of editorial mediation has had a significant, but historically overlooked, impact on Chaucer and his work.

From the advent of printing in England, Chaucer's work was under the control of those who edited, translated, and dispensed his texts. Print culture allowed for dialogue between Chaucer's editors and his readers—one that helped establish Geoffrey Chaucer as “the Father of English Poetry” and a representative of English nationalism and identity. This dissertation explores how the paratextual elements of handpress-period publications defined this representation of Geoffrey Chaucer.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation has been working its way through my mind, in one form or another, for nearly eight years. Though the research and writing portion did not begin until late 2016, I have been thinking about the printing of Geoffrey Chaucer's work, particularly by William Caxton, since 2011. This kind of work is never done alone or in a vacuum, although it certainly feels solitary at times. In addition to the many scholars who I have read and learned from over the years, there are a number of people in my life that have made this effort possible.

My studies in book history and librarianship began at American University where I was fortunate to study under some amazing faculty, including Richard Sha, David Pike, and the late Betty Bennett. Each helped strengthen me as a student and pushed me to explore my academic boundaries. While in Washington, I fell in love with the world of rare books and research libraries while working at the Folger Shakespeare Library. There, I explored the research side of academia through my work with the Folger Institute and found a lifelong mentor in Owen Williams. Owen's support for the past two decades has been an unwavering presence whenever called upon and was essential to getting me on my current track.

When I returned to school after a long absence, I was supported by strong and supportive faculty at Simmons College. I was helped along towards the world of book history and rare book librarianship by my primary advisor, Ross Harvey, and one of my role models in the field, Sidney Berger. Most significantly was the never-ending encouragement, guidance, and friendship of Kathy Wisser—my unofficial but unceasingly supportive advisor, colleague, and friend. Kathy offered essential help

throughout my Master's program, while delivering thoughtful and productive life lessons and much-needed doses of reality.

At Drew University, my thanks must begin with my outstanding dissertation committee. Jonathan Rose, Kim Rhodes, and Jesse Mann have proven to be equal parts constructive, productive, supportive, helpful, and mindful throughout this process. Their patience and interest has not waned in the more than two years since I have started researching and writing and they have remained open and welcoming to my thoughts, questions, and concerns throughout. I certainly could not have asked for a better trio than them and am thankful for their willingness to bring their expertise in book history, printing history, and art history to this dissertation. I am also extremely grateful to Seth Lerer for joining as an outside reader and bringing his enormous level of expertise and wisdom to this project. His presence on the committee is both amazing and awe-inspiring. It is still somewhat unbelievable to me that an academic whose work informed so much of my work served on the committee to review the dissertation.

As my advisor, I must separately thank Jonathan Rose for his many years of support and wisdom. When asked to describe my ideal PhD advisor, I can think of no one better than Jonathan. His scholarship is both an inspiration and a signifier of his importance in the field of book history. For me, he is a model to follow and an academic to live up to. Jonathan's presence brought me to Drew University in the first place and his continued support and encouragement throughout my years have helped keep me going through classes, comps, and dissertation. I am so very thankful for his dedication to my work and to the university. In addition, numerous other faculty at Drew have shaped my

studies and helped my academic growth over the years, including: Ken Alexo, Angie Calder, Louis Hamilton, Neil Levi, Robert Ready, and Kim Rhodes.

While at Drew I have had the pleasure to be both a student and a member of the library faculty and staff. In this latter role I have come to know an amazing group of people who support and encourage me as a librarian and as a historian. I am grateful to the Special Collections and University Archives department (Matthew Beland, Masato Okinaka, and Candace Reilly) and to my colleagues in the General Commission on Archives and History (Fred Day, Frances Lyons, Michelle Merkel, Dale Patterson, and Mark Shenise) for making my work life a rather enviable one. Thanks to my many colleagues in the Drew University Library for their support and assistance. I have been very fortunate to work with some wonderful people over the years who have helped me with this process and project in many ways. These are people who have gone beyond the role of colleague and become friends and confidants: Christopher Anderson, KwangYu Lee, Lucy Marks, Rick Mikulski, Candace Reilly, and Mark Shenise.

As a student, I have found an incredible support system at Drew. This includes faculty and staff, as well as much-needed financial support as a Caspersen School of Graduate Studies PhD Fellow. I also received generous funding for conference attendance through the Graduate Student Association and a research travel grant from the Margaret and Marshall Bartlett Fund. I have been fortunate to study alongside a wonderful group of fellow students who have provided motivation and encouragement throughout: Cassie Brand, Zannah Buck, Tony Calandrillo, Christina Connor, Ted Hart, Amy Hester, Hamza Radid, David Reagles, Rebecca Van Horn, and Dave Ziznewski. There are a few who I have come to know more closely and whose friendships have been

of particularly great value: Leanne Horinko, Dan Michalak, and Jordan Reed. I would especially like to thank the amazing and wonderful Mike Hitchcock and Becca Miller for their friendship, love, and support. I certainly would not be sane without them.

Getting a PhD is not a one-person job. It takes support and structure from institutions, professors, students, and colleagues. It also takes the emotional support of friends and family outside of the academic environment. These people offer an escape from the world of books and writing and have been essential to my process. My friends, who I have too often ignored in order to write and edit, have been there throughout. In particular, I want to thank Sophy Bishop, Diana Martinez, and Mike Riley for being lifelines to the world outside of the university.

My family has been supportive, caring, and extremely understanding during this period. They know that my head is in the dissertation every weekend and patiently put up with not hearing from me for weeks on end. Thanks to Lori, Andrew, and Lindsay for their love and support. There is no amount of thanks I can give to my parents, Wayne and Suzanne Shetler, for their love, generosity, support, and care. They have been there for me my whole life and I know I can turn to them whenever I need. My decision to go back to school and pursue a new career was not an easy one but their encouragement and support made the journey that much easier.

Finally, and most importantly, this dissertation would not be done without the one constant in my life, my partner Kiersten Paine. She has weathered my highs and lows, been there for me throughout, and never wavered in her support and dedication. Her sacrifices have been great, while her understanding, care, and patience has been immeasurable. I dedicate this work to her.

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INTRODUCTION

A National Monument

Geoffrey Chaucer is among the most well-known of English writers. After William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Agatha Christie, and J. K. Rowling, his name might be the most recognizable. Even if you haven't read any of his work, you probably still know of the *Canterbury Tales*—Chaucer's most popular text. It is, according to noted Chaucerian scholar Jill Mann, a “national monument and one of the great classics of English literature.”¹ Chaucer began writing the *Tales* in 1387, continuing to work on them sporadically throughout the rest of his lifetime. When he died in October of 1400, the *Canterbury Tales* were unfinished, incomplete, and left without clear order: “It might at that point have seemed no more than a series of brilliant fragments, its final shape and meaning forever inaccessible.”²

The inherent inaccessibility of the text was amplified by a lack of physical control over the manuscripts. No definitive, authoritative version of the *Tales* existed when Chaucer died. What we are left with are more than eighty manuscripts (complete and fragmentary) that were created after Chaucer's death but based on his writings. These manuscripts are consistently inconsistent in their order of the *Tales* and even disagree about which *Tales* should be included in the collection.³ The fundamental lack of

¹ Jill Mann, introduction to *The Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Jill Mann (London: Penguin Books, 2005), xviii.

² Ibid.

³ Chaucerian scholars have explored the “proper” order and construction of the *Canterbury Tales* for centuries. The work of John Manly and Edith Rickert, completed in 1940, is the most significant undertaking and completely thorough study of the various manuscripts and their divergent readings. The Manly-Rickert edition of the *Canterbury Tales* influenced an entire generation of Chaucer scholars, readers, and editors and is still referenced with great respect and admiration to this day. Their work was questioned somewhat in the 1980s by George Kane in his chapter “John M. Manly (1865-1940) and Edith Rickert (1871-1938)” in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books,

authoritative control over the *Tales* has been an issue since the earliest manuscripts and has led to confusion, guesswork, and editorial over-reaching from the fifteenth century to today.

It is this last issue, editorial control, that is of concern in the following chapters. This dissertation is concerned with editorial choices and the decision-making process in handling Geoffrey Chaucer's most famous work. Specifically, it addresses the history of the *Canterbury Tales* in print—an area of Chaucerian studies that has been largely overlooked by scholars. Great effort has been put into the exploration of the manuscript sources for the *Tales*, including in-depth discussions of order, language usage, and Chaucer's true intentions. Such in-depth focus, however, has not yet shifted to the editorial practices and outcomes of the printed versions of Chaucer's text that were brought forth about a century after he started writing the *Canterbury Tales*.

The necessity for such a study will be made clear in the chapters that follow. But it is a rather simple proposition: if we focus on Chaucer and his work without looking at the editors who presented the work and their editorial practices, we are missing a significant part of the story. Scholars, students, novices, and curious readers after the advent of print have viewed Chaucer through a particular lens—that of the editor whose edition they are reading. How this lens is developed, and how it changes from editor to editor, is of greatest importance in this dissertation. It is at the heart of each of the following chapters, and should be at the heart of Chaucerian studies.

1984), 207-29. Kane sees the work as being treated too much with kid gloves, pointing out that the Manly-Rickert study has been “protected...from challenge for more than a generation” because of its impressive “appearance of authority” as a massive, six-volume work (207). Other scholars have cast a critical eye on the Manly-Rickert edition in recent years, but it remains the most significant and influential approach to Chaucer's text in the modern era.

It is the editorial lens that most significantly affects the reader, most strongly influences the student, and most clearly defines the author. Chaucer did not leave us a perfect, clean manuscript with which to work. Instead, we are left to pick up the scattered fragments and reassemble the text as best we can with Chaucer's authorial intentions in mind. This is, frankly, an impossible task. With this impossibility, we are forced to configure and present Chaucer and his work as best we can through a variety of editorial lenses.

Throughout this dissertation, I explore how Chaucer and his most famous work were presented to readers through various editorial lenses. The study is mostly arranged chronologically, in order to demonstrate how one editorial perspective can influence and inform another. I concentrate exclusively on editions of the *Canterbury Tales* that were published in England, beginning with William Caxton's first printed edition (1477) and concluding at the end of the handpress period in 1830.⁴ During this 350-year period more than 140 editions of the *Tales* were printed in England.

Not all of these editions were equal. Some featured complete versions of the *Tales* while others had only a few selections from the text. Some included the *Tales* as part of a "Complete Works" of Geoffrey Chaucer while others included only a selection of Chaucer in a larger collection of poets and poems. Some of the editions are wholly

⁴ Ascribing a specific date to the end of the handpress period has been of some debate among book historians and print scholars. Some scholars, such as Philip Gaskell, point to 1800 as the end of the handpress period since that year witnessed the invention of the Stanhope press which allowed for greater mechanical reproduction at a faster and more effective rate. Others, such as Mark McDayter, point to 1850 as the final year due to the invention of the Gordon Letterpress by George Phineas Gordon in 1851. Settling somewhere in the middle, I am choosing to follow the most commonly used date for the end of the handpress period: 1830. This date is used by numerous historians, including Dimec Zlata (2002), William R. McKelvy (2009), David McKitterick (2003), B. J. McMullin (2003/2004), James Mosley (2013), James Raven (1996), and Michael Suarez (2003/2004). The reason for selecting this year is that it corresponds with both the rise of mechanized printing, thanks to inventions such as the steam press, and the end of the dominance of the traditional handpress that had been in use since the time of Gutenberg.

unique while others are merely reproductions of already published versions copied from earlier editions. What makes these various printed editions important to study is how each of them treat the poet and the poetry—how Chaucer is presented to the reader, how the poem is presented to the reader, how the language of fourteenth-century England is (or is not) discussed with the reader, etc. Exploring these *hows* is the main objective of this dissertation, and will allow us to look at each unique edition and its potential impact on readership and the study of the Chaucerian oeuvre.

It is important to note that this is not a reception history of Chaucer's work. This dissertation is focused on the presentation of the *Canterbury Tales* rather than the reaction by readers. This is partly due to a lack of consistent and cohesive evidence regarding reader response to the 143 editions under examination in this dissertation. Valuable academic work has been done on particular readers and particular editions.⁵ Most of these are related to single copies of an edition that contains marginalia and other notational responses from readers. While providing important insight into reading habits of particular readers, these studies are not comprehensive enough collectively to establish a concrete pattern of reader behavior and response to all of the editions considered for

⁵ See, for example, Kathleen Forni, "The Value of Early Chaucer Editions," *Studia Neophilologica* 70 (1998): 173-80; Antonina Harbus, "A Renaissance Reader's English Annotations to Thynne's 1532 Edition of Chaucer's Works," *Review of English Studies* 59 (2008): 342-56; Seth Lerer, "Latin Annotations in a Copy of Stowe's Chaucer and the Seventeenth-Century Reception of Troulius and Criseyde," *Review of English Studies* 53 (2002): 1-7; Seth Lerer, "Unpublished Sixteenth-Century Arguments to *The Canterbury Tales*," *Notes & Queries* 248 (2003): 13-7; William Snell, "A Note on Dr. Samuel Johnson and the Reception of Chaucer in Eighteenth-Century England," *Hiyoshi Review of English Studies* 44 (2004): 157-72; Alison Wiggins, "What Did Renaissance Readers Write in Their Printed Copies of Chaucer?" *Library*, 7th Series, 9 (2008): 3-36; and Alison Wiggins, "Frances Wolfreston's *Chaucer*," in *Women and Writing, c.1340-c.1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, eds. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Phillipa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 77-89.

this dissertation. For this reason, the dissertation will focus on the choices and behaviors of editors, printers, and publishers within the paratextual elements of the editions rather than individual reader response.

The 143 editions discussed in this dissertation were assembled by printers, editors, publishers, and poets, each of whom had their own perspective on Chaucer and a particular approach for how best to present his work—a lens through which they saw Chaucer and his texts.⁶ In order to best understand and assess these approaches, this dissertation will follow the shifts and changes to paratextual material in Chaucer publications, with particular attention paid to introductory material such as title pages, prefaces, prologues, expository notes, dedications, letters, etc. that accompany the main body of text—what Gerard Genette refers to as “authentic allographic peritext.”⁷

Using Genette’s explanation, these elements are created by a real person (authentic) other than the author (allographic)⁸ and are placed in a manner that precedes or otherwise introduces the main text (peritext).⁹ The editorial and creative control for authentic allographic peritext is solely in the hands of someone other than the author. For

⁶ The individual roles of printer, editor, publisher, etc. that we are familiar with today were far more indecipherable in the early centuries of English printing. Catherine Armstrong describes the circumstances and roles of printers as follows: “It would be a mistake to think of practitioners of this trade as merely printers or booksellers. They took an active role in collecting and distributing knowledge and an active interest in overseas travel, indeed the title of ‘publisher’ might more accurately describe the role of these men. Publishers in the modern sense, taking responsibility for financing and distributing a text, did not exist independently of booksellers during this period.” *Printing Places*, ed. John Hinks and Catherine Armstrong (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2005), 18. Modern publishing specialization did not fully emerge until the late eighteenth century, though the process began in the mid-seventeenth century London book trade (see David Stoker’s chapter from the same collection, “Norwich ‘Publishing’ in the Seventeenth Century”).

⁷ Paratext, according to Genette’s definition, is “what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1. Paratext is made up of both peritext and epitext. The focus of this dissertation is on peritext in particular. For an in-depth discussion of the definition and role of peritext, see chapter 10 of *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, 237-93.

⁸ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5n8.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

printed editions of Chaucer's work, these elements include everything from title pages to tables of contents to biographies to glossaries and a whole host of other elements. Each of these items is created by someone other than Chaucer and is, in most cases, the first thing that the reader encounters before reading the text of the *Canterbury Tales*.

The role of authentic allographic peritext, as Genette discusses, is to provide the reader with context and containment. It is important to point out that Genette focuses almost exclusively on textual elements, with little to no consideration for the physical format of the book and its printing/binding process. In using Genette as a model, I am following a similar approach for this dissertation. While there is certainly much to be gained from a thorough analysis of the binding and print production side of this history, I will focus on the textual and illustrative elements of the editions rather than the physical format.

It is this text-based paratextual material that, according to Genette, provides the structure within which the reader interacts and engages with the main text. This, potentially, puts an incredible amount of power in the hands of the non-authorial editor—particularly if the author has no input on the content of the peritextual material, as is the case with all of the Chaucer editions that will be explored throughout this dissertation. Each of the print editors were born after Chaucer died, leaving his text very much open to interpretation, translation, and reimagination.

Paratextual elements can greatly influence how readers “see” the text they are reading and the person who wrote it. In Chaucer's case, readers of printed editions are seeing the poet and his text through the lens of an editor or set of editors. This presentation of Chaucer could be extremely influential to readers. In particular, readers of

Chaucer's works would often be provided with some sort of aid or mediation in the reading process, as will be discussed in detail throughout the dissertation. Most obviously, the fact that Chaucer's language is different from our own makes some sort of intervention by the editor necessary for a reader to interact with the text. Whether that means an explanation of Chaucer's language, a glossary or other vocabulary aid, or a straight translation of the text, some editorial intervention is needed to read the *Canterbury Tales*.

The importance of paratextual elements in editions of Chaucer's work cannot be overstated. Returning to Genette, he places the onus on the reader to understand and navigate these paratextual elements, no matter their intention or purpose. From straightforward components such as dedicatory letters to more complex elements such as academic discussions of Chaucer's versification, the paratextual material in these editions requires readers to interact with a wide variety of elements:

What one paratextual element gives, another paratextual element, later or simultaneous, may always take away; and here as elsewhere, the reader must put it all together and try (it's not always so simple) to figure out what the whole adds up to. And the very way in which a paratextual element gives what it gives may always imply that none of it is believed.¹⁰

Navigating this somewhat confusing paratextual pathway is made that much more difficult by the presence of non-authoritative textual elements. What one editor says about Chaucer and his work can differ vastly from another. In fact, as will be explored in this dissertation, the editorial presentation can completely change how a text is read, or even *what* text is read.

This textual interaction involves the confluence of three individual elements: authorship, editorship, and readership. In the case of printed Chaucer texts, there may be

¹⁰ Ibid., 183.

a blurring of the author and editor roles in the reader's eye. This is due to Chaucer being removed from the production process; his text is left to fend for itself, often at the mercy of editors who may not care how much they retain Chaucer's authorial identity.

Much, if not all, of how the reader is introduced to Chaucer is contained within the pages of authentic allographic peritext. These prefatory pages are most significantly influential for the reader's understanding of Chaucer and his work. As will be explored in the chapters that follow, nearly all editors felt the need to contextualize the poet and his work for their readers and establish how to "properly" understand Chaucer and his writings. This heavily interpretative approach further confuses or blurs the lines between editor and author.

The blurring of lines occurs within paratextual elements that discuss different aspects of Chaucer's life and work. These include explorations of his biographical background, in-depth studies of his language, translations of his text into modern English, and images of the poet and his characters to enhance the text. Each of these aspects of the printed Chaucer work together to develop a descriptive portrait of the poet for the reader. Within book history and textual studies, it has generally been argued that readers and reading communities "create their own personalized versions of authors."¹¹ This personalization begins, I argue, with the editor, who is the first to shift the focus of textual interpretation out of the author's domain and into the more democratic arena of readership. By studying the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*, this dissertation will demonstrate that the creation of this "arena" lay within the hands of the printers, publishers, and editors who presented Chaucer to readers.

¹¹ Guyda Armstrong, *The English Boccaccio: A History in Books*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 3.

Overview

This 350-year exploration of printed editions of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* will begin with a survey of relevant studies of Chaucer and his work. Chapter 1: "Reviewing Chaucerian Scholarship" will provide an exploration and summary of certain Chaucerian scholarship. This chapter will outline what efforts have been made by Chaucer scholars to explore the printing history of his work and the editors who created them. This chapter will help to establish the current landscape of works on Chaucer and how they relate to—or differ from—the exploration that will follow.

Chapter 2: "Putting Chaucer into Print" will outline the history of the *Canterbury Tales* in print, beginning with William Caxton's 1477 edition and touching upon the 143 editions under consideration in this dissertation. The chapter will provide a general overview of the circumstances of Chaucer's work reaching the English reader. Among the areas of focus in this chapter will be the number of editions, size of print runs, potential audience reach, location of publication, and identity of editors. Through statistical analysis and summation, this chapter will help lay the foundation for the assessment of paratextual material that makes up the remaining chapters.

The next section, Chapter 3: "The Prefatory Chaucer," begins the detailed discussion of paratextual elements in Chaucer editions. This chapter will look at the ways in which introductory material in printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales* shapes the reader's perception of Geoffrey Chaucer. Much of how Chaucer is introduced to the reader is contained within these prefatory pages, specifically in biographical essays, explorations of Chaucer's life and ancestry, and details about his writing history and

process. It is within these prefatory pages that the reader is most greatly influenced in his/her understanding of Chaucer and his work.

Chapter 4: “Considering Chaucer’s Language” will focus on Chaucer’s language and the editing, manipulation, translation, and modernization of his text. Taking a cue from the growing field of translation studies, this chapter will focus particularly on the influence of translation on readership. It will address how the alteration of Chaucer’s language is addressed by editors and translators and how such approaches could influence readership and understanding of the text. The mediation of Chaucer’s text is significant, and the explanation for that mediation is perhaps even more important. Understanding why and how text is translated can better help to understand how a reader may consume the text.

Chapter 5: “The Internal Paratext of the *Canterbury Tales*” will consider the paratextual elements to be found *within* the pages of the *Tales* themselves. Notations added to the *Tales* provides an additional editorial presence for the reader and creates a greater sense of mediation within the text. This is especially noticeable in editions of the text that provide summaries, glosses, and commentary within the *Tales* themselves. Notes such as these not only aid the reader in understanding the text, but also provide a filter through which to read Chaucer’s work. Unlike the prefatory material, the internal paratext is more directly and closely connected to Chaucer’s text as opposed to his biographical or linguistic circumstances.

In the final section of the dissertation, Chapter 6: “The Illustrated Chaucer,” the focus shifts from language to image. The content of this chapter will concentrate on illustrative representations of Chaucer and his characters in printed editions of the

Canterbury Tales. Both the author and the Canterbury pilgrims were depicted graphically throughout editions of the text. The ways in which Chaucer, as poet, is presented can influence how the reader sees him and how they react to him. In addition, the depiction of the pilgrims (including Chaucer himself) can change how the reading audience perceives the character. From the Knight to the Wife of Bath to Chaucer himself, the visual representation can have a significant impact on readability and understanding.

Through an assessment of paratextual elements, translation, notation, and illustration, this dissertation aims to understand how Chaucer was presented to the reader in print during the handpress period. Since William Caxton's first printing of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1477, Chaucer's most important work has been in the hands of men and women who have massaged and manipulated the text to create their own vision of the *Tales*. It is my contention that this abundance of editorial mediation has had a significant, but historically overlooked, impact on Chaucer and his work. As will be explored in the following chapters, this mediation takes many forms and was in the hands of people other than the author himself.

Geoffrey Chaucer died in 1400. After that time, and from the advent of printing in England, his words and his image were under the control of those who edited, translated, and dispensed his texts. Printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales* opened up opportunities for dialogue between Chaucer's editors, his readers, and—somewhat indirectly—the poet himself. This created the setting for a three-way conversation between poet, reader, and editorial intermediary. The role of the editor in the age of print completely changed the way readers interact with and understand Chaucer and his work.

CHAPTER 1 REVIEWING CHAUCERIAN SCHOLARSHIP

Introduction

In order to properly assess the edited versions of Chaucer's texts during the handpress period, I first need to explore current Chaucerian scholarship and determine what work, if any, has been done on this front. This chapter, then, will serve as an exploration of recent literature in Chaucerian studies. I will investigate the prevailing trends and themes in Chaucerian scholarship and place this dissertation into the existing literature. In the most recently published annotated bibliography of works on Chaucer (covering 1997 to 2010) there are more than 4,600 titles of books, articles, and edited collections listed. Of the extant bibliographies that date back to 1908, the number goes well beyond 20,000. I have done a survey of all Chaucerian scholarship published over the past century and found relatively few that are concerned with the printing history of Chaucer's works. In recent decades, the focus on printing and editorial history has certainly increased, but is still far outnumbered by more literary studies and traditional explorations of Chaucer's work.

These recent texts that discuss printing and editorial history have not been written and published in a vacuum. Many of the works discussed below are reactions to, responses to, or defenders of work that has come before them. These include some seminal works that are worth mentioning. Although these important works will not be discussed at length in this chapter because they are not directly related to the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*, it is important to note the long-term influence and impact of these titles. In chronological order, these works include Charles Muscatine's

Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (1957), D. W. Robertson's *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (1962), and N. F. Blake's *The Textual Tradition of the Canterbury Tales* (1985).

As is evident below, each of these three texts has had a significant effect on Chaucerian studies since they were first published. Shades of Muscatine, Robertson, and Blake appear in nearly all of the texts discussed in this chapter. Muscatine's exploration of the French influence on Chaucer, Robertson's framing of Chaucer within the context of fourteenth-century England, and Blake's dissection of the Chaucerian print tradition helped form the foundation of late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century Chaucer criticism and research. These areas of concentration continue to appear throughout the present literature.

The first main thematic area of study that I explore in Chaucerian studies is focused on Chaucer's readership, from fourteenth-century contemporaries to Renaissance bibliophiles to modern-day readers. Works under consideration in this section include assessment of individual readers as well as responses to general readership. This theme focuses both on reader interpretation as well as Chaucer's intention for the reader and ties into one of the overarching concerns of this dissertation: reader interaction with Chaucer's texts.

The second area of focus discussed in this chapter is related to scholarship concerned with the editing and reworking of Chaucer's texts. These studies focus on edits, additions, adaptations, and changes to Chaucer's work over time. The works in this section are interested in how Chaucer's texts have been altered or added to by editors,

authors, readers, and publishers and how these changes have affected his long-term influence—which has a direct connection to the focus of this dissertation.

An extension of the reworking of Chaucer's text can be found in the third, and final, theme discussed in this chapter: the production of Chaucer's texts in print. Work done in the field of book history and print culture has brought together literary studies and historical analysis to closely examine the development of Chaucer on the printed page. How Chaucer's work was produced in various printed formats and editions is a growing area of concern for recent Chaucerian studies and is directly connected to the primary concern of this dissertation.

My intention in this chapter is to offer a summary of recent literature in the field of Chaucerian studies, with the purpose of showing how different scholars have touched upon the topics that are covered by this dissertation. Each of the themes discussed below is related to how Chaucer is presented and represented in print. By focusing on these areas of Chaucerian study, this chapter will offer a greater understanding of where and how the Chaucerian literature has engaged with the ideas raised in this dissertation.

Understanding Readership

Readership studies and reader reception appear in numerous Chaucerian works. Many of these studies were published in the past decade or so, demonstrating the increase in scholarship on reader behavior in the field. The focus on readership is not unique to Chaucer, but it is important to note that within the world of Chaucerian studies readers have become even more significant to both historians and literary scholars in recent years.

Before delving into the most current scholarship, however, it is important to look back a bit to the beginnings of the reader-focused movement in Chaucerian studies.

Seth Lerer offers one of the earliest and most valuable studies of those who read Chaucer. His seminal work, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (1993), tackles the subject of reader reception from the fourteenth to the fifteenth century, including readership of printed editions. The central claim of the book is that Chaucer is “a construction of his later fifteenth-century scribes, readers, and poetic imitators.”¹² Lerer argues that readership of Chaucer’s works has redefined the poet within a literary system:

The works that I study here thus form what I consider a coherent line of influence and critical response, a literary system defined by writing in certain genres, developing a critical vocabulary, and establishing relations between scribes, patrons, and booksellers.¹³

Within this system, Lerer sees a give-and-take relationship between writer and reader.

Chaucer subjects his readers to his authority, while at the same time they are the subjects of his fictional creations. In this way, readers interact with Chaucer’s text on two distinct and powerful levels: as agents within the text and without.

An important part of this interaction, according to Lerer, is the idea that Chaucer has long been read through the modified lens of academia. Readers have “entrusted” their interaction with Chaucer to the “editing and critical interpretation” of academics.¹⁴ This, undoubtedly, influences how readers approach and interact with the text. Part of Lerer’s purpose in his book is to “restore a critical authority to the early manuscripts” of Chaucer’s work and to encourage readers to approach them without the “received

¹² Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 6.

authority” of the academics.¹⁵ He seeks to promote the early manuscripts while also questioning (and somewhat undermining) the established academic lens. In the end, Lerer hopes that his study can be “restorative” for the manuscripts and scribes that first presented Chaucer to the public.¹⁶

Lerer continues this discussion of readership in his essay “Receptions: Medieval, Tudor, Modern” from *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches* (2009) edited by Susanna Fein and David Raybin. He notes that the past 20-25 years “have seen larger critical interests in the history of reading and the place of reception in the narratives of literary formation.”¹⁷ Reception studies have aided in the understanding of authorship. As Lerer notes, there is a relationship between Chaucer and his readers that can add to the depth of study of the poet’s work.

One of the types of readership that Lerer explores is the child reader. He examines how Chaucer was turned into “a children’s writer” in the mid-fifteenth century.¹⁸ From student readers in the schoolhouse to childish audiences at home, Chaucer’s work was aimed at a young readership in order to support “specific educative and commercial goals.”¹⁹ These readers are presented a particular view of Chaucer, as the “father-narrator” who bestows morals and mature advice on his young audience.²⁰

In order to present this morally-focused Chaucer, editors of children’s editions of his works often simplified his text (most often the *Canterbury Tales*) into a narrowly focused and distilled version. Lerer argues that this led to “banal moralisms” and some

¹⁵ Ibid., 6.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ Seth Lerer, “Receptions: Medieval, Tudor, Modern,” in *Chaucer: Contemporary Approaches*, eds. Susanna Greer Fein and David B. Raybin (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 83.

¹⁸ Ibid., 86.

¹⁹ Ibid., 87.

²⁰ Ibid., 85-6.

“uniquely bad texts” in the fifteenth century.²¹ These texts lose the format and function of the established manuscripts, replacing the authority of the writer with the authority of the editor. In the end, Lerer concludes, the text is adulterated precisely in order to fit the audience, which then makes the audience view the text in a particularly childish light. While the edited, juvenile versions are “bad” poetry compared to the manuscripts, this “badness is a function of its purpose and its audience.”²² Without the desire to craft Chaucer for a children’s audience, the poor edits and changes that take place would not be needed.²³

The second area of readership that Lerer discusses is one that is influenced by Chaucer’s place in English literary culture. From Caxton’s first printing of Chaucer in 1477, Chaucer is presented to the reader as the father of English. This presentation, Lerer argues, provides the reader with a certain set of expectations and assumptions about Chaucer before they even read the text:

To read Chaucer like a laureate is to read him as an exemplar of ancient practice, as a model for the pursuit of poetic fame, as a monument of literature. It is, in short, to read him in a humanist manner...²⁴

²¹ Ibid., 88.

²² Ibid., 116.

²³ Sian Echard’s *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) dedicates a chapter to juvenile adaptations of Chaucer’s work. While mainly focused on the printing aspects of Chaucer’s works (a topic which is addressed below), Echard does delve into the impact of the children’s versions of the poet’s work. Unlike Lerer, who sees the childish Chaucer as almost wholly bad, Echard positions the edited works as a “refashioning” of Chaucer (127). The juvenile adaptations offer the reader “an idyllic, childlike world” (129), though Echard admits that some of these childish representations result in “bland, brief, or even misleading” versions (130). Like Lerer, Echard sees the publication of children’s editions of Chaucer as a way for printers and publishers to successfully sell Chaucer to the reading public. This is particularly notable in the focus on a “dual audience” for Chaucer’s work (143). This dual audience (both parents and children) are catered to in nineteenth-century editions that Echard studies. By appealing to both the potential readers (children) and potential buyers (adults), these editions were able to sell quite briskly (143). As with Lerer’s discussion, Echard sees a focus within these editions to “show that Chaucer is a moral man” and one who is capable of providing guidance to juvenile readers (150).

²⁴ Ibid., 149.

The positioning of Chaucer as a poet laureate is “a product of the critical imagination” for Lerer.²⁵ In a way, he argues, this construction is wholly independent from Chaucer’s actual poetry. Instead, Chaucer is positioned as an entity (a “commercial ploy for selling books”) and a part of the fifteenth-century literary system that Lerer describes at the beginning of his book.²⁶

Stephanie Trigg approaches Chaucer’s readership through a far wider temporal frame. In *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (2002), Trigg covers the long reception history of Chaucer’s work in an attempt to analyze patterns of Chaucerian study.²⁷ Her work is centered on John Dryden’s idea of readers having “a soul Congenial to”²⁸ Chaucer’s:

“Congenial” is my key term, since it embraces the two senses in which readers have traditionally established a relationship with Chaucer. First, it invokes a brotherly, even spiritual companionship in poetry and learning... In [the] second sense, Chaucer is less the solitary bookish figure than the jovial companion on pilgrimage.²⁹

For Trigg, the idea that Chaucer and his readers are congenial is a reflection of the patterns and traditions of academic Chaucerian studies.

Identification with the author is key to Trigg’s understanding of Chaucer’s readership. Aligning the reader with “Chaucer the Author” permits a very particular form for reading his texts. This includes the “relationships of intimacy” that readers develop with the poet and his reading communities.³⁰ The communities that develop around Chaucer are varied and inexact. They include editors, scholars, biographers, and critics,

²⁵ Ibid., 166.

²⁶ Ibid., 175.

²⁷ Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xvii.

²⁸ Ibid., xix.

²⁹ Ibid., xx.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

as well as writers of history, poetry, and literary studies. Beyond these specific audiences, Trigg points to a “broader, more general reception” of Chaucer that is on the margins of literary tradition.³¹ This general reader is a consumer of Chaucer, sustained by “an informed interest in and love of literature” without needing “special training or very specific knowledge of the text to participate” in the literary process.³²

Trigg often returns to the idea of “love” in Chaucer’s readership. She discusses the “community of like-minded readers” that gather around his poetry to “share their knowledge and love of the poet” through the “pleasurable” labors of reading and studying.³³ These readers often have external bonds (such as affinity, class, and scholarship) but their greatest connection is with the text itself. Such connection helps sustain the community through the transition from manuscript to print culture.³⁴

There are, however, many intermediaries between Chaucer and the reader. Though the community is able to exist due to a “love” for the text, Trigg points out the tremendous impact of editors, compilers, and translators on these communities. These intermediaries form part of the “social vision of Chaucer” that influences readership and reception.³⁵ Looking at Dryden, for example, Trigg notes that his work helped “present” Chaucer to the reader, but did so while stripping his texts “of their historical, linguistic, and cultural difference” and assimilating them into English verse conventions.³⁶ The influence of editors, then, should not be overlooked in any study of Chaucerian readers.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

³² Ibid., 11.

³³ Ibid., 111.

³⁴ Ibid., 111.

³⁵ Ibid., 143.

³⁶ Ibid., 146.

Trigg concludes that it is “impossible to separate the reading of Chaucer from the reading of Chaucerian discourse” and that readers of Chaucer are necessarily readers of editorial and critical thought.³⁷ This aligns with Lerer’s assessment of Chaucer readership and the inability of readers to separate themselves from the academic perspective. Even when reading Chaucer is “not simply a professional activity” but “also a social act” there is still the presence of literary studies and professional academics hanging over the reader’s shoulder.³⁸

In a reversal of Lerer and Trigg, Kathy Cawsey’s *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (2011) explores how the perception of readers influenced the way in which well-known Chaucerian scholars have interpreted the poet’s work. Cawsey focuses on the “roles that audiences and readers play in the creation of meaning” within Chaucer’s poetry.³⁹ The assumptions that critics make about audience, Cawsey argues, “seem to dictate, to a large extent, their criticism” and have long influenced Chaucerian scholarship.⁴⁰

Cawsey echoes D. W. Robertson’s idea of using “audience function to determine Chaucer’s intentions.”⁴¹ This “audience function” is essential to the structures of Chaucerian criticism and the ways that critics have envisioned Chaucer’s readership. Cawsey is interested in critics’ theories of audience and how these theories affect literary criticism.⁴² She explores six different types of readers throughout her book: the Dramatic Reader, the Psychological Reader, the Careful Reader, the Allegorical Reader, the

³⁷ Ibid., 235.

³⁸ Ibid., 235-6.

³⁹ Kathy Cawsey, *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (Farnham, GB: Ashgate, 2013), 1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁴¹ Ibid., 6.

⁴² Ibid., 12.

Gendered Reader, and the Subjective Reader. Each of these types of readers is aligned with a model reader (such as George Lyman Kittredge, C. S. Lewis, and D. W. Robertson) who represents a particular era or trend in Chaucerian studies.

By progressing chronologically through the twentieth century, Cawsey is able to show the development and growth of Chaucer criticism. Her work demonstrates the importance of reader-response and reception theory to the field of Chaucerian studies. As she points out, scholars have expanded the idea of Chaucer's audience:

[S]cholars do not restrict their idea of Chaucer's audience to either medieval audiences or modern ones, but consider Renaissance, seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century, Victorian, modernist, and late twentieth-century responses to Chaucer's works.⁴³

Each of these readerships also represent a different "audience function" that has evolved over the twentieth century. And for each new audience there is a new interpretation of Chaucer. Readership, for Cawsey, dictates our academic response.

Graham D. Caie provides an example of how readership can influence interpretation in his essay, "'This Was a Thrifty Tale for the Nones': Chaucer's Man of Law" in *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake* (1999) edited by Geoffrey Lester. In his essay, Caie looks at how Chaucer's contemporary readers would have read the *Man of Law's Tale*. He points out that the tale is one of the more complex stories in the Canterbury Tales:

...an exceptionally subtle work that requires very careful reading. The Man of Law's performance would probably have been met by Chaucer's contemporary audience with as many conflicting interpretations as today.⁴⁴

⁴³ Ibid., 156.

⁴⁴ Graham D. Caie, "'This Was a Thrifty Tale for the Nones': Chaucer's Man of Law," in *Chaucer in Perspectives: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Lester (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 47.

By studying and reflecting on how readers might approach the text, Chaucerians can more easily understand Chaucer's writing and decision-making.

In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Caie explores how Chaucer used glosses to help readers better interpret or understand the text. These glosses, in manuscript form, "would have demanded the attention of the fifteenth-century reader and ought therefore to make us pause to examine them today."⁴⁵ The glosses, which Caie contends to be a product of Chaucer himself, provide authorial insight into the writing of the *Tales*. These glosses have been largely overlooked in Chaucerian studies. However, by looking through the eyes of the contemporary reader and seeing the glosses for what they are (i.e., reader guidelines) scholars can gain new meaning and information about the *Man of Law* and other tales. The glosses, Caie concludes, provide valuable information about both reader and author and "warn us" of the true moral within the tale.

Another scholar interested in the intersection between authorship and readership, Carolynn Van Dyke, sees Chaucer's readers as interpretive agents in literary studies. By studying readers, she argues, we can better "illuminate Chaucer's texts."⁴⁶ Van Dyke's *Chaucer's Agents: Cause and Representation in Chaucerian Narrative* (2005) identifies readers as central to understanding Chaucer's texts. His readers "have an excellent vantage-point on the multifariousness of agency" in his work.⁴⁷ In return, Chaucer "acknowledges his dependence on readers habitually, with both ironical and serious valence."⁴⁸ The Chaucer that emerges from readers' perspective is a "partner of the

⁴⁵ Ibid., 48.

⁴⁶ Carolynn Van Dyke, *Chaucer's Agents: Cause and Representation in Chaucerian Narrative* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005), 15.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

author” and co-agent of meaning in the text.⁴⁹ In many ways, Van Dyke is pointing towards a similar role that editors take on in the printed editions of Chaucer’s works. They become heavily involved in the “partner” process that Van Dyke sees between author and reader.

Van Dyke, however, does not explore specific types of readers in her work. Instead, she concentrates on the overall influence of readership, without speaking directly to who those readers might be. For a more direct and incisive investigation into Chaucer’s medieval readers, we should turn to *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower* (2001). Edited by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo, this collection brings together essays concerning medieval readers and their responses to medieval texts. The editors seek to “offer practical, manuscript-based studies of medieval reading habits in use”—eschewing the theoretical approach of Carolyn Van Dyke for a more practical examination.⁵⁰

As Kerby-Fulton points out in the introduction to the volume, understanding readership in the period is significant: “Professional readers wielded a great deal of power, and their impact on medieval culture should never be underestimated.”⁵¹ Part of the influence of readership is its ability to show an alternative perspective or interpretation of a text. This can allow researchers and scholars to view known texts, such as Chaucer’s, in a different light.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 224.

⁵⁰ Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Introduction: The Medieval Professional Reader and Reception History, 1292-1641,” in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 2001), 8.

⁵¹ Ibid., 8.

One of the ways in which the medieval reader was able to interact with the text was through the use of marginalia and annotations within and around the manuscript. These physical marks on the page serve as valuable evidence for understanding medieval readership and the thoughts/reflections of professional readers—what Kerby-Fulton refers to as “the excavation of readership...that illuminates both medieval understanding of narrative...and the ethical and polemical response of readers.”⁵²

An additional form of reader interaction discussed in the collection is the use of visual presentation in manuscript form. Maidie Hilmo’s essay “Framing the Canterbury Pilgrims for the Aristocratic Readers of the Ellesmere Manuscript” focuses on the effect that illustrations have on readers of Chaucer’s *Tales*. Hilmo’s focus is due, in part, to the fact that “modern studies have largely missed what the illustrative program really contributes to its aristocratic readership’s understanding of the *Canterbury Tales*.”⁵³ The illustrations, according to Hilmo, invite the reader to emulate the action of the poem and provide a closer connection between reader and author.⁵⁴

Yet, while the illustrations of the pilgrims can help guide the reading process, Hilmo argues that “they resist a single interpretation and are thus as elusive as Chaucer.”⁵⁵ At the same time, the reader is encouraged to “become actively and creatively engaged” in the *Tales* through the repeated use of illustrations.⁵⁶ This active engagement can then be used as an avenue of research for scholars and provide insight into the role that readership can play in the assessment of medieval texts.

⁵² Ibid., 11.

⁵³ Maidie Hilmo, “Framing the Canterbury Pilgrims for the Aristocratic Readers of the Ellesmere Manuscripts,” in *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 2001), 17.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

Theresa M. Krier brings the conversation of readership and Chaucerian studies into the Renaissance with her edited collection *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance* (1998). Featuring essays on a wide variety of topics, Krier points to reader interactions as an important source of understanding Chaucer's texts: "Chaucer's work is taken or constructed as a gift by readers and writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."⁵⁷ This "gift" acts as inspiration for readers during the Renaissance. Krier frames the reception of Chaucer's work within the English literary community leading up to the Renaissance as a somewhat tense relationship of give and take:

In the context of this book, we may speculate that fifteenth-century readers and writers often felt a kind of passive envy in the burden of Chaucer's generosity: not a desire to despoil his creativity but the helplessness of not being able to respond in kind to his power.⁵⁸

Moving into the Renaissance, Krier argues, Chaucer's readership became more personally attached to the poet.

This personal association is most noticeable in the Renaissance-era editions of Chaucer's work and how writers and editors respond to his texts. Francis Thynne's response to Thomas Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer, for example, treats Chaucer as a father figure not only for English national identity, but also for Thynne personally.⁵⁹ Speght, likewise, sees Chaucer as an authority figure whose work "becomes a general gift" to the Renaissance readership.⁶⁰ Krier concludes that Chaucer was an influential contributor of literary themes and truisms to the Renaissance audience—an idea that is echoed in each of the essays included in *Refiguring Chaucer*.

⁵⁷ Theresa M. Krier, "Introduction: Receiving Chaucer in Renaissance England," in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

John Watkins essay in the volume, “‘Wrastling for This World’: Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer,” offers an example of the type of relationship that can form between Chaucer and his readers. Focusing on Thomas Wyatt, Watkins investigates how Wyatt’s use of Chaucer is reflected in his personal relationships and biographical journey. Wyatt, in fact, found an ally and coconspirator through his reading of Chaucer:

The more Wyatt found himself on the margins of royal favor, the more he joined aristocratic writers like Thomas Howard in appropriating Chaucer as an oppositional voice.⁶¹

Chaucer, then, served as both inspiration and agitation for the aristocratic reader. Wyatt positions Chaucer as a representation of the “older nobility” and an advocate of “traditional social distinctions.”⁶²

Wyatt becomes dependent on Chaucer, beyond the simple author-reader dynamic. When Wyatt was at his most unstable politically and socially, Watkins argues, he turned to Chaucer as a stabilizer. Yet, while Wyatt saw Chaucer as reinforcing traditional social structure, Chaucer was becoming part of the larger national readership in England. He was no longer solely the domain of aristocrats and the clergy. Wyatt was caught in the middle of the transition of Chaucer from elitist to egalitarian.

The relationship between Thomas Wyatt and Geoffrey Chaucer is a great example of how Chaucer was “received” by Renaissance readers. As Theresa Krier points out in the introduction to *Refiguring Chaucer*, there is no single way to assess Chaucer’s impact on the reader. Rather, reader interaction with Chaucer is a paradox, with many interpretive possibilities and outcomes. In the end, the only consistency lies in the fact

⁶¹ John Watkins, “‘Wrastling for This World’: Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer,” in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 26.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 30.

that “his works have formed what could be taken by writers and readers...as an authentic literature, within which they could speak themselves.”⁶³

This description of Chaucer as a paradox is echoed throughout Geoffrey W. Gust’s *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (2009). Gust approaches Chaucer from the authorial perspective, looking closely at the relationships that develop between Chaucer as author and his readers. These relationships, Gust argues, are anything but cut and dry:

In Geoffrey Chaucer’s poetry, it often appears that the author is present in some way, shape, or form. But this seeming presence is a kind of narrative mirage, inconsistent and unreliable...the shifting, elusive authorial technique manipulated by poet throughout his oeuvre.⁶⁴

This perception of Chaucer as an enigma presents the reader with a challenging set of texts that are, in part, difficult to pin down.⁶⁵

This difficulty, Gust contends, is part of the appeal for Chaucer’s readers. While the poet “repeatedly pulls the proverbial rug out from beneath the feet of readers” he does so with a deliberate playfulness that is appealing and alluring to many readers.⁶⁶ This playfulness is not only engaging to read, but can offer insight for scholars who study and interpret Chaucer’s work. By looking through the eyes of the reader, Gust argues, we can better understand the perspective of the author. Gust specifically uses autofiction as a way to bridge the gap between author and reader:

⁶³ Krier, “Introduction,” 1.

⁶⁴ Geoffrey W. Gust, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 1.

⁶⁵ Elizabeth Scala very succinctly summarizes this difficulty as “leaving Chaucer’s readers with no secure interpretive method” (5). Her book, *Desire in the Canterbury Tales* (2015) is concerned with the pilgrimage frame of the *Tales* and how it can generate “entanglements” within the story (2). These entanglements not only trip up the characters and storytellers in the *Tales*, but readers as well. There is no fixed system in the *Tales*, allowing Chaucer to play with conventions and assumptions as the stories unfold. The result is disruptive, playful, and (to borrow Gust’s term) elusive.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

The notion in question is “autofiction,” which designates a “story of the self” that is creative, unreliable, and essentially unreal. Autofiction is a theoretical response to the many readers of Chaucer who are inclined to believe in a certain kind of “truth,” a predilection that—at least to an extent—Chaucer’s characters are “real” in that they authentically depict the poet’s world or somehow reveal facets of his mind or convictions.⁶⁷

Gust uses autofiction as the foreground of his book as a way to see how readers saw Chaucer and better understand the author-reader interaction. As discussed above, John Watkins used Thomas Wyatt’s reading of Chaucer as an advocate of the traditional social dynamics to understand Chaucer’s impact on Renaissance readers. Gust takes this same approach, though in a much more widescale manner.

There is no greater interaction between Chaucer and the reader than in the *Canterbury Tales*, particularly in the role of Chaucer as narrator. Gust contends that there are three primary ways of reading Chaucer’s persona in the *Tales*:

...the poet and narrator are altogether divided, wholly separate entities so that Chaucer's speaker is afforded no “realistic” significance whatsoever; a middle ground is alleged wherein the speaker(s) reflects partly on Chaucer the Man but also functions partly as fiction; or, it is argued that the narrator represents the poet himself (and his beliefs).⁶⁸

The third reading is, according to Gust, the most prevalent in reader response and scholarly interpretation. However, that does not mean that the other assessments are ignored. Depending on the autofiction, the reader can see the narrator in each of these roles. The role that Chaucer takes in the *Tales* is dependent, in large part, on the perception of the reader. Add to this that, across his entire corpus, Chaucer is inconsistent

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 31.

in his use of narrative voices.⁶⁹ This puts more pressure on the reader to interpret and apply his or her own “truth” to the texts.

Gust uses autofiction as a way to “reinvigorate the discussion of Chaucer” and develop fresh outlooks on his work—particularly his first-person narrators.⁷⁰ The use of autofiction is especially important in relation to academic readers. These scholars and critics consciously create interpretations and construct arguments in and around Chaucer’s texts. Gust aims to encourage such academics to “consider our own selves” in relation to Chaucerian studies and realize “the impact of their chosen scholarly masks.”⁷¹ Whether medieval monk, Renaissance poet, or modern-day scholar, the relationship between author and reader is essential to understanding the study of Chaucer and his work.

Andrew Higl emphasizes this point in his 2012 book, *Playing the Canterbury Tales: The Continuations and Additions*. He notes in his introduction “it is important for readers to understand that there is a complex and dynamic textual history of interaction and reader-produced meanings lurking beyond the pages of the monolithic modern

⁶⁹ Kathryn Lynch addressed the issue of readership and narrator consistency in her book, *Chaucer’s Philosophical Visions* (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000). Lynch, however, comes to quite a different conclusion than Gust:

The Chaucerian *oeuvre* is characterized by a kind of continuity that is rare even in modern poets, as if the author wished and expected his readers to think of his work as a whole body. The similarity of his various Narrators—plump, self-deprecating, urbane—is one example. But the Narrator forms only a single instance of the intensive intertextuality of Chaucer’s poetry. (147)

Lynch argues that there is a level of consistency among Chaucer’s work that actually helps the reader through his or her interpretative process. This is contradictory to Gust, who sees readers as struggling with the inherent *inconsistency* of the Chaucerian corpus. Like Gust, however, Lynch also notes that Chaucer “engaged in a complicated, highly playful practice” in his writing (158). For both authors, the reader’s interpretation—whether in the context of one of Chaucer’s texts or his whole body of work—is an important point of emphasis.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 197.

⁷¹ Ibid., 197-8.

critical edition.”⁷² Higl discusses the fact that readers from different eras encountered a different form of Chaucer. Medieval readers read Chaucer in manuscript form, seventeenth-century readers encountered a Chaucer that contained spurious texts (such as the *Plowman’s Tale*), and modern readers engage with Chaucer through an academic, edited lens. Active readers (whether academic or not) have a participatory engagement with Chaucer, adding text, rearranging text, and adding new meanings as time goes by.

Higl suggests that these various forms of reader interaction lead to an ever-changing, dynamic corpus that influence the construction and reception of Chaucer’s work. He focuses primarily on the *Canterbury Tales* since that work has received the most attention and emendation.⁷³ He argues that Chaucer “endures” in our literary canon “because he has been remade through an interactive transmission” of texts among readers.⁷⁴

Higl concludes his book much in the same way as Gust: the role of the reader has had a significant impact on Chaucerian studies and how scholars should perceive and interpret Chaucer’s work. He warns that “we have lost sight of a long history of readers’ writerly interaction, which continues even to this day with each new adaptation, translation, edition, or selection.”⁷⁵ The presence of the reader is as important as the presence of the author in Chaucerian studies.

⁷² Andrew Higl, *Playing the Canterbury Tales: The Continuations and Additions* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012), 2.

⁷³ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 174.

Reworking Chaucer

Andrew Higl's *Playing the Canterbury Tales* serves as an effective transition from the theme of readership into our next area of discussion: the editing, rewriting, and reworking of Chaucer's work. This theme is one that a few authors discussed above have hinted at. Geoffrey Gust, for example, points out that scholars "often disregard the importance and vitality of the actual person who wrote the texts being analyzed" in order to focus on their own particular area of analysis.⁷⁶ This idea is also apparent in Seth Lerer's work on Chaucer's readers:

From the late nineteenth century on, such readers have instead entrusted Chaucer's editing and critical interpretation to the academics trained in textual criticism and close reading....What I would suggest is that we too have constructed ourselves as subjected readers, and our own subjection is a product of the history of textual criticism that empowers academic editors over medieval scribes.⁷⁷

Lerer attempts to "restore critical authority to the early manuscripts of Chaucer's poetry" in his work.⁷⁸ Even within these manuscripts, however, there is still a significant amount of editing and reworking of Chaucer's texts. While studying the manuscripts may get us closer to Chaucer's true intentions, there is still some mediation present.⁷⁹ That mediation—by editors, publishers, and printers—serves as a central part of this dissertation.

⁷⁶ Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, 35.

⁷⁷ Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁹ Jerome Mandel's *Geoffrey Chaucer: Building the Fragments of the Canterbury Tales* (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992) is a relatively early text to include in this essay. However, his work on the fragmentation and unification of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is worth noting. Mandel is very much concerned with the structure, order, and connections within and between the *Tales*. He feels that "the multitalle fragments show the larger elements of Chaucer's craft in its least ambiguous and least contentious form" (17). As he notes, few scholars study the fragments as artistic wholes, choosing instead to look mostly at individual tales. Mandel's work is intended to "make more well-known...the means which Chaucer employed to unify the fragments, to make them coherent in terms of structure, theme, and character" (17). Mandel's work is worth noting here in advance of our discussion of "mediation" and the reworking of Chaucer's text. Long before editors and scholars got their hands on Chaucer's work, the poet did quite a lot of reworking himself.

Returning to Higl, he argues that the editing and reworking of Chaucer's texts has had a significant impact on Chaucerian scholarship. The work of Manly and Rickert (culminating in their eight-volume edition of Chaucer in 1940) is undoubtedly influential, as is the work of N. F. Blake, who very much responds to the Manly-Rickert edition in his book, *The Textual Tradition of the Canterbury Tales* (1985). Higl sees these scholarly approaches to and editions of Chaucer as quite influential to scholarship and readership:

When most scholars and students imagine the *Canterbury Tales*, they likely have in mind a set of very specific tales by Geoffrey Chaucer perhaps in a specific order. Oftentimes, the text of the *Tales* that most imagine is that of a modern critical edition such as the *Riverside*, which presents only one version of the *Tales*, and that version is largely a modern editorial construct.⁸⁰

The construction of a critical edition of the *Tales* is, of course, a mediated effort. From editorial decisions to scholarly commentary, such a collection is developed with certain level of manipulation.

As Higl is quick to point out, however, editorial impact is not limited to scholarly editions. Within Chaucer manuscripts and early printed editions, there are countless “continuations and additions” to the text that Higl refers to as “meaning-making, socially significant narratives and/or narrative-shaping textual additions.”⁸¹ These emendations are discernable acts that show interaction between the reader and Chaucer. These readers range from anonymous individuals whose marginalia marks the edge of pages to well-known literary actors such as John Lydgate.⁸²

⁸⁰ Higl, *Playing the Canterbury Tales*, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 4.

Higl's exploration of Lydgate's "expansion" of the *Canterbury Tales* provides a valuable assessment of how one author can influence another.⁸³ Lydgate places himself in the context of the *Tales*, essentially replacing Chaucer as the recorder of events. As Higl notes, "regardless of what Chaucer wanted for his book, it was no longer his book once it entered the hands of scribes and readers" like Lydgate.⁸⁴ Instead, it became a public entity, ready to be reworked and remixed as each reader and scholar saw fit. The result, Higl concludes, is "a single, modern text of a medieval work made up of many texts"—an amalgamation.⁸⁵

Peter Brown explores a few additions to Chaucer's text in his 2013 collection, *Reading Chaucer: Selected Essays*. Brown dedicates the last section of essays to discussing "the reputation of Chaucer, imitations of his work and its critical evaluation."⁸⁶ The imitations are of particular interest, particularly in the context of editing and remixing Chaucer's work. Brown discusses the authenticity of the *Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale* and whether or not it is apocryphal. While this question is "unthinkable to many Chaucerians," the work of N. F. Blake brought the question to the forefront in the 1980s. Blake is very much concerned with the origins of Chaucer's work and the various editions of his work over the centuries. Brown, Higl, and others echo this concern over the editing and reworking of Chaucer's text.

Brown investigates the idea that the *Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale* is not of Chaucer's making. He outlines Blake's argument (based largely around the tale being absent from the Hengwrt manuscript) and also dissects the literary qualities of the tale.

⁸³ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 174.

⁸⁶ Peter Brown, *Reading Chaucer: Selected Essays* (Oxford: Peter Lang AG, 2013), xi.

Brown concludes, “the prologue is so brilliantly conceived as part of the fabric of the *Canterbury Tales* that it is pointless to assume that it is by anyone but Chaucer.”⁸⁷

However, he does hedge his results with “conditional and subjective” language since it is difficult to conclude anything about Chaucer’s work with absolute certainty.⁸⁸

Another area of exploration for Brown is a look at a known apocryphal work, the *Tale of Beryn*. Appearing in Manuscript 455 (Alnwick Castle), *Beryn* is said to have appeared in an early version of John Stow’s 1561 edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. However, no known copy of Stow’s printed text contains the tale. In fact, the first proven printing of *Beryn* did not occur until 1721. From manuscript to print, the *Tale of Beryn* is something of an enigma. In his chapter on the topic, which serves as the closing essay in the collection, Brown attempts to follow the trail of *Beryn* from its manuscript creation to its inclusion in the Chaucer canon to its removal.

Beryn was reprinted in at least eight different editions of Chaucer’s work between 1782 and 1909. Even with these repeated publications, Brown argues that *Beryn* “has suffered neglect because of its association with Chaucer.”⁸⁹ Once it was clearly and convincingly established that the tale was not a product of Chaucer’s hand, it was dismissed as inferior and generally disregarded as a medieval text (regardless of authorship). Part of the problem, Brown points out, is that the poem can no longer be seen independent of its connection to Chaucer. Even though it is known not to be part of his corpus, scholars are “unable or unwilling to evaluate it on its own terms” and merit.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid., 153-4.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 155.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 183.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 185.

There is no doubt, however, that the author of *Beryn* was inspired and influenced by Chaucer's most famous work. Brown's study of the text reveals that the author "certainly...had access to a reasonably complete version of the *Canterbury Tales*."⁹¹ By copying the style and formula of the *Tales*, the author was able to create a version of his own tale that fit (even if not perfectly) into the *Tales* as Chaucer conceived them. While this act may not have been explicitly intended to trick scribes or printers, it seems to have done just that. For hundreds of years, some editors believed *Beryn* to be a part of the *Tales*, even though the writing style and skill did not match the rest of Chaucer's work.

Brown, however, sees a benefit to the work. While there are certainly "consequences" for interpreting *Beryn* as a part of the *Tales*, there is more to it than just mere imitation:

Instead, its function becomes that of an occasional piece for which the existence of the *Canterbury Tales*, as a recently composed and well known collection of narratives, was a convenient, but by no means necessary, stimulus.⁹²

The importance of *Beryn* is to show how others, writing in response to and with knowledge of the *Canterbury Tales* were affected by Chaucer and his work. There is creative engagement between Chaucer and the *Beryn* author. Though no editing of Chaucer's actual text takes place, this is a clear indication of the impact that Chaucer has had on readers and writers who followed him. Brown concludes his essay by noting how *Beryn* serves as evidence "that the *Canterbury Tales* in all their variety enjoyed continuing appeal beyond Chaucer's immediate circle."⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., 192.

⁹² Ibid., 200-1.

⁹³ Ibid., 216.

This continuing appeal goes well beyond the writing of the *Tale of Beryn*.

Looking again at John Watkins essay discussed above, we can see evidence for other writers who appropriated Chaucer's work. Watkins examines the poetry of Lord Thomas Howard and reveals that his "best poem" was stolen from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁹⁴ Howard took Chaucer's original text and changed a few words, deleted Criseyde's name, and updated Chaucer's grammar.

Like Howard, Thomas Wyatt took Chaucer's texts and reworked them to fit his own perspective and reflect the circumstances of Henrician England. Wyatt revised Chaucer's ballads in order to combat the Tudor aggression of political authority, even replacing "Chaucer's opening imperatives with conditional verbs signaling persistent enthusiasm for secular advancement."⁹⁵ Wyatt reworks Chaucer's text in order to more directly address the realities of sixteenth-century England.

In their 2015 collection, *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall bring together essays that look closely at the establishment of Chaucer's reputation and his literary fame. The essays in the collection "investigate a full range of intertexts for Chaucer's work, finding rich networks of allusion, both between Chaucer's works and his sources, and also between the work of those who came after him."⁹⁶ Davis and Nall center the collection around the idea of "fame" and view Chaucer through a particularly modern perspective, a view that is reflected in many of the essays in the collection.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Watkins, "Wrastling," 25.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁹⁶ Isabel Davis, "Introduction," in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, eds. Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 2.

⁹⁷ Another example of this strongly modern perspective on Chaucer can be found in L. O. Aranye Fradenburg's *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002). Fradenburg's book is "derived chiefly from psychoanalytic writing about culture

Mike Rodman Jones's essay, "Chaucer the Puritan," examines how Chaucer and his works were repurposed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During this time, Jones contends, Chaucer's fame and popularity often demonstrated "how widely and pervasively his name could be taken in vain."⁹⁸ Chaucer's name and sense of authority acted "as cultural ballast" during the time period, appearing as "an authority on alchemy, grammar, armouries, bee-keeping and the dangers of smoking."⁹⁹ It was this sense of authority that was important to many readers at the time, even more so than the content of his texts. This was apparent in his being positioned as a "native vernacular authority who could speak to the anticlerical—and sometimes specifically anti-papal—agenda of early English Protestantism."¹⁰⁰

The positioning of Chaucer as Protestant came as a result of editing and reorganizing his texts, particularly the *Canterbury Tales*. Jones discusses the "impulse to add to, embellish or 'complete' *The Canterbury Tales*" and how the 1530s witnessed the appearance of apocryphal Chaucerian texts.¹⁰¹ He also outlines the ways in which Chaucer was characterized: Reformist, Reformed, Protestant, Presbyterian, and Puritan. Depending on who was appropriating Chaucer, his identity and association would change. As Jones describes, the appropriation was not "singular and uncontested" but

and sociality" but with a "medieval understanding of desire" (2). She draws on Chaucer and other medieval authors in order to understand the "present-day fascination with desire as a key to understanding subjectivity" (2). Through a comparison with this historical period, Fradenburg contends, we can better work through "the intimacy between privation and desire in discourses of love" (2). Her work focuses more on the theories and philosophies of psychoanalysis than the work of Chaucer, but she uses the poet as a sounding board for her explorations.

⁹⁸ Mike Rodman Jones, "Chaucer the Puritan," in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, eds. Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 166.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 166.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 167.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 169.

continuously challenged and “controversial.”¹⁰² Reframing Chaucer and his work to suit a particular objective was “a very conscious and contested thing to do” in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹⁰³ These emendations and depictions would shape the perception of Chaucer for many years to come.

Thomas A. Prendergast explores another way in which Chaucer has been manipulated in his essay “Revenant Chaucer: Early Modern Celebrity.” Prendergast looks at how Chaucer has been “invented” by readers, writers, editors, and others since “almost at the moment of his death.”¹⁰⁴ There is a desire, he says, by those encountering Chaucer to help “complete” his work, particularly the *Canterbury Tales*.¹⁰⁵ In their attempt to tie up loose ends and fill in the narrative holes, these readers-turned-writers become inventors of Chaucer’s literary corpus. Not only was there a desire to have a more complete text, but “for some late-medieval editors, the more beautiful and complete the text, the more Chaucerian it was.”¹⁰⁶

Rather than leaving the text as it was—incomplete, unfinished, and (sometimes) in no discernable order—these inventors applied their own mark to Chaucer’s text and made it different from what was originally created. Prendergast points out that there was significant rejection of this approach in the sixteenth century. At that time, in order to most properly and accurately understand a text, readers had to discover the actual words of the author and remove them from the mire of apocryphal texts and corrupt manuscripts. This was not, however, a universal declaration. Some editors continued to invent and

¹⁰² Ibid., 175.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 177.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas A. Prendergast, “Revenant Chaucer: Early Modern Celebrity,” in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, ed. Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 186.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 187.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 189.

corrupt the text without hesitation: “it did not stop editors from subordinating textual concerns to their ideological beliefs—even rewriting texts so they would be more doctrinally acceptable.”¹⁰⁷ Prendergast’s point is very similar to that of Mike Rodman Jones: Chaucer enhanced the power and prestige of a particular doctrine or idea and was manipulated in order to take advantage of this enhancement.

Among the greatest offenders of Chaucer’s work were other poets. They “justified the posthumous adaptation or continuation of works by resurrecting the original poet and externalizing him or her into the work itself as a legitimating threshold figure.”¹⁰⁸ This includes Edmund Spenser, who reworked portions of Chaucer’s text into his *Faerie Queene*. By doing so, Spenser claimed to revive the lost past of Chaucer’s work.

This “resurrection” at the hands of the poets is far from the only instance of authors and editors using Chaucer to support their points of view. Prendergast describes a strange case in which Chaucer somehow became involved in a tobacco pamphlet war. Chaucer is presented as being against the use of tobacco from beyond the grave:

Richard Brathwait's *Chaucer's Incensed Ghost*, published in 1617, narrates the descent of Chaucer from Parnassus Hill to take issue with those who have attributed false works to him. The poet is “incensed” we are told, because someone has created a false Chaucer—a “Chaucer” who has “fathered” a tract (now lost) favouring tobacco—a “drug” that leads to both physical and mental infirmity.¹⁰⁹

The use of Chaucer authenticates and validates the perspective (in this case of anti-tobacco) by attaching his name and reputation to the cause. Brathwait uses and “celebrates a Chaucer who is in one sense a poetic invention but in another is

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 190.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 194.

authentic.”¹¹⁰ This mix of inventiveness and authenticity, Prendergast argues, continues long after the seventeenth century and even surfaces in the twenty-first century.

Steve Ellis, in *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (2000), examines how Chaucer is perceived and presented in the Modern Era. Ellis looks at the ways in which Chaucer appears in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century popular literature, history, and entertainment. Focusing on the popular representations of Chaucer (as opposed to academic creations), Ellis explores how the general public perceives and receives Chaucer and his work.

During this exploration, Ellis begins by looking at how Chaucer is presented in works intended for a general audience. Within these works, Ellis argues, Chaucer is proven to be both popular and famous. He is presented in a variety of ways: as masculine, bawdy, merry, and practical in some cases and “cheery, unintellectual, uncomplicated, convivial” in others.¹¹¹

One of the most interesting representations of Chaucer is the one aimed at children. Ellis investigates the “golden age” of Chaucer editions for children (from 1903-1914) and shows how the *Canterbury Tales* were retold and reworked during the period. He focuses primarily on the “prose paraphrases or translations of various kinds, often aimed at a younger age group.”¹¹² It is these Chaucer creations that are perhaps the most reworked and heavily edited of any version of the poet.

The children’s editions that Ellis discusses are almost exclusively concerned with the *Canterbury Tales*. Not all of the tales, however, are included in the editions. Rather,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 198.

¹¹¹ Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 21.

¹¹² Ibid., 46.

“in most compilations (with or without the ‘General Prologue’) one passes straight from the ‘Knight’s Tale’ to the ‘Man of Law’s Tale,’ since the fabliaux are of course inadmissible.”¹¹³ The stories are purposefully selected in order to emphasize “romance, adventure, and fairy-tale elements” above all else.¹¹⁴ In addition to a narrowly-focused selection of tales, the children’s editions also present Chaucer in a very particular light:

Indeed, the concept of a “Children’s Chaucer” genre is interestingly related to the idea of Chaucer himself as essentially a child, or as proceeding from a period in literary history of childish immediacy and unsophistication. This attitude was particularly current in the nineteenth century... comments on Chaucer’s childlike gentleness and frolicsome innocence.¹¹⁵

With this perception, the poet becomes one with his childish reader and the *Tales* take on even more of a playful, delightful characteristic.

At the same time that these editions are appealing to the childlike playfulness of their reader, they are also concerned with reinforcing the moral message of the *Canterbury Tales*. For this reason, the more risqué stories are often left out or reworked to make them harmless. Editors are generally more concerned with presenting Chaucer as a “serious moralist” rather than just “an irresponsible child” who wrote fun stories.¹¹⁶ His tales are edited to make them “safer” for the child reader (such as removing the act of rape from the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*). The suppression and editing of tales for the child audience is greater than any other version of Chaucer’s work that Ellis discusses.

Perhaps the most important reworking of Chaucer, however, is not in children’s editions, but in translated editions for adult readers. Translations of Chaucer are “one of

¹¹³ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 48.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 49.

the main channels for the wider dissemination of his work outside the academy.”¹¹⁷ Ellis notes that the issue of translation is contentious between the popular Chaucer and the academic Chaucer. Defenders of translation argue that there is a difficulty for the general audience to understand Middle English, while detractors believe that modern readers are capable of learning how to read Chaucer with “only a casual amount of study.”¹¹⁸

Ellis looks at the argument from both sides and chooses to focus on the possible dangers of translation of Chaucer’s text. Bad translations can lead to “a failure of transmutation” in which “Chaucer remains stranded halfway between his own language and ours, to result in a ghastly mishmash of Middle and modern English.”¹¹⁹ Ellis points to Dryden’s perception of Chaucer as a “rough diamond” who must be polished by being brought into more modern language.¹²⁰ Many early editors, including Skeat, Mackaye, and Burrell, supported this perspective. The result, in many cases, was the unfortunate “mishmash” of which Ellis warns: “Chaucer is half-naturalized to modern eyes, becoming (the translator’s sin of sins) ‘quaint’.”¹²¹

Poor translations, Ellis argues, damage Chaucer as a poet. They lose both the language and the meaning of his original work. Without either, Chaucer is not really represented on the page. He has been reworked and reconfigured into a shell of himself and his writings have been reduced to simple, defective versions. Ellis does conclude, however, that there is some merit in the study of these works: “instead of turning in

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹²⁰ The focus on Dryden’s translations is not limited to Ellis, but has been discussed in numerous articles including Janne Goldbeck, “The Absent Father: Translating Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*,” *Rendezvous* 32, no. 1 (1997): 87-93 and Joanna Maciulewicz, “Translations and Imitations of Medieval Texts in Neoclassicism: Chaucer as a ‘Rough Diamond’ That ‘Must First Be Polished ere He Shines,’” in *Medievalisms: The Poetics of Literary Re-Reading*, ed. Liliana Sikorska (Frankfurt: Lang, 2008), 113-31.

¹²¹ Ibid., 102.

horror from Chaucer translation, we academics might integrate it into our procedures and even put it before our students to highlight by contrast” the strengths of Chaucer’s originals.¹²² Scholars can also study and compare the different translations to make discriminations between them and see how Chaucer has been reworked over the centuries.¹²³

In a similarly wide-ranging collection, *Essays on the Art of Chaucer’s Verse* (2001), editor Alan T. Gaylord brings together essays that span the eighteenth to twenty-first centuries. The essays are intended to demonstrate the long-term impact of Chaucer’s work. The book focuses on Chaucer’s versification, which has “been ignored because as a formalist or mechanical aspect it is kept separate from poesis.”¹²⁴ The essays in the collection “share a conviction that Chaucer’s versification is artful, pleasurable, and deserving of much, much more attention than it has erstwhile received.”¹²⁵ One aspect of this attention concerns how editors, scholars, and readers have often overlooked Chaucer’s verse.

In his essay “Chaucer’s Meter: The Evidence of the Manuscripts,” Derek Pearsall explains the importance of understanding Chaucer’s versification:

Though it might easily slip one’s mind, given that nine-tenths of the critical writing on Chaucer never mentions the fact, Chaucer’s poetry is written in verse, and the way we read that verse and respond to its

¹²² Ibid., 120.

¹²³ The impact of translation is, of course, not limited to Chaucer’s texts and legacy. For broader studies of translation and English literary history, see: Paul Davis, *Translation and the Poet’s Life: The Ethics of Translating in English Culture, 1646-1726* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*. 5 vols., series eds. Peter France and Stuart Gillespie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); in particular, see Tom Mason, “Chaucer and Other Earlier English Poetry,” in *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English. Volume 3: 1660-1790*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins, 427-39.

¹²⁴ Alan T. Gaylord, “Introduction,” in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer’s Verse*, ed. Alan T. Gaylord (New York: Gaylord, 2000), 1.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 3.

musicality, whether in our heads or when reading aloud, is presumably an important part of our interpretation of and response to its meaning.¹²⁶

To overlook or ignore Chaucer's verse is to do him an injustice and misrepresent his work. This action is not as noticeable as changing Chaucer's language (like Dryden) or writing new poems to accompany his work (à la Lydgate) but it is, in Pearsall's view, just as misleading.

As Pearsall concludes, there is great value to properly understanding and dissecting Chaucer's verse and, particularly, his meter. Ideally, Pearsall states, Chaucer's poetry "would have to be read aloud" to be fully understood and appreciated.¹²⁷ As it stands, Chaucer's versification has been "misrepresented by generations of editors and metrists."¹²⁸ Though less obvious than a poor translation or rewritten tale, this misrepresentation is still a significant reworking of Chaucer by scholars.

A final text that focuses on the "redesigns of medieval texts" is Siân Echard's *Printing the Middle Ages* (2008).¹²⁹ Echard studies the post-medieval printing life of medieval works, including Chaucer's texts. Her claim in the book is that there is a "persistent claim to authority and authenticity" and an attempt to "present a book as authentically medieval" among printers.¹³⁰ Like Steve Ellis, Echard looks to children's editions of Chaucer as particularly telling examples of how his work was changed over time. As she concludes, "Chaucer is gradually separated from the rest of the medieval canon, whether for children or for adults."¹³¹ This separation is due, in part, to an

¹²⁶ Derek Pearsall, "Chaucer's Meter: The Evidence of the Manuscripts," in *Essays on the Art of Chaucer's Verse*, ed. Alan T. Gaylord (New York: Gaylord, 2000), 131.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 144.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Siân Echard, *Printing the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), vii.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, vii.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

increased emphasis on the biography of Chaucer that is found in both juvenile literature and adult texts.

Echard explores a variety of editions that made Chaucer available (and accessible) to juvenile readers. Aside from the Arthurian legends, Chaucer's "stories seem to have been directed to the attention of children more than almost any other medieval texts."¹³² Echard explains that children's editions of his work thoroughly "refashioned" Chaucer and his work in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The correlation between Chaucer and children's stories is evident in these editions: "to be a child—or indeed to be medieval—is to be in a state of simplicity and innocence."¹³³

Just as Ellis discusses in his book, Echard finds that there is a common tendency among juvenile editions of Chaucer to present "an idyllic, childlike world."¹³⁴ The result of this is a selection of retelling and reworking of the *Canterbury Tales* into child-friendly formats:

This vision of Chaucer and his work of course required adapters to grapple with those tales that were not felt to be suitable for children, and could lead to one of two responses. A minority of adapters...made at least some representation of every tale, but reduced the problematic ones to bland, brief, or even misleading descriptions. But most adapters simply selected the tales which best suited their sense of what children should read.¹³⁵

The outcome, in either case, was a repackaging of Chaucer's *Tales* into a neutered version of his original work. Echard notes that the *Miller's Tale* only appeared in a few adaptations because most adapters thought it too "ribald" to include for a young and, presumably, innocent audience.¹³⁶

¹³² Ibid., 127.

¹³³ Ibid., 129.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 129.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 129-30.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 130.

Echard also concludes, like Ellis, that these juvenile editions played up the romance and chivalry within Chaucer's *Tales* in order to appeal to their audience. Some of the editions pay particular attention to the medieval social organization and hierarchy, even when it seems out of touch with the reality of the reader's environment. These tales "demonstrated high moral seriousness" with Chaucer's "morality and religiosity" being among the most important characteristics of the work.¹³⁷

In order to uphold this sense of morality and seriousness, adapters went out of their way to rework the tales into cleaner versions for their audience. The way in which they reformed and edited the text could be "quite startling."¹³⁸ A 1923 edition called *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, for example, completely changed the *Miller's Tale* in order to hide the sexual affair between Nicholas and Alison.

For many adapters and editors, Chaucer's language formed a barrier to reader access. In a collection from 1833, *Tales from Chaucer in Prose*, the editor attempts to balance Chaucer's original language with modern reader expectations. He does so through "prose adaptation and simplification" as well as "expurgation" of certain *Tales*.¹³⁹ While some editions embraced the original language of Chaucer's age, for most editors "Chaucer's language is seen as a bar."¹⁴⁰

This does not, however, prevent editors and adapters from positioning Chaucer as "founder of English poetry" and raising him upon a pedestal of English language and literature.¹⁴¹ Such an approach allows the editions to carry the literary weight of Chaucer's name and identity without the actual burden of his difficult language. Chaucer

¹³⁷ Ibid., 139.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 141.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 144.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 154.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 155.

is positioned as belonging to England, a founder of the English language, but his actual medieval text is scrubbed clean and erased in order to make him easier to digest.

Echard concludes her discussion of these editions by pointing to the “racial nationalism” that emerges from the “idea of a children’s canon and Chaucer’s place in it.”¹⁴² By the time of World War I, this racially focused reverence towards Chaucer was “a particular embarrassment” and the retellings of the *Canterbury Tales* started to change. From this point onward (especially during and after World War II), Chaucer “recedes somewhat” from the editions of his work, replaced by a greater focus on medievalism and storytelling.¹⁴³ This new focus was apparent not only in the text of these editions, but in their print production as well. This shift is significant to the context of this dissertation because of the importance put on Chaucer in the handpress period as the “Father of English Poetry” and how much national identity and pride is tied to that moniker.¹⁴⁴

Chaucer in Print

Siân Echard’s *Printing the Middle Ages* is focused on the production history of medieval texts, with a great portion of the text dedicated to the history of Chaucer’s work in print.¹⁴⁵ While concentrating on how these works are rewritten and repackaged for modern audiences, Echard does not forget the importance of the package itself:

¹⁴² Ibid., 161.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 161.

¹⁴⁴ For additional discussion on Chaucer as a father figure, see Laura M. Bishop, “Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106 (2007): 336-63.

¹⁴⁵ In his 2003 book, *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition* (discussed in more detail above), Simon Horobin provides a brief but valuable history of the printing of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. He specifically looks at the language and linguistics of various printed editions “in order to examine the way in which editors have treated linguistic details in their presentation of Chaucer’s text” (78-9). Even with this hyper-concentration on the language of the printed text, Horobin’s overview touches upon the most significant printings of the *Canterbury Tales* from the early modern period to present day and serves as a useful reference guide.

Printing the Middle Ages seeks to understand the lasting impact, on both the scholarly and the popular imagination, of the physical objects which transmitted the Middle Ages to the English-speaking world....Beneath the foundational works of scholarly recovery in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there is a vast terrain of books—books that were scholarly or popular, grubby or beautiful, widely disseminated or privately printed, and often varying combinations of these things.¹⁴⁶

Echard focuses on the impact of print and its ability to transmit Chaucer and other medieval authors. It is this transmission, in both print and manuscript, which is the focus of the final theme of this chapter—a theme that fits squarely within the “framework of book history”¹⁴⁷ that is at the heart of this dissertation.

The study of Chaucer in print is certainly nothing new. In 1985, N. F. Blake opened *The Textual Traditions of the Canterbury Tales*, by looking at “the printed editions for they introduce a new phase in the readership of Chaucer’s work.”¹⁴⁸ As Blake noted at the time, print editions have the potential for wider audience distribution than manuscripts and “can thus have a more marked influence on modern attitudes to the text.”¹⁴⁹ It is this “marked influence” of the printed Chaucer that is discussed below. The role that printing plays in Chaucerian studies and book history come together through the exploration of this theme—one that has taken off considerably since Blake’s publication.

Alexandra Gillespie provides a detailed look at the transmission of Chaucer in print in her 2006 book, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557*. Her work is intended to describe “the place of the medieval author in books produced (or just put to use) during the first century of printing in

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., xi.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., xi.

¹⁴⁸ N. F. Blake, *The Textual Tradition of the Canterbury Tales* (London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1985), 1.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

England.”¹⁵⁰ Gillespie aims to fill in the bibliographical gaps and silences that exist in the authorial lives of Chaucer and Lydgate. As she points out, these writers became “an effect” of their texts and their printed personas.¹⁵¹

An important aspect of Gillespie’s study is the emergence of the author through the medium of print. Printing, she notes, helped accelerate “an existing traffic in texts” while also helping establish the concept of “the author” in the reader’s mind.¹⁵² It is this development of authorship and publishing that are central to Gillespie’s work:

These points are central to my interpretation of the place of the medieval author in the context of printing. My first intention in this book is to consider in detail how representations of authors mediated the process by which books that were produced in commercial contexts and by mechanized means became a part of the culture of late medieval or Renaissance England; my second is to show how ideas about authors were liable to shift and slide.¹⁵³

Gillespie focuses on Chaucer and Lydgate in her text, but her conclusions can be applied more broadly to other medieval authors and their works.

Chaucer was particularly important to the history of medieval texts in early modern printed form. Gillespie notes that he was the first English author whose complete works were assembled and printed in a single edition (in 1532).¹⁵⁴ Within the context of Chaucer’s work (particularly the *Canterbury Tales*) there is an “absence of a single position for the author” and he becomes a “function of the creation, circulation, and interpretation” of his text.¹⁵⁵ This is most noticeable in the printed format of Chaucer’s

¹⁵⁰ Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books 1473-1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

work, according to Gillespie. For this reason, she argues, “Chaucer is a guide to the destabilizing as well as centralizing forces of print.”¹⁵⁶

Gillespie traces Chaucer’s appearance in print, including the first printing of the *Canterbury Tales* by William Caxton in 1477. This edition makes no outward mention of Chaucer as author. Rather, the attribution is “buried, following manuscript tradition, in the ambiguous text” within and between the *Tales*.¹⁵⁷ This is just one example, Gillespie contends, of how the manuscript tradition transitioned into the art of printing. The conditions of manuscript production that influenced the development of the *Canterbury Tales* before the fifteenth century were not forgotten by the time they appeared in print.

According to Gillespie, one thing that did change significantly between the manuscript tradition and printing was the framing of books as commercial objects. Through the actions of Caxton and other early printers, books were sold through “promotional material that suggested aspects of their worth.”¹⁵⁸ This included Caxton’s second edition of the *Canterbury Tales* (1483) which “was markedly different from the first” and highlighted “the new edition’s value as [Caxton] describes his careful editing of the text” as a selling point for the volume.¹⁵⁹

Following in Caxton’s footsteps, Wynkyn de Worde and Richard Pynson both printed their versions of Chaucer’s work with the hope of reaching new readers and tapping into the print marketplace. In order to promote their editions, both De Worde and Pynson focused on “the medieval author” as a selling point for their books.¹⁶⁰ Gillespie contends that the use and operation of the “printing press was a context for the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 56.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 100.

redefinition of Chaucer and Lydgate's texts."¹⁶¹ Within this redefinition, printers such as Caxton, De Worde, and Pynson "made a case for printed texts as well as a case for fiction itself" in order to sell more copies of their books.¹⁶²

Gillespie's examination of early printed editions of Chaucer's works reveals things about both the author and the printers who produced him. As she notes in relation to De Worde: it was "in [his] interest to invite the book buyer to think productively and creatively about texts and the medieval 'auctour' rather than to prescribe meaning."¹⁶³ The early printers, then, provided readers with the opportunity to encounter medieval writers and engage with their material in a productive manner. This encounter came about because "author and book producer *together* give value to a work" as they "facilitate the recovery of all that is good from the literary past."¹⁶⁴

By 1532, Gillespie concludes, the works of medieval authors became even more defined: "Chaucer's texts and his name are presented to readers in new, more apparent, and more apparently stable ways."¹⁶⁵ In the end, however, even as the printing press made Chaucer's work more accessible, "the most assiduous editor" could not control how "readers read their Chaucer."¹⁶⁶ While Chaucer and Lydgate "understood authorship in terms of persistently unstable textual traditions" of the Middle Ages, the process of putting their work into print provided a form for readers to "encounter texts and the meanings that they continue to make long after their author is himself 'uncertain'."¹⁶⁷

Gillespie concludes that print provided a more stable and long-lasting format for

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁶² Ibid., 100.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 116.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 123.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 105.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 143.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 233.

Chaucer's work, enabling a larger audience to engage with him as an author. Even if the productions were imperfect or incomplete, they managed to connect the fourteenth-century poet with a fifteenth- and sixteenth-century audience.

Joseph A. Dane also looks at the physicality of the book and its role in the interpretation and understanding of Chaucer's works. His book, *Who is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb? Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book* (1998) explores both the authorship and production of Chaucer's work in print. His premise, however, is opposite that of Alexandra Gillespie: "The following study concerns the history of Chaucer reception and the unstable nature of the material on which that history is based."¹⁶⁸ Instability, then, is at the heart of Dane's approach to the history of Chaucer in manuscript or print:

Chaucer manuscripts are unique and...are generally treated as such. The printed book is similar: it is theoretically reproducible or, in some of its sense, the product of the myth of reproducibility; but no two books are ever found to be the same and the singularity characteristic of manuscripts continues long after the supposed rise of print culture.¹⁶⁹

With this supposition in mind, Dane confronts the printing history of Chaucer and attempts to understand "the problem of the Chaucer book and the tradition of Chaucerianism within which that book and its attendant mythology is transmitted."¹⁷⁰

Dane focuses on the 1532 edition of Chaucer's works by William Thynne. This edition was the first "whose physical form shows that as a project it was begun and completed as a complete works."¹⁷¹ Dane chooses Thynne's edition to study because it

¹⁶⁸ Joseph A. Dane, *Who is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?: Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book*. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 1.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 1-2.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

“defined both the form and content of Chaucer’s book” for more than 200 years.¹⁷² The book also provides evidence for the importance of a collected volume of work, giving the reader Chaucer’s complete corpus in order of importance.

The edition was not created in a vacuum, of course, and Dane is careful to point out the social and political import of the printed text. In addition to praising Chaucer in the opening pages of the book, Thynne also notes his praise for the King and England. The result of comparing Chaucer’s medieval environment to Thynne’s sixteenth century is “an analogy between his own preservative editorial work and the progressive illuminating work of Chaucer.”¹⁷³ The whole opening is placed “within the framework of a general history of writing, ending in the invention and development of printing.”¹⁷⁴

While the development of printing is certainly progressive and forward moving in Dane’s eyes, he is quick to point out that the idea of stability in print is a “mythology.”¹⁷⁵ In contrast to Gillespie, Dane argues that the “destabilization of the text is the direct result of print, not the result of manuscripts.”¹⁷⁶ Inconsistencies in print versions of Chaucer, due to printer error, editorial reworking, and apocryphal texts, lead to far more instability in print than in the limited manuscripts that are available as source documents. Dane notes that “the editorial matter in the early Chaucer editions is shot through with misattribution and deceit” even within the framework of “what Chaucer himself wrote.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷² Ibid., 34.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 45.

This misguided development of Chaucer's canon was a regular issue in early printed editions of the poet's work, whether in complete collections or individual volumes. Some of the decisions that led to the confusion of Chaucer's canon were economic in nature:

Thynne's decision to include all he found in Caxton and early editions, including non-canonical works, was purely economic (and thus non-literary): Thynne presumably wanted to produce the "large volume" that Caxton himself had not produced, and in order for such a volume to have maximum value, it must operate on a principle of inclusion, not exclusion. Subsequent to these "necessary" choices were a second set of literary decisions, and these decisions involved works selected to include in addition to those already in the printed canon.¹⁷⁸

Between these economic and literary influences, a wide variety of works found their way into the Chaucer canon in the early stages of print. Not all of these works belonged there. Each addition to Chaucer, Dane argues, "is an index of an opinion (perhaps erroneous) concerning an author's canon."¹⁷⁹ At some point, he surmises, Chaucer's canon became "so large as to require overly-large or expensive volumes" at which point, scholars began "defining a new leaner canon."¹⁸⁰

Beyond the development of the Chaucer canon, Dane is concerned with the formats in which his works are presented: "representatives of the Chaucer book can be found for nearly every period of English book production and typography."¹⁸¹ Dane pays particular attention to typography because it is an aspect of the physical book that readers most quickly recognize and interact with—what he calls the "character" of the book.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 47.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸² Ibid., 51.

Like the textual and literary history of Chaucer, Dane argues that the “history of Chaucerian typography is...marked by persistent anomalies.”¹⁸³

Typography is part of what Dane calls the “production genre” of Chaucerian studies, and includes two parts: “the mechanical (actual history of particular physical type fonts)” and “the aesthetic (how the printers imagined a production would be received).”¹⁸⁴ Dane determines that Chaucer is caught between the standardization of English typography and the transformation of French typography. These, by extension, lead to the transformation of “the narrative of Chaucer reception”—combining the textual and the typographical to inform Chaucerian scholarship.¹⁸⁵

In his conclusion, Dane points to the difference between the literary text and the printed work. Chaucerian scholars, he argues, are concerned with “defining the text, rather than the book, as the primary object of concern.”¹⁸⁶ While this enables them to free themselves from the economics of the book trade, it creates a rather limited perspective of Chaucer and his works.¹⁸⁷ The physical book and the literary text are inseparable in Dane’s eyes:

As the Chaucer book became rarefied, the Chaucer text became modernized and popularized....This modernization is in essence a textualization—a wrestling of Chaucer away from the expensive Chaucer book.¹⁸⁸

The printed book serves as an important tool in the history of Chaucer editing and exist as artifacts, not just vessels for text. Dane believes that to exclude or overlook the printing history of Chaucer’s work is a detriment to Chaucerian studies. This is particularly

¹⁸³ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 52.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 215-6.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 216.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 216.

noticeable in Dane's work with the earliest Chaucer folios, notably John Stow's 1561 edition of Chaucer.

Dane and Seth Lerer's article "Press Variants in John Stow's Chaucer (1561) and the Text of 'Adam Sciveyn'" is concerned with the changing nature of early printed books and how they "can be as much unique, individual artefacts as the manuscripts that had preceded them."¹⁸⁹ Dane and Lerer explore the textual alterations made by Stow from the Tyrwhitt editions that came before. Differences in individual copies are detailed in the article, with particular attention to variations due to compositional errors, mid-press run corrections, and more significant editorial changes.¹⁹⁰ The study of these press variants points to an active editorial hand during the print process; quite possibly Stow's hand:

Such editorial activity may place Stow more securely in the print shop, and may provoke scholars to consider anew the practices by which medieval texts were edited and printed in the sixteenth century.¹⁹¹

Dane, on his own, explores these very issues even further in his article "Fists and Foliations in Early Chaucer Folios, 1532-1602" (1999) and in his chapter "In Search of Stow's Chaucer" (2004).¹⁹² Collectively, Dane's work serves as an extremely valuable and detailed approach to book historical research with regards to the printing history of Chaucer's works.

¹⁸⁹ Joseph A. Dane and Seth Lerer, "Press Variants in John Stow's Chaucer (1561) and the Text of Adam Sciveyn," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 11 (1999): 468.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 470.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 476-7.

¹⁹² Joseph A. Dane, "Fists and Foliations in Early Chaucer Folios, 1532-1602," *Studies in Bibliography* 51 (1998): 48-62; Joseph A. Dane, "In Search of Stow's Chaucer," in *John Stow (1525-1605) and the Making of the English Past: Studies in Early Modern Culture and the History of the Book*, eds. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: British Library, 2004), 145-55. See also Derek Pearsall, "John Stow and Thomas Speght as Editors of Chaucer: A Question of Class," in Gadd and Gillespie, *John Stow*, 119-25.

William Kuskin's work on the history of printing in England has been a similarly important addition to the field of book history since the early 2000s. In *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism* (2007), Kuskin provides some insight into the history of Chaucer in print and the impact that this history has on Chaucerian studies. He begins by looking at why Caxton chose to print Chaucer and Lydgate before other authors. The choice "reminds us of the status fifteenth-century readers accorded the vernacular author."¹⁹³

Caxton realized the demand that potential audiences had for these types of texts and "strategized ways of supplying it" by putting established texts into printed formats.¹⁹⁴ Kuskin outlines the sequence of print production and reproduction during the fifteenth century:

Printing derives from fifteenth-century culture, and as such it *reproduces* that culture's literary works and practices. In doing so, however, it also *produces* the work as a text, a book, an object materially and symbolically different from the manuscript.¹⁹⁵

The result of this sequence, according to Kuskin, is a codification of medieval literature from script to print. The printed book represents a transformation in the textual practices of the Middle Ages.¹⁹⁶

Looking specifically at Chaucer, Kuskin envisions a system "tied to vernacular knowledge—writing, textual production, and commerce—which dovetails material and intellectual reproduction in the object of the book."¹⁹⁷ This is a continued movement away from manuscript production tied to Latin and other non-English languages and

¹⁹³ William Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 108.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

towards a more universal and widespread audience. The role of print in this system “reduces the pre-existing notion of Chaucer’s authority” and transforms it into something new with which potentially larger reading communities can interact.¹⁹⁸ Printed editions of Chaucer’s work operated as commodities in late fifteenth-century England. The printed book, Kuskin points out, “promises the consumer a greater unity, a resolution of corruption in the comfort of commerce.”¹⁹⁹ In a conclusion contrary to Joseph Dane, Kuskin sees printed editions as cleaner, clearer versions of Chaucer than the manuscript tradition could ever offer.

The impact of print, Kuskin claims, is not easy to track. It “occurs neither through slow evolution nor sudden burst” but through a combination of factors of production.²⁰⁰ The result, however, is fairly clear: print serves as an avenue for readers to access Chaucer and his work. Kuskin does agree with Dane, however, that printed works are not fixed works. Indeed, “the printed book itself remains as idiosyncratic and flexible as its manuscript counterparts” and it “participates in the larger imagination of a literary totality, a canon.”²⁰¹

Kuskin succinctly describes the transition between script and print from Chaucer’s era to that of William Caxton. He sees printing as the reproduction of manuscript culture while changing “social relationships surrounding literary production, reducing the book down to a clear authority...and multiplying it outward” to a larger

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 118.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 125.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 127.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 135.

reading community for “retail sale.”²⁰² This “clear authority” is, in part, a select group of canonical English authors—Chaucer chief among them.

Authority does not stop with the author, however. Kuskin argues that everyone included in the production of the printed text has some role as an authority figure, including “translator, literary historian, author, patron, and printer.”²⁰³ Caxton and his fellow printers are part of an essential production, helping ensure “the culture of the Middle Ages is reproduced as the modern.”²⁰⁴ Caxton may use Chaucer’s text as his base, but the construction of printed books, Kuskin concludes, helps the text to endure past the Middle Ages and into modernity.²⁰⁵

A final text that explores the significance that the printed form has had on Chaucerian studies is that of Jamie C. Fumo. *Making Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess: Textuality and Reception* (2015) is the first full-length study of the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer’s earliest major narrative poem. Within the study, which covers readership and production of the book, Fumo looks at the poem’s journey into print. Similar to Joseph Dane, Fumo starts with William Thynne’s 1532 edition of Chaucer’s complete works.

What makes Thynne’s edition of particular interest is that it contains a version of the *Duchess* that is not wholly present in any existing manuscript copies. In many ways, then, the first printed copy of the poem is the most complete “manuscript” from which

²⁰² Ibid., 173.

²⁰³ Ibid., 186.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 298.

²⁰⁵ Daniel W. Mosser examines the intersection between scribal and print culture that Caxton represents. In his essay, “The Use of Caxton Texts and Paper Stocks in Manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*” from Geoffrey Lester’s edited collection *Chaucer in Perspectives* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), Mosser focuses on manuscripts that contain “some or all of the *Canterbury Tales*” including those that “employ identical and/or similar paper stocks to those found in editions of Caxton” (161). Mosser points out that there is value within the connections “between Caxton printed editions and manuscripts” of the *Tales* (172). The most obvious value is that the connections “provide us with a *terminus post quem* for the undated manuscripts when they are correlated with those Caxton editions for which dating is far more certain” (172). Mosser argues that by understanding the print history of Caxton’s *Canterbury Tales*, we can better understand the history of the Chaucer manuscripts.

scholars have to work.²⁰⁶ Fumo is concerned with “how the MSS and early printed editions of *BD* positioned the work in relation to Chaucer’s canon and related texts, and how such settings contributed to notions of the ‘Chaucerian’ that influenced early readers’ apprehension of the poem.”²⁰⁷

Fumo points out that, prior to Thynne, no edition of *Book of the Duchess* was printed. It was passed over by Caxton, Pynson, and De Worde, who each printed multiple texts from the Chaucer corpus. She suggests that this was possibly due to the fact that “the poem may not even have been commonly perceived as Chaucer’s work.”²⁰⁸ While it did not appear in a whole form until Thynne’s 1532 edition, Fumo notes that portions of the poem appeared in various manuscripts and printed editions of Chaucer’s work under different titles or as part of other poems. As she explains it, “the early textual transmission of *BD* reveals a powerful trend of completion and supplementation.”²⁰⁹ The poem was “liberally contextualized and re-integrated into larger narratives” include portions of Chaucer’s biography that appeared in early printings of his work.²¹⁰

Just as we saw with the reworking of Chaucer’s text in the section above, the *Book of the Duchess* was edited, misplaced, and retouched over many years before being more formalized in print through Thynne’s edition. It was through this formalization that the *Book of the Duchess* was able to be “absorbed into Chaucer’s canon.”²¹¹ For Fumo, the presentation of the *Book of the Duchess* in print in 1532 was a significant moment for the poem. She also sees it as representing “the history of Chaucer’s construction as an

²⁰⁶ Jamie C. Fumo, *Making Chaucer’s Book of the Duchess: Textuality and Reception* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2015), 105.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

author” in the early modern period.²¹² Fumo notes that her work dwells on the “bookishness of this first major narrative effort by Chaucer.”²¹³

Conclusion

The “bookishness” that Fumo discusses in her work is at the core of this dissertation. The printed book, and book history more broadly, has become an important lens through which scholars view Chaucer and his work. The problem with this lens is that, thus far, very little has passed through it. Some of the scholars discussed above have certainly touched upon the ideas of readership, editing, and printing history that inform this dissertation. None, however, have taken the long view of the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales* and addressed the editorial approaches that this project does.

There has been relatively little interest in the paratextual elements of printed Chaucer editions. That which has been published thus far has been rather minimal and/or temporally limited in scope. This includes Megan L. Cook’s work on the paratextual elements of the *Legend of Good Women*, which briefly discusses how “printed books often introduced new paratextual elements that subtly and not so subtly guide readers’ experience of the text.”²¹⁴ This statement speaks to the heart of the paratextual study that is at the core of this dissertation and is largely absent in the study of the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Recent publications, such as Cook’s, point to an increased crossover between Chaucerian studies and book history and the examination of editorial paratexts. Devani

²¹² Ibid., 179.

²¹³ Ibid., 180.

²¹⁴ Megan L. Cook, “Author, Text, and Paratext in Early Modern Editions of the Legend of Good Women,” *Chaucer Review* 52, no. 1 (2017): 126.

Singh's 2016 article looks specifically at Thomas Speght's 1598 and 1602 editions of Chaucer and discusses how the prefatory material of the editions "conceive, invite, and attempt to influence their audiences."²¹⁵ Singh goes on to argue that the paratextual material on Speght's editions are "enmeshed with the primary text of the poet's writing" and conflate Speght's prefaces with Chaucer's poetry in the reader's eye.²¹⁶ This is, perhaps, taking the argument a bit far, but Singh's conclusion about the importance of prefatory material in influencing readership is spot on. The study of prefatory material, in particular, has been more prominent in Chaucerian scholarship than other paratextual elements. Robert Costomiris's 2002 discussion of prefaces "from William Caxton to William Thynne" is one such study, although a rather brief one.²¹⁷ Costomiris discusses the influence of early prefatory material on both readership and later editions, a topic explored in detailed throughout this dissertation.

There is one last book that I have not yet discussed that fits into a similar mold as this dissertation. On the surface, it seems to be exactly the kind of project that I am calling for: one that looks at a broad span of the editorial and printing history of Chaucer's work. The text, *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, was edited by Paul G. Ruggiers and published by Pilgrim Books in 1984. The book collects the work of twelve Chaucer scholars, each of whom is tasked with writing a chapter about a particular editor of Chaucer's work. The dozen editors discussed range from William Caxton to Walter

²¹⁵ Devani Singh, "'In his old dress': Packaging Thomas Speght's Chaucer for Renaissance Readers," *Chaucer Review* 51, no. 4 (2016): 479. For a further discussion of Speght's editions and the effect on Tudor readers, see David Matthews, "Public Ambition, Private Desire, and the Last Tudor Chaucer," in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, eds. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 74-88.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 501.

²¹⁷ Robert Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 5 (2002): 1-13.

Skeat to John Manly and Edith Rickert. They are all undoubtedly significant figures in the production history of Chaucer's works and are treated with relative kid gloves by their biographers.

The text has been very helpful for me as I have worked through this project, and it is certainly a valuable tool for Chaucer scholars and book historians. While it is intended to fill in the editorial history of Chaucer's work (as is the intention of this dissertation) there are some problems with *Editing Chaucer* that need to be discussed. First, the editors are mostly treated with veneration and reverence that verges on hagiography. The collection is put together by Ruggiers as a way to honor the work of important people in the history of Chaucerian publication, scholarship, and academic study—and it shows. Second, the format of the book (twelve separate essays) results in a dozen snapshots of editorial influence that are not connected by an overarching argument or voice. Instead, each essay can be read wholly independently from the others without the reader losing the overall thread of the collection. Third, by handpicking only certain editors, Ruggiers has eliminated some important editions of Chaucer's work that were highly influential and important to the printing and editorial history of Chaucer's texts. This last problem is perhaps the most significant and was one that N. F. Blake saw as a shortcoming when he reviewed the text in 1984:

Although there are some excellent essays in it, the way in which it is put together has led to certain shortcomings. Although there is a chapter on Caxton there is not one on either de Worde or Pynson. Because the emphasis is on complete editions of *The Canterbury Tales* there is no room for those who have made partial editions, like Thomas Morell, or those who have made important contributions to textual studies...²¹⁸

²¹⁸ N. F. Blake, review of *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, by Paul G. Ruggiers, ed., *The Modern Language Review* 81, No. 4 (1986): 976.

It is my intention in this dissertation to approach the broad study of the printing and editing history of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* by addressing the issues that Ruggiers' collection failed to engage. Through a thorough and comprehensive study of all editions produced during the handpress period (both complete and partial works) I intend to touch upon every editor and edition of the *Canterbury Tales* during a 350-year period. By doing so in a comprehensive and unbiased manner, this dissertation will become an important work on the editorial and printing history of Chaucer's most famous work.

While the past two or three decades of Chaucerian scholarship certainly cannot be reduced to the three themes addressed in this chapter, these areas of study are clearly dominant in the field. As is noticeable from the sections above, significant work has been done in the areas of Chaucer's readership, the reworking of his texts and image, and the role of print production on his long-term legacy. At the center of each of these areas, however, is Chaucer himself. For centuries, he, more than any other medieval English author, has been worth reading, studying, editing, printing, and publishing. As N. F. Blake noted in 1985: "we put Chaucer on a pedestal and assume that no one else could write like him."²¹⁹

Scholars have elevated Chaucer to great heights. His work, his life, his psyche, and his circumstances have all been investigated and dissected over the centuries. This chapter has attempted to summarize where the most recent literature on Chaucer has turned over the past two decades, where current Chaucerian scholarship stands, and how this dissertation can contribute to the overall academic discussion.

²¹⁹ Blake, *Textual Tradition*, 201-2.

CHAPTER 2 PUTTING CHAUCER INTO PRINT

Introduction

At the methodological core of this dissertation is a lengthy census of printed editions of Geoffrey Chaucer's work. As discussed in the Introduction, the focus is on the printing of the *Canterbury Tales*—whether in whole or in part—from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. More specifically, this dissertation looks exclusively at printing as it occurred in England from the first introduction of the printing press by William Caxton in 1477 to the end of handpress period in 1830. This temporal focus encompasses a period of more than 350 years of English printing history for a single text, covering 143 editions²²⁰ of the *Canterbury Tales* that will be investigated, analyzed, and interpreted in the chapters that follow.

This particular chapter is intended to provide a summary and statistical analysis of the 143 editions that were produced over that 350-year period. Rather than simply list the printed editions in chronological order (which can be found in Appendix A at the end of the dissertation), this chapter provides a statistical summary and analysis of the texts as a whole before delving deeper into particular content areas in later chapters. Such an analysis will allow me to draw broad conclusions regarding the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales* in England over the full span of 1477-1830.

The intent of this chapter, then, is to lay the groundwork for the more detailed discussions that are to follow. By looking holistically at the printed editions from the last

²²⁰ For comparison, and to properly understand the significant increase in production levels in nineteenth-century England, the number of editions printed from 1831 to 1899 is 283—nearly twice that of the prior 350 years. Further study of these latter editions should be considered to advance the research of Chaucer's work into the mechanized printing age. Such coverage is not, however, a particular focus of this current project.

quarter of the fifteenth century to the first quarter of the nineteenth century, this chapter will set the foundation for the assessment, analysis, and understanding that make up the remaining chapters. From here the rest of the story can unfold and be better understood. This chapter will provide a broad history of the printed editions of Chaucer's work and contextualize their creation within the larger scope of English printing history.

The aforementioned census of Chaucer's works that is at the heart of this study can be found in its entirety in Appendix A at the end of the book. This Appendix lists all editions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* that I have been able to locate or find record for from 1477-1830. The list, though thoroughly researched and checked against numerous sources²²¹, is undoubtedly incomplete. I was limited in my research by existing and known editions of Chaucer's work. If an edition was printed in the time period but was either never recorded or did not survive in physical form, then there is no way for me (or anyone) to know of its existence.

In addition, based on my own selection choices, there are most likely works, particularly excerpts or highlights from the *Canterbury Tales* in newspapers and magazines, that did not make my list. I chose to focus on printed books and not on ephemeral publications such as periodicals and broadsides. Doubtless, there are also collections of poetry that include a work or two of Chaucer's that did not make my list. I was able to locate numerous poetry collections that included parts of the *Tales*, but am

²²¹ The sources I used to develop the list were varied, but include major databases such as Early English Books Online, English Short Title Catalogue (which incorporates both Pollard & Redgrave's and Wing's catalogues), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Nineteenth Century Collections Online, WorldCat, and OCLC. In addition, I used a variety of previously gathered sources on Chaucer's publication history including Betsy Bowden's *18th-Century Modernizations from The Canterbury Tales* (1991), Derek Brewer's *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Critical Heritage, Volumes 1 & 2, 1385-1933* (1978), Charles Muscatine's *The Book of Geoffrey Chaucer: An Account of the Publication of Geoffrey Chaucer's Works from the Fifteenth Century to Modern Times* (1963), and Paul G. Ruggiers' *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition* (1984).

sure that there are some out there that I missed due to lack of proper records for these texts or omission on my part. This was not due to purposeful oversight or ignorance, but to the fact that I was limited both by search platforms and the availability of materials either online or in-person.

Regardless of the possible items that I might have missed in my research, I feel that I have completed as thorough and accurate a survey of printed Chaucer publications during the time period as is possible. It is with a great degree of surety that I offer the following broad assessment of these publications, secure in the knowledge that any items I may have missed would not significantly alter my assessment or conclusions if added to the inventory. Rather, I have worked under the assumption that any absent publications would only reinforce the conclusions reached in this and all subsequent chapters. If this were a statistical survey, I have no doubt that it would meet all requirements for validity, reliability, and statistical significance.

Growth Over Time

As stated above, this chapter looks at the overall printing history of 143 editions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. These 143 editions appeared over the course of 354 years (1477-1830). This, very roughly, averages out to a new edition every 2.5 years. In reality, the production cycles were not so consistent. Multiple editions would be printed in one year, or no edition would be printed for many years in a row. The only perceptible trend in terms of timing when it comes to the publication history of the *Canterbury Tales* was one of inconsistency.

Only four editions of the *Canterbury Tales* were printed between William Caxton's first edition in 1477 and the end of the fifteenth century. There was some relative regularity within these early years of printing, with each edition being printed, on average, seven years apart:

- 1477 (Caxton)
- 1483 (Caxton)
- 1492 (Pynson)
- 1498 (Wynkyn de Worde)

Following de Worde's publication near the end of the fifteenth century, however, the printing of the *Canterbury Tales* hit a rather long pause.

It was not until Richard Pynson's 1526 edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that Chaucer's most well-known work would reappear in an English press. This 28-year gap was by far the longest between publications since Caxton first printed the text. While it was a long distance between publications, this gap was not an anomaly. From the first printing all the way up until the end of the seventeenth century, there were numerous gaps in production of the *Tales*. None of them reached the length of twenty-eight years, but pauses in printing were frequent. These pauses were much more common in the first two centuries of printing in England.

Noticeable gaps can be seen between editions of the *Canterbury Tales* from the late fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries. These gaps are significant to understanding the possible impact of Chaucer's text on the English reading public. Coupled with the relatively small production numbers during the early centuries of print production, these

pauses meant a rather limited number of physical copies available to English readers at the time.

Production rates are very difficult to estimate for this time period. However, educated guesses based on known print runs can help to provide at least an approximate figure. William Caxton's 1477 and 1483 editions, for example, were likely in the neighborhood of about 200-250 copies apiece.²²² This aligns with other early print runs from the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as researched by Alain Veylit, Olaf Simons, and others.²²³ The average yearly production of presses in England between 1475 and 1600 was so minimal, Veylit quips that anyone living during this time "could easily have read the whole of the English output of the press of any given year within that same year."²²⁴

We cannot know for sure exactly how many copies of a particular text were printed during this time period, particularly as early as the days of William Caxton. Even the greatest Caxton historians, William Blades and N. F. Blake among them, have not been able to determine the exact number of copies for any of Caxton's works, relying instead on estimates and educated guesses.²²⁵ The only thing we can know for sure (or at least comfortably assume) is that Caxton would have printed as many copies as "he

²²² See William Blades's *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer* (London: Trubner & Co., 1877), and N. F. Blake's *Caxton: England's First Publisher* (London: Osprey, 1976) and *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991) for discussion and estimates of the quantity of Caxton's publications.

²²³ Alain Veylit, "Some Statistics on the Number of Surviving Printed Titles for Great Britain and Dependencies from the Beginning of Print in England to the Year 1800," *ESTC Statistics*, University California, Riverside, 2003, <http://estc.ucr.edu/ESTCStatistics.html>; Leo Lahti, Niko Ilomäki, and Mikko Tolonen, "A Quantitative Study of History in the English Short-Title Catalogue (ESTC), 1470-1800," *LIBER Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2015): 87-116.

²²⁴ Veylit, "Some Statistics..."

²²⁵ N. F. Blake, *Caxton: England's First Publisher* (London: Osprey, 1976), 184.

thought would be sufficient to satisfy the expected demand” of his audiences and still net the printer a profit.²²⁶

Without an exact figure, we can only estimate the total number of Chaucer texts that featured part or all of the *Canterbury Tales*. Assuming an average print run of 250 books per edition from 1477 to 1600, the total number of printed copies of the *Tales* amounts to about 5,000 books (20 total editions at 250 copies each). This averages out to about 41 copies of the *Tales* available in print for each year of the time period. Since some years resulted in no editions being printed at all, this number is not constant. During this time, the population of London grew from about 50,000 in 1500 to about 200,000 in 1600.²²⁷ The reading population of the city was significantly smaller, with estimates ranging from 10-30% for men and 5-10% for women.²²⁸ Assuming an overall readership of 10% of the population, that would equate to about 20,000 potential readers of Chaucer’s work by 1600.²²⁹

Printed texts during this time, however, were not easily affordable for most of the public—although there would be a greater likelihood of the ability to purchase texts among the literate population. Even so, the chances of an English reader in London acquiring a printed copy of the *Canterbury Tales* must have been relatively low.

According to Robert Houston’s study of literacy in Early Modern Europe, there were

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90.

²²⁸ David Mitch, “Education and Skill of the British Labour Force,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. I: Industrialisation, 1700-1860*, eds. Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 344.

²²⁹ This estimated figure covers only those who could read themselves, it does not account for those “readers” who accessed text aurally.

approximately 5,100 titles published in England during this time frame (1486-1605).²³⁰

Of these, publications of the *Canterbury Tales* made up only about 0.4% of the total titles published in that period.

While the number of editions of the *Tales* increased slowly from 1477-1600, the number actually decreased slightly over the course of the next century. This is rather surprising to see, especially since overall print production in England increased significantly during the same period. The following chart shows the total number of publications of the *Canterbury Tales* during the handpress period, broken down by century. Note the decrease in the seventeenth century before a sharp rise in the eighteenth century.

Years	# of <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Editions	% of <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Editions
15 th Century	4	2.8%
16 th Century	15	10.5%
17 th Century	12	8.4%
18 th Century	88	61.5%
19 th Century (to 1830)	24	16.8%

It is particularly interesting to see that the entire seventeenth century saw the production of only twelve editions of the *Tales* (Caxton and his followers produced a third of that number in only twenty years). These figures are particularly interesting when compared to the overall printing output during the handpress period in England.

²³⁰ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2013), 175.

Throughout England, and especially in London, the total number of printed texts increased quite dramatically from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to the seventeenth century. According to estimates developed by Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden in 2009, the total number of printed texts produced in Great Britain from the 1470s to 1600 was about 11 million volumes. From 1601 to 1700, that number increased to more than 122 million.²³¹ While Buringh and van Zanden's numbers seem to me to be an overestimation of output in England, the increase of 1,000% in production levels is comparable to other statistical summaries of printing in Great Britain at this time.²³²

With such a significant increase in overall print production, it is surprising to see the overall number of *Canterbury Tales* editions drop in the seventeenth century. This is especially curious because of the relative popularity of the *Tales* in England up until this point. Even from its days in manuscript form, Chaucer's work proved to be a popular text:

The criterion of popularity of medieval books is the number of manuscripts that have survived or are known to have existed. Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, with more than eighty manuscripts, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, with more than sixty manuscripts, rank among the favourites of entertaining narrative literature.²³³

This popularity continued into the era of print, with William Caxton selecting the *Canterbury Tales* as his first printed work in English partly because he knew it would be a popular work with his new consumers:

Caxton's masterstroke was that in order to publicize printing in English he chose a work that was already popular among people who could afford manuscripts. When printed it would become available to readers 'of every estate and degre', as he put it some seven years later

²³¹ Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden, "Charting the 'Rise of the West': Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries," *The Journal of Economic History*, 69, no. 2 (June 2009): 409-45.

²³² See, for instance, statistics compiled by Olaf Simons based on ESTC data: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bf/1477-1799_ESTC_titles_per_decade%2C_statistics.png

²³³ S. H. Steinberg, *Five Hundred Years of Printing*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955), 99.

in the prologue to his second edition, a readership that might be as varied as the pilgrims in the tales.²³⁴

This growing and varied readership, however, seems not to be reflected in the print production numbers above. Rather, the popularity of the *Canterbury Tales* appears at its lowest, relative to the available audience, when print production in handpress-period England was gaining strength.

One of the reasons for a reduction in the number of printed Chaucer volumes in the middle of the seventeenth century is the instability caused by the English Civil War (1642-1660). This, however, only explains a brief period of the lull in Chaucerian printing. Some historians, including Trevor Ross and Charlotte Morse, point to a more specific reason for the decline in publishing of Chaucer's works during the century:

...the relative neglect of Chaucer in the seventeenth century owes less to the disruptions of civil war or the difficulty in understanding his English than to the inutility of his poetry as a model of refinement and style.²³⁵

Within Chaucerian literature, however, there is no prevailing reason for the decrease in printing of the *Canterbury Tales*. This is, in part, because literary scholars and historians have written very little about the printing history of Chaucer's works (as has been discussed in Chapter 1).²³⁶ Another possible explanation for the lack of seventeenth century editions is the presence of Thomas Speght's edition, which was first published in 1598. Speght's *Canterbury Tales*, as is discussed below, so dominated the landscape of

²³⁴ Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London: British Library, 2010), 58.

²³⁵ Charlotte C. Morse, "Popularizing Chaucer in the Nineteenth Century," *The Chaucer Review* vol. 38, no 2 (2003): 101.

²³⁶ Researching and studying printing patterns in England in the seventeenth century could reveal some trends in printing history that may provide insight into the reduction in editions of Chaucer texts. Such an investigation, however, is outside the scope of this dissertation.

Chaucerian publications that it may have been either unnecessary or untenable to produce a new edition from the perspective of seventeenth century printers, publishers, and editors.

Regardless of the reasons for the decrease in publication, it is evident that seventeenth-century audiences had very few editions of the *Tales* to purchase and/or read. It is also evident, however, that the number of available editions increased significantly *after* the seventeenth century. The eighteenth century, as noted in the chart above, produced nearly 62% of the editions of the *Tales* during the handpress period. While not all of these editions were up to the quality of Caxton or Speght, the sheer volume and availability of Chaucer's text is impressive. Between 1701 and 1800, nearly ninety editions were published in England—more than a third of which (35) were new editions. While not every year saw an edition published, there were never more than a handful of years between editions. After 1709, in fact, the longest gap between editions was only four years.

This regularity of publication of the *Canterbury Tales* continued into the nineteenth century as well. From 1801 to 1830, twenty-four editions were published with the only significant gap in production occurring between 1811 and 1820. For both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the increase in number of editions was coupled with an overall increase in print runs. While estimates of 250 books per title were appropriate for the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the number was closer to 1,000 copies in the seventeenth century, and about 2,000 in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²³⁷ Based on these (admittedly imprecise) averages, the total book production of the *Canterbury Tales* by century is close to a quarter of a million copies, as is shown in the chart below.

²³⁷ Veylit, "Some Statistics..."

Years	# of <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Editions	Estimated # of Printed Volumes
15 th Century	4	1,000
16 th Century	15	3,750
17 th Century	12	12,000
18 th Century	88	176,000
19 th Century (to 1830)	24	48,000
TOTAL	143	240,750

These numbers are, of course, rather speculative, but they fit within estimates presented by numerous book and printing historians.²³⁸ The numbers can help us to understand the availability of the *Canterbury Tales* over the course of the handpress period. A growing audience buoyed by an increased literacy rate, coupled with more efficient and effective production methods that lowered the cost of production, meant that more copies of Chaucer's work were available to the English reading public. This was especially true, as will be explored in the next few pages, if you lived in or around London. For it was there that Chaucer's *Tales* were (almost) exclusively produced.

²³⁸ See, for example, Eltjo Buringh and Jan Luiten van Zanden, "Charting the 'Rise of the West': Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries." *The Journal of Economic History*, 69, no. 2 (June 2009): 409-45; R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education 1500-1800*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2013; Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Olaf Simons, "1477-1799 ESTC Titles Per Decade." Wikipedia Commons, 2010; and Alain Veylit, "Some Statistics on the Number of Surviving Printed Titles for Great Britain and Dependencies from the Beginning of Print in England to the Year 1800," *ESTC Statistics*, University California, Riverside, 2003.

Places of Publication

London and its surrounding environs were the dominant centers of printing in England for the entirety of the handpress period. Caxton, Pynson, and other early printers set up printshops in the most highly populated areas in order to reach as many potential customers as possible. This, of course, meant sticking close to London. In addition, legal restrictions in the seventeenth century limited the expansion of printing across the rest of England: "...the only authorised persons allowed to print outside London were the university printers of Oxford and Cambridge."²³⁹

It was not until 1695 that these restrictions were lifted, allowing the printing trade to expand beyond the limited urban area. By that time, however, London was already established as the center of the English book trade—a center that was rapidly expanding:

New London squares devoured fields to the west of the City and property speculators launched vast rebuilding schemes in Westminster and the northern villages. Commerce and financial activities intensified, and most of London's great markets, wharves and trading areas were reorganized. Within the tumult of the city the book trades flourished. London, now the site of hundreds of trades and industries, was also a vast consumer's market which dominated the British economy. The book trade, always centred in London, responded to demand led by the metropolitan population and institutions, and swollen by fast advancing country custom.²⁴⁰

Knowing this about London and the geographic seat of the print trade in England, it is no surprise that most of the *Canterbury Tales* publications during the handpress period were produced in/around London. What might be surprising, though, is the near totality of that production.

²³⁹ Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wooten, trans. David Gerard (London: Verso, 2000), 192.

²⁴⁰ James Raven, "The Book Trades," in *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays*, ed. Isabel Rivers (London: Continuum, 2003), 3-4.

Locations	# of <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Editions	% of <i>Canterbury Tales</i> Editions
London ²⁴¹	138	96.5%
Manchester	2	1.4%
Oxford	2	1.4%
Salisbury	1	0.7%

As is evident from the chart above, there is no doubt that the geographic concentration for production lay within London. Only 3.5% of editions produced in England were done outside of the city. It may be somewhat surprising that the 354-year period of publication resulted in only five editions being printed *outside* of London. This fact, however, can partially be explained by the fact that legal restrictions, as mentioned above, often prohibited printers from establishing print shops outside the city:

The desire to control the output of the press and to ensure that its expansion did not lead to a multiplied production of seditious pamphlets, led the state to concentrate the industry in London by a Decree of 1586, and to limit the number of presses.²⁴²

The book trade was centralised in London. That was of benefit to the authorities, who at least had a centralised industry with which they could deal rather than one that was scattered throughout the country.²⁴³

The establishment of the Stationers Company also helped to further concentrate the printing industry in London. Indeed, it was “essential for the protection of the established industry” that the trade be “limited” to London.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ Within the “London” grouping, I have included any publication that was listed as being produced or printed in London itself or specific portions of the city. These portions include: Chiswick, Clerkenwell, Cornhill, Fleet Street, Paul’s Church Yard, and Westminster.

²⁴² Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, 191-2.

²⁴³ David Harvey, *The Law Emprynted and Englysshed: The Printing Press As an Agent of Change in Law and Legal Culture, 1475-1642* (Portland, OR: Hart Publishing, 2015), 48.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

This restrictive environment was eased by 1695, when the “draconian legislation was abolished” and the print trade expanded geographically throughout all of Britain.²⁴⁵ Still, even with the expansion of printing outside of London, the city remained at the center of production and trade. As David J. Shaw notes, the city was “a self-sufficient market” unlike any other in England, enabling it to “provide the mechanism” for printing in the rest of Britain.²⁴⁶ London was at the center of everything related to print production from Caxton’s first days in Westminster through the handpress period.²⁴⁷ Even, it seems, the printing of Chaucer’s greatest work.

Editors

Having established the “When” and the “Where” of production of printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, we now turn to the “Who”. The 143 editions of the *Tales* printed during the handpress period were edited by a total of 55 different individuals.²⁴⁸ This number does not include the “unknown” editors for nine editions of the *Tales*. Since I cannot properly and unequivocally state who these editors were, I have removed them from some of the statistics that follow.

Focusing solely on the 55 known editors, the production output roughly equates to an average of 2.4 editions per editor. Only thirteen (9.7%) of the editions were edited by

²⁴⁵ Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, 192.

²⁴⁶ David J. Shaw, “Canterbury’s External Links: Book-Trade Relations at the Regional and National Level in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Mighty Engine: The Printing Press and its Impact*, eds. Peter Isaac and Barry McKay (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 113.

²⁴⁷ John R. Turner outlines the history of printing in England perhaps the most clearly: “The general pattern of the development of book publishing in England appears to fall into three main periods; (1) confined to London from the earliest times until the beginning of the eighteenth century, (2) very gradually spreading out to the provinces from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and (3) the provincial spread going in reverse and publishing retracting to London again after about 1918.” John R. Turner, “Book Publishing from the English Provinces in the Late Nineteenth Century: A Report on Work in Progress,” in *The Mighty Engine: The Printing Press and its Impact*, eds. Peter Isaac and Barry McKay (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2000), 185.

²⁴⁸ See Appendix A for full list of known editors and the editions they produced.

more than one person with no edition having more than three editors listed.²⁴⁹ This could point to the notion that editing was a personal and individual process at the time and one that did not involve multiple layers of review and assessment that is more commonly found in present-day editorial work. In fact, the role of the editor at the beginning of the handpress period was vastly different from the role as it stands today:

Whatever the deficiencies inherent in being the first of a line of publishers and editors of Chaucer...Caxton is in a sense the father of the editing of Chaucer. He was surely not an editor in the modern sense, nor would his immediate successors be, but he produced seven Chaucers in his lifetime.²⁵⁰

Caxton, like most of the 55 editors who helped produce editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, was not concerned with an academic approach to the editing of Chaucer's text. H. T. M. van Vliet's description of scholarly editing in the Netherlands can, I think, be applied to many of the editorial practices of fifteenth- to seventeenth-century England. In describing the editorial circumstances, van Vliet states that "the publication of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature" occurred in an era:

...in which no consideration was taken of the specific bibliographical problems of books printed in the handpress period. There was no academic interest for editions of modern literature. They were almost entirely left to publishers or compiled by editors who did not work according to a scholarly method, but who made their own decisions in ways that seemed best to them. Extensive bibliographic and text-critical research was not performed. The last edition was almost always taken as the starting point and was then "corrected" and modernised. All this resulted in unscholarly, unreliable editions...²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ The names of editors for each of the 143 editions was taken from either 1) the title page and other content found within the books themselves, or 2) from catalog records and online databases. The editorial role is included in all instances in which I could verify the identity of the editor with near certainty. As mentioned above, there were nine editions that I reviewed but was unable to successfully attach a particular editor.

²⁵⁰ Paul Ruggiers, introduction to *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984), 2.

²⁵¹ H. T. M. van Vliet, "Scholarly Editing in the Netherlands," *TEXT: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies*, vol. 13 (2000): 104-5.

The early editions of Chaucer's *Tales* can just as easily be seen as "unscholarly" and "unreliable" in nature. This is due, in part, to the great reliance on prior editions to help shape and influence the next edition that came along. The Chaucer editors, after Caxton, did not operate in a vacuum. On the contrary, they continuously build upon one another's work and made connections from one edition to the next.

Though the editing of Chaucer's text was mostly done by individuals (as noted above, more than 90% of editions were handled by a single editor) the editors used prior editions as springboards for their own publications:

The accumulated commentary, presented to us so economically by the modern editors, has been made possible, of course, by the work of their predecessors, as well as the bit-by-bit accretions of periodical scholarship.²⁵²

It is evident in the editions themselves that the editors had an awareness of versions that were printed before their own. This includes an awareness of the commercial appeal of prior editions (such as de Worde and Pynson) and the academic impact of editions (such as Thomas Tyrwhitt). Tyrwhitt, for example, states clearly in his Preface that the intention of his edition is to "give the text of the *Canterbury Tales* as correct as the Mss. within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it."²⁵³ In order to accomplish this, Tyrwhitt claims, he must act as if no other edition of Chaucer has been printed. Those other editions, which he lists in a lengthy appendix to the Preface, have "either entirely neglected, or at least very imperfectly pursued" the accuracy and consistency of Chaucer's text.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 2.

²⁵³ Thomas Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Thomas Tyrwhitt (London: T. Payne, 1775), i.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

Some of the most significant editors of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (both before and after Tyrwhitt) are worth mentioning at this time. This brief exploration will help to provide context for the upcoming chapters and introduce some of the most significant players in the story of Chaucerian publications in the handpress period:²⁵⁵

- Thomas Betterton
- William Caxton*
- Elizabeth Cooper
- John Dryden
- George Ogle
- Alexander Pope
- Thomas Speght*
- John Stow*
- William Thynne*
- Thomas Tyrwhitt*
- John Urry*

The eleven editors listed above represent 20% of the total number of known editors during the handpress period—a rather important slice of the pie. Together, they account for 71 of the 143 total editions under review. That amounts to nearly half of the total production in the period from only 20% of the editors.

²⁵⁵ Those names listed below with an asterisk also appear in Paul Ruggiers' collection *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984). Ruggiers' selection of important Chaucerian editors is noteworthy for being one of the few texts to focus on the editorial history of Chaucer publications. As is discussed in greater length in chapter 1, this collection is problematic in several ways but still represents a longform approach to the study of Chaucer's editors that should not be ignored or overlooked.

Before focusing on individual editors, it is important to reinforce the idea that many editions of Chaucer's works borrowed or copied from those that came earlier. According to Peter Robinson, this was true for nearly all editions produced between William Caxton (1477) and Thomas Tyrwhitt (1775): "Before Tyrwhitt, all editors...simply reproduced the text of a preceding edition."²⁵⁶ This is not an entirely accurate summation of the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*. While many of the editors copied or imitated one previous edition or another, nearly every published version of the *Tales* had differences in paratextual elements or within Chaucer's text itself. By reviewing these 11 particular editors we can better understand the ways in which these editions differentiated from one another.

William Caxton

The earliest editions of Chaucer's work, those produced by William Caxton, Richard Pynson, and Wynkyn de Worde, were by far the most indistinguishable from one another. Caxton's first edition of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1477 has taken on an almost mythical status in the literary and printing history of England and the English language:

Considerable scholarly energy has been expended in order to prove that *The Canterbury Tales* was the first major vernacular work to come off Caxton's press in Westminster. It is a finding that dovetails nicely with discussions of Chaucer's deserved place as the 'father of English literature'. The last time a copy of the c. 1476 edition of the *Tales* came up for sale it fetched a price well in excess of that for any other book ever sold. A lot is apparently at stake in a book's history and authors are an important part of the symbolic worth upon which profit margins depend.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Peter Robinson, "The History, Discoveries, and Aims of the Canterbury Tales Project," *The Chaucer Review* 38, no. 2 (2003): 137n.

²⁵⁷ Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 55.

The first printed edition of the *Tales* is certainly worthy of great attention (and financial investment)²⁵⁸ because of its significance to the history of printing and literature in England. From a purely editorial perspective, however, the edition is very flawed and even Caxton was unhappy with the result. The reworked second edition in 1483 was, according to Caxton, a far more accurate representation of Chaucer's text.

Using Caxton's 1483 edition as a model, both Pynson and de Worde reproduced Chaucer's famous work almost identically. This includes Caxton's brief preface to the *Canterbury Tales*, which stands as the first editorial commentary on the text to appear in print. The *Tales* (including Caxton's preface) were reproduced by Pynson in 1490, 1492, and 1526 and by de Worde in 1498. These four editions, plus Caxton's two, were the only printed copies of the *Tales* available to English audiences for nearly 50 years.

During that time, anyone wanting to read the *Canterbury Tales* in print was essentially limited to Caxton's edition. While Pynson and de Worde produced editions in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, they were nearly word-for-word reproductions of Caxton's 1483 edition. Pynson did make a slight adjustment to the preface of his 1492 edition of the *Tales*, but only so far as to explain that his text was from "a copy of the seid master Caxton."²⁵⁹ Wynkyn de Worde's edition was even more directly linked to Caxton's work, going so far as to sign the "Prohemium" as "By William Caxton"²⁶⁰ even though the master-printer had been dead for about seven years.

²⁵⁸ The sale that Gillespie references was from July 1998. Through a Sotheby's auction, the Caxton Chaucer sold to the Getty Museum for about \$7.5 million. Since that time, numerous other books have sold for more, including Audubon's *Birds of America* (\$7.9-\$11.5 million) and the Bay Psalm Book (\$14.2 million).

²⁵⁹ Richard Pynson, preface to *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (Westminster: Richard Pynson, 1492), a1r.

²⁶⁰ Wynkyn de Worde, preface to *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer (Westminster: Wynkyn de Worde, 1498), a2v.

William Thynne

Nearly fifty years after Caxton's second edition, William Thynne published *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer Newly Printed* (1532). This work, which was reprinted with some regularity over the next 30 years, was the first collected edition of Chaucer's poems to appear in print. Unlike Caxton's *Canterbury Tales*, Thynne includes many different selections from Chaucer's oeuvre, not just the *Tales*. The text of the *Tales* itself was different from Caxton's, having come out of Thynne's research and work with multiple manuscript editions of the *Tales*.

In addition to expanding the amount of Chaucer's text in publication, Thynne also increased the introductory material that preceded the text. Prefacing the collected edition is a brief note from Thynne to his "royal and lordly readers", two tables of contents, "eight goodly questions with their answers", and two short poems. The entirety of the prefatory material is only six pages, but in that limited space Thynne provides far more introductory material for the reader than Caxton, Pynson, or de Worde ever produced. Within the prefatory material, Thynne shows his exuberance for Chaucer and marvels at the poet's skills. Such exuberance seems quite fitting for this first complete edition of Chaucer's works in print.

To create this larger and more comprehensive work, Thynne used Caxton's edition as well as collections of Chaucer manuscripts:

With the edition of William Thynne, an official in the household of Henry VIII, we see the first serious attempts at correcting Chaucer's work by collation with the available manuscripts. If Francis Thynne is an accurate reporter of his father's activities, William Thynne owned twenty-two manuscripts of Chaucer's works, which he used in making his various texts of the poetry. In his *Animadversions*, Francis reports that his father was commissioned to search out in all the libraries of England the works of the poet. William's purpose was to correct the

errors in the texts of Chaucer's poetry and, further, to add to the Chaucer canon.²⁶¹

It was a monumental and important edition that changed the future production landscape of Chaucer printed texts and, contrary to Peter Robinson's suggestion, was quite different from the work of the three editors/printers who came before him.

This edition is particularly noteworthy because it was the first attempt to bring together all of Chaucer's known writings into one edition. Thynne also added a selection of non-canonical texts that were spuriously attributed to Chaucer at the time. Thynne took a more heavy-handed approach to the text than any of his predecessors. This approach to Chaucer's works was based in his understanding of Chaucer's language and society:

Thynne, however, also knew of other means to improve a text: emendations can be based on an editor's knowledge of a writer's language and cultural environment and on a consultation of the original work when the work being edited is a translation. Thynne recognized some of the details of Chaucer's language that had become archaic by the early sixteenth century. He made some emendations apparently intended to restore more archaic, and thus, presumably, more authentically Chaucerian, readings to the texts.²⁶²

The edits and emendations present in Thynne's edition were done in an effort to bring the text back to Chaucer's original. Thynne even claimed to have used a manuscript edition of Chaucer's text that was examined and annotated by the poet himself.²⁶³ No such manuscript is known to exist, so this is surely a spurious claim. However, the dedication that Thynne had to the original text and its author's original intention is evident. And his edition was the first to bring Chaucer's complete works and authorial intent to the printed page.

²⁶¹ Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 3.

²⁶² James E. Blodgett, "William Thynne," in Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 47.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 39.

Thomas Speght

In 1598, with Thomas Speght's edition, the role of the editor really began to develop within Chaucer publications. Paul Ruggiers refers to Speght as the first editor "to take on



Fig. 2.1 – Woodcut portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer done by John Speed, from Thomas Speght's *The Workes of our Antient and lerned English Poet, Gefrey Chaucer, newly Printed* (1598). Courtesy of the University of Rochester, *Visualizing Chaucer* project.

a more modern connotation” of editorial practice.²⁶⁴ Unlike his predecessors, Speght was obviously aware of the role that editors and publishers could play in the production of Chaucer’s work. This is especially evident in Speght’s prefatory material, through which the editor provides his readers with a biographical sketch of Chaucer that was unlike anything that had been printed in the 120 years that came beforehand.

Speght begins the biographical section with an elaborate and detailed Chaucer family tree (fig. 2.1) that provides the hereditary context for Chaucer’s life. This detailed woodblock image dominates the opening of the book and far surpasses in detail and size any prior images in printed editions of Chaucer’s works. The portrait was created by John Speed, who created the frontispiece image for Thomas Speght in 1598. Speed’s image of Chaucer was remarkable not only for its detail and beauty but for its long-term impact on the printed image of Chaucer: it was “copied and reprinted in subsequent editions through 1687.”²⁶⁵

Speght’s edition is one of thirty-three that includes illustrations of some kind. That represents 23% of the total number of printed editions between 1477-1830. While numerous earlier printings included illustrations, Speght’s was among the most complex and significant images of Chaucer during the handpress period.²⁶⁶

The image of Chaucer and his “Progenie” helps to establish the poet in the reader’s mind as a member of the aristocratic class, with his first listed ancestor being

²⁶⁴ Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 4.

²⁶⁵ Martha Driver, “Mapping Chaucer: John Speed and the Later Portraits,” *Chaucer Review* 36 (2002): 228.

²⁶⁶ For more information on illustrations within editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, see chapter 6. That chapter is dedicated to the analysis of imagery in printed editions of the *Tales* and provides examples of different types of illustrations.

“Payne Roet, a Knight.”²⁶⁷ This positioning of Chaucer as upper class is continued in the lengthy biographical study that follows the woodcut image. In that biography, which spans 16 pages in the 1598 edition, Speght details Chaucer’s parentage, educational background, marriage and children, employments, political connections, friendships, and literary merits. The intent of the text is to demonstrate how Chaucer became “a wittie Logician, a sweete Rhetorician, a pleasant Poet, a grave Philosopher, and a holy Divine” as well as “a skillfull Mathematician.”²⁶⁸ Speght provides evidence of Chaucer’s greatness through his biographical study, highlighting his education at Oxford and Cambridge as a major catalyst for his later literary accomplishments.²⁶⁹

In discussing Chaucer’s literary works, Speght retains Chaucer’s original language and provides his readers with tools to make the task of reading easier. These tools included “Arguments to every Tale and Booke”—six pages that summarize and explain the different parts of Chaucer’s text in the book. Each work is given its own “argument” to help the reader better understand the text that they are reading. This includes short summaries of each of the *Canterbury Tales* (as well as the *General Prologue*) that are only a few sentences in length and easy to digest. These summaries provide the reader with an abstract of sorts that can help them better understand the text they are about to encounter. As will be explored in Chapter 5, while these “arguments” are helpful, they can also influence how the text is read. The “arguments” appear in each of the three Speght editions printed in 1598, 1602, and 1687.

²⁶⁷ For further discussion of Chaucer’s familial connections, see Sarah A. Kelen, “Climbing up the Family Tree: Chaucer’s Tudor Progeny,” *Journal of the Early Book Society* 6 (2003): 109-23.

²⁶⁸ Thomas Speght, preface to *The Workes of Our Antient and Learned English Poet* by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Thomas Speght (London: Adam Islip, 1598), b3r.

²⁶⁹ For an extended discussion of how Chaucer’s biographical background, including his education, was presented to the reader, see chapter 3.

At the end of Speght's edition he includes additional paratextual material that is intended to help the reader navigate Chaucer's text. This material includes a lengthy glossary entitled "The Old and Obscure Words in Chaucer Explained" which aims to define and describe terms that late sixteenth century readers may not readily understand. This section is followed by translations of French and Latin words in Chaucer's text. Finally, the paratextual material ends with a list of "Authors cited by G. Chaucer in his workes". This brief section provides context from some of Chaucer's references and his literary influences (including Petrarch and Dante).

Speght's editions are significant to the development of Chaucer's work in print. They represent a huge step forward in the role of the editor and the power that editors can have over the presentation and interpretation of texts. More than any other editor who preceded him, Thomas Speght did the most to frame Chaucer's text and deliver it to the reader in an organized and internally supported format. The presence of paratextual material both before and after the main text is evidence of the extent to which Speght felt the need for a moderator between late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth century readers and the fourteenth-century poet. In addition, Speght's version of Chaucer's text served as the most influential edition to major literary figures over the next 150 years: "It was the text read and owned by Milton, Junius, Pepys, Dryden, and Pope, and by a multitude of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gentlemen with respectable tastes and sturdy bookshelves."²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Pearsall, Derek, "Thomas Speght" in Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 91.

John Dryden

It would be more than a century before another editor made as significant an impact on Chaucer publications as Thomas Speght. During the intervening years, only 8 editions of Chaucer's work appeared in print. Most of these were retellings of single tales (such as the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*) or spurious tales (such as the *Plowman's Tale* which was mistakenly attributed to Chaucer for more than two centuries). It was not until the late seventeenth century that an editor decided to produce a wider selection of Chaucer's works and put them into print.

That editor, John Dryden, used Speght's edition as a launching point for his own work and took the role of editor to a new level.²⁷¹ There is, in fact, no greater example of how an editor can shape the reading of Chaucer's text than Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern* from 1700. It is this version of the *Canterbury Tales* that presents readers with the most heavily mediated and modernized version of Chaucer's work.

Dryden begins his discussion of Chaucer by acknowledging the poet's influence on the English language and his overall literary significance. However, Dryden is quick to point out, Chaucer is far from perfect and his language is no longer "harmonious" to English readers.²⁷² In order to remedy this problem, Dryden takes it upon himself to translate and modernize portions of the *Canterbury Tales* for his early eighteenth-century audience. As part of this approach to modernization, Dryden turns to the editors who came before him and casts their work in a negative light. In particular, there is a noticeable dig at Speght and his edition of Chaucer's work. This could have been done in

²⁷¹ See Frederick Tupper's "Dryden and Speght's Chaucer" *Modern Language Notes* 12, no. 6 (June 1897): 174-7.

²⁷² John Dryden, preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern*, ed. John Dryden (London: Jacob Tonson, 1700), b2r-b2v.

an effort to both highlight and promote his own edition and to denigrate and harm the sales of his potential rivals.

Dryden positions his criticisms of Speght and others as an explanation for his subsequent modernization of Chaucer's text. In order to make up for the disharmonious and "obsolete" quality of Chaucer's language, Dryden presents the reader with his translated text, creating a more "digestible" version of the *Canterbury Tales*. The *Tales* he selects, in particular, are worth noting. Unlike all of the editors discussed above, Dryden does not reproduce the entirety of the *Tales* in his publication. Dryden explains how it was difficult for him to choose which of the *Tales* to present to the reader: "There is such a Variety of Game springing up before me, that I am distracted in my Choice, and know not which to follow."²⁷³

The choice is difficult because Chaucer has "taken into the Compass of his *Canterbury Tales* the various Manners and Humours...of the whole English Nation" and has not allowed a "single Character" of the age to escape him.²⁷⁴ In the end, however, Dryden forces himself to select a few of the *Tales* and provides the reader with some explanation for his selections:

...may I have leave, I say, to inform my Reader, that I have confin'd my Choice to such Tales of *Chaucer*, as favour nothing of Immodesty. If I had desir'd more to please than to instruct, the *Reve*, the *Miller*, the *Shipman*, the *Merchant*, the *Sumner*, and above all, the *Wife of Bathe*, in the Prologue to her Tale, would have procur'd me as many Friends and Readers, as there are *Beaux* and Ladies of Pleasure in the Town. But I will no more offend against Good Manners: I am sensible as I ought to be of the Scandal I have given by my loose Writings; and make what Reparation I am able, by this Publick Acknowledgment. If

²⁷³ Ibid., c1v.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., c1r.

any thing of this Nature, or of Profaneness, be crept into these Poems,
I am so far from defending it, that I disown it.²⁷⁵

Dryden's judgment that certain *Tales* are too immodest for his readers demonstrates his control over the content. Not only does he defend his choice to translate and modernize the language of the *Tales*, he also places himself in the role of arbiter of the text by selecting which *Tales* are worthy of being presented and read. Dryden sees himself as a better caretaker (and editor) of Chaucer's texts than any who came beforehand: "In sum, I seriously protest, that no Man ever had, or can have, a greater Veneration for Chaucer, than my self."²⁷⁶

Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern* were extremely popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The complete *Fables* were printed nine times between 1700 and 1797. In addition, excerpts from the *Fables* of Chaucer's Tales appeared in print eight additional times through 1830. The 17 combined publications are among the most of a single editor from 1477 to 1830. For many readers, Dryden's *Fables* was the first (and, in some cases, only) interaction with Chaucer and his work. Dryden's "characterization of the Canterbury pilgrims" as "protonationalism" was important in propping Chaucer up in the public view and leading to his popularization in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.²⁷⁷

Alexander Pope/Thomas Betterton

In 1712, Alexander Pope edited a collection of *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* that followed in the manner of Dryden's *Fables*. Pope's edited collection brought

²⁷⁵ Ibid., c1v.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., d1r.

²⁷⁷ Morse, "Popularizing Chaucer," 99. For further discussion specifically regarding eighteenth-century modernizations, see Derek Brewer, "Modernising the Medieval: Eighteenth-Century Translations of Chaucer," in *The Middle Ages After the Middle Ages in the English-Speaking World*, eds. Marie-Francoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer (Woodbridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 103-20.

together texts by “Several Hands” including those of Pope himself. Also among these “hands” were those of Thomas Betterton, a leading stage actor and theatre manager during the Restoration period. Betterton had died in 1710, but his work modernizing some of Chaucer’s works appeared in Pope’s miscellany a few years later.

The connection between Pope and Betterton is not accidental. I have placed them together here because the true editor of these texts is uncertain. Many Pope scholars and Chaucerians have concluded that the modernizations under Betterton’s name were actually done by Pope himself. In addition, contemporaries such as Samuel Johnson attribute the poems to Pope rather than Betterton. While scholars largely credit Pope with the editing and modernization of the *Tales*, it is important to note that Pope himself stated in a letter that Betterton at least assisted in their creation.²⁷⁸ He is, however, the only person in the eighteenth century known to ascribe the poems to Betterton. Some scholars, including Betsy Bowden, have pointed to that letter as Pope merely trying to distance himself from the work.²⁷⁹

Regardless of the true identity of the editor, the texts remain an important edition of Chaucer’s *Tales* from the early eighteenth century. They represent a significant reworking of some of Chaucer’s texts, including:

- The *General Prologue* (renamed “Chaucer’s Characters or the Introduction to the Canterbury Tales”)
- The *Reeve’s Tale* (“The Miller of Trompington”)
- The *Merchant’s Tale* (“January and May”)
- The *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* (“The Wife of Bath, Her Prologue”)

²⁷⁸ Betsy Bowden, ed., *18th-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Studies XVI (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 3.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

- *The Shipman's Tale*

These modernizations offer a simplified version of Chaucer's original *Tales* and, like Dryden's editions, more closely fit early eighteenth century reader's vernacular.

Pope was undoubtedly one of the most popular poets of his era. His own poetic work was equaled or, in some cases, surpassed by his translations and modernizations of other great poets and authors. For readers of the early-to-mid eighteenth century, Pope was among the greatest living poets in England:

At the time of his death in 1744, Alexander Pope had been for over twenty years the pre-eminent English poet; his large body of work, from the enormous critical and popular success of the translation of Homer's *Iliad* to *The Rape of the Lock* and the later satiric works...formed an imposing series of poetic models for his contemporaries.²⁸⁰

Like Dryden, Pope's work was put into print with great regularity and consistency.

Including Betterton's texts in the mix, Alexander Pope's Chaucer was in more constant production than even Dryden's work. Between 1709 and 1785, 23 editions of Pope's Chaucer appeared in print in England. This is more than Speght and Dryden combined. Pope's versions of the selected *Tales* were reprinted well after his death in both edited collections and individual editions.

John Urry

About 120 years after Thomas Speght produced the first collected works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Urry helped bring forth a new complete set of Chaucer's writings. Urry never saw the final printed work come to fruition, having died in 1715, but his work was among the most significant to the printing history of Chaucer's texts due to its academic

²⁸⁰ Adam Rounce, introduction to *Alexander Pope and His Critics, Volume I: An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope* by Joseph Warton, ed. Adam Rounce (London: Routledge, 2004), xi.

focus. The publication of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* in 1721 featured a series of prefatory works related to Chaucer's life, his language, and a summary of the editorial approach to the edition.

The intent of the edition was to provide a more scholarly approach to Chaucer's works. Its long-rumored publication had "engaged, directly or indirectly, the interest of a number of scholars—several of them more than ordinarily competent antiquaries—and hopes for it ran high."²⁸¹ The edition was a necessary update to Speght's complete works and was created with a specific audience in mind. Unlike the preceding anthology versions, this Chaucer edition was intended for a specifically academic audience at a time when there was, thanks to Dryden and others, "a discernable quickening of interest in Chaucer and his works."²⁸²

Among the most important features of the 1721 edition is a 21-page biographical "Life of Chaucer" that opens the first volume. It is the first text that the reader encounters when they open the book and sets the tone for the whole publication. It is written in a rather academic tone and, within the second sentence, connects Chaucer to Homer as two men who are alike "in their perfections of writing" and who represent national identity through poetry.²⁸³ The biography is by far the longest and most thorough survey of Chaucer's life up to this point. It was written by John Dart, an English antiquary and lawyer who contributed the text after Urry's death. The biography echoes some of the same themes and tropes of prior studies, and uses some of the same sources that Speght and Thynne used to develop the biographies that were included in their earlier editions.

²⁸¹ William L. Alderson, "John Urry" in Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, 93.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Dart, "The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," a1r.

Admiration for the poet and the majesty of his writing is obvious throughout the biography and in the other introductory pages. This is no clearer than in the “Testimonies of Learned Men concerning Chaucer and his Works” that Urry includes among the paratextual material. This section, which follows the biography, is eleven pages long and includes quotations from Chaucer contemporaries such as John Gower and John Lydgate, to editors such as William Thynne and John Dryden, to fellow poets such as Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and John Milton. These quotations serve a similar purpose to blurbs on the back covers of bestsellers: both promotional and informational.

John Dart’s biography stands in concert with these various quotations by adding some effusive praise of its own:

In one word, he was a great Scholar, a pleasant Wit, a candid Critick, a sociable Companion, a steadfast Friend, a grave Philosopher, a temperate Economist and a pious Christian....His Strokes are bold, and his Colours lively; but the first not too much laboured, nor the other too showy or glaring. There is a wild Beauty in his Works, which comes nearer the Descriptions of Homer, than any other that followed him.²⁸⁴

All of these testimonies demonstrate the greatness of Chaucer as an author while supporting Urry’s belief that there is a strong need for a new publication of Chaucer’s works. Though Dryden’s edition had been printed relatively recently, it had been since 1687 that a complete works of Chaucer had been printed (and that edition—Speght’s—had been originally produced in 1598). The prefatory material, while surely intended to inform the reader and provide context, was also in many ways a chance for Urry to advocate for his edition. All of the prefatory materials in Urry’s edition amount to more than 50 pages of material before the reader arrives at the first page of Chaucer’s actual

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

text. This represents the longest amount of “introductory” text that a Chaucer reader had ever encountered.

At the end of the book, the paratextual elements continue. Urry follows Speght’s lead and includes a lengthy Glossary as well as translations of Latin and French words in Chaucer’s work, and a “short Account of some of the Authors cited by Chaucer”. While previous editions placed glossaries and other aids in the prefatory material, Urry places his Glossary, translations of Latin and French words, and a “short Account of some of the Authors cited by Chaucer” at the *end* of the collected works. These closing paratextual items make up more than 80 pages of additional context and explanation for the reader. In addition, Urry inserts comments throughout the text to help clarify passages, decipher differences in manuscript versions of the text, and provide the reader with context for the editorial decisions made for the edition. The prefatory material, closing texts, and internal notations combine to give Urry’s edition the most comprehensive paratextual presence of any Chaucer edition up to this point. The result is an extremely mediated and modulated version of Geoffrey Chaucer and his work. It also represents the first major academic presentation of Chaucer’s work; the closest thing yet to a critical edition of the text.

Elizabeth Cooper

Chaucer-only texts, such as Urry’s, were most often targeted to a more academic audience who sought Chaucer’s works alone and did not want an anthology of numerous authors. General works, such as miscellanies and anthologies of numerous authors, such as Dryden’s *Fables*, were far more common and aimed at reaching a larger, more public readership. These collections were often reprinted with more regularity (see both Dryden

and Pope above) and reached a greater audience through larger print runs. Among these collections is *The Muses Library; or a Series of English Poetry, from the Saxons, to the Reign of King Charles II*, edited by Elizabeth Cooper.²⁸⁵

The *Muses Library* was first published in 1737 and was reprinted in 1741. It was not nearly as popular or successful as Dryden or Pope's miscellanies, but it was an important edition particularly because it brought Chaucer's text under the editorial control of a female editor for the first time in history. Cooper was also among the first to create a chronologically-organized collection of English writers. This approach was "one of the earliest histories of literature in the vernacular (English)" and her focus on Elizabethan poetry was "the most extensive of its time."²⁸⁶ The *Muses Library* helped to bring attention to some forgotten contemporaries of Chaucer's including John Gower and William Langland. Cooper's preliminary text focuses on biographical information about the selected authors "as well as her own critical opinions, developing the convention of the headnote, now a familiar feature of the anthology."²⁸⁷

Her editorial hand is far lighter than most of her predecessors, especially when compared to Dryden and Pope. Her work is described by Derek Brewer as "an unusually full, original and sensible anthology" that focuses on "the importance of literature, its

²⁸⁵ In discussing Cooper's anthology, Sarah Pittock describes the anthology movement in England at this time as "feeding the demands of an increasingly literate population and growing leisured class." Publishers, Pittock explains, saw great profit potential in collections like the *Muses Library*: "Printers commissioned anthologies for many practical reasons. As a culling of previously printed material, they were relatively cheap and easy to produce; they could be quickly produced to anticipate the newest fashion; and they were affordable, certainly cheaper than the cost of full editions of all the authors they featured. Anthologies discriminated among the mass of printed material available to readers, showing them what and how to read. Anthologies were among the many cultural instruments of the early eighteenth century that encouraged the public to read critically." "Elizabeth Cooper." in *Eighteenth-Century British Literary Scholars and Critics*, ed. Frans De Bruyn (Dictionary of Literary Biography Vol. 356. Detroit, MI: Gale, 2010), *Literature Resource Center*.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

relation to the general language and culture, the significance of a sense of the past, and has a fresh appreciation of Chaucer's relationship with his contemporaries."²⁸⁸ This is particularly noticeable in Cooper's treatment of Chaucer in her introductory pages.

Cooper focuses on Chaucer's ability to be both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. She presents him to the reader as someone so well-known that he barely needs an introduction. In fact, Cooper explains, Chaucer is so famed a writer that it is difficult to select a work of his to include in the anthology that has not previously been seen elsewhere by readers.²⁸⁹ In the end, Cooper selects the *Pardoner's Prologue* as her choice to represent Chaucer—a text that had not appeared in any previous anthology.

The selected text is presented in a somewhat modernized version rather than in Chaucer's original language. This is intended, Cooper explains, as a way to more easily introduce a new and previously uninitiated audience to Chaucer's work in a way that is not restricted by its "antiquated, original Dress."²⁹⁰ Cooper's edition did not sell well or gain a large audience,²⁹¹ but it was an important in helping to "shape the canon of English literature by its selection of specific works that have come to define the standards of excellence and innovation expected in a canonical literary work."²⁹²

Thomas Tyrwhitt

The final major edition of Chaucer's work that appeared in the handpress period was that of Thomas Tyrwhitt. In 1775, Tyrwhitt published an edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that

²⁸⁸ Brewer, *Critical Heritage, Volume 1*, 198.

²⁸⁹ Elizabeth Cooper, *The Muses Library, or A Series of English Poetry* (London: J. Wilcox, *et al.*, 1737), 24.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁹¹ Yvonne Noble, "Cooper [née Price], Elizabeth," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6217>

²⁹² Pittock, "Elizabeth Cooper."

returned to the academic approach taken by Urry in the early eighteenth century.

Tyrwhitt's edition consciously and openly addresses the printed versions of Chaucer's works that came earlier. In his lengthy prefatory material, Tyrwhitt spends nearly 60 pages summarizing former editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, including many of those mentioned above.²⁹³

Tyrwhitt uses this section of his prefatory material to chastise some of the previous editors because they did not "give the text of the *Canterbury Tales* as correct as the [manuscripts] within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it."²⁹⁴ Instead of aligning their text with the extant manuscripts, these editors have "either entirely neglected, or at least very imperfectly pursued" Chaucer's original text.²⁹⁵ In order to make up for these repeated deficiencies of editing, Tyrwhitt explains that his edition "therefore has proceeded as if his author had never been published before."²⁹⁶ He approaches the text cleanly from the extant Chaucer manuscripts (which he lists in detail within the Preface). His explanation for why he went back to the manuscripts is reminiscent of the way that Caxton handled the *Canterbury Tales* nearly 300 years earlier. They both approach editing the text with Chaucer's original authorial intentions in mind.

Unlike Caxton, however, Tyrwhitt provides an extremely lengthy and in-depth paratextual discussion of Chaucer and his work in his edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. After summarizing former editions of the *Tales*, he focuses on Chaucer's language in "An Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer" which runs 95 pages. There are

²⁹³ It is interesting to note that none of the "anthologists" (Dryden, Pope, or Cooper) are mentioned in Tyrwhitt's text. He addresses the Chaucer-only editions that are discussed above, while works that appear in larger collections are ignored or overlooked.

²⁹⁴ Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales*, i.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

also more than 300 pages of additional notes at the end of the final volume of Tyrwhitt's *Tales*. All told, Tyrwhitt presents his reader with over 700 pages of paratextual material. Quite a change from Caxton's page-and-a-half preface.

In many ways, Tyrwhitt can be viewed as the natural successor to Caxton, Thynne, Speght, Urry, etc. His work is influenced by all of the previous editors of Chaucer's text (even those he does not mention, like Dryden and Pope).²⁹⁷ Tyrwhitt's edition was reprinted in 1778, 1798, 1822, and 1830; with this last edition coming at the end of the handpress period in England. Tyrwhitt's synoptic approach to Chaucer editing nicely summarizes the most significant editorial control of Chaucer's work from the late fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century.

Compilations and False Flags

The editors discussed above were the most significant figures in Chaucerian publications during the handpress period. They were not, however, the only individuals to put Chaucer's work into print. Dozens of other editors and publishers produced versions of Chaucer's texts for the English reading audience. While they were not as prolific as the editors detailed above, these individuals still aided in the promotion of Chaucer's work throughout the handpress period. There are two particular types of publication that are worth closer discussion at this point—and which will be mentioned again in the chapters that follow. These two types of publications are: 1. Compilations of edited Chaucerian texts, and 2. Texts that are Chaucerian in name only (what I refer to as “false flags”).

²⁹⁷ For a discussion of John Urry's specific influence on Tyrwhitt's edition, see Sarah A. Kelen, “Tyrwhitt's Urry's Chaucer's *Works*: The Tracks of Editorial History,” *British Library Journal* 25, no. 1 (1999), 180-7.

The first type of publication is the easiest to identify. It is a publication organized by an editor or publisher that uses already existing versions of Chaucer's work in a new format. Examples of this type include Thomas Morell's *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, in the Original, from the Most Authentic Manuscripts; And as they are Turn'd into Modern Language* (1737), George Ogle's *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by several Hands* (1741), and William Lipscomb's *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version* (1795). These editions were essentially cobbled together by their editors and repackaged as modernized versions of Chaucer's "authentic" text.

Each of these editions took texts from familiar and well-known editors such as Dryden, Pope/Betterton, Tyrwhitt, and Urry. This included modernizations of portions of the *Tales* as well as paratextual material such as the "Life of Chaucer" biographical texts from Urry's and Tyrwhitt's editions. The repackaging of these existing texts was both fiscally sound and commercially smart. The text was already a known commodity among the English reading public, the success of the text was proven through prior printings, and the material could be marketed easily as modernizations of one famous writer's texts being updated by other famous writers. Chaucer, Pope, and Dryden are each named in the three editions (often on the title pages), signaling to the reader that the text has essentially been vetted by these literary figures. In Morell's edition, for example, he states on the title page that the *Tales* have been modernized "by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Pope, and Other Eminent Hands". Similarly, in both Ogle's and Lipscomb's editions, each *Tale* is listed in the table of contents with the name of the "modernizer" next to it. So Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* is "by Mr. Dryden" and his *Reeve's Tale* is "by Mr. Betterton" even though these are the *Canterbury Tales* "of Chaucer".

The compiled modernizations rose to prominence in the mid-eighteenth century and continued to be published with regularity into the early nineteenth century. The works were part of a reinvigoration of Chaucer's work in England that began in 1700 and started to really take off by the end of the eighteenth century:

To recuperate Chaucer, then, Dryden translates his poetry into contemporary style, inaugurating a tradition of translation that involves Pope, then George Ogle and others in the early 1740s, and finally, in 1795, William Lipscomb...When Chaucer comes back, he comes back not translated into contemporary idiom, but in his antique form, a form that the nineteenth-century popularizers sought to preserve largely by modernizing rather than translating.²⁹⁸

This act of "modernization" proved popular among English readers well into the nineteenth century and served as a launching point for the popularizing of Chaucer among the reading public in the latter part of the century.²⁹⁹

Chaucer's name and works were still significant enough in the eighteenth century, however, to be used as a marketing device for other, unrelated publications. These productions, which I refer to as "false flags" because of their deceptive association with Chaucer, were produced beginning in the late seventeenth century and extended into the nineteenth century. From the titles alone, these texts seem to also be simply reprints of Chaucer's work:

Chaucer's Ghoast: or, A Piece of Antiquity, Containing twelve pleasant Fables of Ovid penn'd after the ancient manner of writing in England (1672)

Canterbury Tales: Compos'd for the Entertainment of all Ingenious Young Men and Maids (1687)

Chaucer's Whims: Being some Select Fables and Tales In Verse (1701)

²⁹⁸ Morse, *Popularizing Chaucer*, 101.

²⁹⁹ See, among others, Trevor Ross's *Making of the English Literary Canon* (1998), Steve Ellis's *Chaucer at Large* (2000), and Charlotte Morse's *Popularizing Chaucer* (2003), for further discussion on Chaucer's rise in popularity in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.

Earl Robert's Mice: A Poem in Imitation of Chaucer (1712)

Canterbury Tales (1797)

Canterbury Tales, Parts 1 & 2 (1802)

New Canterbury Tales, or The Glories of the Garrison (1811)

These titles all invoke Chaucer's name or the name of his most famous work. The other thing that they have in common is that none of the texts is written by Chaucer or include portions of his original *Tales*. Instead, these works all use Chaucer's name or the *Canterbury Tales* format as a way to engage readers and draw attention to the text.

Chaucer's Ghost, for example, contains fables from Ovid but written in an "ancient manner" that is intended to be reminiscent of Chaucer's style. Similarly, in both *Chaucer's Whims* and *Earl Robert's Mice*, the poetry was intended to mimic Chaucer's style, written by early eighteenth century poets Matthew Prior, Samuel Cobb, and William Pittis. These poets saw Chaucer as both an inspiration and a challenge. Could they write in "imitation" of the great poet but still connect with a modern, eighteenth-century reader? Matthew Prior's presence in these texts is perhaps the most interesting. He was, by this time, already well established as a poet in his own right—who Samuel Johnson referred to as someone who "wanted not wisdom as a statesman, nor elegance as a poet."³⁰⁰ He was seen as being "in the second rank of the Pope and Dryden School—beneath these two masters, but on a level with Swift and Gay."³⁰¹

Aside from Prior, the other authors of the "false flag" texts were relatively obscure or even unknown. The possible exception to this was Harriet and Sophia Lee, who wrote *Canterbury Tales* starting in 1797. The *Tales* of the Lee sisters proved popular

³⁰⁰ Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets: With Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 64.

³⁰¹ George Gilfillan, preface to *The Poetical Works of Matthew Prior*, by Matthew Prior, ed. George Gilfillan (Edinburgh: J. Nichol, 1858), xvi.

during the early nineteenth century: “The *Canterbury Tales* were in fashion among the contemporaries of Lord Byron in his youth.”³⁰² Byron even credits one of Harriet Lee’s Tales as the source material for his play *Werner*:

The following drama is taken entirely from the “*German’s Tale, Kruitznier*,” published many years ago in Lee’s *Canterbury Tales*; written (I believe) by two sisters, of whom one furnished only this story and another, both of which are considered superior to the remainder of the collection.³⁰³

Even including Matthew Prior and the Lee sisters, the most famous name associated with all of these “false flags” is Geoffrey Chaucer himself. The use of both “Chaucer” and “*Canterbury Tales*” in titles and descriptions demonstrates the significance that a Chaucerian connection could have for readers. It was a choice that editors and publishers made consciously and with a particular outcome in mind:

...Chaucer must be reclothed in contemporary guise...Such “dressing” could also take the form of a disguise. The signifiers “Chaucer” or “*Canterbury Tales*” often functioned as a convenient tag, through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for further collections of poems or stories, often satirical or moralistic in intent, with little reference to Chaucer or medieval poetics...None of these examples of pseudo-Chaucerian writing bears much relation to Chaucer’s own writing, but must still color our sense of what “Chaucer” signifies in this period.³⁰⁴

Stephanie Trigg is correct to point out that these “signifiers” were more meaningful as identification for the type of text being produced. They certainly did not mean that the texts were actually related to Chaucer or his work. They were Chaucerian only by association.

One important conclusion that can be reached based on these “false flags” is that Chaucer was well-known enough at the time to act as a signifier for certain types of texts

³⁰² “Publishers’ Advertisement” in *Canterbury Tales*, by Harriet [and Sophia] Lee, (New York: Mason Brothers, 1857), iii.

³⁰³ George Gordon Byron, *Werner, a Tragedy* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1823), v.

³⁰⁴ Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 154.

and collections of tales. Even if these texts had nothing to do with Chaucer's actual work, they are worth noting in the larger printing history of Chaucerian texts. If they did nothing else for Chaucer's legacy, they helped keep his name (and the name of his greatest work) in the minds of the English reading public.

Each of the 143 editions explored in this chapter, and discussed at greater length throughout the remaining chapters, helped to establish, strengthen, and solidify Chaucer's identity among the reading public in England. Whether it was a complete edition of all of Chaucer's works, a one-off printing of a particular tale, a modernized version of his Middle English language, or an imitation that had nothing to do with his original work, each and every one of these editions was significant in shaping how Chaucer was presented to the reader. And, in return, how the reader viewed and understood the poet.

CHAPTER 3 THE PREFATORY CHAUCER

Introduction

In 1927, John M. Manly and Edith Rickert were hard at work on a lengthy, systematic study of Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In order to help them better understand Chaucer's original intentions and his authorial approach to the text, Manly and Rickert decided to look at the social and political circumstances in which Chaucer wrote his most famous work. This included gathering extensive information and documentation related to Chaucer's own life and circumstances:

Early in the summer of 1927 Miss Rickert asked Miss Lilian J. Redstone, British historical researcher and archivist, to prepare a list of documentary sources, in addition to those used by the Chaucer Society, that should be studied for Chaucer's life history. The ensuing survey included documents of the London Public Record Office, borough records, records of the City Companies, manorial records and title deeds, ecclesiastical records, testamentary records, and manuscript collections in the British Museum, the Guildhall Library, the Bodleian Library, the Society of Antiquaries, the College of Arms, the Ipswich Public Library, and various private libraries. To these were added at a later date documents from archive collections in such widely scattered places as the Vatican, Ghent, Navarre, Harvard University, and the University of Chicago. In its extended form the list of manuscript sources prepared by Miss Redstone covered sixty-four pages of handwriting, forty-one of these being devoted to P.R.O. documents.³⁰⁵

Manly and Rickert used Redstone's work to contextualize the world in which Chaucer was born, raised, and worked. This approach helped the two editors to create the most in-depth and detailed study of the *Canterbury Tales* ever produced. Since its publication in 1940, the Manly and Rickert edition has served as an undeniably important assessment of the *Tales* and reconstruction of their original order.

³⁰⁵ Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson, eds., *Chaucer Life-Records* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), v.

The supporting materials that were compiled by Lilian Redstone, and edited by Manly and Rickert, were eventually published under the title of *Chaucer Life-Records*. This publication was nearly as important and influential as the eight volume *Canterbury Tales* that came out in 1940. The *Life-Records* represented, for the first time, a comprehensive, primary-source-focused approach to understanding and contextualizing Chaucer's life and existence in fourteenth-century England.

Manly and Rickert were far from the first to use Chaucer's biographical background as a way to frame and interpret his work. They were, however, the first to use so many verified primary sources to develop this background information. Prior to Manly and Rickert, especially in the handpress period that is being discussed in this dissertation, the use of such sources was spotty at best. Rather, the biographical framing of Chaucer, his life, and his work was left to the realm of fiction and embellishment. The inaccurate fragments that made up early Chaucer biographies were never explained to the reader or positioned as fabricated or incomplete. Instead, the biographies that appeared in the printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales* were portrayed as realistic and accurate representations of the life story of Geoffrey Chaucer. Readers were none the wiser as they ingested the stories that were laid before them.

When the story of Chaucer's life was included in a publication during the handpress period, it was always placed at or near the beginning of the text. The biographical material was often placed ahead of all other prefatory material included by editors and printers. In addition to the common placement, the biographical texts had one other thing in common: they were all written by someone other than Chaucer himself. The biographical sketches all represent Gerard Genette's "authentic allographic peritext"

that was discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. It is important to emphasize that the editorial and creative control for these biographical texts was solely in the hands of someone *other* than the author, who had no influence over the development of the text.

Genette discusses the historical importance of the author biography and the role that it has played since before the advent of print. It is, along with information about the publication itself, the most common form of prefatory material that accompanies the work of a deceased author:

A second type of information, similarly characteristic of posthumous prefaces, is strictly biographical. Publication of a work, and a fortiori of the complete works, of an author has for a long time—at least since the troubadors’ *vidas* [biographies] were inserted into thirteenth-century collections—been the almost obligatory occasion for informing readers about the circumstances of that author’s life. In the classical period all the major editions opened with a ritual “Life of the Author,” which served as a critical study.³⁰⁶

Biographical prefaces appear in most Chaucerian publications. These include short descriptions of Chaucer’s life as well as lengthy academic studies of the poet’s origins. While some of these biographies are intertwined within other paratextual materials (such as a general Preface to a work), the most significant and impactful bios are separated out by editors in order to better highlight Chaucer’s background.

As was discussed in the previous chapter concerning the printing history of Chaucer’s work during the handpress period, the biographical history stretches from 1477 to 1830. During that time, each editor uses the real estate of the biographical sketch or study to share their particular perspective on Geoffrey Chaucer and his works. The range of these biographical introductions is wide and varied: they include Thomas Speght’s lengthy exploration of Chaucer’s life and ancestry from 1598, John Dart’s 50-page

³⁰⁶ Genette, *Paratexts*, 266.

biography of Chaucer that preceded John Urry's 1716 edition, and Thomas Tyrwhitt's "Abstract of the Historical Passages of the Life of Chaucer" in 1775.

It is perhaps within these prefatory biographical pages that the reader is most significantly influenced in their understanding of Chaucer and his work. For, as the late-nineteenth-century Chaucerian editor Mary Haweis stated, without a prefatory understanding of Chaucer and his world, readers would not be able to properly understand and appreciate his work:

If we wish to enjoy the celebrated *Tales* of Geoffrey Chaucer we must first know something about the man who made them, the time at which he lived, and the language which he spoke.³⁰⁷

Haweis's assessment is echoed by Manly and Rickert in their thorough and monumental edition of Chaucer's works. As mentioned above, they saw from the beginning of their work that Chaucer's texts would be best served by a better and more accurate understanding of Chaucer's life and biographical background. While Roland Barthes and others pushed against this notion in the 1960s and beyond, it is evident from printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales* that editors in the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries were more closely aligned with the Manly-Rickert perspective than Barthes' "death of the author".

Geoffrey Gust explored this topic in his 2007 text, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Edition*. Gust looked specifically at literary biographies of Chaucer and noted that they could potentially have a direct impact on readers:

Another important aspect of Chaucerian biographies is that these works offer intriguing examples of the aforementioned tendency to read the persona literally...explicit evidence is seen for the politicized idealization of the author, who consistently emerges as the lofty "Father of English

³⁰⁷ Mary Eliza Haweis, *Chaucer for Schools with the Story of His Times and His Work* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1899), 1.

poetry” rather than, say, a civil servant of perhaps dubious societal import during his age.³⁰⁸

The biographical elements were put in place to elevate Chaucer in the reader’s mind and raise him up to a poet who is worthy of the admiration and attention of both editor and reader.

“That Noble and Grete Philosopher”

The feeling of admiration is evident in all of the prefatory material examined for this dissertation. From his designation as the “Father of English poetry” to comparisons with Homer and Virgil, Chaucer was elevated and venerated by editors within the prefatory pages. This trend begins with the very first paratext to appear in a printed Chaucer work: William Caxton’s second edition of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1483. Caxton prefaces the text with a brief, two-page “Proheyme”³⁰⁹ that introduces the reader to “that noble & grete philosopher Gefferey Chaucer.”³¹⁰ Caxton briefly mentions Chaucer’s “beautuous volumes/ and aournate writynges/ of whom he made many bokes and treatyces of many a noble historye as wel in metre as in ryme and prose.”³¹¹ Even within this brief mention, Chaucer’s depth of skill and breadth of authorship are noted and praised.

For most of his preface, Caxton concerns himself more with the history of the *Canterbury Tales* themselves than with Chaucer’s life. His attention to detail as an editor is evident within this portion of the preface. The reason for this second edition, Caxton

³⁰⁸ Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, 54.

³⁰⁹ A “proheyme” as defined by the Dictionary of the Scots Language, is “an introductory discourse or poem; a prologue, a preface, a preamble” (<http://www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/proheme>). Likewise, the Oxford English Dictionary defines “proheme” as “an introductory discourse at the beginning of a piece of writing; a preface, preamble” (“proem, n.”. OED Online. March 2017. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/152006?redirectedFrom=proheme&>).

³¹⁰ William Caxton, preface to *Canterbury Tales*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (Westminster: William Caxton, 1483), a2r.

³¹¹ Ibid.

states, is that his first edition was based on a manuscript that was “incorrecte” and did not reflect that “vary true & correcte” book that Chaucer had written.³¹² This second edition, then, is intended to make up for Caxton’s initial error and provide the true tales as Chaucer intended them. By doing so, Caxton sought to honor “the soule of the sayd Gefferey Chaucer” and to provide his readers with “good and vertuous tales/ that it may so prouffyte/ unto the helthe of our soules.”³¹³ Only by understanding, appreciating, and properly reflecting on the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, Caxton contends, can the reader gain the most out of the text: something akin to eternal salvation.

Caxton’s brief preface to the *Canterbury Tales* is the first editorial commentary on the text that ever appeared in print. What is especially noteworthy about this “Proheyme” is that it essentially serves as the only editorial preface for the *Tales* from 1483 until William Thynne’s monumental collected works of Chaucer in 1532. For fifty years, anyone wanting to read the *Canterbury Tales* in print was essentially limited to Caxton’s edition. While Richard Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde produced editions in the late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, they were nearly word-for-word copies of Caxton’s 1483 edition. Pynson did make a slight adjustment to the preface of his 1492 edition of the *Tales*, but only so far as to explain that his text was from “a copy of the seid master Caxton.”³¹⁴ Wynkyn de Worde’s edition was even more of a direct copy of Caxton’s work, even going so far as to sign the “Prohemium” as “By William Caxton/His soule in heven won.”³¹⁵

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid., a2v.

³¹⁴ Pynson, preface to *Canterbury Tales*, a1r.

³¹⁵ de Worde, preface to *Canterbury Tales*, a2v.

Following these copycat editions of Caxton's work, the next evolution in prefatory material appeared in a text edited by William Thynne in 1532.³¹⁶ This edition of Chaucer's texts, entitled *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer Newly Printed*, was the first to collect all of the poet's work in one volume and was reprinted with regularity over the next thirty years. A new printing of the collected works appeared in London every 8-10 years up through the 1560s. The popularity of the book was significant enough to warrant two different printers each being tasked with the job in both 1550 and 1561.

Thynne (and possibly Tuke) provided the reader with a three-page preface that discussed both Chaucer's work and his life. The prefatory material also includes a brief note from Thynne (or Tuke) to his royal and lordly readers, two tables of contents, "eight goodly questions" and their answers, and two short poems. The entirety of the prefatory material is only six pages, but in that limited space Thynne delivers quite effusive praise for the poet:

[T]hat noble & famous clerke Geffrey Chaucer, in whose workes is so manifest comprobation of his excellent learning, in all kindes of doctrines and sciences, such fruitfulness in words, well according to the matter and purpose, to sweet & pleasaunt sentences, such perfection in metre, the composition so adapted, such freshness of invention, compendiousnesse in narration, such sensible and open stile, lacking neither majesty ne mediocrity, covenable in disposition, and such sharpness or quickness in conclusion, that it is much to be marvailed.³¹⁷

This admiration is not just for the text that the reader is soon to encounter, but also applies directly to Chaucer's life, particularly his education and life experience. This presents Chaucer as a poet who is worthy of the attention and praise; one that the reader

³¹⁶ Greg Walker has argued, quite convincingly, that Thynne alone did not edit the text for the 1532 *Complete Works*. In *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Walker leans on evidence from the poet John Leland, who claimed that Sir Bryan Tuke was co-editor of the text and actually wrote the preface for the collected works.

³¹⁷ William Thynne, preface to *The Workes of Geffray Chaucer*, by Geoffrey Chaucer (London: Thomas Godfray, 1532), a2v.

should feel almost honored to have the chance to read. Such an approach also provides strong evidence for Thynne's claim that this collection of the poet's work is "so excellent and notable" to be worthy of printing.³¹⁸ That is due, in part, to the life of the poet.

Up until the end of the sixteenth century, no one explored Chaucer's life in great detail. This changed in 1598 with the first edition of Thomas Speght's *Workes of Our Antient and Lernet English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, Newly Printed*. Within this collected works, Speght included a biographical sketch of Chaucer that was unlike anything that had been printed in the 120 years that came beforehand. Speght begins the biographical section with an elaborate and detailed Chaucer family tree that provides the hereditary context for Chaucer's life (see fig. 2.1 on p. 84). Entitled "His Portraiture and Progenie shewed", the woodblock image is amazingly detailed, overly ornate, and precise in its craftsmanship. This detailed woodblock image dominates the beginning of the book and far surpasses in detail and size any prior images in printed editions of Chaucer's works.³¹⁹

This image of Chaucer and his "Progenie" helps to establish the poet as a member of the aristocratic class, with his first listed ancestor being Payne Roet, a Knight. This positioning of Chaucer as upper-class is continued in the lengthy biographical study that follows the woodcut image. In that biography, which spans 16 pages in the 1598 edition, Speght details Chaucer's parentage, educational background, marriage and children, employments, political connections, friendships, and literary merits. The intent of the text is to demonstrate how Chaucer became "a wittie Logician, a sweete Rhetorician, a pleasant Poet, a grave Philosopher, and a holy Divine" as well as "a skillfull

³¹⁸ Ibid., a3r.

³¹⁹ See chapter 6 for an in-depth analysis of the imagery and illustrations used in Chaucer printed editions. Speght's "Progenie" of Geoffrey Chaucer is just one of thirty-three editions containing illustrations of Chaucer, his characters, and their stories placed within the printed text.

Mathematician.”³²⁰ Speght provides evidence of Chaucer’s greatness through his biographical study, highlighting his education at Oxford and Cambridge as a major catalyst for his later literary accomplishments. In addition to his own text, Speght also includes excerpts from Thynne’s edition. This serves to further establish Chaucer as an established and successful author. Not only does Speght believe so, but he includes the comments of other editors to corroborate his praise and admiration for the poet.

Speght discusses how Chaucer “had alwaies an earnest desire to enrich & beautifie our English tongue, which in those daies was verie rude and barren...”³²¹ It is due to Chaucer’s writings, Speght claims, that the English language was made more clear and consistent (an argument that Caxton made in his preface as well). Speght handles Chaucer’s text with a fair amount of reverence. Though Chaucer’s text was somewhat difficult for some readers to fully understand in 1598, Speght did not alter the original text in any way. He chose, instead, to retain Chaucer’s original language (what we now label as Middle English) and provide his readers with tools to make the task of reading easier.

These tools are part of the prefatory material and helped guide the reading of the text, including “Arguments to every Tale and Booke”—six pages that summarize each portion of Chaucer’s text in the book. The “arguments” are short summaries of each of the *Canterbury Tales* (including the General Prologue) as well as all other works included in the collection. These summaries are brief but helpful, providing the reader with an abstract of sorts that can help them better understand the text they are about to encounter. They can also influence how the text is read. Some of the arguments, for

³²⁰ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b3r.

³²¹ Ibid., b6v.

example, have a moral summary attached to them. The *Knights Tale*, for instance, is presented as “a Tale fitting the person of a Knight” because it discusses both war and love. Likewise, the *Franklin’s Tale* is presented as “a contention in curtesie.”³²²

These arguments are present in each of the three editions printed between 1598 and 1687. An important change, however, occurs within the second edition of Speght’s publication. In 1602, the arguments are moved out of the prefatory material and presented within the text itself, as previews that precede each of the individual *Tales*. The content of the arguments doesn’t change, but the impact on the reader is undoubtedly different.³²³ Even with his “arguments” in place, Speght did not actively alter or change Chaucer’s original Middle English text. He seemed to work hard to ensure that he didn’t interfere with Chaucer’s original text.

About 100 years later, John Dryden had no such qualms. In his *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700), Dryden begins his discussion of the poet by acknowledging his influence on the English language and overall literary significance:

From Chaucer the Purity of the English Tongue began....In the first place, As he is the Father of *English* Poetry, so I hold him in the same Degree of Veneration as the *Grecians* held *Homer*, or the *Romans* *Virgil*. He is a perpetual Fountain of good Sense; learn’d in all Sciences; and therefore speaks properly on all Subjects.³²⁴

Again, like Speght and Thynne, Dryden connects Chaucer’s importance and value as a poet to his biography—specifically to his education. However, Dryden, unlike Speght and Thynne, is quick to point out that Chaucer is far from perfect:

³²² Ibid., c4v.

³²³ See chapter 4 for a discussion of the internal paratextual material that has been included in various Chaucer printed editions. Speght was not the first to include notes and annotations within the text itself, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

³²⁴ John Dryden, ed. *Fables Ancient and Modern* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1700), b1r-b2r.

The Verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not Harmonius to us; but 'tis like the Eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*.³²⁵ ... There is the rude Sweetness of a *Scotch* Tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who publish'd the last Edition of him; for he would make us believe the Fault is in our Ears, and that there were really Ten Syllables in a Verse where we find but Nine... We can only say, that he liv'd in the Infancy of our Poetry, and that nothing is brought to Perfection at the first.³²⁶

In this analysis of Chaucer and his language, there is a noticeable dig at Speght and his edition of the poet's work. Dryden is the first editor of Chaucer's work to attack one of his predecessors. From Caxton through Speght, all of the editors seemed to build on one another over the 125 years of publication. Dryden was the first to actively cut down those who came before him and the first to criticize Chaucer for his "rough" language and lack of consistency in metre and syllables.

Despite these criticisms, Dryden echoes the praise and admiration for Chaucer that his predecessor editors proclaimed. He refers to Chaucer as a "diamond" that just needs to be "polish'd" (by Dryden) in order to shine. In addition, Dryden repeatedly compares Chaucer to other great poets, placing him in an upper echelon of writers who have had a significant impact on both literary history and nationalist identity:

Having done with Ovid for this time, it came into my mind, that our old English poet Chaucer in many things resembled him, and that with no disadvantage on the side of the modern author, as I shall endeavour to prove when I compare them... With Ovid ended the Golden Age of the Roman tongue: From Chaucer the purity of the English tongue began. The manners of the poets were not unlike: Both of them were well-bred, well-natur'd, amorous, and libertine, at least in their writings, it may be also in their lives. Their studies were the same, philosophy and philology. Both of them were knowing in astronomy... Both wrote with wonderful facility and clearness.³²⁷

³²⁵ "Suited to the ears of that time"

³²⁶ Dryden, *Fables*, b2r-b2v.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, a1r-a1v, b1r.

Dryden praises Chaucer throughout the preface to *Fables*, continuously noting his importance on the history of the English language and other poets who followed him. This praise does not, however, stop Dryden from translating and rewriting much of the Chaucer that he includes in his book. Even the most beautiful diamonds need to be cleaned, apparently.

About 20 years after Dryden gave readers his “polished” version of the *Tales*, John Urry brought forth a new *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Urry never saw the final printed work come to fruition, having died in 1715, but his work was among the most important to the printing history of Chaucer’s texts. The 1721 publication was more academically focused than any previous edition and featured a series of prefatory works related to Chaucer’s life, his language, and a summary of the editorial approach to the edition.

The “Life of Chaucer” that opens the edition echoes some of the same themes and tropes of prior biographical studies. The biographical sketch was written by John Dart, who positions Chaucer as “the Father of our English Poetry” and uses some of the same sources as Speght and Thynne. However, the conclusions Dart draws are quite different, down even to Chaucer’s parentage. The 21-page biographical sketch is the longest up to this point in the printing history of Chaucer’s work. It is as thorough and exact a biography as was possible at the time period, and can still serve as an insightful portrayal of Chaucer’s life and history.

Dart’s text is not without hyperbole, however. His admiration for the poet and the majesty of his writing is obvious and leads to some overly effusive praise:

In one word, he was a great Scholar, a pleasant Wit, a candid Critick, a sociable Companion, a steadfast Friend, a grave Philosopher, a temperate

Economist and a pious Christian...His Strokes are bold, and his Colours lively; but the first not too much laboured, nor the other too showy or glaring. There is a wild Beauty in his Works, which comes nearer the Descriptions of *Homer*, than any other that followed him...³²⁸

Dart's slightly hagiographic approach to Chaucer's work does take some of the shine off an otherwise well-handled and academic preface. But, at its heart, the biographical sketch is intended to provide the reader with the proper context to read and understand Chaucer's work. Dart and, by extension, Urry echo the call for readers to credit Chaucer as a progenitor of the English language and an important figure in English literary history.

The importance of Chaucer and his influence on the English language is particularly emphasized by Urry in his inclusion of a lengthy list of "Testimonies of Learned Men concerning Chaucer and his Works". These testimonies demonstrate the greatness of Chaucer as an author while supporting the need for a new publication of his works. Though Dryden's edition had been printed relatively recently, it had been since 1687 that a complete works of Chaucer was printed. The prefatory material in Urry's edition, while surely intended to inform the reader and provide context, was also in many ways a chance for Urry to advocate for his edition of the text.

Some of the more directly useful paratextual elements in Urry's edition appear at the end of the book. While previous editions placed glossaries and other aids in the prefatory material, Urry includes a lengthy Glossary, translations of Latin and French words in Chaucer's work, and a "short Account of some of the Authors cited by Chaucer" at the end of the collected works. These closing paratextual items make up more than eighty pages of additional context and explanation for the reader. In addition, Urry inserts comments throughout the text to help clarify passages, decipher differences in manuscript

³²⁸ Dart, "The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," e2v.

versions of the text, and provide the reader with context for the editorial decisions made for the edition. The prefatory material, closing texts, and internal notations combine to give Urry's edition the most comprehensive paratextual presence of any Chaucer edition up to this point. The result is an extremely mediated and modulated version of Geoffrey Chaucer and his work. It also represents the first major academic, editorial presentation of Chaucer's work; the closest thing yet to a "critical edition" of the text.

While Chaucer-specific texts like Urry's were significant in shaping the perception of the poet and his work, collected works of numerous authors, such as Dryden's *Fables*, were far more common. This includes *The Muses Library; or a Series of English Poetry, from the Saxons, to the Reign of King Charles II*, edited by Elizabeth Cooper beginning in 1737. Cooper is the first known female editor of Chaucer's work and one of the first to bring together such a disparate collection of poets (ranging from the eleventh to sixteenth centuries). While Cooper only discusses Chaucer in detail for a few pages, her focus echoes that of the editors who came before:

The Morning-Star of the English Poetry! ...All agree he was the first Master of his Art among us, and that the Language, in general, is much oblig'd to him for Copiousness, Strength, and Ornament.³²⁹

Cooper focuses on the dual abilities of Chaucer to be both entertaining and intellectually stimulating. She presents him to the reader as someone so well known that he barely needs an introduction. In fact, Cooper states, Chaucer is so well known that it is almost difficult to select a work of his to include in the collection that hasn't been repeatedly seen elsewhere by readers. In the end, Cooper selects the *Pardoner's Prologue* as her choice to represent Chaucer.

³²⁹ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 23.

Nearly simultaneous with Cooper's publication, schoolmaster and author John Entick put forth a proposal to print a new, two-volume edition of Chaucer's complete works. The 1736 proposal, which ultimately failed, included an excerpt of the prefatory material Entick would be including in the final version. In this text, Entick makes clear that Chaucer's greatness was due not only to his writing prowess but to his education and background as well:

Poetry in England never flourisht more than in the days of Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, the riches of his understanding flow'd like nectar on every word; whose elegant stile adorn'd his happy invention, and his profession obtain'd for him riches and honours. Then the poet, the scholar and gentleman were so well united, that each added to the other's beauties.³³⁰

Like Speght, Entick includes quotes from others in support of Chaucer and his works. This includes significant English literary figures such as Dryden, Spenser, Lydgate, Oldham, and Denham. These "testimonials" are not only for Entick to prove the value and worth of Chaucer himself, but also as evidence for the need for a new printing of Chaucer's works. Though Entick did not succeed with his endeavor, his efforts mimic many of the more successful Chaucer publications that came before and after him.

One of those successful editions was Thomas Morell's edited collection published in 1737. Rather than start from scratch with an edition of his own, Morell brought together different edited versions of Chaucer's texts to create *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*. This collection was compiled from the edited texts by Dryden, Pope, and others—saving Morell from having to edit or translate Chaucer's work himself. Even the prefatory material was not wholly Morell's own. The dedicatory text is taken from

³³⁰ John Entick, introduction to *Proposals for Printing By Subscription in Two Volumes Folio, the Works of That Most Learned, Facetious, and Ancient English Poet Sir Geoffrey Chaucer*. London: 1736.

William Thynne's edition and the biography is from Urry's edition (originally written by Dart):

[Chaucer's] life has been wrote professedly by Leland, Pits, Speght, and others, but by none more fully and accurately than by the Author of that prefixed to Mr. Urry's edition, from whence (as I thought it needless to transcribe the whole, and had not leisure to endeavour at any amendments, supposing any could be made) I have drawn this short sketch, sufficient for our present purpose.³³¹

Morell uses many of the same tropes that appear in earlier biographies: comparing Chaucer to Homer and other ancient poets, labeling him the "father" of English poetics, and extolling his "genius and perfection of writing."³³² While much of his prefatory material is not new or unique, Morell clearly saw the need to mimic his predecessors and include high praise and admiration for Chaucer in his compiled edition.

Thomas Tyrwhitt's *Canterbury Tales* from 1775 is, in many ways, the exact opposite of Thomas Morell's work. Unlike Morell, who took other editors' texts and reworked them slightly to create a compiled edition, Tyrwhitt actively avoids picking up any material from those who came before him. Tyrwhitt's edition returned the text to an academic approach—similar to that taken by Urry in his edition. What makes Tyrwhitt's edition distinct is the way in which he consciously and openly addresses the printed editions that preceded his. In a lengthy prefatory essay, Tyrwhitt spends nearly 60 pages summarizing former editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, including many of those mentioned above. Tyrwhitt uses this opportunity to chastise some of the previous editions

³³¹ Thomas Morell, introduction to *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, in the Original, from the Most Authentic Manuscripts*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Thomas Morell (London: 1737), xv.

³³² *Ibid.*, xvi.

and their editors because they did not “give the text of the *Canterbury Tales* as correct as the [manuscripts] within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it.”³³³

Rather, this objective of “correct” editing has “hitherto been either entirely neglected, or at least very imperfectly pursued.”³³⁴ In order to make up for these repeated deficiencies of editing, Tyrwhitt “therefore has proceeded as if his author had never been published before.”³³⁵ He approaches the text cleanly from the original manuscripts, similar to how William Caxton handled the *Canterbury Tales* nearly 300 years prior.

Tyrwhitt’s approach to the text is very calculated and academic. There is not room for the effusive praise and overwrought compliments that appear in other editions. Tyrwhitt does not lay out specific reasons for why Chaucer is so important—it is just a given that the text is worthy of being printed. In many ways, his work brings the editing of Chaucer full circle from Caxton’s first edition in 1477. Tyrwhitt’s intention is to honor Chaucer’s text by presenting it unaltered and unadulterated. He does this, in part, by forgoing things like comparing Chaucer to other great poets or defending his status as father of English poetry. Instead, Tyrwhitt puts his efforts into defending Chaucer’s work by returning to the source material and attempting to erase the prior 300 years of Chaucer printing history.

After Tyrwhitt’s edition, the printing of Chaucer’s works went right back to the modernized, praise-filled versions that Tyrwhitt had decried. John Bell’s *The Poets of Great Britain* (1777) and Robert Anderson’s *Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* (1793) were both collected works of a large number of British poets. Both collections began with Chaucer, and positioned him as the progenitor of English poetics.

³³³ Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales*, i.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid.

Bell's collection dedicated 14 volumes to Chaucer's works—by far the most space given to a single author in the collection. The reason for this expansiveness was evident in Bell's prefatory material, especially the lengthy "Life of Geoffrey Chaucer" which describes Chaucer as "the Father of our English poets, and the first great improver and reformer of our language."³³⁶ Bell's biographical study of Chaucer was one of the standard versions of the poet's life for over half the century, appearing first in *Biographia Brittanica* in 1748, in Bell's edition in the 1777, and in William Lipscomb's collection of Chaucer texts in 1795. The biography is extremely positive and places Chaucer in the position of founding father of English literature and modern poetry.

Anderson, likewise, strikes upon the theme of Chaucer as father, pointing to the "rough" and "defective" style of poetry before the poet's time. Chaucer was inspired by the "fabulous narratives" that had been in England since the beginning of the eleventh century ("poetry received from the Normans" according to Anderson). While inspired, Chaucer was better equipped to improve upon the quality of the medieval fables:

These fabulous narratives, afterwards enlarged by kindred fancies, derived from the crusades, and enriched by the marvelous machinery of the Italian poets, formed the taste, and awakened the imagination of Geoffrey Chaucer, the illustrious ornament of the reign of Edward III and of his successor Richard II, the father of the English heroic verse, and the first English versifier who wrote poetically.³³⁷

Chaucer is elevated in status by his association with English kings and in his trailblazing status as a poet. In promoting Chaucer, and explaining his placement as the first in the series, Anderson states that the poet's works are "curiosities" that "must excite" the reader for their significance to the history of English poetry.

³³⁶ John Bell, ed. *The Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill* (London: G. Cawthorn, 1777), vii.

³³⁷ Robert Anderson, ed. *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* (London: John & Arthur Arch, Bell & Bradfute, and I. Mundell, 1793), iii.

Chaucer's place in the history of English literature is reiterated by Anderson throughout the "Life of Chaucer". He presents Chaucer as both a successful and important poet and as a great man: "The private character of Chaucer appears to have been as respectable as his literary character was truly illustrious."³³⁸ Admiration and praise continue to the end of the biographical section, with quotations from other writers in praise of Chaucer and his work. Anderson, clearly, followed the same biographical narrative path that was taken by nearly all of his predecessors.

This same narrative trend continued into the early nineteenth century as collections of Chaucer's works were produced in greater overall numbers while retaining the same elevation of Chaucer to patriarchal status. It was at this time, as well, that Chaucer's importance in English poetry began to be associated with another influential author:

The two names which perhaps do the greatest honour to the annals of English literature, are those of Chaucer and of Shakespear. Shakespear we have long and justly been accustomed to regard as the first in the catalogue of poetical and creative minds; and after the dramas of Shakespear, there is no production of man that displays more various and vigorous talent than the *Canterbury Tales*.³³⁹

It had been nearly two centuries since the printing of the "First Folio" of William Shakespeare when William Godwin's *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* was published (1804). Shakespeare had long been established as a writer of great importance in English literary history, but as time marched on, his work became almost as distant as Chaucer's texts. The temporal distance from Chaucer to Shakespeare (about 200 years) was the same as that from Shakespeare to the nineteenth century. Godwin explained it from the

³³⁸ Ibid., vi.

³³⁹ William Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet* (London: Richard Phillips, 1804), 1:i.

perspective of a general reading audience: “Ordinary readers are inclined to regard the times of Shakespeare as barbarous, because they are remote.”³⁴⁰

The remoteness and barbarousness of Shakespeare’s time to nineteenth-century audiences is rather similar to how Dryden and his audiences viewed Chaucer’s time in the early eighteenth century. By the time Godwin produces his biographical study, Chaucer’s times were “in a much more obvious and unquestionable sense, so far as poetry is concerned, times of barbarism.”³⁴¹ This presentation of the fourteenth century as barbarous does not take anything away from Chaucer’s abilities as a poet. In fact, Godwin argues, the conditions make it even more remarkable and impressive that Chaucer emerged as “the father of our language” and “the first to restore...literature” in England following the Norman Conquest.

The veneration of Chaucer in the nineteenth century was evident in biographical studies such as Godwin’s as well as in edited volumes of poetry. Samuel Johnson and Alexander Chalmers’ multi-volume *Works of the English Poets* (1810) featured Chaucer in the first volume. Since Dr. Johnson did not include Chaucer in his earlier *Lives of the English Poets* (1779), Chalmers had to write the biography of Chaucer for the 1810 publication. Johnson had died in 1784, so he could not contribute the necessary biographical overview for the medieval poet. Chalmers did, however, quote Johnson’s description of Chaucer from previous works: “As to what English poetry owes to Chaucer, Dr. Johnson has pronounced him “the first of our versifiers who wrote poetically...”³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Ibid., ii.

³⁴¹ Ibid., iii.

³⁴² Alexander Chalmers and Samuel Johnson, eds. *Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper* (London: J. Johnson, etc., 1810), xii.

This statement, which Robert Anderson copied in the introduction to his 1793 edition of Chaucer's works, maintains the two primary themes of admiration that have been associated with Chaucer since the days of Caxton: 1. He is the progenitor of English literature, and 2. The era in which he lived and wrote was backwards and barbarous. It is the combination of these two themes that most editors and authors focus on when singing Chaucer's praises and honoring all that he did for English literature and all he had to overcome to do so:

In such an age it is the highest praise of Chaucer, that he stood alone, the first poet who improved the art by melody, fancy, and sentiment, and the first writer, whether we consider the quantity, quality, or variety of his productions.³⁴³

Such sentiments became even more solidified in the early nineteenth century and were even beginning to be applied to later authors such as Shakespeare, as we saw from Godwin's text. It was the hope of many editors, including Chalmers, that Chaucer would be read more frequently by nineteenth-century audiences and not seen as "an old, rather than a good poet."³⁴⁴

In 1822, Samuel Weller Singer produced a massive 100-volume study of British authors called *The British Poets: Including Translations*. The first five volumes are dedicated to Chaucer's works. Like previous editors of multi-author collections, Singer begins his collection with Chaucer—the "Morning Star of our poetical hemisphere."³⁴⁵ Singer also echoes past editors by focusing on the two themes of admiration:

It is with justice that Chaucer has been called the Father of English Poetry, for he was not only 'the first of our versifiers who wrote poetically,' but in some degree the inventor of our versification....The judicious reader need

³⁴³ Ibid., xiv.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., xv.

³⁴⁵ Samuel Weller Singer, ed., *The British Poets, including Translations* (Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1822), v.

not be reminded of the disadvantage under which Chaucer lies from our imperfect acquaintance with the mode of accentuation used in his day.³⁴⁶

Singer argues that it is not just these reasons that make Chaucer admirable to nineteenth-century readers. He is also to be credited for “versatility of his genius” including his ability to write both serious texts and humorous, playful ones.³⁴⁷

The *Canterbury Tales*, in particular, are best representative of Chaucer’s skills and virtuosity as a poet, according to Singer. The *Tales*, in fact, “may be considered one of the most extraordinary monuments of human genius” and to what Chaucer “principally owes his fame” as an author.³⁴⁸ Regardless of the text, Chaucer is still presented to the reader as an essential figure in English literary history and one that is as highly respected and praised in the 1820s as he was by Caxton in the 1470s.

Moving beyond the admiration and honorifics, there are a few other common threads that can be found among the various biographical paratexts that accompany Chaucer’s texts. There are three areas of Chaucer’s life in particular that are consistently highlighted by editors from the earliest editions to the end of the handpress period: 1. Chaucer’s ancestry and lineage; 2. Chaucer’s formal education; and 3. Chaucer’s role in court life. The remainder of this chapter will explore each of these three areas of biographical focus and how they could influence readers of Chaucer’s works.

In combination, these aspects of the paratextual worked to present Chaucer to the reader as both man and author. The first humanized Chaucer and provided context in which he wrote, while the second elevated him to a higher level as creative force almost

³⁴⁶ Ibid., xvi-xvii.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., xviii.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., xxii.

distinct from his mortal being. The first was Chaucer made man, the second was Chaucer made god:

[T]he early modern English folio constructs an Author who seems larger than life, and the folio itself seems physically the monument to the Author's fame that it so often claims to be. The entire package—the life, the elaborate table of contents, the letters to readers, the eulogies, the indices and glossaries, and the elaborately printed text itself—seems designed to bring to life the writer of the text as a powerful presence, a Creator of a Work, almost as if while the scriptures of the books of the Bible were beginning to be constructed as human, the authors of the *Iliad*, the *Aeneid*, the *Orlando Furioso*, and *The Canterbury Tales* were being raised to near-divinity.³⁴⁹

Barbara Mowat's discussion of how authors and authorship was constructed in England during the early modern period certainly applies to Chaucer and his treatment by printers and editors at the time. This development of the "Author" as an elevated figure, Mowat argues, was "alive and robust in Renaissance England"—particularly in the form of William Shakespeare.³⁵⁰

Moving Mowat's argument a bit further back, I would argue that the classification of "Author" was "alive and robust" even earlier—within the first twenty-five years of printing being introduced to England. Indeed, the modern idea of the "Author" was a "shift away from one major mode of Author-construction, that of the medieval *auctor*."³⁵¹ The idea of an "auctor" in the time of Chaucer was "someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed" by the reader.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ Barbara A. Mowat, "Constructing the Author," in *Elizabethan Theater: Essays in Honor of S. Schoenbaum*, eds. R. B. Parker and S. P. Zitner (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1996), 96. See also, Michael Ulliot, "English *Auctores* and Authorial Readers: Early Modernizations of Chaucer and Lydgate," in *Reading and Literacy in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Ian Frederick Moulton (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2004), 45-62.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 95.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 94.

³⁵² Ibid.

This sense of authority and respect is not just given to the author; it must be earned or proven. For those authors that long dead by the time their materials are printed, it is up to the printers, publishers, and editors to “defend” them and their works and to provide the evidence of authority to the readers. This is done in numerous ways, beginning with heaping praise and admiration on the author, as we have seen in Chaucer’s works referenced above. This will elevate the mere “writer of books” to a “Creator of Works”.³⁵³ Next, as will be seen below, the author must be humanized and made accessible to the reader. The biographical elements help “bring Chaucer to life as someone not so far away.” They create a balance between the “ancient” poet who is “Father of English poetry” and the man who has written the text that readers are about to encounter.

Family Matters

The first biographical area addressed by editors and publishers in lengthy editions of Chaucer’s work was his familial history. Establishing the context for Chaucer’s upbringing, including positioning him as a high-level member of society, was a clear imperative for editors as early as the sixteenth century. Thomas Speght’s edition in 1598 begins, as mentioned above, with “His Portraiture and Progenie shewed”—a full-page woodcut showing Chaucer’s family tree and tying his lineage to knights, dukes, duchesses, earls, ladies, lords, and even King Henry IV. Most of the associations presented in the woodcut were through Chaucer’s wife, Philippa, who was the daughter of Sir Payne Roet, a well-known and well-connected Knight in fourteenth-century England.

³⁵³ Ibid., 95.

Speght played up this in-law connection in his biography of Chaucer, highlighting the titled nobility with whom the poet was connected via marriage:

He matched in marriage with a Knights daughter of Henault, called Paon de Ruet, King of Armes... This gentlewoman, whome hee married (whose name we can not finde)... by this marriage he became brother in law to John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, as hereafter appeareth.³⁵⁴

This marital connection was also strongly emphasized by Urry, Cooper, Morell, Tyrwhitt, Bell, and Chalmers (among others). For each editor, it was worth a specific mention and, in some cases, worth repeating. Building a connection to nobility and royal figures was important to help establish Chaucer as an authority figure and admirable author. Even though he did not “earn” the connections directly, his association with such important figures was worth highlighting. What is particularly interesting is the similarity in narrative within some of these biographical summaries of Chaucer’s marriage:

From Cooper (1737): “After this he marry’d the Daughter of a Knight of Hainault, by which Alliance he is said to become Brother-in-Law to John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster.”³⁵⁵

From Morell (1737): “He married about the 32d Year of his Age, Philippa, the Daughter of Sir Payne, or Pagan, Rouet, a Native of Hainault, and Guien King of Arms for that Country. Her elder Sister, Katherine, was at that Time Guardianess to the Children of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, &c. who had a singular Value for our Poet, as had likewise his Dutchess Blanch; nor was he less in Favour with Q. Philippa, a Princess of extraordinary Merit.”³⁵⁶

From Anderson (1793): “He appears to have been early conversant with the court, and particularly attached to the service of the king’s son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by whose favour he obtained in marriage Philippa, daughter of Sir Payne, or Pagan Rouet, a native of Hainault, and sister of the famous Catherine Swynford, the duke’s mistress, and afterwards his wife.”³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b3v.

³⁵⁵ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 23.

³⁵⁶ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, xvi-xvii.

³⁵⁷ Anderson, *Complete Edition*, iv.

Chaucer's connection to important and significant figures was almost entirely through his wife's relations. While Chaucer's family was wealthy and had extensive property holdings throughout London, marrying Philippa better positioned Chaucer within the royal household.³⁵⁸

While establishing Chaucer's marital associations were relatively easy for sixteenth- to nineteenth-century editors to track down, determining the poet's own ancestry proved more difficult. There was consistent confusion over Chaucer's parentage and his standing in the world prior to his court appointment in 1367. Even by the time of the latest edition under consideration in this dissertation, the mystery remains unclear. As Samuel W. Singer wrote in his 1822 edition: "Of his family nothing certain is known."³⁵⁹

The issue with establishing Chaucer's heritage was not that it was a blank slate, it was that each editor and biographer of the poet had his/her own idea of what was an accurate portrayal of Chaucer's past. John Bell, in 1777, summarized the confusion most succinctly:

One would imagine...that every historical circumstance relating to him, or at least those of the greatest moment, should be well preserved, and be perfectly clear, which however is so far from being the case that nothing can hitherto be certainly determined concerning his descent, or so much as who was his father. Leland says that he was of noble stock, Pitts that he was the son of a knight, Speght that his father was a vintner, Hearne that he was a merchant, and the fifth and last opinion, which is the best, is, that nothing can be said with any tolerable assurance of his family at all...³⁶⁰

The most consistent truth about Chaucer's upbringing was that it was completely unverified during the handpress period—really, until the *Life Records* were published in

³⁵⁸ See Martin M. Crow and Virginia E. Leland, "Chaucer's Life" in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd Edition, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

³⁵⁹ Singer, *British Poets*, vi.

³⁶⁰ Bell, *Poets of Great Britain*, vii.

1966. The confusion caused by the lack clear sources for Chaucer's biographical history was a source of frustration for many editors of the poet's work.

Editors and biographers were consistently stymied in their efforts to provide a thorough, full, complete, and accurate biographical history of Chaucer's life. They often relied on past publications that were severely flawed or largely incomplete. Speght's biographical notes were among the most accurate, but were hampered by a lack of evidence accessible to late sixteenth-century editors. Even Speght's decent attempt at accuracy was sometimes ignored or forgotten by editors who followed in his footsteps: "After the Restoration, several brief and inaccurate biographical notes had appeared about Chaucer." These inaccurate portrayals were somewhat surprising because they often did not take Speght's "more accurate and complete life of Chaucer" into account when they were written. Continued confusion, obfuscation, and inaccuracies plagued the biographical entries in Chaucer's works, furthering the sense of frustration among some editors.

The "Life of Geoffrey Chaucer" written by John Dart and included in John Urry's 1721 edition of Chaucer's works, provides evidence of this frustration:

Many particulars relating to our Author having, through the negligence of our fore-fathers, been suffered to sink in oblivion, it is the more necessary to preserve what remains of him, and to attempt the recovery of some parts of his History: I shall therefore digest the confused common places left concerning him in as regular a method as I can, and with such additions as have been rescued from Time endeavour to clear up his Birth.³⁶¹

In the attempt to "clear up" details about Chaucer's birth, Dart's biography regurgitates much of the information from Speght and others. Rather than clearing things up, the biography continues to muddle Chaucer's parentage and family background. The Urry

³⁶¹ Dart, "The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer," a1v.

text is in good company, however, as the lack of clarity remained in place throughout the handpress period. The biography, in fact, was among the most important versions available in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was “the first truly significant biography since Speght’s” and became “the standard biographical account of the poet” until Harry Nicolas published his biography of Chaucer in 1844.³⁶²

Despite a lack of accuracy and clarity—a concern, perhaps, more of editors, historians, and Chaucerians—nearly every biographical study of Chaucer during the period includes some mention of his family. Even short summaries of Chaucer’s life, such as that by Elizabeth Cooper, mention his heritage: “His Family is suppos’d to come in with William the Norman, and, some say, his Father was a Merchant.”³⁶³ The intention of the editor is to place Chaucer in context for the reader and to emphasize his historical “birthright” as a poet.

By establishing Chaucer’s place in English history through his parentage, the editors solidify his reputation as the Father of English Poetry. His roots to England are so strong and long-standing that he can be connected back to William of Orange and the Norman Invasion. This is significant, since English “vernacular poetry [was] received from the Normans, the rudiments of that cultivation which it has preserved to the present times...the patronymic name seems to indicate, that it came originally from Normandy.”³⁶⁴ If Chaucer is the father of English verse, then he must be connected back to the Normans.

³⁶² Michael Shugrue, “The Urry Chaucer (1721) and the London Uprising of 1384: A Phase in Chaucerian Biography,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 65, no. 2 (Apr. 1966): 229.

³⁶³ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 23.

³⁶⁴ Anderson, *Complete Edition*, a2v.

In some cases, the lack of clarity about his parentage was used to further enhance Chaucer's status: "As in his Genius and Perfection of Writing, Geoffrey Chaucer bears a near Resemblance to the Father of Poets, Homer, so does he likewise in the Uncertainty of his Parents..."³⁶⁵ The lack of information about his heritage is not seen as a negative trait, but as a way to further connect Chaucer to other great poets, at least according to Thomas Morell.

A combination of Chaucer's known familial connections through his wife, Philippa, and the assumed Norman heritage of his ancestors, work together to provide the reader with a well-crafted image of Chaucer. Each of the editors presents him as a man of great importance, with royal connections and strong familial roots. While Chaucer's poetry can stand on its own as a testament to his skill as a poet, the familial associations elevate Chaucer from just an author to a more fleshed-out and historically-significant figure.

An Educated Man

While Chaucer's parentage was muddled throughout the handpress period, his educational background was presented much more clearly. Beginning with Speght's edition in 1598, nearly every edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that contains a biographical study or sketch of Chaucer's life mentions his educational experience. The story is consistent and stated with authority, no matter the editor:

From Speght (1598): "His bringing up, as Leland saieth, was in the Universitie of Oxford, as also of Cambridge..."³⁶⁶

³⁶⁵ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, xvi.

³⁶⁶ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b3v.

From Urry (1721): “His first studies were in the University of Cambridge...How long he continued there is not known: It is certain he removed from thence to compleat his Studies at Oxford.”³⁶⁷

Cooper (1737): “He had his Education partly at Oxford, partly at Cambridge...”³⁶⁸

Morell (1737): “His first Studies were in the University of Cambridge...From thence he removed to Merton-College in Oxford...”³⁶⁹

Bell (1777): “[A]s soon as he was fit for academical studies he was sent to Cambridge...He removed from Cambridge, for reasons which we find nowhere assigned, to the university of Oxford, and completed his studies there...”³⁷⁰

Chalmers & Johnson (1810): “This biographers have provided him with education both at Oxford and Cambridge, a circumstance which we know occurred in the history of other scholars of that period, so it is not therefore improbable.”³⁷¹

Singer (1822): “He is said to have studied at Oxford; but, from a passage in the Court of Love, in which he styles himself ‘Philogenet of Cambridge, Clerk,’ it might be rather inferred that he was educated there...”³⁷²

As is evident in the passages above, the biographies consistently claimed that Chaucer attended both Oxford and Cambridge—though it was not always clear in which order those schools were attended. Regardless of order, the consistency of Oxford/Cambridge mentions is noticeable.

Not only was Oxbridge mentioned within most biographies, Chaucer’s educational background was presented to readers as proof positive of the poet’s skills and abilities. He attended the two oldest and most well-respected educational institutions in England—as he should, given the moniker of Father of English Poetry. Presenting

³⁶⁷ Dart, “The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer,” b1v.

³⁶⁸ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 23.

³⁶⁹ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, xvi.

³⁷⁰ Bell, *Poets of Great Britain*, xi-xiii.

³⁷¹ Chalmers and Johnson, *Works*, iv.

³⁷² Singer, *British Poets*, vi.

Chaucer as an educated man also elevated his work and his language; a man who has been educated at these fine institutions is worth reading.

It did not hurt that some of the editors were themselves involved with both institutions. Thomas Speght and Thomas Morell were Cambridge University grads while Alexander Chalmers and Samuel Johnson were directly associated with Oxford University. Associating Chaucer with their own institutions of higher learning was not a surprise. Doing so without any real evidence of Chaucer's educational background, however, was a bit misleading. The presentation of Chaucer's educational background is perhaps the best example of how one editor can inform and influence another.

The trail begins with John Leland, who served as head librarian under Henry VIII and was an important figure in establishing English history in the middle ages. Leland's biography of Chaucer, which is the first known study of the poet, was written ca. 1540 (though not published until 1709). Within the text, Leland claimed that Chaucer studied at Oxford University and "left the university an acute logician, a delightful orator, an elegant poet, a profound philosopher, and an able mathematician."³⁷³ This description of Chaucer's education clearly influenced Speght's description of the poet—right down to his being "a skillfull Mathematician."³⁷⁴

Speght took the Oxford connection from Leland and the Cambridge connection from *The Court of Love* (ca. 1500)—a poem believed to be written by Chaucer at the time of Speght's publication. He also used Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love* (ca. 1380) as a

³⁷³ Translation of Leland's text taken from Thomas R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer: His Life and Writings* (New York, 1892), 1:133.

³⁷⁴ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b3r.

source to support his biographical material on Chaucer's life.³⁷⁵ Once Speght accepted these educational connections as truth, the editors that followed pick up the same thread. Speght's biographical work, in the end, did more damage to properly understanding Chaucer's life than it helped:

Speght went even further than Leland and others in emphasizing the autobiographical "truth" of the verse, to an extent that could even mar the poet's reputation...By extending and more firmly establishing the fallacious material drawn from the *Testament of Love*, Speght's depiction perpetuated some of the most prominent and damaging untruths ever found in Chaucerian life-writing.³⁷⁶

Speght's biography, particularly his discussion of Chaucer's educational background, was picked up by many of the editors who followed him. The repetition of this misinformation was hard to overcome. As is evident from the quotations above, the Oxbridge connection was repeated regularly up through the nineteenth century. It was not until the publication of Manly and Rickert's edition in 1940 and the subsequent publication of *Chaucer's Life Records* in 1966 that true clarity of Chaucer's educational background was achieved.

A few select editors along the way, however, tried to challenge the Leland/Speght narrative. They were far outnumbered and, in many cases, ignored. Their efforts are worth highlighting, however, if for no other reason than to show how they still intended to elevate Chaucer in the reader's eye while aiming for more accurate representation of his life and educational experiences.

The first editor to push back against the Oxbridge narrative was Thomas Tyrwhitt, nearly 200 years after Speght's first biographical sketch appeared. Tyrwhitt, continuing

³⁷⁵ For a more in-depth discussion of the sources for Speght's biographical sketch, see "Chapter 2: Getting a Life: Biographical Constructions of Chaucer the Man" in Geoffrey W. Gust's *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 51-86.

³⁷⁶ Gust, 60.

his thorough takedown of previous editors and editions that had come before his, was critical of the biographical sketches that had been included in editions of Chaucer's works. In particular, he doubts the accuracy of the educational claims:

We are more in the dark about the place of his education. In his Court of Love, ver. 912, he speaks of himself under the name and character of "Philogenet—of Cambridge, Clerk." This is by no means a decisive proof that he was really educated at Cambridge, but it may be admitted, I think, as a strong argument that he was not educated at Oxford; as Leland has supposed, without the shadow of proof. The Biographers however, instead of weighing one of these accounts against the other, have adopted both; and tell us very gravely, that he was first at Cambridge, and afterwards removed from thence to compleat his studies at Oxford.³⁷⁷

Tyrwhitt clearly questions the veracity of these biographical claims, seeing no true evidence to support either Cambridge or Oxford as the place of Chaucer's education.

Tyrwhitt not only doubts the conclusions made by Leland, Speght, and others, but actively undercuts their points of evidence in certain areas: "The single circumstance, by which Leland has endeavoured to strengthen his supposition that Chaucer was educated at Oxford, is another supposition that he was born in Oxfordshire or Berkshire. The latter has been shewn above to be false."³⁷⁸ The evidence to support any clear Oxford or Cambridge university connection is non-existent in Tyrwhitt's view. The fairly thorough takedown of these claims makes it even more surprising that the Oxbridge narrative continued well into the nineteenth century. Tyrwhitt's audience, including editors who were influenced by his work, seem unconvinced by his anti-Oxbridge arguments. Perhaps part of the problem is that Tyrwhitt didn't fill in Chaucer's educational background with anything else. The idea that Chaucer was not educated at either Oxford or Cambridge

³⁷⁷ Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales*, xxiv-xxv.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xxv.

may have been more palatable if Tyrwhitt had offered an alternative explanation for the poet's multitude of skills and talents.

The only significant edition that questions the traditional narrative of Chaucer's educational history comes from Robert Anderson's *Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain* (1793). In Anderson's "Life of Chaucer" that precedes the first volume, he states that Chaucer's "biographers are as much in the dark about the place of his education" as they are about his familial heritage.³⁷⁹ He refers to the evidence on which the biographies are based as "no means a decisive proof" and criticizes Leland for drawing conclusions "without the shadow of proof" of their accuracy.³⁸⁰ If those criticisms sound familiar, that is because they are. Not only does Anderson agree with Tyrwhitt's assessment of the biographical sketches, he essentially copies his criticisms word-for-word in his "Life of Chaucer." Anderson does admit that "the present edition of the *Canterbury Tales* is printed from Tyrwhitt's incomparable edition" and that other parts of the text have been "copied with little variation" directly from Tyrwhitt.³⁸¹ So this edition, perhaps, is not so much another editor agreeing with Tyrwhitt's assessment but just Tyrwhitt agreeing with himself.

Regardless of the accuracy (or lack thereof) of the presentations of Chaucer's educational background, the intent from the editorial perspective is consistent and clear: Chaucer was a well-educated and well-rounded man who was skilled in areas beyond the writing of poesy. Every editor, even Tyrwhitt, speaks highly of Chaucer's intellect and abilities. In most cases these qualities are supported, reinforced, and framed by his presence in the venerable world of Oxbridge scholarship and academe. Such positioning

³⁷⁹ Anderson, *Complete Edition*, iv.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid., vi.

further elevates the poet in the mind of the reader and validates his title of Father of English Poetry.

Whether or not the editors believed his educational background does not matter. What is important is the mythology that surrounded Chaucer and helped to establish him as an authoritative, educated, and well-rounded man. As Geoffrey Gust explains, this myth-making was an important aspect of the development of Chaucer as a literary figure in English history:

This pre-“Enlightenment” era is most significant biographically as the age that initiated, extended, and relied heavily upon the Chaucer “legends,” and created an idealized myth of the venerable auctor who, supposedly, began the English literary tradition and established many of the very traditions of language itself.³⁸²

The development of Chaucer’s mythology began with Leland’s manuscript in the sixteenth century, but was picked up, regurgitated, and repeated in the realm of print continuously throughout the handpress period. This was evident no more clearly than in the creation of the myth of his Oxbridge education.

A Life in Court

The final area of emphasis in Chaucer biographies that preceded the *Tales* was his life in the royal court. Contrary to the prior two areas of focus (family heritage and educational experience) the biographical surveys of Chaucer’s court life are more accurate and almost perfectly consistent with one another. This is due, in part, to the continual record-keeping of court life during Chaucer’s lifetime. His introduction to the royal court remained somewhat obscured in early biographies, but his presence was not doubted or questioned. In the telling of his courtly role, Chaucer’s editors placed him in

³⁸² Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, 63.

positions of honor and power that demonstrated his reputation and served as evidence of his importance.

As usual, Speght was the first to explore Chaucer's royal connections in-depth. Caxton, Thynne, and other early printers did not really mention the poet's presence in court in their brief introductions. Thynne's edition states that Chaucer was a "noble and famous clerk" but does not go into detail about where or for whom the poet worked.³⁸³ Speght goes into greater detail regarding Chaucer's "Service" to the court. For it was through his connection to the royal court that he had received "sundry rewards bestowed upon him, and that worthily for his good service, which often he performed, and whereof in Chronicles we may partly read..."³⁸⁴ The chronicles provided Speght (and other editors who followed) with some evidence of Chaucer's connections to the courts of Edward III and Richard II. It is most likely that Speght is referring to, among others, Holinshed's Chronicles, which were completed in 1587. Some of these historical sources were available to earlier editors like William Thynne (and Brian Tuke, who wrote the biography for Thynne's edition), but Speght was the first to put them to good use and note their existence in the prefatory material. Speght's biography made a significant impact beyond Chaucerian scholarship, including influencing William Shakespeare's writing of *Henry IV*:

As for Chaucer's life, [Shakespeare] probably had very little knowledge of it at all until the biography in Speght's book made it accessible to him—save of course for bits of information that may have been gleaned from the poet's works, from gossip and hearsay drifting about literary London, or from the "records and monuments" observed by Stow...For no editions of Chaucer contained a biography before Speght's Englished version...We may assume that a new edition after so many years, containing a life and notes in plain English,--full of such familiar names, too, as King Henry IV,

³⁸³ Thynne, *Workes of Chaucer*, a2v.

³⁸⁴ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b6r.

John of Gaunt Duke of Lancaster, the Duke of Clarence, John Hastings Earl of Pembroke—must have interested Shakespeare, busy at the moment recreating for the stage the very times presented.³⁸⁵

William Shakespeare was certainly not the only one impressed and inspired by the courtly life presented in Speght's edition. Speght included highly complimentary notes about the poet that seem to have been included solely to help persuade the reader of Chaucer's greatness. This included how he was seen by others at court, both by friends and by royal persons: "...some for some causes tooke liking of him, and other for his rare giftes and learning did admire him. And thus hee lived in honour many years both at home and abroad."³⁸⁶

Positioning Chaucer as an "honored" member of the royal court surely elevated him in the eyes of the reader. This was something emphasized by numerous editors following Speght's edition. John Urry's 1721 edition highlighted the importance of Chaucer's position in court, and how he arrived there. It was Chaucer's "singular accomplishments" as a student and writer that caused him to be "discovered by some persons at Court" and invited to join the courtly realm.³⁸⁷ The biographical sketch included in Urry's edition (written by John Dart) describes Edward III's court as one in which "Men of Letters" were invited to share their education and learning with the rest of court. The result of this opening to literary and academic figures was a court in which "Valour was not more esteemed than Learning, and Cowardice and Ignorance were equally despised" by the King and his subjects.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Thomas H. McNeal, "'Henry IV', 'Parts I' and 'II', and Speght's First Edition of 'Geoffrey Chaucer,'" *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (April, 1946), 87-8.

³⁸⁶ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, b6v.

³⁸⁷ John Urry, ed. preface to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. John Urry (London: Bernard Lintot, 1721), b1v.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

Chaucer exemplified the qualities that Edward III sought for his court: intelligence, sophistication, and learnedness. He was positioned in Urry's edition as the exemplar of these ideals, attributes that helped Edward's court to consist "of all that was great and splendid and every thing that could be desired...to make it the most glorious in Europe."³⁸⁹ Chaucer's presence in the court served to strengthen this glory and help maintain "a long and happy Reign" in which "successful in Victories abroad, filled it with Heroes, and a just Administration at home supply'd it with Men of Learning."³⁹⁰

Men like Chaucer:

How well qualify'd our Poet was to be a Member of such an Assembly, we may judge by his learning, wit, amorous disposition, gay humour and gallantry...So that every Ornament that could claim the approbation of the Great and Fair, his Abilities to record the Valour of the one, and celebrate the Beauty of the other, and his wit and gentle behaviour to converse with both, conspired to make him a compleat Courtier.³⁹¹

Chaucer represented, then, the highest and purest royal court possible; one that, according to Dart, was "long and happy" in large part thanks to men like Chaucer.

Following the reign of Edward III, Chaucer joined the court of his successor Richard II. Chaucer's role as Page under Richard was "a place of honour and esteem" and so highly regarded within the royal court that Pages were often left "Legacies" in the King's will.³⁹² Chaucer was one of those fortunate enough to receive such rewards from his King; Dart notes that the poet was given an annuity of twenty marks to be paid out in perpetuity. While the amount might seem "mean" to the eighteenth-century reader, it was, Dart assures the reader, "very considerable, and in Chaucer's case was still the more

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

valuable as being an earnest of future Favours” from the King.³⁹³ These future gifts amounted to a promotion in position for Chaucer and an additional twenty marks per annum.

Not only was Chaucer granted lofty titles, positions, and pensions, but he also commanded the respect and admiration of other courtly figures. Dart discusses how Chaucer was seen by Queen Philippa, John of Gaunt (Duke of Lancaster), Dutchess Blanche, Lady Margaret, and a host of others. These figures are seemingly recalled from beyond the grave to testify in favor of Chaucer and laud his skills and intellect:

Our Poet being thus placed near the King, found respect and encouragement from all the chief persons of the Court... Thus beloved, esteemed and honoured, he spent his younger years in a constant attendance upon the Court...³⁹⁴

The appreciation for Chaucer extended beyond his literary abilities and into his skills as an advisor and trusted member of the inner circle. He rose to “higher places of Trust” and “became more entangled in the Affairs of State.”³⁹⁵

Urry’s edition, even more than Speght’s, positions Chaucer as an essential player in courtly life of fourteenth-century England. This positioning further elevates the poet in the readers’ mind and gives him the insights needed to be able to write and accurately portray courtly life as he does in the *Book of the Duchess*, the *Parliament of Fowls*, the *Canterbury Tales*, and other texts. Not only is Chaucer elevated but, by courtly association, so is his writing.

The association between Chaucer’s writing and his role as courtier were present in many editions of the *Canterbury Tales*. Just as Dart laid out in his biography of Chaucer,

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Ibid., b1v-b2r.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., b2v.

other editors put the literary Chaucer and the courtly Chaucer together. Elizabeth Cooper conflates the two completely: “in the Reign of Richard the Second, was famous for his Learning...was employ’d on several Embassies, received many great Rewards from the Crown, and was in high Esteem with the most Noble and Excellent Persons of his Time.”³⁹⁶ Cooper places him on a pedestal as “the first Master of his Art” in England and “a real Genius” whose accomplishments are too numerous to list.³⁹⁷

Such commendation was echoed in John Bell’s 1777 edition. Bell first discussed the remarkable English court of Edward III, deeming it “the most gay and splendid in Europe” and a place “distinguished by [Edward’s] civil and martial virtues”.³⁹⁸ The result was a royal court that was “more glorious” and “brighter” than any other in the Chronicles. One of the most important qualities of Edward’s court was his dedication and support for learning:

Among other great qualities with which this famous monarch was endued his love of learning and learned men was not the last conspicuous, and therefore we need not wonder that our Author, who was continually giving some specimen or other of the vivacity of his parts wrought himself into high favour, insomuch that it appears that he was a constant attendant on the court...³⁹⁹

Bell aligns the learned atmosphere of court with Chaucer’s literary works and makes a connection between the strong, courtly environment established by Edward III and the literary courtliness of Chaucer’s works. Bell had more access to information about Chaucer’s life than did his predecessors, but his story remained fairly similar. While he was able to provide more clear details about Chaucer’s titles and associated duties, Bell retained the same narrative that can be seen going back to Speght: the royal court was a

³⁹⁶ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 23.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Bell, *Poets of Great Britain*, xvi.

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

place that recognized and supported learned men and Chaucer was the perfect example of a literary figure who thrived in that environment.

Bell also pointed to the ways in which Chaucer's courtly associations influenced his writing, including his choice of whom to target in his works: "...his patron the Duke of Lancaster having espoused the cause of Wickliffe, whom the clergy considered as a heretick, Chaucer inclined the same way, and turned the edge of his satire against lazy monks, ignorant priests, and the insolence of such as belonged to ecclesiastical courts, with extraordinary success."⁴⁰⁰ Chaucer, then, not only reflected the emphasis on literature and learning in the royal court, but also used his associations and experiences to directly influence his writing and craftsmanship. Bell made it more evident than any other editor that Chaucer was as influenced by the court as the court was by him. The symbiotic relationship proved beneficial to both parties.

Robert Anderson's edition a few years after Bell (1793) echoes this sentiment of mutual benefit. Anderson begins by establishing the relationship between Chaucer and John of Gaunt. He then explains how Chaucer's presence was seen by the courtly set: "the liveliness of his parts, and the native gaiety of his disposition, rendered him a very popular and acceptable character in the English court, at that time the most gay and splendid in Europe."⁴⁰¹ Chaucer's popularity helped him to distinguish himself among other courtiers, particularly in the use of his poetry to elevate his presence in the royal court. As he rose to higher levels of standing within the court of Edward III, Anderson contends, it was "almost certain" "that he had distinguished himself before this time by

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., xxiv-xxv.

⁴⁰¹ Anderson, *Complete Edition*, iv.

his poetical performances.”⁴⁰² For Anderson, the poetical success and political success happened concurrently for Chaucer. This did not mean, however, that Edward or Richard directly supported Chaucer’s poetry. Rather, the environments they created through their royal courts were conducive to the creation of, and inspiration for, Chaucer’s poetic works.

Edward III’s court was, as we have seen, a place supportive of men of learning. Alexander Chalmers pushed this same narrative in his life of the poet: “...we discover, at length, with tolerable certainty, that Chaucer betook himself to the life of a courtier, and probably with all the accomplishments suited to his advancement in the court of a monarch, who was magnificent in his establishment, and munificent in his patronage of learning and gallantry.”⁴⁰³ Chalmers was the first to strongly argue that the King actively supported Chaucer in his writing. While other editors skirted around the topic or left it completely untouched, Chalmers made a fairly good case that Edward III, in giving Chaucer an annuity, was able to “honourably encourage the genius of a poet” and provide him with the security needed to render “him easy in his circumstances” as a civil servant.⁴⁰⁴ From a reader’s perspective, what is even more impressive than a royal court that supported men of learning? How about one that actively supported and (by such association) championed the Father of English Poetry?

Not all of the editors painted such a rosy picture of Chaucer’s relationship with the royal courts. Thomas Morell (1737), Thomas Tyrwhitt (1775), and Samuel W. Singer (1822) were more critical—and accurate—in their discussions of Chaucer and his time in the courts of both Edward III and Richard II. None of these editors discounted the basic

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Chalmers and Johnson, *Works*, v.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., vi.

facts that were laid out from Speght onwards, but they added context for some of Chaucer's years of service that were either unknown or ignored by other editors.

Tyrwhitt began by pointing out that those editors who came before him (including Speght) had been working with some incomplete information and had leaped to conclusions about Chaucer's courtly life that were not necessarily true:

The first authentic memorial, which we have of Chaucer, is the Patent in Rymer, 41 E. III. by which that King grants to him an annuity of 20 marks, by the title of *Valettus noster*. He was then in the 39th year of his age. How long he had served the King in that, or any other, station, and what particular merits were rewarded by this royal bounty, are points equally unknown.⁴⁰⁵

Tyrwhitt, as seems to be the trend in his treatment of Chaucer's biography, is very cautious about drawing conclusions about the poet's life with limited or incomplete information and evidence. This is not an issue that most of his fellow editors share, but Tyrwhitt's cautionary perspective is a good reminder that, until the publication of *Chaucer Life-Records* in 1967, there was no comprehensive and accurate resource for the biographical study of Chaucer's life. Tyrwhitt's hesitation to jump to conclusions about Chaucer's role in the court of Edward III or Richard II is picked up by a few editors who follow in his footsteps, but none are as overtly questioning of the historical record (or lack of record) as Tyrwhitt.

What we do find, however, are a few editors who provide insights into the negative results of Chaucer's courtly interactions. Not everything in Chaucer's role as courtier was positive and productive. Even though nearly all editors highlight the supportive environment for "men of learning" in Edward's court, only a few discuss the

⁴⁰⁵ Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales*, xxvi-xxvii.

realities of political intrigue and loss of favor that were prevalent in medieval English royal courts.

Thomas Morell, for example, discussed Chaucer's rise in power and his increased position level in court, just as Dart mentioned in Urry's 1721 edition. Morell moves beyond the positive aspects of increased trust and power, however, to show that Chaucer was soon ensnared by political turmoil and instability, leading to the poet's imprisonment:

But as he was advanced to higher Places of Trust, so he became more entangled in the Affairs of State, the Consequence of which, in those troublesome times, proved of the utmost Prejudice to him; for having been too deeply engaged in the Duke his Patron's Interest, which had caused no small Disturbance in the City, he fled to Hainault, and from thence into France and Zealand; till, weary of his Banishment, he returned to London, was taken, and imprisoned in the Tower.⁴⁰⁶

Chaucer did not linger in prison long (not even for the length of a full sentence in Morell's telling). Richard II soon released the poet and pardoned him. Soon thereafter, Chaucer was granted a new title and position, with a healthy annuity to accompany it. Chaucer's punishment was not severe and his behavior not egregious, leaving him perfectly redeemable in Morell's eyes. Within a few sentences after his imprisonment, Chaucer was back to a full, life-long annuity and had regained the standing in the royal court that he had previously left behind.

Samuel Singer took a similar approach to Chaucer's courtly days. Like Morell, Singer wanted to ensure that the reader was aware of the difficulties that Chaucer faced in his various royally appointed positions. While the poet had long been receiving support from the court in the form of a steady twenty marks per annum (beginning under Edward III), his fortunes were not always so positive and easy under the reign of Richard II:

⁴⁰⁶ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, xvii.

He was now, however, fated to feel a reverse of fortune. The political influence of Lancaster began to decline about the third or fourth year of his nephew's reign; he had incurred the displeasure of the clergy on account of the encouragement he had given to Wickliffe, and several of the old nobility found their ambitious views kept under by his presence...Chaucer to save himself escaped, first to Hainault and then to Zeeland. His liberality to some of his countrymen, who had also fled thither on the same account, soon reduced his finances, and the treachery of those to whom he had confided the management of his affairs at home was so extreme that they endeavoured to make him perish for absolute want. Yet he summoned courage to return to England, where he was soon discovered and committed to prison, from whence he was only liberated upon condition of making some disclosures implicating his late partisans, to whom he certainly owed no fidelity.⁴⁰⁷

From Singer we learn the most about the intricate, and insecure, nature of the royal court under Richard II. By 1822, he had access to more resources and pieces of evidence than did any of his predecessors. While he would not reach the same level of understanding that is reflected in the *Life-Records*, Singer brings forth a clearer and accurate picture of Chaucer's royal life than any other editor of the handpress period.

The focus on negative parts of Chaucer's royal court life should not be seen as a wholly negative representation of the poet's courtly existence. Rather, the work of Morell, Tyrwhitt, and Singer represent some of the glossed-over or ignored portions of Chaucer's biography that most other editors chose not to include in detail (or at all). In the end, all of the editions mentioned above have some mention of Chaucer in a royal setting. In doing so, the editors purposely attempt to connect Chaucer the poet with Chaucer the courtier; such a connection not only elevates Chaucer as author, but the text itself through its association with royalty and courtliness. This applies to more than just the *Canterbury Tales*, of course, and is present in every biographical study of Chaucer from Speght onwards. For readers of these editions, the heavy-handed nature of the biography is clear:

⁴⁰⁷ Singer, *British Poets*, x-xi.

Chaucer was a legitimate member of the royal courts. His poetry, much of which was created during his time as courtier, is therefore elevated to a kingly level—supported, even if indirectly, by both Edward III and Richard II. No other endorsement could be greater.

Conclusion

Regardless of the actual connection to his kings, the editors of Chaucer's works positioned the poet as a man with great royal import, familial connections, educational *bona fides*, and strong personal traits. The "Prefatory Chaucer" presented to readers during the handpress period shared these qualities and qualifications with great regularity. Almost every edition of the *Canterbury Tales* included some biographical information about their author. And every biographical sketch included, in some form, the elevation of Chaucer from mere poet to the "Father of English Poetry".

The biographical sketch, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, was used by editors to contextualize Chaucer and elevate the poet in the reader's mind. This is apparent throughout all of the examples discussed above, from the briefest of biographies (Elizabeth Cooper) to the longest (John Dart). These biographies enabled editors to create what Geoffrey Gust calls the "autofictional persona" of Chaucer the poet.⁴⁰⁸ This persona created a "mask" over Chaucer that enabled his editors to position him in a particular manner, whether as Father of English Poetry or savior of the English language or

⁴⁰⁸ Gust discusses the concept of "persona" throughout his book, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). In particular, discussions related to "autofictional persona" appear in Chapter 1 (pp. 1-50) and coverage of Chaucer's biographical representations appear in Chapter 2 (pp. 51-86).

religious caretaker. In surveying a wide variety of Chaucer biographies, beyond publications of the *Canterbury Tales*, Gust concludes:

In looking specifically at Chaucerian biography, it is readily seen that many, or indeed most, biographers continue the trend of Chaucer's fifteenth-century followers by upholding the cultural centrality of the poet and projecting his life in accordance with their own high expectations.⁴⁰⁹

I would add to this that the editors of Chaucer's works are also projecting his life in accordance with their *readers'* expectations. As is evident from the examples above, there was an elevation of Chaucer in the biographical portions of the printed texts. This was not done solely for the pleasure and enjoyment of the editors, but in order to raise the poet in the eyes of the reader as well. The trend that Gust rightly sees as a continuation from the fifteenth century can be applied to readers of the biographies as well as their authors.

In 1803, William Godwin produced his lengthy *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet* in four volumes. The text, a second edition of which was released the next year, was one of the first full-length studies of Chaucer's life. It was published independently from any of Chaucer's writings, unlike each of the other biographies discussed in this chapter. The nearly 2,000-page biography managed to weave Chaucer's personal life, professional experiences, and poetical production into the social and political history of fourteenth-century England. Chaucer's history, then, became England's history (and vice versa). Chaucer's high level of importance is reinforced throughout the next nearly 2,000 pages and Godwin does not hold back in his praise and elevation of the poet.

⁴⁰⁹ Gust, *Constructing Chaucer*, 55.

The biography is intended as a memorial to Chaucer and an effort to enable the reader to “feel for the instant as if he had lived with Chaucer.”⁴¹⁰ Indeed, Godwin wanted the reader to feel connected to Chaucer and to understand the poet and the world that he inhabited. By doing so, Godwin hoped, readers would better be able to understand how significant a figure Chaucer was to English history:

There are abundant reasons why England should regard Chaucer with peculiar veneration, should cherish his memory, and eagerly desire to be acquainted with whatever may illustrate his character, or explain the wonders he performed. The first and direct object of this work, is to erect a monument to his name, and, as far as the writer was capable of doing it, to produce an interesting and amusing book in modern English, enabling the reader, who might shrink from the labour of mastering the phraseology of Chaucer, to do justice to his illustrious countryman.⁴¹¹

There is perhaps no better explanation of *all* Chaucer biographical sketches in the handpress period than Godwin offers in the preface to his own work.

The intent of each of the editors discussed in this chapter is to present Chaucer to the reader in a way that places the poet in a position of importance and admiration. This elevates the poet and his poetry in the reader’s eye and provides an introduction to the world in which Chaucer lived, worked, and created his literary legacy. Godwin’s biography reaches a nearly hagiographic-level of admiration: “No one man in the history of human intellect ever did more, than was effected by the single mind of Chaucer.”⁴¹² Even this embellishment, however, fits in line with editors from Thomas Speght onwards who brought Chaucer’s biography to the reader and who positioned the poet as the Father of English Poetry.

⁴¹⁰ Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1:xi.

⁴¹¹ Ibid., 1:v.

⁴¹² Ibid., 1:iv-v.

Through an exploration of Chaucer's literary skills, strong lineage, formal education, and courtly connections, each presentation of the poet discussed in this chapter elevates him for the reader. This elevation, surely intentional and heavy-handed at times, is then transferred to the poetry itself. In the case of the *Canterbury Tales*, it is the very best poetry written by the very best poet in English history. From these prefatory biographical studies it is clear that editors saw no better way to increase the reader's expectations and understanding of the text than to first elevate the poet himself.

CHAPTER 4 CONSIDERING CHAUCER'S LANGUAGE

Introduction

From the first printing of Geoffrey Chaucer's text by William Caxton in 1477, Chaucer's language has been a concern for printers, editors, and publishers. This chapter focuses on the purposeful alteration of text through acts such as translation and modernization. Specifically, it assesses how editors and publishers explained and defended their decisions to translate, modernize, or otherwise alter Chaucer's work. From Caxton's initial printing of the *Canterbury Tales* until the end of the handpress period, dozens of editors attempted to rework and reform Chaucer's language into a more "polish'd" version.⁴¹³ Some, like Caxton, tried to retain as much of Chaucer's original language and authorial intent as possible. Others were less concerned with the authorial influence than with their own perceptions of audience and readability. They were more concerned with the words on the page than with the poet's authorial intentions.

The result was a purposeful attempt intended to make Chaucer's language more easily accessible to the reader. This was done through a variety of different methods (glossaries, notations, translation, and modernization) and for different reasons (commercial appeal and literary concerns). This chapter explores how these methods and reasons were presented to readers through editorial commentary and other paratextual elements. The movement from fifteenth-century Middle English to nineteenth-century Modern English was one of great and concerted effort by editors and publishers. The result was a purposeful reshaping and altering of Chaucer's original language and text.

⁴¹³ Dryden, *Fables Ancient and Modern*, 1700, C2r.

Like all discussions of Chaucer in this dissertation, we begin with William Caxton's selection of the *Canterbury Tales* as one of the first major texts to produce in his new print shop in England near the end of the fifteenth century. The choice was, according to Lotte Hellinga, "his boldest step, manifesting what he intended to do as a publisher, and at the same time making his most enduring gift to English literature."⁴¹⁴ Of primary concern for Caxton in his selection of the text was to make the text available to fifteenth-century readers and share with them the great impact of Chaucer and his work on the vernacular English language:

For to fore that he by hys labour embelysshid/ornated and made faire our englysshe/in thys royaume was had rude speche and incongrus/as yet it appiereth by olde books/whyche at thys day ought not to have place ne be compared emong ne to hys beauteous volumes/and aournate writynges/of whom he made many bokes and treatyses of many a noble historye as well in metre as in ryme and prose/and them so craftyly made/that he comprehended hys maters in short/quyck and hie sentences/eschewyng prolyxyte/castyng away the chaf of superfluyte/and shewyng the pyked grayn of sentence/utteryd by crafty and sugred eloquence⁴¹⁵

This text comes from Caxton's "Proheyme" that preceded his second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. This preface introduced the reader to "that noble & grete philosopher Gefferey Chaucer" and presented the poet as someone who actively shaped the English language.⁴¹⁶ Caxton mentioned, specifically, Chaucer's "beauteous volumes/and aournate writynges...as wel in metre as in ryme and prose."⁴¹⁷ He established the poet as an arbiter of the English language, and someone who was exceedingly important to the development of the vernacular in England.

⁴¹⁴ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, 57-8.

⁴¹⁵ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, a2r.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

In this work, and others, Caxton played an important role in “making and disseminating the canons of medieval English literature, as well as in promulgating an idea of vernacular authorship,” according to Seth Lerer.⁴¹⁸ Caxton supported Chaucer’s status as a classical *auctor* and the father of English poetry, pointing to his use of the vernacular as evidence of this lofty status. It also, according to Lerer, allowed Caxton to “legitimate his press in the context of English vernacular culture” by printing Chaucer in his native language and promoting this usage as a form of textual recovery (particularly of the “vary true & correcte” 1483 edition).⁴¹⁹

The perception of Geoffrey Chaucer as the progenitor of the English language (a view echoed repeatedly throughout the four centuries following Caxton’s edition) is at the heart of this chapter. By establishing Chaucer as a fundamental agent in the development of the English vernacular, particularly in relation to literary creation, early printers and editors of Chaucer’s work positioned the poet as an essential contributor to the development of the English language and, by extension, English identity. This positioning of Chaucer as the “Father” of the English language occurred in editions of Chaucer’s work that mirrored or replicated his Middle English vocabulary as well as editions that altered or modernized his text. As will be explored below, the establishment of Chaucer as a linguistic Founding Father persisted from Caxton’s early editions through to the end of the nineteenth century. How and why the idea was presented changed significantly over time. For the reader, an understanding of and appreciation for Chaucer’s original language was not always guaranteed. Founding father or not,

⁴¹⁸ Seth Lerer, “William Caxton,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 723.

⁴¹⁹ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, a2r.

Chaucer's language was always at the mercy of the editors and printers who put type to page.

As has been discussed in earlier chapters, and is evident from his 1483 "Proheyme," William Caxton was concerned with presenting as accurate a version of the *Canterbury Tales* as possible. His 1477 edition was inadequate, according to Caxton, because it resulted in "many thynges left out" of the text that should have been included.⁴²⁰ Caxton saw his first edition as faulty because it did not reflect the true text of the *Canterbury Tales* that Chaucer had conceived and written. His 1483 second edition was, in many ways, a do-over for Caxton—one that he felt necessary to produce in order to properly honor the author and his text. Both editions retained the original Middle English found in the manuscript sources. Caxton did not alter or update the text and his devotion to the source material in his second edition was such that present-day Chaucerian scholars consider the 1483 edition as a stand-in for the original (but now lost) manuscript source that Caxton used.

Most of the printed editions of the *Canterbury Tales* that immediately followed Caxton's 1483 edition likewise retained the vernacular language that was found in the medieval manuscripts. Word choices and minor spelling differences were certainly present in these editions, but they were still within the realm of the original language found in the manuscripts. Caxton's edition was reused and copied by numerous printers as a source text for many decades to follow. For this reason, Chaucer's vernacular language was long seen through the lens of Caxton's editions (primarily his 1483 version). Significant and meaningful changes to the text, along with paratextual commentary on these changes, did not occur until about 50 years later.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

Celebrating Chaucer's Language

While Caxton discussed Chaucer's impact on the development of the English language, he did not directly address the language of the poetry itself. Rather, he focused on the importance of Chaucer as an author in general, not specifically because of particular language in the *Canterbury Tales*. Following in Caxton's footsteps, Richard Pynson and Wykyn de Worde printed editions of the *Tales* that mirrored the second edition from Caxton's printshop. There are numerous explanations for this mirroring, among them the fact that de Worde worked directly with Caxton and had a hand in preparing the printing press for many of Caxton's editions. In addition, both men saw the success that Caxton had as printer and viewed themselves as his natural successors in the industry. Finally, there is the simple economic impact of the publications: it was far cheaper to reprint the existing text as Caxton had printed it than to update, translate, or otherwise alter the text. Neither Pynson nor de Worde concerned himself with the language that they were printing, but chose (like Caxton) to focus on producing the *Canterbury Tales* for a growing audience of English readers.

This can partly be explained by the fact that, even by de Worde's edition of 1498, the readership was less than 100 years removed from Chaucer's death. The language shift over that period of time was certainly not a definitive split between Middle English and Modern English. As Jeremy J. Smith notes, the transition was hardly finite at all:

The term 'Middle English' generally refers to the period between the Norman Conquest of AD 1066 and the arrival of printing in England in 1476, as opposed to 'Old English' (before 1066) and 'New' or 'Modern English' (after 1476). It should of course be noted that the correspondence between language-state and date is approximate: people did not wake up

on the morning after the Norman Conquest, or after the arrival of printing, speaking in a radically different way.⁴²¹

The reading audiences of Caxton, Pynson, and de Worde were nearly as connected to the language of the *Canterbury Tales* as Chaucer's contemporary readers. While some shifts did indeed begin to occur after Caxton set up the first English printing shop in the 1470s, such shifts did not greatly influence the language until well into the sixteenth century.⁴²² As a result, we can see these first three printers as essentially contemporaneous to Chaucer himself. With this assumption in mind, it is no surprise that they did not feel the need to alter or adjust the language in the *Tales* for their readers.

In order to locate the first true shift in language from Chaucer's Middle English to the Modern English reader, we must progress more than 130 years from the poet's death and enter near the mid-point of the sixteenth century. It was at this point that printed texts began to make major shifts in how they presented Chaucer's text and, most importantly, his language to the reader. Beginning with William Thynne's 1532 edition, printed editions of Chaucer's works began to offer readers close assessment of the poet's language and paratextual elements to help interpret and understand the Middle English vocabulary. Thynne's edition was the first to collect all of the poet's work in a single

⁴²¹ Jeremy Smith, "Language," in *A Concise Companion to Middle English Literature*, ed. Marilyn Corrie (West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 145.

⁴²² Jeremy Smith's essay on the evolution of the English language provides a concise and informative summary of the development. In his essay, Smith notes that two particular influences on the English language can help us to determine the dividing point between Middle and Modern English. The first influence (French) began "after around 1250 [when] a mass of Central French vocabulary start[ed] to be recorded as part of English usage" (p. 145). The second influence, and one that is important to the printing history of Chaucer's text and this chapter in particular, was that of Latin-based words: "In the sixteenth century, there was an influx of Latin-derived vocabulary into English not only as a result of Renaissance humanism but also as a result of the development of specialist vocabularies in the vernacular (such as scientific terms) that used Latin- and Greek-based formulations to express new concepts" (146). The result, Smith contends, is a division between Middle and Modern English that comes to fruition in the early sixteenth century—shortly after Caxton, Pynson, and de Worde.

volume.⁴²³ Thynne's collected edition proved rather popular to sixteenth-century readers and was reprinted with regularity over the next thirty years (1542, 1550, and 1561).⁴²⁴

Thynne's edition provided the reader with a three-page preface that briefly discussed both Chaucer's work and his life.⁴²⁵ Like Caxton, Thynne emphasized Chaucer's linguistic skills and his role as father of the English language. Caxton was, in fact, one of Thynne's sources for his edition of Chaucer's text. As Robert Costomiris has discussed, it is clear that "Thynne was simultaneously influenced by both manuscript and print traditions"—a fact made most evident in his treatment of the *Canterbury Tales*.⁴²⁶ Likewise, portions of the paratext echoed Caxton's Proheyme, including the adoration of Chaucer's language. In the preface, Thynne presented his edition to the reader as an authoritative version of Chaucer's works—even if it was not actually approved by the author. In reality, as Greg Walker summarizes, the edition was positioned by the editor(s) as "a project to establish an elevated, 'civil' English literary culture on the model of

⁴²³ Though this dissertation is primarily concerned with the printing of the *Canterbury Tales*, it is worth emphasizing that Thynne's edition was the first to attempt to bring together all of Chaucer's works in one collected volume. Richard Pynson printed a multi-volume selection of Chaucer's works in 1526, but Thynne was the first to collect and print *all* of Chaucer's known texts. It included all of the Tales, as well as other major works attributed to Chaucer including *The Romaunt of the Rose* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In addition to these and other texts that have long been attributed to Chaucer, the edition also includes a variety of poems and ballads that have since been proven not to be written by the poet. Regardless of these extraneous texts, Thynne's edition was extremely valuable in promoting Chaucer's readership in the sixteenth century and providing English audiences with a more expansive collection of the poet's work than was previously available.

⁴²⁴ These latter editions reprinted Thynne's original paratext, though with new editors overseeing the productions. The 1542 edition was largely put together by Bonham and Reynes, the 1550 edition was printed four years after Thynne's death, and the 1561 edition was famously edited by John Stow, who not only picked up the majority of Thynne's original text, but also expanded the edition by adding a group of other texts purported to have been written by Chaucer.

⁴²⁵ As was discussed in chapter 2, Greg Walker has argued, quite convincingly, that Thynne alone did not edit the text for the 1532 *Workes*. In his 2005 book, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford University Press), Walker leans on evidence from the poet John Leland, who claimed that Sir Bryan Tuke was co-editor of the text and actually wrote the preface for the collected works. See, in particular, his Chapter 4 "Reading Chaucer in 1532: William Thynne, Brian Tuke, and the Politics of Literary Editing" (pp. 56-72).

⁴²⁶ Robert Costomiris, "The Influence of Printed Editions and Manuscripts on the Canon of William Thynne's *Canterbury Tales*," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, eds. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1999), 245.

classical Greek and Latin letters.”⁴²⁷ This was accomplished by positioning Chaucer’s words as an essential part of the development of the English vernacular.

Including the three-page preface, the entirety of the prefatory material is only six pages. Even in that limited space Thynne delivers quite effusive praise of the poet, referring to him as “that noble & famous clerk” whose work is made up of “sweet & pleasant sentences...and such sharpness or quickness in conclusion, that it is much to be marveled.”⁴²⁸ Chaucer, Thynne contends, is to be admired and praised for being among the “English men, which have right well and notably endeavored and employed themselves to the beautifying and bettering of the English tongue.”⁴²⁹

Thynne emphasizes Chaucer’s role in establishing the English language, aligning it with other vernacular traditions, namely Italian and Spanish. While these two languages are more “Latyn” than English is, they are products of “corruption” by “Vandales, Gothes, Moores, Sarracenes, and other so many tymes blemysshed” by the intermingling of Latin and barbarism.⁴³⁰ By comparison, the reader can assume that Chaucer (and, therefore, the English language) is more pure and less barbarous than these Latin descendants. Indeed, it is the mark of “Englishemen” that they “have right well and notablie endevoyred and employed them selves to the beautifying and bettryng of the Englysh tonge.”⁴³¹ There is no better example of this for Thynne than the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer.

In order to present Chaucer in his purest form, Thynne edited the text to remove any “errors, falsities, and deprivations” that he found in prior editions of the text

⁴²⁷ Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 30.

⁴²⁸ Thynne, *Complete Works*, 1532, a2v.

⁴²⁹ Thynne, *Complete Works*, 1532, a2v.

⁴³⁰ Thynne, *Complete Works*, 1532, a2r.

⁴³¹ Thynne, *Complete Works*, 1532, a2v.

(including the various manuscript editions).⁴³² These imperfections, Thynne notes, were introduced as part of the process of collating one version of the texts with another. He argues, essentially, that the lack of thorough editorial oversight from manuscript to early printed editions has led to a muddled Chaucerian oeuvre. Thynne's edition was put together in order to clear those muddled waters and allow his beauteous language to shine through unblemished. For Thynne, Chaucer was not the cause of lack of clarity in his language; that blame falls to those that followed the poet: scribes, printers, editors, etc.—everyone who touched Chaucer's work after he died. Thynne was the first editor to clearly state his desire to improve the texts through intentional alteration, but far from the last. He (and Tuke) were, as Greg Walker states, “engaged in the opening skirmishes of a struggle over the implications of the Chaucerian legacy” that would continue well into the coming centuries.⁴³³

This compulsion for correction is quite noticeable in many subsequent editions of Chaucer's work. Among the most influential was Thomas Speght, whose collected works of Chaucer first appeared in 1598. Speght addressed the reader directly on the issue of repairing and restoring Chaucer's texts:

Some few years past, I was requested by certain gentlemen my near friends, who loved Chaucer, as he well deserveth; to take a little pains in reviving the memory of so rare a man, as also in doing some reparations on his works, which they judged to be much decayed by injury of time, ignorance of writers, and negligence of Printers.⁴³⁴

Though Speght laid the burden of error at the feet of previous editors and printers, Chaucer himself was not without fault. He came from a time, said Speght, which was “most unlearned” and of “greatest ignorance” and resulted in a poet who, while certainly

⁴³² Thynne, *Complete Works*, 1532, a2r.

⁴³³ Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*, 98.

⁴³⁴ Speght, preface to *Workes*, 1598, a2v.

worthy of our reverence, suffered the effects of his surrounding environment.⁴³⁵

Chaucer's language, in particular, was of concern to Speght. Not just because of how he had been handled by previous editors and printers, but also because of Chaucer's own inherent linguistic weaknesses.

According to Speght, Chaucer "had always an earnest desire to enrich & beautify our English tongue" which he accomplished, in part, by "following the example of Dante and Petrarch" in improving the vernacular language.⁴³⁶ This improvement of the language notwithstanding, Speght still felt the need to provide his readers with additional guidance for better understanding Chaucer's work. The original vocabulary and text that Speght worked so hard to "repair" still had to be explained to the reader in order for them to get the most out of Chaucer's texts. At the end of the book, Speght inserted a glossary of "old and obscure words of Chaucer, explained" or "the hard words of Chaucer, explained".⁴³⁷ This list of words took up fourteen pages at the end of the 1598 edition, resulting in a total of more than 2,000 "obscure" words that the reader may have had trouble understanding.

This use of glossaries could be seen as an indirect way to translate the "old" language in which Chaucer wrote (re: Middle English) into a more acceptable and understandable form of Modern English. While not a direct, *in situ* translation of Chaucer's text, the glossaries acted as a translational stand-in for the reader. They were, in many respects, as effective as a straight word-for-word translation. From the reader's perspective, this act of peripheral translation was almost as useful as if Speght had rewritten the text in the more common tongue of late sixteenth-century England. Rather

⁴³⁵ Ibid., a3r.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., b6v-c1r

⁴³⁷ Ibid., 4a1r-4a1v.

than having to know—or guess at—the meanings of “old and obscure words” like readers from Caxton to Thynne, Speght’s readers were given a linguistic crutch to lean upon while they traveled through Chaucer’s works.

In his second edition, printed in 1602, Speght expanded the glossary to over 22 pages in length. He included additional words and phrases, as one might expect, but also expanded and corrected his definitions in order to better inform the reader. In addition to the increased glossary, Speght included English translations of select Latin and French words that appear throughout Chaucer’s texts. These translations further bridged the gap in language and readership from the late fourteenth century period of authorship to the early seventeenth century period of readership, reflecting the knowledge and understanding of his intended audience.

The supplementary material (including glossaries, non-English dictionaries, and other paratextual elements) was added by Speght in order to help the reader better understand the text. While these elements did not reflect or represent direct translations of the Chaucerian manuscripts and his original language, they were the first significant step towards translation and modernization of Chaucer’s works. Even if peripherally, the *Canterbury Tales* and other Chaucerian texts were beginning to be shaped and shifted by editors in order to better reach and connect with the reading public. The era of intentional translation was fast approaching and Thomas Speght was, in many ways, the first to cross into that new period of Chaucerian publication.

Direct Translation

If we see Speght's edition of Chaucer as the first step towards direct translation, it could easily be argued that his work was a catalyst for active reworking of Chaucer's text. In the 200-plus years from Caxton's edition to Speght's, very little had been done by printers or editors to change the text out of its original language.⁴³⁸ Speght, whose first two editions came in quick succession (1598 and 1602), was still relevant nearly a century after his original publication when his 1687 edition was printed. Speght's editions were influential to eighteenth century poets, printers, and writers including Alexander Pope (who owned the 1598 edition as a youth), Ben Jonson (who read the 1602 edition), and, most importantly, John Dryden.⁴³⁹ It was Dryden's work with Chaucer's text in 1700 that brought the medieval poet directly out of the past and into the realm of Modern English.

As early as 1897, Chaucerian scholars have pointed out the link between Speght's edition and John Dryden's work. Frederick Tupper convincingly argued that Dryden relied on Speght for opening the field of Chaucerian editing to translation:

Dryden was indebted to Chaucer's editor, Speght... The seventeenth century modernizer has incorporated into his version, not only the inspired lines of Chaucer, but the uninspired notes of Speght; has indeed, in a few

⁴³⁸ This is not to say that the text was wholly unchanged from Caxton to Speght. The text was altered, added to, and reordered by many printers during that span. The act of translation or modernization, however, was not purposefully addressed until Speght's edition. There *was* a concerted effort by some editors to retain Chaucer's language as much as possible: in particular, Elias Ashmole's 1652 collection, which included the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*, and Richard Brathwait's 1665 commentaries on the *Miller's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Both of these texts are discussed in more detail below.

⁴³⁹ For additional discussions of Chaucer's impact on fellow authors and the public in general, see *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, edited by Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015). In particular, see the following chapters: "The Early Reception of Chaucer's The House of Fame" by Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, "Chaucer the Puritan" by Mike Rodman Jones, "Revenant Chaucer: Early Modern Celebrity" by Thomas A. Prendergast, and "Ancient Chaucer: Temporalities of Fame" by Jamie C. Fumo.

cases, preferred to be wrong with the scribe, to being right with the prophet.⁴⁴⁰

Tupper makes a valid argument that Dryden used Speght's edition to create his own Chaucerian text. I would add that Dryden was influenced by Speght's translational activities and was inspired to take them even further. Why stop at a lengthy glossary or foreign language translation? Why not translate Chaucer's entire text to make it easier to read and more palatable to eighteenth century audiences?

Dryden began his discussion of the poet by acknowledging his influence on the English language and overall literary significance:

From Chaucer the Purity of the English Tongue began....In the first place, As he is the Father of *English* Poetry, so I hold him in the same Degree of Veneration as the *Grecians* held *Homer*, or the *Romans* *Virgil*. He is a perpetual Fountain of good Sense; learn'd in all Sciences; and therefore speaks properly on all Subjects.⁴⁴¹

Like Speght and Thynne, Dryden connected Chaucer's importance and value as a poet to his biography—specifically to his education. However, and this is a big however, Dryden was quick to point out that the poet is far from perfect:

The Verse of Chaucer, I confess, is not Harmonious to us; but 'tis like the Eloquence of one whom Tacitus commends, it was *auribus istius temporis accommodata*.⁴⁴² ...There is the rude Sweetness of a *Scotch* Tune in it, which is natural and pleasing, though not perfect. 'Tis true, I cannot go so far as he who publish'd the last Edition of him; for he would make us believe the Fault is in our Ears, and that there were really Ten Syllables in a Verse where we find but Nine...We can only say, that he liv'd in the Infancy of our Poetry, and that nothing is brought to Perfection at the first.⁴⁴³

In this analysis of Chaucer and his language, there was a noticeable slight towards Speght's edition of the poet's work. Dryden was the first editor of Chaucer's work to

⁴⁴⁰ Tupper, "Dryden and Speght's Chaucer," 174.

⁴⁴¹ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, b1r-b2r.

⁴⁴² "Suited to the ears of that time"

⁴⁴³ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, b2r-b2v.

attack his predecessors. From Caxton through Speght, they all seemed to build on one another over the 200-plus years of publication. Dryden was the first to cut down those who came before him.

Dryden positioned his criticisms (and subsequent edits of Chaucer's text) as being necessary for the sake of the reader. Simple common sense, Dryden argued, was enough to convince any reader that consistency in the number of syllables in poetic verse was "either not known, or not always practis'd" during Chaucer's lifetime.⁴⁴⁴ In order to make up for this and other issues related to the disharmonious and "obsolete" quality of Chaucer's language, Dryden translated the text for the reader. Such translation created a more "digestible" version of the *Canterbury Tales* and a cleaner result in Dryden's eyes: "*Chaucer*, I confess, is a rough Diamond, and must first be polish'd e'er he shines."⁴⁴⁵

Dryden did admit, however, that "there are other Judges who think I ought not to have translated Chaucer into English, out of a quite contrary Notion: They suppose there is a certain Veneration due to his old Language; and that it is little less than Profanation and Sacrilege to alter it."⁴⁴⁶ He rejected this idea and claimed that the translation is necessary: "How few are there who can read Chaucer, so as to understand him perfectly? And if imperfectly, then with less Profit, and no Pleasure."⁴⁴⁷

The translation was not perfect, he admitted, but it was necessary to properly pass along Chaucer's work to modern readers. Without translation, Dryden argued, the poet's words would essentially be useless to the reader—the words may technically be "read" but the sense and meaning would be lost or maimed. Anything lost by the translation,

⁴⁴⁴ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, b2v.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., c2r.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., c2v.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., c2v-d1r.

such as the beauty of the language, is more than made up for by the increased clarity that translation provides. In addition, Dryden claimed “what Beauties I lose in some Places, I give to others which had them not originally.”⁴⁴⁸

Dryden also reinforced the idea that he was a better caretaker (and editor) of Chaucer’s legacy than any who came beforehand. His own understanding of the poet and his works far exceeded that of Speght, Thynne, and others going back to Caxton:

In sum, I seriously protest, that no Man ever had, or can have, a greater Veneration for *Chaucer*, than myself. I have translated some part of his Works, only that I might perpetuate his Memory, or at least refresh it, amongst my Countrymen. If I have alter’d him any where for the better, I must at the same time acknowledge, that I could have done nothing without him.⁴⁴⁹

It would seem, to follow Dryden’s reasoning, that Chaucer had never been in better hands and handled with such care as in *Fables Ancient and Modern*. Chaucer was great, but only made that much greater by Dryden’s efforts—a rather brilliant act of self-praise and self-promotion.

In the hundred years between Speght’s first edition and Dryden’s collection, two editors took a different approach to Chaucer and his work. These two men, Elias Ashmole and Richard Brathwait, saw Chaucer’s original language as worth preserving and defending. In both instances, the publishing of Chaucer’s text was accompanied by a defense of his language. Perhaps both editors saw what had been with Speght and what was coming next (as represented by John Dryden). Their attempt to preserve Chaucer’s language can be seen as admirable, but in the end it was not enough to stave off the Dryden’s of the world or to preserve Chaucer unblemished and untouched by modern hands.

⁴⁴⁸ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, d1r.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, d1r.

In 1652, Elias Ashmole was concerned not only with preserving the language of Geoffrey Chaucer but other poets as well. His publication, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, was a collection of alchemical texts from English authors. It was intended to demonstrate the significant role of England in alchemical studies and to highlight unknown or lesser-known works from manuscript sources:

How great a blemish is it then to us, that refuse to reade so Famous Authors in our Naturall Language, whilst Strangers are necessitated, to Reade them in Ours, to understand them in their Own, Yet think the dignity of the Subject, much more deserving, then their Paines. If this we do but ingeniously Consider, we shall judge it more of Reason that we looke back upon, then neglect such pieces of Learning as are Natives of our owne Countrey, and by this Inquisition, finde no Nation hath written more, or better, although at present...few of their Workes can be found.⁴⁵⁰

Ashmole resolved, through this publication, to find and publish as many of these great works on alchemy that he could find: “[I] Centred my Thoughts, and fix’d them on this designe of Collecting All (or as many as I could meete with) of our own English Hermetique Philosophers, and to make them publique.”⁴⁵¹ Among his sources for the material were manuscripts in private collections. These were texts that had been previously overlooked or forgotten by the English reading public.

In addition to being concerned about bringing the alchemical texts to his readers, Ashmole was also aware of the importance of presenting the texts in their original language. The subtitle of the collection—“Containing severall poetickall pieces of our famous English philosophers, who have written the hermetique mysteries *in their owne ancient language*”⁴⁵²—made it clear that Ashmole wanted to keep the language in its original state:

⁴⁵⁰ Elias Ashmole, *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (Cornhill: Nathaniel Brooke, 1652), A2v.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid. B2v.

⁴⁵² Ibid., t.p. (emphasis added)

My Care was next to dispose them in such a Series as might be answerable to the Respective Times, wherein each Author Flourished...I have made Old Age become Young and Lively by restoring each of the Ancient Writers not only in the Spring of their severall Beauties, but to the Summer of their Strength and Perfection...And therefore that the Truth and Worth of their Workes might receive no Diminution by my Transcription, I purposely retain'd the old Words and manner of their Spelling, as I found them in the Originalls.⁴⁵³

The concern for all authors' original language was reinforced throughout Ashmole's lengthy closing section entitled "Annotations and Discourses." This section included copious notations on the works collected in the book, such as Chaucer's *Canon's Yeoman's Tale*. This section, along with a short but helpful Glossary, provided the reader with helpful guides and context for more easily reading and understanding the text that was included in Ashmole's collection.

For Ashmole, retaining the original text was a key part of the publication at hand. He addressed the opening Prolegomena to "All Ingeniously Elaborate Students" noting that there is a certain amount of sophistication (even difficulty) with some of these texts because they are being published in their "Ancient Language" rather than being modernized or translated.⁴⁵⁴ He was clearly targeting an academic audience, one that could handle the potential difficulties of the publication. It was worth these difficulties, Ashmole argued, in order to accurately and precisely present the work and ideas of great English thinkers to the audience.

Taking a similarly academic approach, Richard Brathwait, a poet and academic active during the bulk of the seventeenth century, likewise defended and protected original language and text. In 1665, at age 77, Brathwait wrote *A Comment Upon the Two Tales of Our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr. Jeffray Chaucer, Knight*. This

⁴⁵³ Ibid., B2v-B4v.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., A2r.

text, spanning roughly 200 pages, was an in-depth study and assessment of two of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: the *Miller's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. The commentary offered a detailed analysis and dissection of Chaucer's text with Brathwait's own perspective on each *Tale* laid out clearly on the page amongst excerpts from Chaucer's original text.

Because of its position as a "commentary" rather than a presentation of the entire text, I would not consider Brathwait's edition to be part of the "translation" focus of this chapter. Rather, it can be seen as one of the first true academic studies dedicated to Chaucer's work. What is important for this chapter, however, is Brathwait's stance against the "polishing" of Chaucer's language. As is evident from the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Brathwait saw such manipulation of Chaucer's text as spoiling the art and poetry. This is not to say that Brathwait thought Chaucer's language to be perfect and untouchable, just that he would not desire to alter it in any manner:

Brathwait thus clings steadily to the tradition of his youth. Chaucer—for him—is still the greatest of English poets, as well as the first; his teaching is sound and moral, his imagination and wit incomparable; yet, owing to the dark age in which he lived, his style is often rude and rough.⁴⁵⁵

Due to his being born in the time of Middle English, then, Chaucer's language was inherently flawed. This should not, Brathwait argued, prompt editors to change or alter the original language.

There is no clearer defense of this position than in Brathwait's closing appendix to the commentaries. The appendix, which seems more like a coda or epilogue than an appendix, explained Brathwait's decision to retain Chaucer's original language. In that

⁴⁵⁵ C. F. E. Spurgeon, introduction to *A Comment Upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr. Jeffray Chaucer, Knight*, by Richard Brathwait, ed. C. F. E. Spurgeon (London: Chaucer Society, 1901), xiv.

section, Brathwait defended himself against a critic who stated that he “could allow well of Chaucer, if his Language were Better” but not in its original state.⁴⁵⁶ Brathwait countered this criticism of Chaucer’s text by both defending the poet and attacking the critic:

Sir, It appears, you prefer Speech before the Head-piece; Language before Invention; whereas Weights of judgment has ever given Invention Priority before Language. And not to leave you dissatisfied, As the Time wherein these Tales were writ, rendered him incapable of the one; So his Pregnancy of Fancy approv’d him incomparable for the other.⁴⁵⁷

Chaucer’s language was indeed hampered by his own life context, Brathwait agreed, but the result was even more impressive given these limitations. Brathwait argued that Chaucer’s language should stand on its own, regardless of the circumstances in which it was written, and “justif[y] the Author” allowing “his Works to perpetuate his Honour” going forward.⁴⁵⁸

The intentions of Ashmole and Brathwait to preserve Chaucer’s language could not, however, stand up to Dryden’s popularity and sheer influence on English readers. Their detailed, academic, and (at times) dry approach to Chaucer was not for the casual or curious reader. Brathwait’s edition, in particular, was extremely detailed and important in the trajectory of Chaucer publications, but Dryden’s translations of Chaucer’s text became an integral part of the Chaucerian oeuvre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His versions of the *Tales* were picked up and reprinted in many editions that followed, far more than Brathwait’s work. In addition, Dryden’s “modernization” of Chaucer was echoed (or copied) by editors and printers almost immediately after its

⁴⁵⁶ Richard Brathwait, *A Comment Upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr. Jeffray Chaucer, Knight*, ed. C. F. E. Spurgeon (London: Chaucer Society, 1901), 199.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

publication. This speaks not only to Dryden's popularity but also to the elevated literary status with which he was seen.

The work of William Pittis, for example, came right on the heels of Dryden's *Fables*. His two publications, both printed in 1701, were produced when he was relatively young (only about 27 years old). The two works, *Chaucer's Whims: Being some Select Fables and Tales in Verse* and *Canterbury Tales Rendred into Familiar Verse*, presented a vastly different Chaucerian text than even Dryden had offered his readers. The text, in fact, was not Chaucerian at all. Rather, Pittis wrote his own verse in the mode of (or inspired by) Chaucer's original works. The result was a rather disjointed and almost maddening mess of text that has almost nothing to do with Chaucer and his work. The text, Pittis claimed, was based on Chaucer's texts; upon reading the material, however, it is clear that this claim was wholly spurious.

Pittis opened *Chaucer's Whims* by explaining, in a short preface, the reason for selecting these tales for publication: "Reflections upon the Common Occurrences of Life are so very necessary... Tales and Fables have hitherto been look'd upon as things worthy of a Common Reception."⁴⁵⁹ He did explain, however, that in "collecting" and modernizing these tales, he feared that he had "not done Justice to Chaucer" in attaching "his Name to Fables and Stories" which "are Collected by another Hand."⁴⁶⁰ Chaucer was positioned as a commodity of sorts in Pittis's preface. By associating his publication with the Chaucer "brand" Pittis aligned his own work with that of the great poet.

This alignment is further reflected in the other Pittis publication of 1701: misleadingly called *Canterbury Tales Rendred into Familiar Verse*. From the outset, this

⁴⁵⁹ William Pittis, ed. *Chaucer's Whims* (London: D. Edwards, 1701), i.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, ii.

seemed like a translation or modernized retelling of Chaucer's most famous work. Upon examination, however, it is very clear that the text had nothing to do with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Two significant aspects of the title page warned the reader immediately that this was not the "Canterbury Tales" with which they were familiar. First, the stories listed on the title page do not align with any of the *Tales* from Chaucer's text:

The Plain Proof

The Forreigner

The Choice

An Eagle and a Crow

The Qualification

The Politician

The Revolution

The Resignation

The Partition

The Republican

The Wind and Weatherman

The Barister⁴⁶¹

The titles did not match with any of Chaucer's *Tales* or even his pilgrims (aside, possibly, from "The Barister" who could be a stand-in for the Man of Law). Second, the author of the text was listed as "Written by no Body"—not by Chaucer or even Pittis, but by nobody. If the text were truly taken from Chaucer and just "rendred into familiar verse" then the author would remain the same. Instead, as described in the preface, the "tales"

⁴⁶¹ William Pittis, ed. *Canterbury Tales Rendred into Familiar Verse* (London: 1701), t.p.

were taken by Pittis from “a Friend in Kent” who “sent ’em up as a Present to me.”⁴⁶²

Pittis claims to not know either the author of these tales (hence the author credit of

“Written by no Body”) or why they are titled the way they are:

...we are to seek for the Author, yet since no account can be given of him, it is Material we should say something in Favour of his Book, and let the Publick know why they are call’d Canterbury-Tales, when they are Printed at London, and take their Name from a Place, which perhaps the Author of ’em knows no better than Him that publishes ’em...I have nothing more than to instance in one Particular, that I have forgot, which is the reason why I call ’em Canterbury-Tales, when they seem Calculated for the Meridian of London, and were found in a Town very distant from it; and that is, because that City is the Metropolis of the County, whence we are oblig’d with ’em.⁴⁶³

Since the stories, according to Pittis’s friend, were found in Kent and Canterbury is the “metropolis” of Kent, they were so named the Canterbury Tales. Nowhere in this preface, or anywhere else in the publication for that matter, was Chaucer mentioned. Indeed, no mention of the *Canterbury Tales* themselves was included. The naming, then, was purely coincidental—or, as is more likely the case, a calculated move by Pittis to gain more attention and readership for his publication.⁴⁶⁴

These two publications provide a view of Chaucer as a commodity—one that Pittis exploited in a most gimmicky manner. This is not to say that Pittis’s texts were without any merit. They were entertaining and pleasant to read and, in Pittis’s opinion, provided valuable instruction for “the readiness ev’ry Person should shew in being Useful

⁴⁶² Ibid., i.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., ii-iii.

⁴⁶⁴ A similar tactic was used by the printer of *Canterbury Tales: Composed for the Entertainment of All Ingenious young Men and Maids* (London: 1687). This text, written by “Chaucer Junior” had nothing to do with the actual Canterbury Tales, but used Canterbury as a setting for its own stories. The tales, meant to entertain and instruct the reader, were not connected in any manner to Chaucer’s text; but the title and author imply some sort of relationship between the two. The brief text (less than 30 pages in its first edition) was reprinted with some regularity from 1687 through 1810.

to the Publick.”⁴⁶⁵ In both *Chaucer’s Whims* and *Canterbury Tales*, each tale included a closing “Moral” that summarized the objective lesson of that particular poem.⁴⁶⁶ These moral codas were instructive, catchy, and directed the reader to better choices and proper behavior. Chaucer, meanwhile, was entirely forgotten after the title pages and prefaces. Perhaps that was for the best. Though Pittis was well-intentioned and enthusiastic, his work did not quite measure up to the Father of English Poetry, as is clear here in the first two stanzas of “Justice Mistaken” from *Chaucer’s Whims*:

A Dolphin once had an Intent,
To visit Parts remote,
And left his watry Government
To his Officers of Note:

Who wisely laid their Heads to make
Advantage of their Place,
And for their own, not Master’s sake,
Direct the Finny Race.⁴⁶⁷

Among Chaucer’s many whims, writing about dolphins was probably not one of them.

Unlike Pittis, who used Chaucer’s name and reputation for only titular purposes, other editors and authors in the eighteenth century used Chaucer as an inspiration to create their own works. Once such author, Samuel Cobb, produced his own version of one of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1712. Entitled *The Carpenter of Oxford, or, the Miller’s Tale, from Chaucer*, the text was a short retelling of the tale “attempted in Modern

⁴⁶⁵ Pittis, preface to *Canterbury Tales*, iii.

⁴⁶⁶ That is, all the stories have morals except the wonderfully titled “One that Shit in his Hat; and afterwards put it upon his Head”—which seems to have not necessitated a moral summary at all.

⁴⁶⁷ Pittis, *Chaucer’s Whims*, 15.

English” by Cobb.⁴⁶⁸ The text was preceded by an “Argument” that provided a short synopsis and moral of the tale for the reader’s sake: “Nicholas a Scholar of Oxford, practiseth with Alison the Carpenter’s Wife of Osney, to deceive her Husband, but in the end is rewarded accordingly.”⁴⁶⁹

Cobb’s translation of Chaucer’s original composition did not change the overall plot or structure of the tale, but it did go a long way in “modernizing” the language for the reading audience—very much akin to Dryden’s approach in 1700. The text was so changed, in fact, that it would be easy to call the poem a reinterpretation rather than a translation. I refer to it as a translation, however, because the intention of the editor was to modernize Chaucer’s language, not to change the tale itself. In addition, the publication included a second part: “Two Imitations of Chaucer” by the poet Matthew Prior. Prior’s “imitations” were clearly attempts to mimic Chaucer’s style and language. In fact, Prior included both an “imitation” version of the poems and a “modern style” of the same text. He was, essentially, translating his own work from the vernacular of Chaucer’s day to the modern English vernacular of early eighteenth-century England. Cobb does the same thing with his modernized style of the *Miller’s Tale*: creating a translation of the text out of Chaucer’s Middle English.

On a much larger, and more successful, scale, Alexander Pope took a similar approach to Chaucer. In 1709, Dryden published a series entitled *Miscellany Poems* which contained “Translations of the Ancient Poets” including a translation of the *Merchant’s Tale* by Pope. Recast as “January and May” the poem was a complete rewriting of Chaucer’s text. Pope also produced a version of the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*

⁴⁶⁸ Samuel Cobb and Matthew Prior, eds., *The Carpenter of Oxford, or, the Miller’s Tale, from Chaucer* (London: E. Curll, R. Gosling, and J. Pemberton, 1712), t.p.

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, i.

that appeared in the 1714 *Poetical Miscellanies, Consisting of Original Poems and Translations*. Both of Pope's texts were presented to the reader as translations of Chaucer's work, even if they are perhaps more appropriately categorized as retellings or rewritings.⁴⁷⁰ They also appeared in the 1727 edition of *The Altar of Love. Consisting of Poems and other Miscellanies. By the most eminent Hands*. In that edition, the poems were listed under the heading of "Popeana" but were credited as "Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prol." and "Chaucer's Jan. and May."⁴⁷¹ Like the other editions of Pope's Chaucerian works, this double crediting of the text to both Pope and Chaucer could cause some confusion for the reader. It also potentially made the text seem more like Pope's translation of Chaucer's work. This shared responsibility gave weight to Chaucer's original work while emphasizing the influence and endorsement of Alexander Pope, a popular and modern poet.⁴⁷²

This trend of translation through rewriting was particularly evident in the work of Thomas Betterton. Beginning in 1712, Betterton reworked numerous parts of the *Canterbury Tales* for publication. This included the *Reeve's Tale*, which Betterton turned

⁴⁷⁰ Another publication during this time was *Three New Poems*, edited by John Markland and printed in 1721 and again in 1727. Of the three poems offered to readers, two are purported to be based on Chaucer's tales. There was no paratextual material printed with the 1721 edition, so all that we have to go on is the title page. There, the poems are listed as follows: "Family Duty: Or, the Monk and the Merchant's Wife. Being the Shipman's Tale from Chaucer. Moderniz'd." and "The Curious Wife, a Tale devised in the Manner of Chaucer; by Mr. Fenton. Moderniz'd." These two works are indeed based on Chaucer's *Tales* (though the former is much closer to the original plot than the latter) but there is no explanation given by the editor or Mr. Fenton for why they chose to produce modernized versions of Chaucer's texts. This lack of paratextual evidence makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the editorial choices, but based on the timing of the publication, it would make sense that the modernization was done in an effort to sell more copies and create an easier point of access for readers.

⁴⁷¹ Henry Curll, ed. *The Altar of Love. Consisting of Poems, and other Miscellanies. By the Most Eminent Hands* (London: Henry Curll, 1727), b1r-b2v.

⁴⁷² Pope, like Prior, was a well-known and popular poet when he produced his Chaucerian texts. Pope's publication of *Pastorals* in 1709 and *The Rape of the Lock* in 1712 made him among the most famous writers of the day. Matthew Prior's fame, meanwhile, came from both his career as a diplomat and his publication of poetic verse dating back to the late seventeenth century. For Chaucer's legacy, having these two significant poetic figures translate and rework his texts was undeniably beneficial.

into “The Miller of Trompington.” This text was published four times in a ten-year period (1712, 1714/5, 1720, and 1722) in Bernard Lintot’s *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* (or, simply, *Lintot’s Miscellany*). The 1722 edition also featured Betterton’s reworking of the *General Prologue* with a particular focus on introducing the reader to the various characters in the *Tales*. Betterton’s work was given nearly 50 pages of text in the 1722 edition of the collection, an amount that rivaled Dryden and other better-known writers. Betterton was a fairly recognizable theatre actor at the time of these publications, but his reputation was tied more to his work on the stage than on the page. The reason for Betterton’s strong presence in *Lintot’s Miscellany*: he probably didn’t write the text at all.

An important study of the Betterton texts comes from the work of Betsy Bowden. She first explored Betterton’s work in *Chaucer Aloud: The Varieties of Textual Interpretation* (1987). Bowden followed with the more encyclopedic *Eighteenth-century Modernizations from The Canterbury Tales* (1991). In her discussion of Betterton, Bowden claims that Alexander Pope wrote all of the modernizations of Chaucer’s works and published them under Betterton’s name.⁴⁷³ *Lintot’s Miscellany* is now widely acknowledged to have been edited by Pope, so his role in creating the Chaucerian texts and publishing them under Betterton’s name is not too far outside the realm of possibility. Samuel Johnson and others, according to Bowden, “matter-of-factly attribute” the texts to Pope, while “internal and other external evidence...also point to Pope.”⁴⁷⁴

Regardless of the true authorship, the resulting poetry were mediated and translated versions of Chaucer’s text in a popular and regularly reprinted eighteenth-century miscellany. The edition also featured a version of the *Miller’s Tale* by Elijah

⁴⁷³ Bowden, *18th-Century Modernizations*, 3.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

Fenton that was “devised in the pleasant manner of Gentile Master Geoffrey Chaucer” but almost entirely rewritten and reconceived.⁴⁷⁵ The trend of modernizing Chaucer may have been at its peak in the first half of the eighteenth century. Bowden’s research on edited collections features 28 different texts written and published during this time; each of which is a reworked modernization and translation of Chaucer’s *Tales*.⁴⁷⁶

In 1737, Thomas Morell published an edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* that featured modernized versions of the poet’s work. This publication (which was followed up with an expanded second edition in 1740) included the works of Dryden, Pope, and others. In many ways, Morell’s editions were hybridized versions of the collected volumes that preceded him. In addition to the works produced by other poets, the volumes also included a “Dedication to Henry VIII” from William Thynne’s edition, an abbreviated “Life of Chaucer,” and an editorial preface. The edition also contained an appendix that provided analysis of and notes on the text, various readings of the *General Prologue* based on the extant manuscripts, a list of abbreviations used in the text, and an “Index of the Obsolete Words, Proper Names, &c.” with pagination so readers could refer to the words being defined and used in context.

Morell’s edition was somewhat odd in that it only featured the *General Prologue* and the *Knight’s Tale*—and it featured each twice. In the first instance, the text was closely tied to original manuscript sources; in the second, it was a modernized version. The order of the content was as follows: the *General Prologue* in Middle English; the

⁴⁷⁵ This is the same “Mr. Fenton” who contributed the poem to John Markland’s collection *Three New Poems* (see n. 470 above).

⁴⁷⁶ In a recent publication, *The Wife of Bath in Afterlife: Ballads to Blake* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2017), Bowden has focused specifically on modernizations and retellings of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*. This particular focus was shared by Andrew Higl in 2012: “The Wife of Bath Retold: From the Medieval to the Postmodern” in *Inhabited by Stories: Critical Essays on Tales Retold*, eds. Nancy A. Barta-Smith and Danette Dimarco (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 294-313.

Knight's Tale in Middle English (with annotations and translations by Morell); "Chaucer's Characters: Or, the Introduction to the Canterbury Tales" (a modernization by Thomas Betterton); and "Palamon and Arcite: or, the Knight's Tale" (a modernization by John Dryden).

Morell was certainly not the first to include modernization of the *Tales* in his edition, but he was among the first to include the original text within the same edition as the modernized version. From Morell's own dedication at the beginning of the book, he intended this to be a series of volumes, each of which produced some of the *Canterbury Tales*. This "first and choicest of them" was dedicated to Frederick, Prince of Wales who, Morell hoped, would support the further publication in order to "perpetuate the Memory of the Renowned Geoffrey Chaucer, and recommend his Works to latest Posterity."⁴⁷⁷

In Morell's eyes, Chaucer was worthy of public attention and protection of his original language:

This ancient Poet Jeoffery Chaucer, has now stood the Test of above 300 Years, still read, and still admired, notwithstanding he hath been so wretchedly abused, miswrote and mismetred by all his Editors...⁴⁷⁸

Morell was not only concerned with returning Chaucer to his textual originality, but his original meter and measure as well. In his mind, the two were of equal concern, and worthy of editorial care.

Also of concern for Morell: the potential reader who did not want to try to tackle Chaucer in his original language and meter. For such an audience, Morell offered something more palatable:

And lest some should still disrelish out Author in his ancient Garb, by the Assistance of the most eminent Hands, I have prepared him a modern one,

⁴⁷⁷ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, iv.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii.

which cannot but please the nicest Taste; for as I have but little Hand in them myself, I may venture to say, that some of these Poems, so modernized, are the noblest and most finished Pieces we have extant in our Language.⁴⁷⁹

Morell aimed to please all: those who sought Chaucer in his original state, those who wanted him modernized, and those who wanted to read both versions. In many ways, Morell's approach forecast the divided approach to Chaucerian editing that dominated the nineteenth century. As will be explored in detail below, this division would come to define how English reading audiences received Chaucer in the 1800s. Morell was, in many ways, ahead of the curve with his juxtaposition of original language and modernization.

The use of modernization is repeated throughout many eighteenth-century editions. Morell was just one of many who feel that modernization is a necessary evil of sorts. Only a few of these editors openly labeled what that they are doing as translation; rather, they saw their work as a much-needed "modernizing" of an otherwise inaccessible text. This did not apply just to Chaucer's texts, but to *all* authors who wrote in an earlier vernacular:

In a polished age, like the present, I am sensible that many of these reliques of antiquity will require great allowances to be made for them... To atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems, each volume concludes with a few modern attempts in the same kind of writing.⁴⁸⁰

This text, from the preface to *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), was written by Thomas Percy. It stated an awareness of the difficulty that readers may have had when encountering older texts set in unfamiliar tongue. Interestingly, the ballad from Chaucer

⁴⁷⁹ Morell, introduction to *Canterbury Tales*, xxxv.

⁴⁸⁰ Thomas Percy, ed., *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), x.

that Percy selected for his collection is neither modernized nor translated; it contains almost no trace of editorial influence aside from its selection. Percy's acknowledgement in the preface, however, is key. It clearly outlined the concerns that editors had for the publication of older texts: that their readers would not be able to properly understand the language.

Thomas Ogle's editions of Chaucer's work in the 1730s and 1740s were among the best known and recognizable to the reading public and were modernized for easier reading by the public. His edition of *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands* (London: J. & R. Tonson, 1741) featured translated and modernized versions of the *Tales* by Betterton, Dryden, Cobb, Boyse, Pope, and Ogle himself, among others. Like Morell a few years earlier, Ogle tapped into the market of modernized Chaucer and picked out the most well-known versions to populate his complete edition. Unlike Morell, however, Ogle managed to produce a version of the *Tales* that included nearly, but not entirely, all of Chaucer's original stories.

In total, Ogle's edition features modernizations and translations by at least ten different editors/authors. It is, perhaps, the epitome of the most mediated and adulterated version of Chaucer's work printed in the eighteenth century. Without a doubt, it highlighted the editorial movement that was afoot in the time period: the modernization of Chaucer's work was far more prevalent than publications of his original text.

Near the end of the eighteenth century, the trend towards modernization of Chaucer's works was in full swing. Editions such as William Lipscomb's *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Completed in a Modern Version* (London: J. Cooke and G. G. & J. Robinson, 1795) signaled a strong and purposeful move towards translations of

Chaucer's texts that would dominate the nineteenth century. Lipscomb referred to his edition of the *Tales* as "the first completed in a modern version" and one intended for an audience who are "lovers of verse" and reflected an improved taste in poetry.⁴⁸¹

Lipscomb, unlike some of his contemporaries, directly addressed the issue of translation in his preface. He established Chaucer as an important figure in the development of the English language, but made clear the fact that the poet's language was far from palatable to late eighteenth-century readers:

...in a word, the language, in which he wrote, hath decayed from under him. It is this reason, and this alone, that can justify the attempt of exhibiting him in a modern dress; and though, with respect to translations in general, I assent to the position that they should be rather free than servile, yet in that part of the present work, which has fallen to my share to execute, I have endeavoured to adhere to the great original the more faithfully, from the considerations that all those readers (a very numerous as well as a very respectable class) who have not given their time to the study of the old language, must either find a true likeness of Chaucer exhibited in this version, or they will find it no where else.⁴⁸²

Lipscomb was concerned with presenting Chaucer as authentically as possible, while having no compunction about changing his original language. This was perhaps as honest a portrayal of the translation of Chaucer's work that existed up to the nineteenth century. It was very telling of the internal battle that most editors faced in dealing with Geoffrey Chaucer and his works. Lipscomb shared his inner struggle with the reader in his preface, making it clear that his respect for the author was as much in consideration as his concern for the reader. Whereas Dryden placed himself above both Chaucer and the reader, Lipscomb represented a shift in editing and translation that was geared towards honesty and openness with the reader. He invited readers into his editorial process and better

⁴⁸¹ William Lipscomb, ed., preface to *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Completed in a Modern Version* by Geoffrey Chaucer, 3 vols. (London: J. Cooke and G. G. & J. Robinson, 1795), 1:v.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, vi.

prepared them for the text they were about to encounter. It was up to the buyer of the book to decide if it is “acceptable to the Reader” in the end.⁴⁸³

This is not to say, however, that all publications featuring Chaucer’s work at this time were modernized, translated, and/or reworked. John Entick, in 1736, proposed the printing of a two-volume set of the Works of that *Most Learned, Facetious, and Ancient English Poet Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, Knt. Poet Laureat*. This edition, Entick explained to his possible subscribers, would “rescue that famous English Poet Sir Geoffrey Chaucer out of that Oblivion into which his piratical Imitators have endeavour’d to bring him.”⁴⁸⁴

Based on his use of the phrase “piratical imitators” it seemed that Entick saw contemporary editions of Chaucer’s work as poor imitations or outright rip-offs. His edition would help to “restore such a Regard for Poesy” and bring respectability back to Chaucer’s work.⁴⁸⁵ This restoration, however, did not include returning Chaucer’s text to his original language. Rather, Entick translated the text into modern English and provided copious notes to help the reader better understand the text. This mediation of Chaucer’s work was spelled out directly at the beginning of the proposal for printing: “Critical, Poetical, Historical, and Explanatory Notes, to render the Work both easy and pleasant to the Reader.”⁴⁸⁶ This description of the proposed volume was part of Entick’s sales pitch.

Though Entick did not return Chaucer wholly to his original state (or as original as the available manuscripts allow), his proposed edition did signal something of a backlash against the more reworked and adulterated versions discussed above. In the *Muse’s Library* (1737) Elizabeth Cooper also noted that Chaucer’s work has been

⁴⁸³ Ibid., x.

⁴⁸⁴ Entick, *Proposal*, 3.

⁴⁸⁵ Entick, *Proposal*, 3.

⁴⁸⁶ Entick, *Proposal*, 1.

“exhausted by the Moderns” and that “most of his principal Tales” had already been printed many times over.⁴⁸⁷ To avoid repeating existing and recently published works, Cooper selected the *Pardoner’s Prologue* for her exemplar of Chaucer’s work. The text, while not as altered as that of Pope and others, was still translated into modern language and vocabulary. Cooper stated that the *Tales* would not “appear to Advantage in their antiquated, original Dress” and inferred that translation is needed in order to make them digestible and understandable by the reader.⁴⁸⁸ Her translation of the Pardoner’s Prologue was somewhat less invasive than others who “modernized” the text for the reader, but mediation by an editor was still very much present in Cooper’s edition.

Restoring Chaucer

Though translated and modernized editions of Chaucer’s work dominated the eighteenth century, they were not the only versions produced. Numerous important editions during the period attempted to restore Chaucer to his original language and take his texts out of the hands of modernizers and translators. As discussed above, Thomas Morell intended in his Preface to help restore Chaucer to his original state. Morell had an odd way of demonstrating this attention, however, since he included modernizations of Chaucer’s work in his edition.

He was far from the only editor to pursue some “back to basics” approaches to Chaucer and his texts. John Urry’s edition of 1721 and Thomas Tyrwhitt’s edition of 1775 presented the reader with versions of Chaucer’s work that were as close as possible

⁴⁸⁷ Cooper, *Muses Library*, 24.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

to the manuscript texts. In this way, both Urry and Tyrwhitt acted as linguistic restorers on Chaucer's behalf.

Urry's *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* was "compared with the former editions, and many valuable MSS" in order to bring forth the most authorial text possible. In the preface, which was written by Timothy Thomas after Urry's death, the editorial purpose of Urry's edition was made clear:

His chief business was to make the Text more correct and compleat than before. He found it was the opinion of some learned Men that Chaucer's Verses originally consisted of an equal number of Feet; and he himself was perswaded that *Chaucer* made them exact Metre, and therefore he proposed in this Edition to restore him (to use his own Expression) *to his feet again*, which he thought might be performed by a careful Collation of the best printed Editions and good MSS.⁴⁸⁹

Urry's intention was to recover Chaucer's original language and metre and "in short to make the Book in all respects more correct and compleat" than other printed editions.⁴⁹⁰

Urry perceived the current printed editions as having corrupted Chaucer's work and misrepresented his texts. By returning to the manuscript sources, Urry hoped that his version of the text would be nearer to that intended by Chaucer in the fourteenth century.

About 60 years after Urry's death, Thomas Tyrwhitt published *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* (1775). Tyrwhitt's edition included an account of former editions of the *Canterbury Tales* as well as an "Essay on the language and versification of Chaucer" that attempted to detail Chaucer's language in his own time and how important it was to the development of modern English. Tyrwhitt, like Urry before him, looked closely at the existing printed editions of Chaucer's text and judged them harshly. Tyrwhitt spent nearly 60 pages summarizing former editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, including many of

⁴⁸⁹ Urry, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, i2v.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, k1r.

those mentioned above. Tyrwhitt rebuked these previous editions and their editors because they did not “give the text of the *Canterbury Tales* as correct as the [manuscripts] within the reach of the Editor would enable him to make it.”⁴⁹¹

This objective of “correct” editing had “hitherto been either entirely neglected, or at least very imperfectly pursued” by those who came before⁴⁹² In order to make up for these repeated deficiencies of editing, Tyrwhitt proceeded as if Chaucer “had never been published before.”⁴⁹³ He approached the text cleanly from the original manuscripts, echoing back to the way that Caxton handled the *Canterbury Tales* nearly 300 years earlier. Like Urry, Tyrwhitt’s approach to editing Chaucer is one of restoration.

The edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that Tyrwhitt assembled was not only a proper homage to Chaucer’s original, but was highly regarded both by his contemporaries and by editors that followed him. John Bell used Tyrwhitt’s 1775 edition to populate parts of the Chaucer portion of his massive *Bell’s Edition of the Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill* (1777).⁴⁹⁴ The poet, Robert Southey, also used Tyrwhitt’s edition in his *Select Works of the British Poets, from Chaucer to Jonson* (1831). For Southey, Tyrwhitt’s edition of the *Tales* was by far the preferred option for a Chaucer selection:

The *Canterbury Tales* have been excellently edited by Tyrwhitt; his other works have been left to chance, and published without any other care than what the corrector of the press might please to bestow upon them.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ Tyrwhitt, preface to *The Canterbury Tales*, i.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ “Massive” may actually be an understatement. The collection of *Bell’s Edition* was 109 volumes in extent, with Chaucer’s portion alone numbering fourteen volumes.

⁴⁹⁵ Robert Southey, ed., *Select Works of the British Poets, from Chaucer to Jonson* (London: Longmans, 1831), 1.

Southey, Bell, and others saw Tyrwhitt's edition as the best possible representation of Chaucer's text available without returning directly to the medieval manuscripts.

Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition and Lipscomb's edition of 1795 served as a perfect close to the eighteenth century printing history of Chaucer. In many ways, these two editions pointed towards the trends of nineteenth century Chaucerian editing and translation. Lipscomb's was a precursor to the heavily edited and modernized editions that are printed for public audiences and children in Britain during the next century. Tyrwhitt's edition, meanwhile, presaged the more academic approaches to Chaucer that are well represented by nineteenth-century scholars such as F. J. Furnivall and the Chaucer Society.

For both editors, the role of translation (and its close cousin, modernization) was essential to the publishing and printing history of Geoffrey Chaucer. Depending on the method of translation used, it was clear that Chaucer and his work was mediated and modulated in ways that changed how readers interacted with both the poet and his texts. As Thomas Morell found in producing his own edition of Chaucer's work: some readers want the authentic and original Chaucerian language while others want the modernization and easy-to-digest version. The nineteenth century would be a battle between opposing forces, with England's reading communities stuck in between the defenders of Chaucer's language and the commercial interests of editors, printers, and publishers looking to capture an audience of readers unfamiliar with Middle English. The result was a century of division in Chaucerian publications—one that greatly influenced how Chaucer was read and by whom.

The Divided Century

The early part of the nineteenth century saw printing of Chaucer's work divide into two main areas of focus. The divisions in publications came down to two basic elements: who was the audience and how much did Chaucer's original text matter. The consideration of these elements resulted in two distinct forms of Chaucerian literature at the beginning of the century: 1. Chaucer for the Public and 2. Chaucer for the Academic.

1. Chaucer for the Public

This category of publications was dominated by a single common theme: modernization. These editions were very much the successors to (or spawns from) John Dryden's seventeenth century Chaucerian text. 100 years after his death, Dryden was still a relevant and relied-upon arbiter of Chaucer and his language. During the first third of the nineteenth century, Dryden's versions of Chaucer's *Tales* (or portions of them) were reprinted with a good degree of frequency: 1800, 1806, 1820, & 1822.

The continued popularity of Dryden's version of Chaucer's *Tales* is representative of the published material that was produced for a growing reading public in England. From 1800 onward, there was a steady and significant increase in the literacy rate in England: from around 40% for women and 60% for men in 1800 to well over 90% for both by 1900.⁴⁹⁶ The increase in literacy occurred throughout England and increased the potential audience and, most importantly for publishers, customer base for printed works. These published texts were sometimes specifically developed to reach certain types of readers, from novices to academics to children. Popular audiences made up a bulk of the

⁴⁹⁶ Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 179.

reading public that was willing and (most importantly) able to read the works of great English authors such as Chaucer.

As with Dryden's editions, the works of great authors were often gathered together in order to present the reader with a wide range and variety of material. Such was the case with Richard Wharton's edited collection *Fables: Consisting of Select Parts from Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto* (1804). While not all of Wharton's selected *Fables* were English in origin, they were all given the Anglo treatment, as is clear on the title page: *Imitated in English Heroic Verse*.

Each of the fables that Wharton selected, no matter from where they originated, was modernized and altered to fit his perception of a traditional English verse. Unfortunately, Wharton did not provide any prefatory paratextual material to inform the reader of his intentions for the collection. Instead, we are left only with some lengthy footnotes that describe, in relatively little detail, some of the internal workings of his editorial mind and process:

The Franklein's Tale is, like the foregoing, and illustration of the quality of courtesy. I was induced to modernise it by the Lady to whose genius I have above expressed my obligations; and I publish my version in order to shew how the same idea was treated by poets of different countries and different aeras.⁴⁹⁷

Wharton's attempt to bring a variety of poets and poems together in one volume was somewhat disjointed and difficult to navigate, particularly because of the lack of editorial oversight throughout the volume. While the Chaucer selection was relatively unadorned with paratextual commentary, Wharton more than made up for this slight with the second volume of his *Fables* (published one year later in 1805).

⁴⁹⁷ Richard Wharton, ed., *Fables: Consisting of Select Parts from Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto* (London: Payne & MacKinlay, 1804), 70n.

Fourteen pages of introductory paratext greeted the reader upon opening Wharton's volume two. Within these pages, Wharton explained his reasons for attempting "a free imitation of Chaucer's fragment" of *Cambuscan* (the *Squire's Tale*).⁴⁹⁸ Rather than adjusting an existing *Tale*, such as the *Franklin's Tale* that appeared in volume one, Wharton chose to complete the *Squire's Tale*, which was left unfinished in the manuscript versions of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Wharton took the content of the *Squire's Tale* (which, in the Riverside edition, spans only 670 lines) and expanded it to more than 5,000 lines set over nearly 200 pages. The content was far from Chaucer's text, with only a few echoes of the original *Tale* present in Wharton's version:

The story of Cambuscan, as far as Chaucer gives it, and of the Falcon, is contained in Wharton's Ist and IIIrd books. He has altered it in so far, as to make the knight who brings the magic horse and other gifts, a treacherous villain...⁴⁹⁹

So, while both modernizing the language and altering the format of the text, Wharton also significantly changed the plot of the story and its characters. This clearly went beyond a mere alteration of language and, in reality, created an entirely new poem almost completely divorced from Chaucer's original tale.

Wharton, himself, admitted in the prefatory pages that the job of updating and completing an unfinished story is hard labor for any editor:

There is something so presumptuous in undertaking to complete a story, left unfinished by a Poet of Chaucer's eminence, that the public has a right to some apology from me for the attempt itself, as well as to some account of the objects which were considered as principally to be kept in view, in the construction of the fable as it now stands. With respect to the first

⁴⁹⁸ Wharton, *Fables*, t.p.

⁴⁹⁹ Alfred Tobler, *Geoffrey Chaucer's Influence on English Literature* (Berne: Haller, 1905), 35.

point, I fear I can make no good defence; but must throw myself on the Reader's mercy.⁵⁰⁰

Completing the story, for Wharton, was equivalent to thinking about how Chaucer himself would write the text if he were alive in the present and not weighed down by the “baldness of our language at the period when he lived.”⁵⁰¹ In that circumstance, Wharton claimed, Chaucer would present his text “as Dryden has dressed it.”⁵⁰²

In the end, Wharton delivered to his reader a version of Chaucer's text that was rather far from what can be found in the manuscripts. This new version represented a completely updated and modernized version of the *Tale*, with Wharton claiming that he took “the liberty of retrenching much of what Chaucer has said, and of adding some softening tints of my own.”⁵⁰³

Such modernization was not limited to lengthy, multi-volume editions like Wharton's. Collections and anthologies had as much of a place within nineteenth-century readership as they did in the prior century—if not more. In 1809, John Cam Hobhouse edited such a collection, entitled *Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics, together with Original Poems Never Before Published*. In his Preface, Hobhouse stated that “the world at present suffers from a glut of books”—though this did not stop him from adding another collection to the multitude of writings that were available.⁵⁰⁴ His publication, while representative of “the sin of appearing in print”, was intended to share verses from an earlier age and to “please his readers” with the text.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ Wharton, *Fables Vol. II*, iii.

⁵⁰¹ Wharton, *Fables Vol. II*, iv.

⁵⁰² Wharton, *Fables Vol. II*, iv.

⁵⁰³ Wharton, *Fables Vol. II*, viii.

⁵⁰⁴ John Cam Hobhouse, ed. *Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics, together with Original Poems Never Before Published* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme, 1809), v.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

One such text from the older age was “The Manciple’s Tale, imitated from Chaucer” by Hobhouse himself. The poem was preceded by a short introduction in which Hobhouse noted that “some, indeed, may conceive that [the Manciple’s] language is a little too poetical...and this objection will appear the better founded when that language is modernized”—as Hobhouse had done.⁵⁰⁶ Modernization, then, helped to clear up Chaucer’s original intentions for his Manciple: that he is “plain, and displays no more wisdom but what may be collected from occasional good company and the Bible.”⁵⁰⁷ Hobhouse saw modernization as clarification, particularly for a reading audience that faced a “glut of books.”⁵⁰⁸

To understand the real impact of editors on Chaucer’s text and language in the nineteenth century, we need to move our focus from anthological publications to individualized Chaucer publications. Some of these publications highlighted a single work from the *Canterbury Tales* while a few others produced a selection/collection of Chaucer’s works. The most prevalent type of publication, however, was a modernized edition of the complete *Canterbury Tales*. Before discussing these editions, we should briefly explore the single texts and collected works that were also available to nineteenth-century readers.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 94-5.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 95.

⁵⁰⁸ This glut of texts was perhaps best represented by Ezekiel Sanford’s *The Works of the British Poets: With Lives of the Authors* (Philadelphia: Mitchell, Ames, and White, 1819-1823). This collection, which was printed in Philadelphia, followed in the footsteps of John Bell and his 109-volume set (discussed above). Sanford’s collection was published all at once, avoiding potential issues that were present in Bell’s publication: “parts of this edition were published at distant intervals, (some of the last volumes appeared more than ten years after its commencement,) scarcely a complete set is any where to be found” (v-vi). Rather than prolong the publishing process, Sanford’s collection was printed *en masse* with all 50 volumes available between 1819 and 1823. The result was an extensive library of thousands of pages of curated and modulated poetry from Geoffrey Chaucer to Thomas Francklin.

John Dryden's modernized retellings of both the *Knight's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Tale* were published in separate editions in 1800 and 1820, respectively. These texts, which were picked up from his *Fables* of a century beforehand, were inspiring to nineteenth-century editors, translators, and poets, who chose to make their own "versions" of Chaucer's work just as Dryden had done earlier. Among these was Lord Edward Hovel Thurlow, who produced his edition of *Arcita and Palamon: After the Excellent Poet, Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: William Booth, 1822).

In his very short preface to the poem, Thurlow explains how the edition came about and why he chose to move forward with its publication:

When I lived at Brussels, and had hardly any books with me, I met, by accident, in that City, with a copy of Chaucer's Poems. And, some time after, going to live at Laken, I made it my employment, and great pleasure, very many mornings, to translate the Knight's Tale: if I may use that expression, in somewhat altering the ancient language and rhythm of Chaucer. I did not lay down to myself any precise rule, in the manner of making my version: but the sense, which I had, of the great beauties of the Original, would not allow me far to wander from it...And, because I believe there is no version, extant, of this poem, so near to the original text, as mine, I have caused it to be printed.⁵⁰⁹

Thurlow did not name the "copy of Chaucer's Poems" that he acquired in Brussels, but one can assume it was a version that contained the "original" text of Chaucer's work and not a translated or modernized version (such as Dryden's).

As seen above, Thurlow's edition was proclaimed to be close to the original text. He did not, however, explain why such translation was needed for the reader. It could be assumed that the text was made more readable and audience-friendly through Thurlow's translation, but this was not made explicitly clear in the Preface. Thurlow noted that Chaucer "is, surely, one of the greatest poets, whom the Sun ever shone upon" and that

⁵⁰⁹ Edward Hovel Thurlow, *Arcita and Palamon: After the Excellent Poet Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: William Booth, 1822), v-vi.

he has been a “faithful interpreter” of his work.⁵¹⁰ As for why Chaucer needed this “interpretation” there was no explanation. It is worth noting, however, that Thurlow’s edition must have proved somewhat popular. A second edition of the translation was released later in 1822 (accompanied by a translation of *The Flower and the Leaf*, a medieval poem incorrectly ascribed to Chaucer). Dryden, Thurlow, and others were reprinted by publishers well into the late nineteenth century. Their work was soon joined by new popular editions by Charles Cowden Clark, Richard Horne, John Saunders, and others who “dominated the popular market for Chaucer” in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁵¹¹

2. Chaucer for the Academic

Returning to the early part of the century, we look towards the second form of Chaucerian publications: those intended for academic audiences. These editions were purposely left in as close to the original language as possible. They represent a focus on Chaucer’s language and poetic craft rather than just the stories he told. In 1810, the *Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper*, was published. The series, edited by Alexander Chalmers, was grounded in the biographical work of Samuel Johnson. Using Johnson’s *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* as a base, Chalmers added selections of each poet to the biographical information to develop a 21-volume work. The first volume in the set was that of Geoffrey Chaucer.

Rather than re-editing or modernizing Chaucer’s language, Chalmers selected existing texts as his source material. For the *Canterbury Tales*, Chalmers chose to use

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., v-vi.

⁵¹¹ Morse, *Popularizing Chaucer*, 105.

Tyrwhitt's edition of the text and explained to the reader why this edition was better than others:

This very acute critic was the first who endeavoured to restore a pure text by the collation of MSS. a labour of vast extent, but which must be undertaken even to greater extent, before the other works of Chaucer can be published in a manner worthy of their author. In the present edition, in which a more regular arrangement has been attempted, Mr. Tyrwhitt's text has been followed for the *Canterbury Tales*...⁵¹²

Tyrwhitt's text represented the closest to the original manuscripts for Chalmers and, the text then being affiliated with Samuel Johnson's biographical sketches, aimed to serve a more academic audience that was interested in the "study" of Chaucer's works.⁵¹³

Though Chalmers did not explicitly state that his edition of Chaucer was intended for an academic audience, he did note, "it is not probable that [Chaucer] can ever be restored to popularity" because his "language will still remain an insurmountable obstacle" for public readers.⁵¹⁴

The focus, then, was not on trying to reach a public audience but on trying to restore Chaucer's language to an academic one. This was certainly the perspective of William Greetheed Lewis, whose two-volume edition of the *Canterbury Tales* was published in 1824. Lewis approached the text from a perspective nearly identical to that of Thomas Tyrwhitt. His *Tales* were accompanied by "A Sketch of the History of English Poetry, A Life of Chaucer, and Observations on his Language and Versification."⁵¹⁵

⁵¹² Chalmers and Johnson, *Works*, xv.

⁵¹³ Beyond Chalmers's edition, Tyrwhitt's text was reprinted or reused numerous times during the nineteenth century. It was in rather constant publication with more than 20 editions printed in London between 1810 and 1893. As will be explored below, these included some of the most academic editions of Chaucer's text and some of the most influential editions that were popular well into the twentieth century.

⁵¹⁴ Chalmers and Johnson, *Works*, xv.

⁵¹⁵ William Greetheed Lewis, ed., *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Other Poems* by Geoffrey Chaucer (London: Thomas Dolby, 1824-25), t.p.

These elements are clearly inspired by Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition, which detailed Chaucer's life as well as his versification.

Lewis was a self-proclaimed master of English grammar and wrote a "new system" for learning proper grammar that highlighted the "Genius of the English Tongue" and "discarded" all "imitations of the Greek and Latin Grammars."⁵¹⁶ His approach was undoubtedly academic even though he was not as established in the world of academia as Tyrwhitt, Urry, and other editors. His focus in the 1824 edition is to present Chaucer to the reader in his original language, even if he may not be fully understood by all readers:

I think it may be safely pronounced that Chaucer, in the usual acceptation of the term, is a popular poet; for though he may be neither read nor understood by the mass of readers, yet all agree in eulogising his productions...But popularity is a bad test of merit. It is with poets as it is with politicians, their popularity frequently depends upon the ignorance of the people, not their knowledge.⁵¹⁷

It is not the popularity of Chaucer that makes him great, it is his language, his craft, and his skill. Lewis wanted to share these qualities, in their original form, with his audience regardless of the "popularity" of the text among the ignorant masses.

The audience that Lewis was aiming for was the same that Tyrwhitt, Urry, and others attempted to reach in earlier centuries: academics and scholars who would appreciate Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in as close to their original form as possible. There was a market for this audience in the nineteenth century, one that Lewis was reaching out to. And one that would have been happy to purchase the final handpress-period edition in this study: *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* edited by Thomas Tyrwhitt.

⁵¹⁶ William Greetheed Lewis, Advertisement for "An Improved Grammar," *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, June 2, 1821, 352.

⁵¹⁷ Lewis, *Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, 32-3.

Published in 1830, this edition was produced by William Pickering in five volumes and mirrored the 1775 edition in its order and contents. This was the fifth and final Tyrwhitt edition of the handpress period, but (like Lewis's edition) presaged a growing academic audience in the later nineteenth century that is reflected in the work of Walter Skeat, Frederick J. Furnivall, and the Chaucer Society. Common among all of these academic editors and their editions is the preservation of Chaucer's original language, regardless of the popularity or understandability of the printed editions.

Conclusion

In 1846, about 15 years after the end of the handpress period, Leigh Hunt presented readers of his *Wit and Humour, Selected from the English Poets* with a version of Chaucer's text that retained the original language but was accompanied by a prose "translation" in Modern English. Hunt saw the benefit of keeping Chaucer's original text, but acknowledged the difficulty it could pose for some readers:

I retain the old spelling for three reasons; —first, because it is pleasant to know the actual words of such a writer, as far as they can be ascertained; second, because the antiquity is part of the costume; and third, because I have added a modern prose version, which removes all difficulty in the perusal.⁵¹⁸

Like the many academic editors before him, Hunt saw the benefit of Chaucer's language and provided a way around the difficulties that lay within accessing it. Rather than choosing modernization for the public or retention for the academics, Hunt found a solution that could manage to please all potential audiences.

⁵¹⁸ Leigh Hunt, ed., *Wit and Humour, Selected from the English Poets* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1846), 73.

From William Caxton to William Greatheed Lewis, editors have struggled to present Chaucer and his work in the “correct and proper” way. As is evident from the dozens of editions discussed in this chapter, there *was no* correct and proper way. Each editor had his or her own quirks, tricks, likes, dislikes, opinions, commercial interests, and perspectives on how best to present Chaucer to the reader. For some, like John Dryden, the decisions were relatively straightforward; for others, like Leigh Hunt, the options were not so cut and dry.

When one looks back to Caxton’s first printing in 1477, it is apparent that only two real editorial options existed. The first was translation and modernization; the second was retention. With the first option, Chaucer’s language was acknowledged and (as much as possible) honored, but overwritten by poets, editors, and translators eager to produce a text that would reach a wide audience and serve as a way to get Chaucer’s text into the broadest spectrum of the public as possible. With the second option, Chaucer’s language was defended and (in some cases) beatified by academics, editors, and philologists whose aims were to protect Chaucer’s work and preserve his legacy through the mechanisms of academia and the university.

Neither of these two approaches was right or wrong. There were benefits to both, and detriments to either. The result, though, was a number of editions produced over hundreds of years with one of two outcomes in mind. What can easily be concluded is, for the vast majority of English readers, the options were most likely limited. Popular editions tended overwhelmingly to contain modernized or translated text; if you were a member of the general reading public, this is probably the type of text you would read. Academic editions were overwhelmingly inclusive of original Middle English; if you

were a student or scholar, you would undoubtedly read this type of publication. The only hope, perhaps, was to read multiple editions of Chaucer's work and gain access to both public and academic forms of publication.

CHAPTER 5

THE INTERNAL PARATEXT OF THE *CANTERBURY TALES*

Introduction

Thus far, this dissertation has been concerned with the paratextual elements encountered by the reader before or after they read Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. While this material is dominant throughout the handpress period, it is certainly not the only form and placement of editorial or other commentary on the *Tales*. Indeed, for numerous editions, the publisher and editor are present not before or after the text but *within* it. Though less common than pre or post material, internal paratext within Chaucer's printed works played a significant role in reader response and understanding of the poet's text.

Gerard Genette discusses the role of notes and other internal paratextual elements in *Paratexts*, including an entire chapter on "Notes" near the end of his book.⁵¹⁹ He points out the physical characteristics of internal paratext and how they can appear in numerous places within a text, including where the reader may not expect them:

No reader can be completely indifferent to a poem's arrangement on a page...Nor can a reader be indifferent to the fact that, in general, notes are arranged at the bottom of the page, in the margin, at the end of the chapter, or at the end of the volume; or indifferent to the presence or absence of running heads and to their connection with the text below them; and so on.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Genette is far from the only scholar to study internal paratextual elements. For the study of footnotes, in particular, see Anthony Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Chuck Zerby's *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* (Montpelier, VT: Invisible Cities Press, 2002).

⁵²⁰ Genette, *Paratexts*, 34.

Genette's "and so on" is rather telling. There are numerous ways in which authors and editors can insert themselves within a text through internal notes and commentary—far more than Genette lists in the passage above.

There is an almost indefinable nature to internal notes. Genette finds it difficult to precisely explain this "transitional field of paratext" due to the fact that they are "by definition irregular, divided up, crumbly, not to say dustlike, and often so closely connected to a given detail of a given text that they have, as it were, no autonomous significance."⁵²¹ There is significance, however, to these notations. Genette spends an entire chapter discussing their significance while still maintaining that they are both varied and difficult to define.

The varied nature of internal paratext is an important aspect of the exploration in this chapter. As Genette points out, there is no hard and fast rule about what a "note" should look like or how it should appear in the text. The only truth, he states, is a rather vague one: "A note is a statement of variable length (one word is enough) connected to a more or less definite segment of text and either placed opposite or keyed to this segment."⁵²²

There are a variety of ways in which an internal paratextual note can be "keyed to" a certain segment of the text. The most obvious is footnotes and endnotes. These are appended directly to a word, phrase, or sentence and comment directly on that section of the text. Footnotes appear within the structure of the page which they are referencing (though they can, of course, run longer than the space allotted on that particular page).

⁵²¹ Ibid., 319.

⁵²² Ibid.

Endnotes appear at the conclusion of the section of the text (such as a chapter break or at the end of an entire volume). Footnotes and endnotes can, as Anthony Grafton explores, have different uses and meanings depending on the field in question. The way historians use notes is different from scientists, which is different still from literary scholars. With all of this variety, Grafton states, the notes may “look similar, but obviously have very different relations both to the texts they supposedly came into being to support and to the historical professions that supposedly regulated their production.”⁵²³

This chapter is not concerned with the accuracy and regulation of footnotes and other internal paratextual elements. Rather, it is concerned with the content of these notes and how they influenced the presentation of Chaucer’s text to the reader. With that in mind, it is best to conclude this introductory section by focusing on the different types of internal paratext that can be found within the editions of the *Canterbury Tales* printed in the handpress period.

Eighteen editors used internal paratext as a part of their publication of Chaucer’s work—slightly less than one-third of the total number of editors in the handpress period. There is not a tremendous amount of consistency in the physical arrangement of the internal paratexts. They range from comments to summaries to footnotes, with some editors using more than one form of note in a single edition. There is consistency, however, in the purpose of these various notes. Among the editions produced by these eighteen editors, there are only two primary uses for the internal paratext: first as definitional glosses and second as summary and interpretation.

I have made the distinction between glosses and summaries based mostly on length and detail of explanation. To identify glosses I am using the narrower OED

⁵²³ Grafton, *The Footnote*, 12.

definition of the term: “A word inserted between the lines or in the margin as an explanatory equivalent of a foreign or otherwise difficult word in the text; hence applied to a similar explanatory rendering of a word given in a glossary or dictionary.”⁵²⁴ Though the term *gloss* can also be more broadly defined as comments, explanations, or interpretations, I am choosing to limit the use of the term to purely definitional or translational purposes in this chapter. Their purpose, in the main, is to provide the reader with information about a word or phrase; offering the reader clarification on the word(s) being used. An example of this is the following, from Alexander Pope’s 1712 collection of *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations: By Several Hands*:

There at the **Martyr*’s shrine a cure they find

...

*Thomas Becket⁵²⁵

This note, like all of those classified as glosses, identifies the “martyr” mentioned in Pope’s “Chaucer’s Characters; or the Introduction to the Canterbury Tales” which is included in numerous editions of Pope’s miscellanies. This note is informational and does not significantly interpret or alter the reading of the poem for the audience. Rather, it clarifies the word (perhaps unnecessarily so) for an audience that should know their martyrological history.

A similar definitional use of internal notes is to more clearly define or translate a word or phrase for the reader. This is done particularly with Middle English words, non-English words, or words whose meaning is different from their original usage in

⁵²⁴ “gloss, n.1”. OED Online. December 2018. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/79130?rskey=IEgMRK&result=1>

⁵²⁵ Alexander Pope, ed., *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands*, 3rd ed., (London: Bernard Lintot, 1720), 232.

Chaucer's time. One example, from Cobb's *The Miller's Tale, from Chaucer* (1725), helps to clarify an unfamiliar word:

My *Lemman Dear, (quoth he) I'm all on Fire,

...

*Mistress.⁵²⁶

The word "lemman" is from Middle English and means "lover, mistress, [or] sweetheart",⁵²⁷ depending on usage. Cobb interprets it as "mistress" in this edition, though modern editors have defined it as "sweetheart" in more recent editions.⁵²⁸ Cobb's awareness of his audience's familiarity with the term is important to note, particularly in relation to the fact that he did not translate the word *in situ*, but left it as Chaucer had written it and offered explanation via gloss. Both definitional and translational use of glosses appeared throughout the handpress period.

It is very important to note that even the simplest and most straightforward glosses can have some interpretive slant to them. No gloss is wholly independent of some editorial decision. The fact that the gloss is even there is an editorial decision. And, as seen from Cobb's above example, the choice of the definition or translation can alter the meaning of the text. This fact notwithstanding, I believe that it is important to make the distinction between these definitional glosses (with their sometimes benign interpretation) and the more in-depth, purposeful notes of summary and interpretation that make up the second use of internal paratext.

⁵²⁶ Samuel Cobb, *The Miller's Tale from Chaucer* (London: 1725), 6.

⁵²⁷ Mann, glossary in *The Canterbury Tales*, 1184.

⁵²⁸ See, for example, pp. 120-1 in Jill Mann's edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (London: Penguin Classics, 2005) for definition as "sweetheart" and p. 69 in Larry D. Benson's *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) for definition as "my love, sweetheart".

This second use of internal notes is intended to offer the reader a far more detailed explanation of certain phrases, sections, or passages of the text. These notes are much longer than the simple glosses discussed above and offer far more insight into the editorial interpretation than do the glosses. They were often even longer than the text on which they are commenting. An example of such a note comes from the 1782 edition of Bell's *Poets of Great Britain*. This edition contained fourteen volumes of Chaucer's works edited, with notations, by Thomas Warton:

In Gernade at the siege eke hadde he be

...

v. 56. In Gernade] The city of Algezir was taken from the Moorish King of Granada in 1344. Mariana, [l. xvi. c. II,] among other persons of distinction who came to assist at the siege in 1343, names particularly "de Inglaterra, con licentia del Rey Eduardo, los Condes de Arbid, y de Soluzber," which I suppose we may safely interpret to mean the Earls of Derby and Salisbury. Knighton says that the Earl of Darby was there, X Script. 2583.⁵²⁹

This brief mention of Granada in Chaucer's *General Prologue* is stated in relation to the introduction of the Knight to the reader. Bell's note adds context to the mention and helps the reader to understand the reference to the siege and the Knight's role. The note itself is taken almost entirely from Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition. In Tyrwhitt's edition, however, the notes were placed at the conclusion of the text, not internally as Bell has placed them.

The inclusion of lengthy explanatory notes within the text is just as commonly found as the glosses. A nearly equal number of editions included only summary and interpretation notes (8 editions) as those only containing glosses (9 editions). And the

⁵²⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: in Fourteen Volumes*, ed. Thomas Warton, vols. 1-14 of *Poets of Great Britain*, ed. John Bell. (London: Cadell and Davies, 1782), 1:9.

number that used both summaries and glosses (7 editions) is comparable with the others.⁵³⁰ The remainder of this chapter will explore these two primary uses of internal paratext and discuss how each usage could inform and influence the reader.

There is one commonality among all glosses, notations, summaries, and commentaries: they all provide the editor a chance to demonstrate (or show off) their own knowledge, education, and experience. Each of the internal paratextual elements discussed in this chapter helps to establish the intellect and authority of the editor and gives him or her a position of power over the text in the reader's eye. No matter if it is a single word or a series of paragraphs, the internal paratextual notations place the editor squarely in the middle of Chaucer's texts in a way that pre- and post-textual material does not. These internal notations are the equivalent of the editor's fingerprints on the text.

Glosses

As discussed in chapter 4, numerous editors chose to include a glossary at the beginning or end of their editions of the *Tales* rather than place the glosses in the midst of the text. These pre- and post-text glossaries served essentially the same purpose as the internal devices. There were, however, three major differences in terms of the impact on the reader and his/her understanding of the text.

First, the internal glosses allowed readers to more quickly and directly read the definition or translation of a term while they are reading Chaucer's texts. This quick reference enabled a smoother reading process without the need to stop partway through and turn to another section of the edition (or another volume in some cases). Readers

⁵³⁰ For editions that contain both glosses *and* summaries, I have included them in both of the sections that follow. Though this may be repetitious, it is important to track the different uses separately.

could easily flick their eyes down to the bottom of the page and see what a particular word or phrase meant. This is especially important for translations of words that would be wholly unfamiliar to most readers (such as Middle English words).

Second, internal glosses allowed for greater clarity for understanding the meaning of a word in a specific context. A word may have multiple meanings and knowing which specific usage of the word applies to a particular instance could help clarify the line for the reader. In post-text glossaries a single word or phrase may have multiple meanings listed with distinct definitions based on context or placement. Having the gloss on the page allows for clearer understanding of the words in context.

The third difference actually points to an area in which the internal glosses were more limited. Unlike a collected glossary, internal glosses did not allow for the browsing of words. For a curious reader who wanted to look up similar words or phrases, the combined pre- or post-textual glossaries offered a chance to learn more than just a single item. For a more academic audience the collected glossary may have proved more useful than internal paratextual notes discussed in this chapter. For a public reading audience, having the glosses on the same page as the text would have made the reading more straightforward, understandable, and (perhaps) enjoyable.

These three distinctions are important to keep in mind as we look at the internal glosses that appeared in the editions of Chaucer's work. In some cases, especially early on, the glosses are so minimal that a compiled list would be unnecessary. In other cases, editors relied very heavily on internal glosses to assist in defining and clarifying words to help readers better understand the text. The "delivery" of these glossarial notations within the text varied significantly from edition to edition, as will be explored in the following

pages. By assessing all uses of internal glosses, we can track the ways in which editors adapted their texts and presented material to readers in wholly different ways over a 100-plus year period in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The first use of glosses within a Chaucer publication did not occur until 1712. Glossaries had been part of the history of printing Chaucer's text since Speght's edition in 1598 but it took more than a century for internal notation to appear in a printed edition of Chaucer's work. For all editions prior to 1712, either the editor or the printer decided to restrict the glossaries and notations to pre- or post-text placement. There are plenty of examples—dating back to the *incunabula* period—of texts being printed with internal notations, so it was not likely due to a lack of ability or technical difficulty. This would make me inclined to think that the decision was based more on the editor than printer. The decision to move the glosses internally come about with more popular versions of the text, as will be seen below. Perhaps the public audiences were, in the editor's mind, more open to (or expecting) the internal glosses than more academic readers.

In 1712, two different editions included internal glosses for definitional and translational purposes: Alexander Pope's *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations* and Samuel Cobb's *The Carpenter of Oxford, or, the Miller's Tale, from Chaucer*. Both texts were published for popular audiences and used glosses to help readers better understand the text. Pope's text (which, again, was attributed to Thomas Betterton) included the Thomas Becket note mentioned above. The gloss was connected to the word "Martyr" in the "Introduction to the Canterbury Tales" which was Pope/Betterton's updating of the *General Prologue* (fig. 5.1).⁵³¹

From every Shire the pious Ramblers stray,
 But most to *Canterbury* bend their way.
 There at the * *Martyr's* Shrine a Cure they find,
 For each sick Body, and each love-sick Mind.

* Thomas Becket. R 4 It

Fig. 5.1 – Gloss of "Martyr's" in Pope's *Miscellany* (1712)

*The * Franklin.*

A Franklin was the Serjeant's chief Delight,
 His Beard was long, and as the Daffie white.

* *A Franklin is a Country Gentleman who lives upon his Estate.* San-

Fig. 5.2 – Gloss of "Franklin" in Pope's *Miscellany* (1712)

⁵³¹ Thomas Betterton, "Chaucer's Characters, or the Introduction to the Canterbury Tales," in *Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands*, ed. Alexander Pope (London: Bernard Lintot, 1712), 247.

The text contained a smattering of other minor notes as well. This included a brief definition for “The Franklin” in the *General Prologue* (fig. 5.2).⁵³² The Franklin is the only pilgrim who receives a definition in this edition of the text. All other characters are left up to the reader to interpret or discern from the description in the poem. It is not clear exactly why “franklin” was chosen to be defined, especially because the word was, according to the OED, still in regular usage at the time of publication.⁵³³

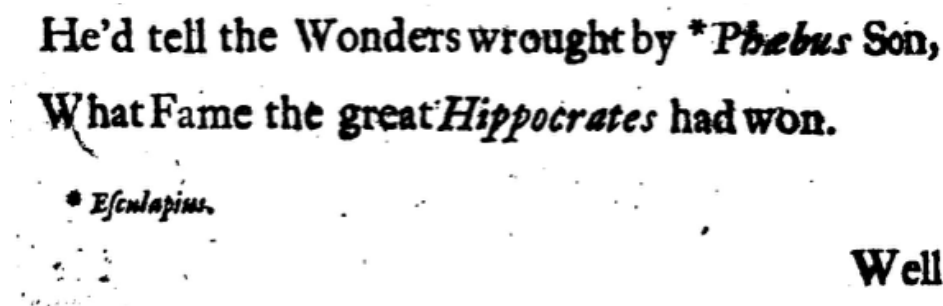


Fig. 5.3 – Gloss of “Phoebus Son” in Pope’s Miscellany (1712)

The third and final gloss included in the text appears in the description of the Doctor of Physick. Pope has translated Chaucer’s original line (“Wel knew he the olde Esculapius”⁵³⁴) as “He’d tell the Wonders wrought by *Phoebus Son,” with the asterisk denoting the gloss (fig. 5.3).

The choice to translate “Esculapius” to “Phoebus Son” is an interesting one, especially when the original word is needed in the gloss to explain what the translation means. Unlike the other choices that Pope makes in this edition, this one translation/gloss issue may be the most confounding and confusing to the reader. It seems, perhaps, that the word selections are made here purely for the rhyme scheme and to maintain the

⁵³² Ibid., 264.

⁵³³ “franklin, n.1”. OED Online. July 2018. Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74235?isAdvanced=false&result=1&rskey=RJDcmx&>

⁵³⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, “General Prologue,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), line 429.

metrical balance of ten syllables per line. Assuming this was the case, then Pope saw the need here to clarify his own words, rather than Chaucer's. It is also notable that he does not gloss Hippocrates—leading to the assumption that his public readership would recognize the famed Greek physician. These same glosses appear identically in Pope's 1720 and 1722 editions of the *General Prologue* with no changes other than to the spelling of "Esculapius" changing to "Aesculapius" in the latter two editions.

The minimal number of glosses in Pope's editions (only three in the *General Prologue* and none in the translation of the *Reeve's Tale* that follows a few pages later) is not an outlier at this time. Samuel Cobb's 1712 publication is equally minimal in its use of internal paratext to help the reader better understand the text. There is a prefatory "Argument" that precedes Cobb's translation of the *Miller's Tale*:

Nicholas a Scholar of Oxford, practiseth with Alison the Carpenter's Wife of Osney, to deceive her Husband, but in the end is rewarded accordingly.⁵³⁵

This brief preview of the text is the extent of prefatory material that is included in the edition. The remainder of paratextual material in the edition is limited to internal notations, each of which is intended to clarify for the reader what is being discussed in the text. There are a total of only nine notes in the entire text; while three times as many as Pope's text, still not a large number.

The glosses vary in length from a single word to a few sentences; though still far shorter than the summary notations and commentary discussed later in this chapter. Each gloss is meant to define or clarify a word or phrase in the text. Cobb's use of the glossarial notes is purely informational and, unlike his brief "argument" that precedes the text, does not include editorial commentary on the text itself. His first note, for example,

⁵³⁵ Cobb and Prior, *Carpenter of Oxford*, 1712, ii.

is on the word “*Almagist*” and informs the reader that it is “the Name of a Book of *Astronomy*, written by *Ptolemy*.”⁵³⁶

Cobb uses the glosses to define Middle English words (such as “Lemman”) and to provide clarification on individuals mentioned in the text (Thomas Becket, for example).

The most detailed gloss comes about three-quarters of the way through the text. In it, Cobb offers a rather lengthy explanation about curfew time following the Norman

Invasion:

And now at † *Curfew* time, dead Sleep began

...

† *Curfew*, William the *Conqueror*, in the first Year of his Reign, commanded that in every Town and Village a Bell should be rung every Night, at Eight of the Clock, and that all People should then put out their Fire and Candle and go to Bed. The Ringing of this Bell, was called *Curfew*, that is, Cover Fire.⁵³⁷

The note is not so much a straightforward definition of the word in question; nor is it an explanation of the word in the context of the Miller’s story. Rather, it is a contextual note to provide the reader with more information about the history of curfew in England in the time in which the story is set. It is also, one could argue, a chance for Cobb to show off his own knowledge and intellect. Unlike the other glosses in Cobb’s edition, this note does not really aid the reader in a better understanding of the story or text.

Cobb’s 1725 edition of the text includes exactly the same glosses as his 1712 edition. The only change noticeable by the reader would be the placement of the note markers. In 1712, much like Pope, Cobb places his markers before the word being glossed (i.e. † *Curfew*). In 1725, the marker is placed *after* the word (i.e. *Curfew* †). This is

⁵³⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 31.

more recognizable to modern readers than the former instance, but no explanation is given (by Cobb or others) as to why the location of the marker switched from before to after. In reviewing a variety of studies on the history of footnotes, this topic is not addressed in the literature. Neither Anthony Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History* (1997) nor Chuck Zerby's *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* (2002) mention the placement of markers or why they changed from before words and phrases to after them. Regardless of the reason, Cobb decided to switch the location for his 1725 edition.

George Ogle's 1741 multi-volume collection of edited and translated Chaucer texts was the next to use internal paratextual notes solely for glossary purposes. *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by several Hands* brought together versions of the *Tales* from numerous editors including Pope/Betterton, Dryden, Cobb, and Ogle himself. Many of the existing glosses from these editors (such as those from Pope that were discussed above) are removed by Ogle. They are not replaced by any other notations.

The first instance of an internal paratextual element does not occur until page 84, in the midst of Dryden's translation of the *Knight's Tale*. The note, which does not appear in Dryden's original, is included to identify "a *Warrior and a Maid" as "*Rubeus and Puella" for the reader.⁵³⁸ The note provides the reader with additional information about who Dryden mentions in his text, much in the same way that Pope and Cobb used their glosses. In comparison, Ogle retains the nine glosses that Cobb originally used in his 1712 edition of the *Miller's Tale*. No new notes or comments are added to the text. The only other notation in the first volume appears in Ogle's version of the *Prologue to the*

⁵³⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands*, ed. Thomas Ogle (London: J. & R. Tonson, 1741), 1:84.

Reve's Tale. He uses a gloss much in the same way as Cobb—using it to define the word “Souter” as “Shoe-maker.”⁵³⁹

The next instance of an internal paratext occurs more than 50 pages into the second volume. Within the *Squire's Tale*, Ogle continues the tale from Samuel Boyse's version (*Cambuscan*) with his own text. As he notes, his version of the text is an adaptation: “*What follows is continued by Mr. Ogle, from the fourth Book of Spenser's [sic] Fairy Queen.”⁵⁴⁰ No other glosses or notes appear in the text until almost 25 pages later when Ogle offers his reader the most extensive of internal paratextual notes.

In the line “As sings the Tuscan* Poet, far renown'd.” the marker connects to the following note:

*To Save the Inquisitive the Trouble of searching after Spenser's Allusion, it was thought not unnecessary to give Him here an Opportunity of satisfying his Curiosity by subjoining as much of the Love and Hate of Renaldo for Angelica as made to the Purpose. And This rather from Harrington's Translation (which is yet very intelligible, tho' dedicated to Queen Elizabeth) than from Ariosto, who might not be so well understood by every Reader.⁵⁴¹

Ogle then proceeds to provide the reader with an extended selection of stanzas from Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516). Spenser was influenced by Ariosto's work, a connection that Ogle makes clear and assumes that some of his readers would like to see this influence themselves. Excerpts of Ariosto's work is included in the footnotes of each of the next ten pages (containing 23 stanzas in all). This lengthy footnote is nearly the last to appear in Ogle's edition. Only two additional notes are present in the text, both of which are extremely short: “The Wife of Bath speaks”⁵⁴² and “Continu'd by Mr.

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 1:159.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., 2:55.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid., 2:79.

⁵⁴² Ibid., 2:123.

Ogle”.⁵⁴³ Both of these notes are mere guidelines for the reader and do not help to clarify or enhance the reader’s understanding of the text.

More than fifty years later, poet and clergyman William Lipscomb picked up where Ogle had left off with his modernization project:

Ogle did not complete his project, but his effort was resumed toward the end of the century, when the Yorkshire clergyman William Lipscomb reprinted Ogle’s edition with twelve new modernized Tales in *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer: completed in a modern Version* (1795).⁵⁴⁴

Lipscomb’s edition combined Ogle’s work with a variety of new modernizations to offer the reader as complete a collection of Chaucer’s work as possible.

Lipscomb uses glosses sparingly throughout his edition, often merely picking up what Ogle included in his edition. The first use is one that Ogle did not include, however. It is the translation of the Latin phrase “amor vincit omnia” in the description of the Prioress in the *General Prologue*. The phrase is translated by Lipscomb as “Love subdueth all things”⁵⁴⁵ and details the engraving on the prioress’s brooch.⁵⁴⁶ In the *Knight’s Tale* Lipscomb includes the same “*Rubeus and Puella” note that Ogle inserted into Dryden’s text in 1741.⁵⁴⁷

In volumes two and three, Lipscomb picks up Ogle’s other footnotes, including mentioning where “The Wife of Bath speaks” at the beginning of her prologue.⁵⁴⁸ In addition, he notes where Ogle’s text “continues” the tales.⁵⁴⁹ The first new note that

⁵⁴³ Ibid., 2:138.

⁵⁴⁴ Barrett Kalter, *Modern Antiques: The Material Past in England, 1660-1780*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2011, 89.

⁵⁴⁵ Lipscomb, *Canterbury Tales*, 1:147.

⁵⁴⁶ Lipscomb’s translation is not incorrect, but would be more conventionally translated as “Love conquers all”.

⁵⁴⁷ Lipscomb, *Canterbury Tales*, 1:238.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., 2:92.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., 2:110 and 3:69.

Lipscomb includes in either of the last two volumes comes at page 106 of the third volume:

Prologue to the *Franklein's Tale

...

* Fortescue (de L.L. Ang. c. 29) describes a Franklein to be a "Pater familias magnis ditatus possessionibus." He is classed with (but after) the "Miles" and "Armiger," and is distinguished from the "Libere tenentes" and "Valecti;" though, as it should seem, the only real distinction between him and other freeholders consisted in the largeness of his estate.—Tyrwhitt, v. 333.⁵⁵⁰

Going beyond the simple definition of a Franklin, Lipscomb turns to Tyrwhitt's notations to provide the reader an enhanced explanation of the role that that particular pilgrim played. This gloss has a far more academic approach than the other glosses in the text, leaving some questions as to the intended audience. One wonders whether Lipscomb is attempting to reach both popular and academic readers, or if he is just using this as an opportunity to show his authority and intellect. Like Pope and others, however, Lipscomb defines only the Franklin among all the pilgrims in Chaucer's group. Lipscomb does add other Tyrwhitt notations later in the text, using them to help the reader understand: the city of Lepe as being "not far from Cadis" in Spain⁵⁵¹, a discussion of Lollardy⁵⁵², the piety of St. Nicholas⁵⁵³, the definition of "chekelatoun"⁵⁵⁴, even "the proper name for a giant" (Sir Elephant).⁵⁵⁵ Lipscomb uses other sources in addition to Tyrwhitt, including an explanation of the story of Simon of Trent from *World's Displayed*.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., 3:106.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., 3:163.

⁵⁵² Ibid., 3:179-80.

⁵⁵³ Ibid., 3:196-7.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., 3:206.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., 3:209.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 3:199.

One of Lipscomb's few original notes also appears in volume three, particularly commending "the keenness of Chaucer's satire" in the *Pardoner's Tale*.⁵⁵⁷ It is one of only two wholly original notations that Lipscomb includes in the entire three volume set. The other is related to a visual representation of Dante: "A very fine picture exhibiting this subject is in the possession of the Duke of Dorset, at Knowles in Kent, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds."⁵⁵⁸ Aside from this, the majority of Lipscomb's descriptive and glossarial notes—including the most erudite—are picked up from Tyrwhitt's work.

Another "modernizer" of Chaucer's work in the eighteenth century was Andrew Jackson, a London bookseller. Jackson's approach to Chaucer's text was to collect particular tales that addressed marital issues. The title of his volume serves as the only introduction to the material and the only clarity on Jackson's selection (fig. 5.4).

These "matrimonial scenes" are reinterpreted by Jackson and presented to the reader in modernized and slightly abridged versions. The entire text, consisting of three tales and a prologue, amount to less than 70 pages.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 3:166.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 3:313.

Fig. 5.4 – Title page of Jackson's *Matrimonial Scenes* (1750)

MATRIMONIAL SCENES:

CONSISTING OF

The SEAMAN'S TALE,

The MANCIPLE'S TALE,

The CHARACTER of the WIFE of BATH,

The TALE of the WIFE of BATH,
and her Five HUSBANDS.

All modernized from

CHAUCEER.

In those pages, Jackson includes only two glosses for the reader's benefit. They both provide definitions for specific words or phrases that would be unfamiliar to the 1750s audience. And they come in both short form:

For, by this sacred * Porthose, now I swear,

...

*A Porthose, is a Mass-Book, pendant from their Girdles.⁵⁵⁹

And long:

The *Dunmow* * *Monks* might their own *Bacon* chew,

...

*At *Dunmow* in *Essex* was a Monastery, where a Gammon of Bacon would be given to any, who kneeling on two pointed Stones in the Church-Yard,

⁵⁵⁹ Andrew Jackson, *Matrimonial Scenes...All Modernized from Chaucer* (London: Andrew Jackson, 1750), 6.

before the Prior and Monks, would take the following Oath. (See Fuller's Worthies.)

You shall swear by the Custom of our Confession,
That you never made any nuptial Transgression,
Since you were marry'd Man and Wife,
By houshold Brawls or contentious Strife;
Or otherwise in Bed or at Board,
Offended each other in Deed or Word;
Or since the Parish Clerk said Amen,
Wished yourselves unmarried again;
Or in a Twelve Month and a Day,
Repented not in Thought any Way;
But continued true and in Desire,
As when you joined Hands in holy Choir:
If to these Conditions without all Fear,
Of your own Accord you will freely swear:
A Gammon of Bacon you shall receive,
And carry it hence with Love and free Leave;
For this is our Custom at *Dunmow* well known,
Tho' the Sport be ours, the Bacon's your own.

It appears on Record, that *Richard Wright* of *Norfolk*, in 1465; *Stephen Samuel*, in 1467; and *Tho' le Fuller*, in 1511, took this Oath, and receiv'd their Bacon.⁵⁶⁰

Jackson's very minimal internal paratext is, essentially, the only guidance the reader gets from the editor. The two notes are, in reality, not that significant to understanding either "The Seaman's Tale" or "The Tale of the Wife of Bath" that appear in Jackson's collection. With only two notes, one has to wonder why Jackson included them at all. Perhaps, one might assume, Jackson himself did not know what a "porthouse" was or what the Dunmow monastery signified.

The notes, like the text, may have been created to serve him more than anyone. As is evident on the title page, the volume was printed "for the author" and sold by him as well. This modernized Chaucer was not the first, or last, such production to come out of

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 40.

Jackson's book shop. Indeed, as Betsy Bowden notes, Jackson was a life-long dabbler in poetry, modernization, and private publishing:

He avidly read his own stock before parting with it, especially poetry and romances, and issued as least four book catalogues entirely in rhymed couplets. His *Paradise Lost: A Poem, Attempted in Rhyme. Book I* (1740) likewise submits Milton to rhymed couplets. In 1751 he and another bookseller reprinted, as if by Shakespeare, a *Briefe conceipte touching the Commonweale of England; originally printed in 1581*. This and other projects failed to generate much wealth; Jackson kept shop for four decades, until the age of 82.⁵⁶¹

The matrimonial Chaucer collection seems to fit alongside Jackson's Milton and Shakespeare. A commercial success it may not have been, but certainly a good example of the personal connection that many Englishers felt with Chaucer and his work.

From the small run of Andrew Jackson, we turn to one of the most popular writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: John Dryden. The last two editions that used internal paratextual elements for purely descriptive and definitional purposes both come (even if indirectly) from the pen of Mr. Dryden. They are also the first editions discussed in this chapter that were published in the nineteenth century—and they are both editions of the same text: *Fables, from Boccaccio and Chaucer*. The first edition in question was published in 1806 and the second in 1822.

Authorship, title, and even location of publishing are the same for both texts. The main contents of both editions are identical, right down to the same stories in the same order.⁵⁶² The internal paratext in both editions looks, at first, identical to one another. The first note in both editions will undoubtedly look familiar to us as well: “* Rubeus and

⁵⁶¹ Bowden, *18th-Century Modernizations*, 151.

⁵⁶² There are a few differences in the preliminary paratextual material of the two editions, however. The 1806 edition features a “Prefatory Essay” on Dryden's fables by J. Aiken, M. D. while the 1822 edition includes both a “Dedication” to the Duke of Ormond and a poem in honor of the Duchess of Ormond (both written by Dryden for his 1700 edition of the *Fables*).

Puella”.⁵⁶³ That, however, is where the similarities end. The 1822 edition includes far more notations than the 1806 version. In fact, the 1806 edition contains only the one gloss mentioned earlier. The 1822 edition provides the reader with far more internal paratextual assistance. For example, in Book III of “Palamon and Arcite” (Dryden’s version of the *Knight’s Tale*), the editors include definitions for a few select terms:

Some wore a breastplate and a light jupon¹,
 Their horses clothed with rich caparison:
 Some for defence would leathern bucklers use,
 Of folded hides; and other, shields of Pruce².

¹A close coat. ²Prussian leather.⁵⁶⁴

Though the words are exactly the same as Dryden wrote them over a century earlier (and the same as was printed 12 years prior), the editors of the 1822 edition thought best to clarify some terms that might be foreign to their readers. Perhaps they saw a reader response to the earlier nineteenth-century edition and noted the difficulty readers had with some words or terms.

Another example from “Palamon and Arcite” is the word “trined”. The 1822 edition glosses the word and defines it as such: “Trine is an aspect of planets supposed by astrologers to be eminently benign.”⁵⁶⁵ Similarly, in “The Cock and the Fox” (Dryden’s retelling of the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale*) the editors of the 1822 edition identify the “ancient author” who Dryden references, but does not name. The editors clarify that the author in questions is “Cicero: in his treatise *De Divinatione*.”⁵⁶⁶ A similar note, later in the tale, clarifies that “Kenelm, the son of Kenulph, Mercia’s king,/Whose holy life the legends

⁵⁶³ John Dryden, *Fables from Boccaccio and Chaucer* (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1806), 44; and John Dryden, *Fables from Boccaccio and Chaucer* (London: Chiswick: T. Tegg, R. Jennings, A. K. Newman & Co., J. Sutherland, and Richard Griffin & Co., 1822), 66.

⁵⁶⁴ Dryden, *Fables*, 1822, 70.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 84.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 151.

loudly sing²,” was indeed a martyr while providing context: “²The legends record him as a martyr. He was murdered by his sister Quendreda, when only seven years old.”⁵⁶⁷ Three additional glosses appear in the tale: one related to Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Bradwardin, one identifying an unnamed monk as Nigellus Wireker, and one clarifying “Gaufride” as the Norman historian Geoffrey de Vinsauf.⁵⁶⁸

This, however, is where the internal paratextual elements end in the 1822 edition. Like its 1806 counterpart, this edition does not include a single gloss or other note in any of the three Chaucer-inspired tales that close out the volume. All of the glosses are contained within the *Knight's Tale* and the *Tale of the Nun's Priest*. Presumably, the readers do not need help navigating Dryden's other versions of Chaucer's texts.

The paratextual material in the 1822 edition of Dryden's modernizations serve as a good example of the glossarial and definitional versions of internal notations that were used in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions of Chaucer's texts. They provide the reader with additional information or clarification about individuals, terms, phrases, and foreign words. While these glosses are definitional or translational in nature, they still retain an aspect of editorial interpretation. Even if they are meant to elucidate and not interpret, the glosses still have a way of placing the editor as an intermediary for the text. While it may not be as obvious (or lengthy) as the summary and interpretations discussed in the next section, these glosses still provide editorial “answers” to readers' questions. In their attempt to clarify and define, the glosses both assist the reader and place the editor in a role of authority and arbiter of the text. This role is made even more obvious in the next category of internal paratextual elements: summaries and interpretations.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid., 157.

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid., 163, 167, and 169.

Summary and Interpretation

In his first edition of Chaucer's works in 1598, Thomas Speght included a prefatory section called "Arguments to every Tale and Booke" that provided the reader with a short summary or overview of each of Chaucer's texts. The summaries included an overview of the *General Prologue* and each of the *Canterbury Tales* in Speght's edition. These "Arguments" were placed within the prefatory material in 1598, but by the second edition in 1602 the summaries had been moved to within the body of the text itself (fig. 5.5).

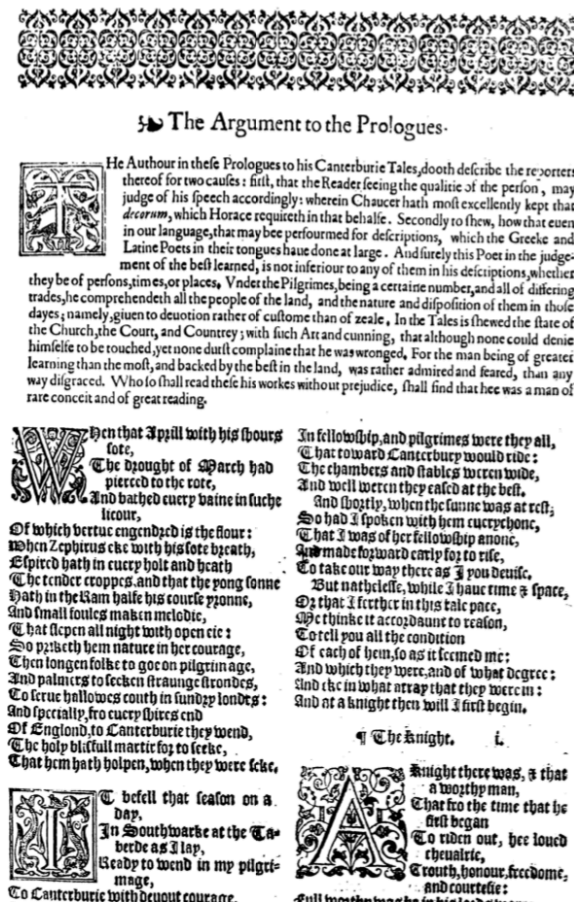


Fig. 5.5 – Speght's "Argument" to the *General Prologue* (1602)

These arguments present the reader with a brief, but important, overview of the text they are about to read. The overview could include simple plot summary as well as more interpretive statements. The somewhat lengthy summary of the *General Prologue* (seen above) contains a bit of both—along with a robust declaration of Chaucer as a great author:

The Author in these Prologues to his Canterburie Tales, dooth describe the reporters thereof for two causes: first, that the Reader seeing the qualities of the person, may judge his speech accordingly: wherein Chaucer hath most excellently kept that *decorum*, which Horace requireth in that behalfe. Secondly to shew, how that even in our language, that may bee perfourmed for descriptions, which the Greeke and Latine Poets in their tongues have done at large. And surely this Poet in the judgement of the best learned, is not inferiour to any of them in his descriptions, whether they be of persons, times, or places. Under the Pilgrimes, being a certaine number, and all of differing trades, he comprehendeth all the people of the land, and the nature and disposition of them in those dayes; namely, given to devotion rather of custome than of zeale. In the Tales is shewed the state of the Church, the Court, and Countrey; with such Art and cunning, that although none could denie himselfe to be touched, yet none durst complaine that he was wronged. For the man being of greater learning than most, and backed by the best in the land, was rather admired and feared, than any way disgraced. Who so shall read these his workes without prejudice, shall find that hee was a man of rare conceit and of great reading.⁵⁶⁹

Speght's introduction to the prologue not only presents the reader with a context for understanding the text itself, but also provides a broad overview about the *Tales* as a whole, including the many areas of English life that they cover (church, court, etc.). Speght also echoes the flattering portrait of Chaucer that is laid out in the biographical section at the beginning of his edition.⁵⁷⁰

Following this lengthy introduction to the prologue, Speght includes far shorter arguments in front of each of the individual tales. They are mostly two-to-four sentences

⁵⁶⁹ Thomas Speght, preface to *The Workes of Our Antient and Learned English Poet*, rev. ed. by Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Thomas Speght (London: Adam Islip, 1602), A2r.

⁵⁷⁰ This image is also discussed above in chapter 3 "The Prefatory Chaucer."

in length and provide fairly broad summaries of the stories that follow, such as this that precedes the *Miller's Tale*:

Nicholas a Scholler of Oxford, practiceth with Alison the Carpenters wife of Osney to deceive her husband, but in the end is rewarded accordingly.⁵⁷¹

Not much of the actual story is given away by Speght, though the end is teased a bit.

Other descriptions are accompanied by information about where Chaucer found the original story to translate and/or adapt, such as the *Reeve's Tale*:

Denyse Simkin, the Millar of Trompington, deceiveth two Clarkes of Schollers Hall in Cambridge, in stealing their corne: but they so use the matter, that they revenge the wrong to the full. The Argument of this Tale is taken out of Bochace in his Novels.⁵⁷²

Speght highlights Boccaccio's influence on Chaucer in this story (and the *Shipman's Tale* as well) in addition to providing a brief plot summary.

In addition to the summaries and influences, Speght also editorializes within some of his arguments. This includes explanations to the reader of the "moral" of the story or the lesson learned by the characters, such as in the *Friar's Tale*:

The Sompner and the Devill meeting on the way, after a conference, become sworne brethren, and to hell they goe together. A covert invective against the briberie of the spirituall Courts in those daies.⁵⁷³

In the *Franklin's Tale*:

Aurelius after much labour and cost bestowed to winne the love of Dorigen, another man's wife, is content in the end through the good dealing of her and her husband, to loose both labour and cost. The scope of this tale seemeth a contention in curtesie.⁵⁷⁴

And the *Nun's Priest's Tale*:

⁵⁷¹ Speght, *Workes*, 1602, fol. 11r.

⁵⁷² Speght, *Workes*, 1602, fol. 14v.

⁵⁷³ Ibid., fol. 37r.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., fol. 48v.

Of a Cocke and an Henne: the morall whereof is to embrace true friends,
and to beware of flatterers.⁵⁷⁵

These moralistic summaries are not written only for *Tales* that contain moral lessons. Rather, they seem to be included in instances in which Speght believes the story to be a bit more difficult to interpret or be fully understood by the reader. The more religious stories, such as the *Prioress's Tale* and the *Parson's Tale* (which are essentially a parable and a sermon at their core) do not require, in Speght's editions, a moral summary within the arguments. Perhaps he realized that Chaucer was far more heavy-handed in these tales than in the ones quoted above. It seems, in Speght's view, far easier to extract the moral lesson from the Prioress and the Parson than from the other characters.

The 1687 edition of Speght's Chaucer likewise included his arguments within the pages of the text itself. The only change to the wording between 1602 and 1687 was an update in the spelling of some words. Otherwise, the 1602 edition that Speght had a direct hand in creating was the same as that which appeared in London in 1687. It was this edition that John Dryden encountered as he worked on the translation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* into more "modern" language, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Dryden, though he found numerous problems with Speght's edition, was similarly concerned with his readers understanding the lessons to be learned from Chaucer's *Tales*. In Dryden's version of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, he provides the reader with an opening summary of the tale that is remarkably similar to Speght's argument: "The Moral whereof is, *To embrace True Friends, and to beware of Flatterers.*"⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid., fol. 81r.

⁵⁷⁶ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, 611.

Dryden also includes a brief summary before his version of the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. The text is essentially identical to Speght's version. First, Speght's argument from 1602 (and repeated in the 1687 edition):

A bachelor of king Arthures Court, is enjoyned by the Queene to tell what thing it is, that women most desire. At length he is taught it by an old woman, who for that cause he is enforced to marrie.⁵⁷⁷

And, second, Dryden's text from 1700:

A Batcheler of King Arthur's Court is enjoyned by the Queen to tell what thing it is that women most desire. At length he is taught it by an old Woman, who for that cause is enforced to marry her.⁵⁷⁸

Dryden did not, however, include a summary or moral before his version of the *Knight's Tale*. It is the only Chaucer text in his *Fables* that does not have an argument or introduction. It is also the text that is the most significantly rewritten as part of Dryden's translation process from Chaucer's original language to the "modern" version. Perhaps there is a correlation here. The tales that most resemble Chaucer's original (and the versions that Speght published) are those that need the explanatory notes in the beginning of the story. The tale that is most noticeably redone by Dryden does not need such explanation and prefacing.

John Urry's edition of 1721 returns to a text version much closer to Speght's Chaucer than Dryden's *Fables*. Along with this return, Urry's edition includes prefatory "arguments" in front of many of the *Tales*. The notes are not entirely identical to Speght's but they serve a similar purpose: to summarize the tales, provide morals, and offer information about the history of their production. The summary in front of the *Miller's*

⁵⁷⁷ Speght, *Workes*, 1602, fol. 35r.

⁵⁷⁸ Dryden, *Fables*, 1700, 638.

Tale, for example, provides the reader with a brief overview of the story as well as analysis of its content:

Nicholas a Scholar of Oxford, practiseth with Alison, the Carpenter's Wife of Osney, to deceive her Husband; but in the end is rewarded accordingly. This is one of those Tales, that Lidgate (in his Prologue to the Story of the Siege of Thebes) says, are of ribauldrie

To makin laughtir in the Cumpany.

So, Reader, you know what you are to expect, read, or forbear, as you think fitting.⁵⁷⁹

There is a clear and direct effort on Urry's part to make this note a helpmate for the reader. It is intended to provide more context than Speght's summaries and to give the reader a greater understanding of the creation of the *Tale*.

Urry places summary notes at the beginning of nearly every *Tale* in his edition. There are only six Tales that do not have summary notes prior to them: the *Knight's Tale*, the *Physician's Tale*, the *Pardoner's Tale*, the *Shipman's Tale*, the *Second Nun's Tale*, and the *Tale of Melibee*. There is no noticeable thread connecting these particular stories to explain why Urry did not preface them with some sort of note or summary, so we are left to assume that these particular stories did not need further explanation for the reader to understand them.

Looking at those *Tales* that do include a summary, it is evident that Urry had his readers in mind as he put together the edition. His intention with the twenty summaries that are included in the edition is to contextualize both the contents of the story and the process of its writing. This includes explanations of *Tales* that were not completed by Chaucer or where the manuscripts are incomplete, such as in the following instances:

The Coke's Tale

⁵⁷⁹ Urry, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 24.

The Description of an unthrifty Prentice, given to Dice, Women and Wine, wasting thereby his Master's Goods, and purchasing to himself Newgate. The most part of this Tale is lost, or never finished by the Author.⁵⁸⁰

...

The Squier's Tale

The King of Araby sendith to Cambuscan, King of Sarra, a Horse and a Sword of rare qualitie, and to his Daughter Canace a Glass and a Ring; by the virtue whereof she understandeth the Language of all Fowles. Much of this Tale is either lost, or else never finished by Chaucer.⁵⁸¹

In addition to these notes, Urry also makes extensive commentary about two *Tales* that have questionable provenance as part of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

The two *Tales* in question are the *Tale of Gamelyn* (which Urry ascribes to the Cook) and the *Plowman's Tale*, which was mistakenly attributed to Chaucer by numerous editors for centuries. In both instances, Urry acknowledges the possibly dubious nature of the text, but explains why he included the tales regardless:

So many of the MSS have this Tale, that I can hardly think it could be unknown to the former Editors of this Poet's Works. Nor can I think of a Reason why they neglected to publish it...But because I find it in so many MSS, I have no doubt of it, and therefore make it publick, and call it the Fifth Tale. In all the MSS it is called the Cooke's Tale, and therefore I call it so in like manner.⁵⁸²

...

This and the Tale is in none of the MSS that I have seen, nor in any of the first Printed Books; Caxton and Pynsent, I presume, durst not publish it...and the MSS being before that, I fancy the Scriveners were prohibited transcribing it, and injoyn'd to subscribe an Instrument at the end of the Canterbury Tales, call'd his Retraction. So that if this Tale had not been carefully collected and preserv'd in Master Stowe's Library, as the Editor of Islip's 1602 Book says he has seen it, in a hand of near to Chaucer's time for Antiquity, in all likelihood it had been lost.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., 35.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 60.

⁵⁸² Ibid., 36.

⁵⁸³ Ibid., 178.

For both *Tales*, Urry presents the reader with the background of their questionable Chaucerian heritage, while still providing the text itself for the reader to see. Urry could have included both *Tales* without any commentary on their provenance, or could have left them out altogether without any note about their absence. Instead, in a direct statement to the reader, he includes both *Tales* and provides context for their creation and inclusion in the edition. Though neither Gamelyn nor Plowman are confirmed as authored by Chaucer, Urry still thinks enough of the two *Tales* to include them in his edition, though with the caveat that their history is certainly muddled.

From Urry in the eighteenth century back to Speght in the sixteenth, each of the editions discussed in this section focus on summarizing and explaining the *Tales* for their readers. They concentrate on explanation, commentary, and interpretation rather than simple definitions or translations (as seen with the glosses above). The number of internal paratextual notes in all of these editions is rather minimal, with anywhere from a single note to only a handful of notes. Whether glosses or commentary, the editors use of internal notations includes only minimal commentary. None of the editions explored thus far in this chapter are heavily annotated or glossed in a way that looks like our present-day critical editions. There are nine editions, however, that contain much more extensive internal paratext, closely resembling critical academic editions that fill the shelves of academic libraries and faculty offices.

Critical Commentary

In many ways the final editions being explored in this chapter are precursors to the most well-known modern editions of Chaucer's work (such as the Manly & Rickert

edition or the *Riverside Chaucer*). The internal paratextual commentary within these nine editions is far greater in size, scope, breadth, and depth than any of the editions discussed above. In some cases, the paratextual elements actually exceed in length Chaucer's original text, placing a greater emphasis on the editorial commentary than on the *Tales* themselves.

This trend in paratextual commentary is not new. In 1606, an edition of *The Plough-mans Tale* was published containing rather extensive commentary. The edition, which was “set out apart from the rest” of the *Canterbury Tales*⁵⁸⁴ included “a short exposition of the words and matters, for the capacitie and understanding of the simpler sort of Readers.”⁵⁸⁵ These “expositions” were written by an unknown editor—though the English Short Title Catalog does note that Anthony Wotton's name appears in an extant copy of the publication in the form of a hand-written note. This is not, of course, a conclusive statement but does make some sense. Wotton was an English clergyman whose works flourished between 1606 and 1624. His works were anti-Catholic and had a rather strong anti-Pope tendency as well. It would not be surprising, therefore to see Wotton publish a version of the *Plowman's Tale* that included the following subtitle: “Shewing by the doctrine and lives of the Romish Clergie, that the Pope is Antichrist and they his Ministers.” With only this scant evidence to go on, it cannot be fully stated that Wotton was the editorial agent behind the publication—however, for the purposes of this

⁵⁸⁴ Once again, this tale was not written by Geoffrey Chaucer or included in the *Canterbury Tales*. However, in 1606 when this edition was published, the text was widely considered to be part of Chaucer's oeuvre. For reference, I have included Chaucer's name in brackets in the citations and bibliography to denote that he was identified as the author in the publication, even though Chaucer did not write the text.

⁵⁸⁵ [Geoffrey Chaucer], *The Plough-mans Tale* (London: Samuell Macham and Mathew Cooke, 1606), t.p.

discussion, I am going to use Wotton's name in place of "the anonymous editor" or "the unknown editor" for ease of discussion.

Wotton's text is heavily annotated and includes extensive notations on every page. The notes include simple glosses, translations of non-English terms, explanations of phrases, and even connections to Chaucer's other texts. They range in length from a few words to entire paragraphs. Typographically, the notations wrap around the text, surrounding and almost overtaking the *Tale* with Wotton's editorial comments (fig. 5.6).

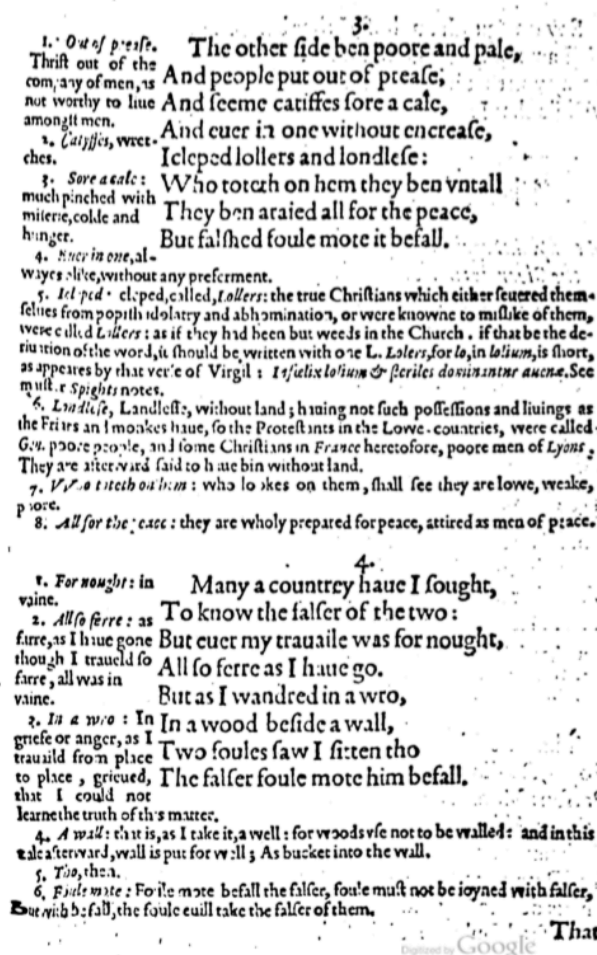


Fig. 5.6 – The *Ploughman's Tale* with Wotton's notations (1606)

These various comments are intended to help guide the reader through the text and provide editorial context for the story. Wotton's internal paratextual notes include his own personal interpretations of the text, including places where he thinks previous print editions (or even the manuscripts) may be incorrect: "*O bye God: I thinke it should be, of high God...*"⁵⁸⁶

The edition is heavily influenced by editorial commentary and is almost impossible to read without said notations. To try to navigate the landscape of the page without reading the notations would have been extremely difficult for the reader. The typographic set-up adds further evidence that this text was supposed to be presented with a strong editorial perspective. The design layout is reminiscent of (even modeled after) biblical commentary or other sacred texts. Perhaps it is a typographic statement on the reverence with which the reader should hold the text?

Nearly sixty years after the *Plough-man's Tale* was published, Richard Brathwait produced his own heavily annotated *Comment Upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr. Jeffray Chaucer, Knight* (1665). Brathwait selected the *Miller's Tale* and the *Wife of Bath's Tale* for his editorial and academic analysis. He was a poet in his own right and had published multiple collections of poetry by the time of his Chaucer publication. The impetus for publishing Brathwait's commentary on the two *Tales* came from friends of his who had known of his literary criticisms on Chaucer's works and had encouraged him to put them in print:

This *Comment* was an *Assay*, whereto the *Author* was importun'd by Persons of Quality, to compleat with Brief, Pithy, and Proper Illustrations, Suitable to such Subjects.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁶ [Chaucer], *Plough-mans*, D2r.

⁵⁸⁷ Brathwait, *Comment Upon the Two Tales*, ii.

Thus encouraged by his contemporaries, Brathwait published his heavy-handed commentary on the two *Tales* towards the end of his life after a long career as both poet and lawyer (he died in 1673).

While all other editions discussed in this chapter include the complete text of Chaucer's *Tales*, Brathwait's commentaries only include the first few words in a particular line on which he is commenting. Chaucer's text is truncated by "&c." in instances where Brathwait's commentary appears (fig. 5.7).

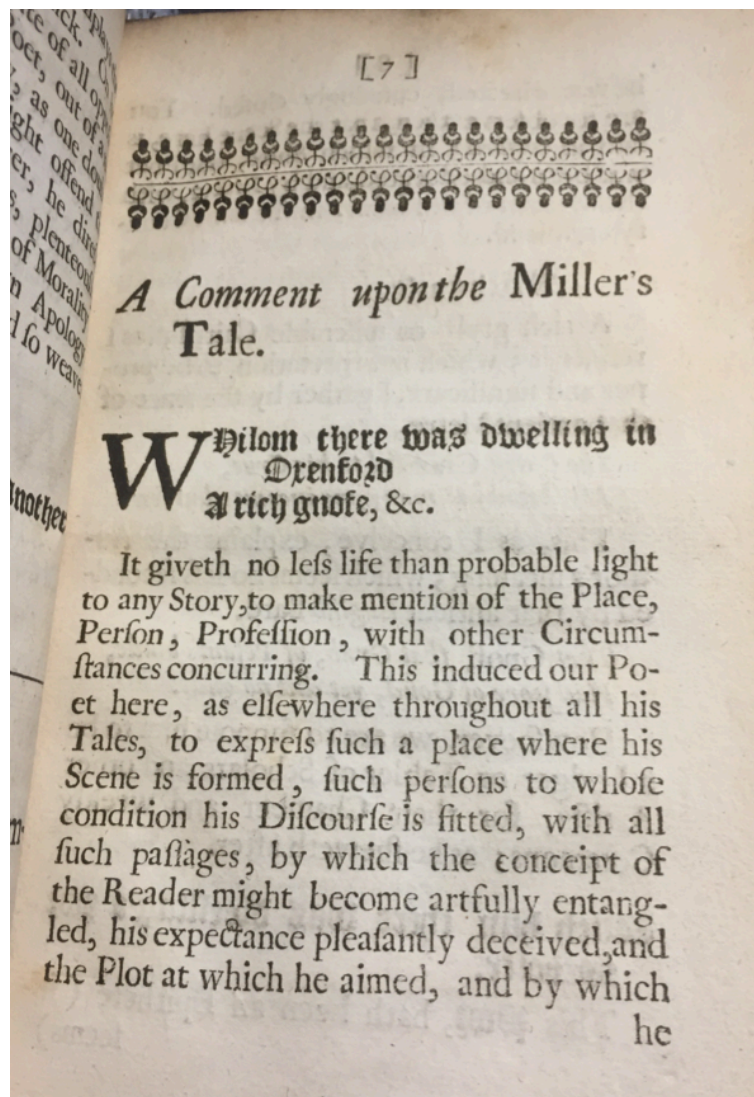


Fig. 5.7 – Brathwait's commentary on the *Miller's Tale* (1665).
By permission of the British Library.

This approach requires readers to either have an in-depth knowledge of the *Tale* in question (to the point that they could remember portions of the text that had been omitted) or have a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* on hand to reference as they read the commentary. Brathwait requires more of his reader than any other editor, printer, or publisher discussed in this chapter. He assumes that his audience will, like those “Persons of Quality” who encouraged him to publish the commentary in the first place, have an academic and critical understanding of Chaucer’s text. A seventeenth-century reader who is not so familiar with Chaucer, or who has never read the two *Tales* in question, would surely have found this volume frustrating and difficult to navigate. It is replete, however, with the internal paratextual commentary that is of concern in this chapter. That commentary includes a great deal of summary within which there are glosses and interpretations:

A rich gnofe.

A rich grub, or miserable Caitiff, as I render it; which interpretation, to be proper and significant, I gather by the sence of that antient Metre,

The Catiff Gnof sed to his Crue,

My Meney is many, my incomes but few.

This, as I conceive, explains the Author’s meaning; which seems no less seconded by that antient English Bard.

That Gnof, that Grub, of Pesants blude,

Had store of Goud, yet did no gude.

However, we are to suppose him to be a Lodger or Tabler of Scholars and other Artists, for their Chamber and weekly Commons; as he sheweth after.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 8.

Brathwait's commentary for both the Miller's and Wife of Bath's tales continues in the same manner for nearly 200 pages. The publication is something of an oddity among Chaucer editions since it clearly privileges the editorial commentary over the original text. No other internal paratextual notations goes so far as Brathwait to place the editorial commentary in front of the reader ahead of the *Tales* themselves.

This is not to say that the publication was without merit. In 1901, the Chaucer Society in London republished Brathwait's commentary with an introduction by noted Chaucerian scholar C. F. E. Spurgeon. In his introduction, Spurgeon notes the importance of Brathwait's edition and how significant it was to the reputation of Chaucer in English literature:

His little book is one of the very few bright places of Chaucer criticism, during the time of gloom and neglect encountered by the old poet in the seventeenth century; and Brathwait himself seems to stand helping to bridge over this dreary interval, by reaching out a hand on the one side to Spenser, and on the other to Dryden, forming thus a link between one of the greatest of English poets and the greatest of English critics, who were at one in their appreciation of Geoffrey Chaucer.⁵⁸⁹

While the content itself may have left something to be desired (according to Spurgeon “the ‘Comments’ are but a prose rendering, and sometimes a rather wearisome expansion of the Tales”⁵⁹⁰) there is value in Brathwait's work. In a century when only ten editions of the *Canterbury Tales* were published—including only three after Brathwait's commentaries—this edition helped keep Chaucer's work in print, even if indirectly.

While John Dryden's modernizations of Chaucer's *Tales* dominated the early eighteenth century, the first edition with extensive commentary was not published until 1737. That year, Thomas Morell published a compendium edition of the *Canterbury*

⁵⁸⁹ Spurgeon, introduction to Brathwait, *Comment Upon the Two Tales*, xvi.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, xii.

Tales “in the Original” but “Turn’d into Modern Language” by Dryden, Pope, and others.⁵⁹¹ Morell brought together a variety of versions of the *Tales* and supplemented the text with copious footnotes throughout the 450-page edition. This included “References to Authors, Ancient and Modern; Various Readings, and Explanatory Notes” throughout the text.⁵⁹² It proved popular enough to warrant a second edition in 1740.

Unlike the compiled editions of Samuel Cobb, George Ogle, and others discussed earlier in this chapter, Morell’s edition is strongly focused on providing annotations and commentary to help explain the text to the reader. There is an intentionality to the internal paratext that is not apparent in other editions published around the same time. Morell was an author, scholar, and historian who served as librettist for numerous works by George Frederick Handel and was a Fellow of two societies. His focus, far more than Cobb or Ogle, was on the scholarly approach to and presentation of Chaucer’s work. Morell explains his approach to annotating the text:

I have not only lessened the Bulk of the Book, but have set before the Eye the Explanation of every obsolete Word and difficult Passage, and this in as concise a Manner as possible, that I might not load the Text...⁵⁹³

Morell proceeds to explain the various ways in which he supports the text: internal notations within the *Tales*, an Appendix with additional annotations “chiefly relating to antiquities”, an index of “obsolete” words, a list of common abbreviations, a glossary, and “various readings” of the text.⁵⁹⁴

Within a single internal notation, Morell provides a variety of valuable information for the reader. This can range from insights and interpretations of the text as

⁵⁹¹ Morell, *Canterbury Tales*, t.p.

⁵⁹² Ibid., t.p.

⁵⁹³ Ibid., xxxiv.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid., see 349-452 for appendices.

well as etymological history of words or the significance of the word or phrase to the story as a whole. In some cases, a single note can contain all of these aspects:

²⁰ In Southarke at the Taberre as I laye,

...

V. 20 Taberre. The Sign of a Taberre, or Taberde. Fr. *Tabare*. It. *Tabarro*. A Jacket of Sleeveless Coat, worn in time past by Noblemen in the Wars, but now only by Heralds, and is call'd their Coat of Arms in Service. *Sp.* This Sign is since changed into the Sign of a Talbot with this Inscription, *This is the Inn where Sir Jeffrey Chaucer and the 29 Pilgrims lodged in their Journey to Canterbury, Anno 1363. Vid. Append.*

And to Ascanius ane proud Tabert gait.

----*Et Phrygiam Ascanio Chlamydem.* Dougl. Virg. ii. 484.⁵⁹⁵

Within this single notation there are numerous tendrils that the reader can follow; from etymology to fashion history to the story of the pilgrims to Virgil's *Aeneid*. Many of Morell's internal paratextual notes are similarly multifaceted and informative. Coupled with the appendix material that concludes the book, readers of Morell's 1737 and 1740 editions are given copious notations and academic references to best understand and navigate Chaucer's most famous work. Morell, for his part, is content to provide readers with a text that honors the "renowned" poet and highlights his "Beauties and Excellencies".⁵⁹⁶

English schoolmaster John Entick attempted a similar approach with his edition of Chaucer's complete works. While his edition never came to fruition, the sample pages published in his proposal show a thorough set of internal paratextual notations. Entick's *General Prologue* begins with a lengthy introduction about the purpose of the prologue and Chaucer's introduction of his characters:

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., xxi.

These Prologues are a Key to, and were design'd by the Author, to give the Reader a general Idea of those Characters, that are more lively represented in his *Canterbury Tales*; as well to prepare him for what might be expected under each State and Condition of Life, as that they might, I presume, serve for Arguments to each respective Tale.⁵⁹⁷

Entick's experience as an educator is evident throughout the proposal for printing. He directs the reader through the content in a clear, concise, and instructive manner. Where Brathwait relied on a significant amount of prior knowledge from his readers, and Morell addressed an educated and academic audience, Entick's approach seems intended for an educated and interested general audience—but one that need not have great foreknowledge of Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales*.

Though we are given only a few sample pages, the intention in Entick's editions are clear enough. His internal paratextual notations are straightforward and informative, balancing basic glosses with brief explanations that serve to contextualize the text for the reader. This is evident within the first notation of the *General Prologue*:

(1) The first twelve Verses are a Description of the Season of the Year; when People more frequently set upon their Traveling Devotions. And herein he seems to have been most choice of his Words to adapt a Meaning to his whole Design: For, as the Pilgrims pretended that they undertook those Devotions by a particular Impulse of the H. Spirit; so the Poet seems by the Drought of March to intimate that State of Aridity or Dryness, from which they pretended to be roused by the said Impulse described here by the *soté* or *sweet Showers of April*, &c.⁵⁹⁸

Entick's description is both explanation and summary in one, with definitions thrown in for good measure. Unfortunately, since the printing of the complete text never came to fruition, we only have four pages of examples to explore. Within those four pages, (which take the reader through only "the Squire" in the General Prologue), Entick manages to include 93 notes. The breadth of these notes is rather impressive and serve as

⁵⁹⁷ Entick, *Proposal*, 1.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid.

an interesting pairing to Morell's edition from the next year. Had Entick been able to generate enough interest via subscription, his edition may have challenged Morell's for popularity and readership.

After the 1740s, English readers had to wait more than forty years for a new, comprehensive edition of Chaucer's collected works. It was in 1782 that John Bell's *Poets of Great Britain* series was printed. The first of fifty poets in Bell's stable of authors was Geoffrey Chaucer. Bell's version spanned fourteen volumes and included everything within Chaucer's oeuvre—plus a few poems that were incorrectly attributed to him. At fourteen volumes, Chaucer is given more real estate within Bell's massive 109-volume set than any poet. The second-most volumes for a single poet are eight for Edmund Spenser. Chaucer clearly holds an important place in Bell's eyes.

The first volume of Bell's Chaucer contains a variety of prefatory material, much of which is taken from Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1775 edition. This prefatory text takes up the entire first volume, leaving the *Canterbury Tales* to begin in the second volume. Bell's text is also taken directly from Thomas Tyrwhitt's edition. This version, as is discussed in earlier chapters, came directly from the Middle English manuscripts and was presented to the reader without translation or modernization. The result, of course, is a text that may not be fully understandable by late eighteenth-century readers. To remedy this, and to further contextualize the *Tales* for the reader, Bell includes copious and extensive notes within the text. The notations, similar to Morell's, include both glossarial and summary information. Nearly every single page includes at least one notation, from the *General Prologue* through to the end of the *Tales*.

The extensive nature of the notes demonstrates the editor's great understanding and appreciation of Chaucer's work. They also point to Bell's desire to create a popular and reader-friendly version of important and influential English poetical works. As explained by Thomas F. Bonnell, Bell's intention was to create a comprehensive edition of British poetry for a mass audience:

'The Plan of this undertaking,' Bell announced, was 'to furnish the public with the most beautiful, the correctest, the cheapest, and the only complete uniform edition of the British Poets.'...The new edition would, according to Bell, fill an obvious void. Booksellers, he explained, had long vied for distinction in publishing the Greek and Latin classics; consequently it was rather easy to obtain a set of the ancient classics. To collect the English poets was, by contrast, a 'business of time, difficulty, and vast expense,' even for residents of London, and to collect them 'uniformly printed, so as to appear in a library as one and the same book,' was out of the question...Unaccountably negligent by comparison, Great Britain had yet to honor her own worthies, to recognize them in a 'general and uniform publication' as 'English classics.' Bell's Poets, the prospectus assured, would answer this need.⁵⁹⁹

The collection did what John Bell intended: to provide the English reading public with easy access to the output of England's greatest poets.

Part of this accessibility was delivered through the internal paratextual notes. The notations in Chaucer's text are drawn from a variety of sources, including Tyrwhitt's notes on the *Canterbury Tales*. The notations picked up from Tyrwhitt gave the text an academic and scholarly feel that helped raise Bell's edition to a more sophisticated repackaging of Chaucer's work. Bell saw his edition as one that provided mass readers with access to text that they might otherwise not be able to read. The placement of internal paratextual notes within the text helped readers navigate these texts.

⁵⁹⁹ Thomas F. Bonnell, "John Bell's *Poets of Great Britain*: The 'Little Trifling Edition' Revisited," *Modern Philology* 85, no. 2 (November 1987): 130.

By using Tyrwhitt (and others) as sources for his notes, Bell aided his readers in dissecting Chaucer's language and analyzing and interpreting the text. Tyrwhitt, who reviewed Bell's volumes in 1783, did not see the edition so positively:

What galled Tyrwhitt most, however, was seeing his own edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (1775-78), along with his name, adopted by Bell—
'without [his] consent, approbation, or knowledge.'⁶⁰⁰

Though Tyrwhitt's complaints about Bell's use of his text were certainly justified, Bell must be credited for making the reading experience much simpler. While Tyrwhitt's more academic publication of the late-1770s was seen as close to an authoritative edition of the *Tales* as possible, the act of reading his edition must have proven difficult.

Tyrwhitt's edition encompassed five volumes, with the text of the *Canterbury Tales* spread over volumes 1-3. The notations and commentary, however, are not included within the text itself. They appear in appendices in some of the five volumes, but not in a way that would necessarily be easy to understand from a reader's perspective. The notations for Volume 3 (which includes six *Tales*) appear at the end of Volume 3, where you would expect them to reside. The notations for Volumes 1-2, however, appear at the end of Volume 4, following nearly 200 pages of essays and discussions on the *Tales*. So a reader of Tyrwhitt's edition would have to have both Volume 1 and Volume 4 open while reading the beginning of Chaucer's *Tales*. And, should they need to consult the lengthy (250 pages) and detailed glossary that Tyrwhitt puts together, they would need Volume 5 as well.

Bell, with a more public readership in mind, moves the notations into the actual text, making interpretation and understanding that much easier for his readers. Again, Tyrwhitt's complaints about the piratical nature of Bell's edition are completely valid.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., 149.

The resulting edition, however, can easily be argued to be more user-friendly and make Chaucer's text more accessible than the great Tyrwhitt was able to achieve.

More than a decade after Bell's monumental edition of English poets was published, Robert Anderson presented the reading public with a scaled-down version of a similar collection. Entitled *A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain*, the collection consisted of thirteen volumes covering the fourteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century. There was far less content in Anderson's edition than in Bell's, but it still aimed to encompass a large swath of English poetic history. The internal notations, likewise, were significantly fewer compared to Bell's edition.

Notations within Anderson's edition were rather minimal, though they were intended to clarify the text for the reader. They were more detailed and explanatory than a simple gloss, but did not reach the in-depth scholarly discussion that Morell and Entick included within their internal paratextual notations. Anderson's approach seems more hit-or-miss, with annotations appearing widely scattered throughout the edition. The General Prologue contains eight notations, while the *Knight's Tale* (which is more than twice the length of the prologue in Anderson's edition) has only two internal notes. The inconsistency does not, however, distract from the reading of the text. The notations are unobtrusive and, in some cases, barely noticeable. One does not need the notes to read the text, but they are available in places where Anderson believed further clarification was needed. In describing the Knight, for example, Anderson provides two notations to explain his importance and high status:

At Alisandre he was whan it was wonne*

Ful often time he had the bord begonne†

...

*Alexandria in Egypt was won (and immediately after abandoned) in 1365 by Pierre de Lusignan King of Cyprus.

†He had been placed at the head of the table, the usual compliment to extraordinary merit, as the commentators very properly explain it.⁶⁰¹

Anderson uses his notations here to both contextualize the knight's battle experiences and to define the concept of "bord begonne" for the reader.

This approach to notations continues throughout Anderson's edition, including some notations on the individual *Tales* that provide a brief summary of the events of the story being told. These miniature summaries are purely plot-focused and do not attempt to moralize or analyze the story:

The Cokes Tale*

...

*The description of an unthrifty prentice given to dice, women, and wine, wasting thereby his master's goods, and purchasing to himself Newgate. The most part of this Tale is lost, or never finished by the Author.⁶⁰²

The Second Nonnes Tale*

...

*The life and death of Saint Cecily. Sp.⁶⁰³

The Chanones Yemannes Tale*

...

*A priest of London, more covetous than wise, is deceived by a chanon professing the art of alchymye. Urry.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰¹ Anderson, *Complete Edition*, 2.

⁶⁰² Ibid., 39.

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 164.

These summaries are taken from a variety of prior editors, including Urry, Speght, and Tyrwhitt. Anderson credits the editors in his text, though does not seem to have qualms about copying their work word-for-word and presenting it to the reader anew.

Anderson's approach, much like John Bell's, was to make English poetry accessible to a general audience through a comprehensible collected edition. This included simple and straightforward notations that served to help with comprehension. His tactic seems to have been popular, resulting in a second collection of British poetry in 1795. Retitled as *The Works of the British Poets*, this text essentially duplicates that of 1793. The internal paratextual notations are identical to the earlier edition, with the same summaries as noted above.

The only significant difference between the two texts (aside from the title) is the inclusion of a "Preface" in the 1795 edition. At the conclusion of that preface, Anderson states his intentions for the edition. These objectives, presumably, can be applied to the earlier edition as well and make clear that Anderson, like Bell before him, was intent on using his publications as a way to reinforce the power and significance of English poetry throughout Great Britain. His intentions are manifold:

To do justice to neglected merit; to extend the honour of our national poetry, as far as possible, both abroad and at home; to enlarge, however little, the boundaries of literary biography and elegant criticism; to strengthen and co-operate with the taste for poetical antiquities, which, for some time past, has been considerably advancing; to hold out an incentive to the love of fame and the cultivation of the mind; to diversify the materials of common reading, and to open fresh sources of useful instruction and innocent amusement, are ends which, though to attain beyond his powers, the honest ambition of the editor is something gratified by the attempt alone.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁵ Robert Anderson, ed. preface to *The Works of the British Poets* (London: J. & A. Arch, 1795),

While Anderson is putting quite a lot of stock in his set of collected British poetry, his desire to provide English readers with a simple and straightforward engagement with the great British poets is evident and successful. A small part of this success are the brief and uncomplicated internal notations that accompany the text. Though they may be taken from other, better editors, Anderson's edition of the *Canterbury Tales* is as digestible a version of the original text as exists in the latter part of the eighteenth century.

Richard Wharton was as different an editor than Robert Anderson as might be possible. Whereas Anderson's commentaries were minimal and (for the most part) taken from other editors, Wharton provided copious, detailed internal notations that heaped information upon the reader. And, while Anderson concentrated solely on British poets, Wharton's focus was on fables from around Europe. His selected authors included only one from England: Geoffrey Chaucer.

In 1804, Richard Wharton published his *Fables: Consisting of Select Parts from Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto. Imitated in English Heroic Verse*. The content was a selection of highlights from the four named authors:

- Dante's *Inferno* (Cantos III, XXXII, & XXXIII)
- Berni's *Orlando Innamorato* (Cantos VIII, IX, & XII)
- Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (*Franklin's Tale*)
- Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (Cantos XV, XVIII, & XXIII)

The *Franklin's Tale* text includes some lengthy internal notations that provide insight into Wharton's understanding of the text. His first note occurs at the end of the first line of the *Tale* and provides background information about the teller of the tale and its author:

Our sires, a gentle race, in times of old^c

...

^cThe Franklein's Tale is, like the foregoing, an illustration of the quality of courtesy. I was induced to modernise it by the Lady to whose genius I have above expressed my obligations; and I publish my version in order to shew how the same idea was treated by poets of different countries and different areas. Chaucer died A.D. 1400, and Berni died A.D. 1543. Boccaccio, who died A.D. 1372, tells a story very similar to this of Chaucer in the 5 Nov. 10 Gior. of the Decamerone. The word Franklein means a country gentleman: how different that character was in the time of Chaucer from what it is now, will appear from the subjoined account which Chaucer gives of the person whom he makes the relator of this tale.⁶⁰⁶

Wharton then proceeds to provide a 32-line excerpt from the *General Prologue* which describes the Franklin in detail. The note spans the first two pages of the *Franklin's Tale* and establishes Wharton as a rather heavy-handed editor and modernizer.

Additional notes within the Tale provide further insight into Wharton's editorial choices and modernization decisions. He notes places where he has attempted to "preserve as much of Chaucer's line as was consistent with modern idiom"⁶⁰⁷ or where he has had to erase "the bad taste of Chaucer in [an] uninteresting speech."⁶⁰⁸ The modernization of Chaucer's text is presented to the reader as a representation of English heroic verse—something that is fairly far removed from the original texts of Chaucer, Dante, and others in the collection.

Wharton's 1804 publication is only the first volume of his work. He followed it up in 1805 with a second volume that contained a version of the *Squire's Tale*. His *Cambuscan, An Heroic Poem* continues the modernization of texts into English verse. This volume is presented to the reader as "a free imitation of Chaucer's fragment" of the

⁶⁰⁶ Wharton, *Fables*, 70-1.

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid., 73.

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., 94.

Cambuscan story.⁶⁰⁹ Wharton expands the story from Chaucer's relatively short 700 lines to nearly 200 pages in length, spanning approximately 5,000 lines. The entirety of the second volume of Wharton's *Fables* is taken up by his adaptation and modernization of the *Squire's Tale*.

Annotations are scattered throughout the text, providing readers with insights into Wharton's editorial choices. The second volume has far more annotations than his version of the *Franklin's Tale* contained in the first volume. These internal notations are part of the process of expanding Chaucer's story and adding Wharton's own perspective to the page: "I have, it is true, taken the liberty of retrenching much of what Chaucer has said, and of adding some softening tints of my own."⁶¹⁰ These "tints" came in the form of a modernization of the poem, but also in the internal notations that accompanied the revision.

Particularly notable about these internal paratextual elements is the fact that they are not as much about Chaucer's original text as they are about Wharton's rewrite. Since he has modernized and reworked the entire text, the clarifications and explanations that Wharton includes often have more to do with his own language choices than Chaucer's. For example, the following note from near the beginning of the *Tale*:

E'en He,^a whose words brought all before the eye,
And cloth'd with shape ideal imag'ry,

...

^a *E'en He*, &c.] Alluding to Shakespear's lines in *Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

⁶⁰⁹ Richard Wharton, ed., *Cambuscan, an Heroic Poem, in Six Books* (London: Payne & MacKinlay, 1805), t.p.

⁶¹⁰ *Ibid.*, viii.

.....As imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shape.⁶¹¹

The allusion to Shakespeare is purely Wharton's invention and has nothing to do with Chaucer's original text (the poet having died more than 160 years before Shakespeare was born). It is put in solely by Wharton, and has no impact on the overall story of *Cambuscan* that Chaucer wrote.

Wharton's "retrenching" of the tale is much closer to Dryden's complete revisions than it is to a repackaging of Chaucer's work. This fact is noticeable in many of the notes as well. In a description of the tomb of Genghis Khan, for example, Wharton notes that he has "borne in mind the account of the Mausoleum of the Lama in Mr. Turner's account of Thibet."⁶¹² Samuel Turner's book, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, was published in 1800 and clearly influenced Wharton's descriptions of the region more than Chaucer's text. Wharton uses and repurposes Turner's descriptions numerous times throughout the text, pointing out their influence each time by an internal notation.

It is clear from Wharton's preface that the editor struggled with how to balance Chaucer's original story (or fragment of a story) with his own expansion and modernization of the tale. This internal struggle plays itself out in the internal notations as well, where Wharton must address changes to or shifts away from Chaucer's tale. One of the last notations in the book is a lengthy discussion of the poem's conclusion and how well (or poorly) handled it is by Wharton:

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 3.

⁶¹² Ibid., 19.

‘Fate portions’^c Theodora as his wife:

...

^c *Fate portions, & c.*] In the following lines, the catastrophe of the poem is summed up: how far it will be found consonant to the outline left by Chaucer, for the fable which he either actually completed or intended to complete, is not for *him* who undertook to fill up the chasm, to judge...⁶¹³

The final judgment of the success or failure of Wharton’s modernization and expansion of the *Squire’s Tale* is in the hands of the reader. It is, really, the reader who must make the call as to whether Wharton’s work is worthy of Chaucer or if his text has “not fulfilled Chaucer’s design” in the end.⁶¹⁴

Whether the internal notations help or harm Wharton’s cause, it is evident that he included them in an effort to assist the reader’s understanding of the text. As with all of the editions discussed in this chapter, the internal notations serve as a guiding tool for readers. They range in size from a few words to multiple pages and include content meant to define, clarify, summarize, and explain. The notes themselves are placed where they can best serve the reader: the space in which the reader is reading. For Wharton and, one assumes, the other editors discussed in this chapter, the choice to place the notations within the text itself is deliberate and with designated purpose.

Conclusion

This chapter has been concerned with the internal paratextual notations editors have made on Chaucer’s text (or their own version of Chaucer’s text). It is perhaps appropriate to look at one last edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that includes commentary not on Chaucer’s work but on the edited and modernized version of his text presented by

⁶¹³ Ibid., 192-3.

⁶¹⁴ Ibid., 193.

another editor, through the eyes of his son and a third editor. This convoluted publication came about in 1811, with the publication of *The Poetical Works of John Dryden, Esq. Containing Original Poems, Tales, and Translations, with Notes, by the late Rev. Joseph Warton, D.D. the Rev. John Warton, M.A. and Others.*

This four-volume set included three selections from Dryden's modernization of the *Canterbury Tales*: the *Knight's Tale*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, and the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Dryden's works remained popular in England at this time, with five editions of his Chaucerian fables being published between 1800 and 1822. The 1811 edition was the first since 1806—which was an edition with no internal paratextual notations. In contrast, the 1811 edition contains numerous internal notations, created by a variety of individuals.

Joseph Warton died in 1800, almost exactly 100 years after Dryden. Warton, an established literary critic and academic, had worked on editions of poetry by both classical poets such as Virgil and English poets such as Alexander Pope. His work on Dryden, however, was not completed when he died in the first few months of 1800.⁶¹⁵ Henry John Todd, a noted Milton scholar, helped complete the edition alongside Warton's son John. Together, they finalized the edition by 1811, producing a four-volume set that honored both Warton's work as well as that of John Dryden.

What makes this edition particularly interesting in the context of this chapter is the multi-level notations that occur throughout the text. The text, which is from Dryden's 1700 edition, includes Dryden's own notes, Joseph Warton's notes, H. J. Todd's notes, and John Warton's notes. While these various notations are theoretically intended to explain and contextualize the story for the reader, they end up causing more confusion than clarification. This is due, in part, to the fact that the editors chose to credit each of

⁶¹⁵ Nettie Farris, "Joseph Warton," *Salem Press Biographical Encyclopedia*, 2013.

the notations to the man who wrote them. The result of this repeated assignation was a rather muddled series of notations on some pages (fig. 5.8).

Fig. 5.8 – Notes from Warton's Dryden edition (1811)

60 **PALAMON AND ARCITE.**
That Greece should see perform'd what he de-
clar'd ;
And cruel Creon find his just reward.
He said no more, but, shunning all delay, 105
Rode on ; nor enter'd Athens on his way :
But left his sister and his queen behind,
And wav'd his royal banner in the wind :
Where in an argent field the god of war
Was drawn triumphant on his iron car ; 110
Red was his sword, and shield, and whole
attire,
And all the godhead seem'd to glow with
fire ;
Ev'n the ground glitter'd where the standard
flew,
And the green grafs was dy'd to fanguine
hue.

Ver. 109. ——— *the god of war*
Was drawn triumphant in his iron car ;]

This passage was in Gray's mind, when he wrote the *Progress of Poesy* ; and I am surpris'd that the epithet applied to *car* escaped him :

“ On Thracia's hills *the lord of war*
 “ Has curb'd the fury of his *car*.” TODD.

Ver. 113. *Ev'n the ground glitter'd where the standard flew,]*

———— *totaque circum*
Ære renidefcit tellus. Lucret. lib. ii.

And again :

Stare videtur et in campis confitere fulgur.

So Euripides, *Phœnissæ*, verse 110.

———— *κατάχαλος ἄπαι*
Πιδίος ἀγράφτη.

JOHN WARTON.

The poor typographical layout of these notes makes them almost unreadable. Trying to determine which note applies to which text (especially without a marker to point to where the note belongs) seems difficult. Add this to the fact that the reader encounters four

different assignations in the notes (Gray, Todd, Lucretius, and John Warton) as well as three different languages (English, Latin, and Greek).

Even when there were only two assignations, readers may have been confused or, at the very least, distracted by the layout of the notations (fig. 5.9).

Fig. 5.9 – Additional notes from Warton’s Dryden edition (1811)

Ver. 432. *Like drunken fots about &c.]* Sed ad hominum studia revertor, quorum animus, etsi caligante memoriâ, tamen summum bonum repetit ; sed veluti ebrius, domum quo tramite revertatur, ignorat.—Boethius de Cons. l. 3.
JOHN WARTON.
Ver. 446. *He frets, he fumes,]* Why should I tell the reader to admire these seven lines ?
DR. J. WARTON.
Ver. 447. *The hollow tower]* An improvement : in Chaucer, “the grete tower.”
JOHN WARTON.
Ver. 448. ————— *his fetter’d feet,]* I take occasion here to observe, once for all, the beauty and simplicity of Dryden’s epithets.
JOHN WARTON.

In the above example there would surely be some confusion about the difference between “John Warton” and “Dr. J. Warton” and whether they are the same person. Only by looking back at the title page, where Joseph Warton is listed as having a D.D. would the reader be able to verify that the “Dr. J.” in question is Joseph and not his son.

Whether it was Todd or John Warton who decided to produce the notations in this manner, the final version had to cause some confusion amongst the readers of the Dryden’s *Poetical Works* of 1811. Nearly all other examples of internal paratextual notations in this chapter involve a single editor commenting on Chaucer’s original text or on a translated or modernized edition of the text. These notations are almost always there to support the text and help the reader navigate the *Tales* in question. There is an

undoubtable benefit to internal notations that is far more direct and easier to identify than any preliminary paratext or appendices can offer.

Todd and Warton's edition serves as an exception to the rule in many ways. What it does demonstrate, however, is how important and useful internal paratextual elements can be to the reader. Perhaps only when they are done poorly can we appreciate just how valuable they are when done well. This chapter has been about the internalization of editorial commentary within Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. At their best, this internalization closely connects the reader with Chaucer's work in as clear and understandable a manner as possible.

These seemingly inconsequential notations are part of an important aspect of the presentation of Chaucer and his work to reading audiences. Such notations are, as Chuck Zerby states, an important aspect of academic study: "the footnote has been for centuries an indispensable tool of the scholar and a source of endlessly varied delight for the layperson."⁶¹⁶ In many ways the internal notations discussed in this chapter are as reader-focused and reader-friendly a paratextual attribute as can be found in the printing of the *Canterbury Tales*. They are short, easily-digestible, helpful, and even entertaining guides through the work of Chaucer and his modernizers.

Readers may skip over the preliminary paratextual material that has been discussed in the preceding chapters. They may gloss over a glossary or disregard an appendix at the back of a book. But those little notations at the bottom of the page are harder to ignore. And though they may not read them all, the internal notations are there—waiting patiently—for the reader to lean upon and learn from. In the world of Chaucerian printing, this can serve different readers in many different ways. Whether

⁶¹⁶ Zerby, *Devil's Details*, 1.

they are glossarial, summary, explanation, or something in-between, these notes serve the reader and help assist their understanding and appreciation for Chaucer and his work.

They also, undoubtedly, provide the editor with the real estate to put forth their own ideas, interpretations, and thoughts. Internal notations give the reader additional information about the text, allowing the editors to show off just how erudite they are and where the final authority of the text lies—not with Chaucer but with the editor.

CHAPTER 6 THE ILLUSTRATED CHAUCER

Introduction

One of the few areas of paratextual study that Gerard Genette does not discuss in depth in *Paratexts* is the use of illustrations. This is not because Genette does not see illustrations as paratextual elements, but because it would be too much to consider in his work:

I have likewise left out three practices whose paratextual relevance seems to me undeniable, but investigating each one individually might demand as much work as was required here in treating this subject as a whole... The third of the three practices in itself constitutes an immense continent: that of *illustration*.⁶¹⁷

This “continent” of paratextual material is too massive an area of study for Genette to include in his work. Though he cannot fit them into his overall study, Genette acknowledges the importance of illustrations as paratextual elements:

This practice goes back at least to the ornamental capitals and illuminations of the Middle Ages, and its value as commentary, which sometimes has great force, involves the author's responsibility, not only when he provides the illustrations himself (Blake, Hugo, Thackeray, Cocteau, and many others) or commissions them in precise detail... but also, and more indirectly, each time he accepts their presence. We know that such authors as Flaubert or James rejected illustrations on principle, either because they feared an unfaithful visualization or, more radically, because they objected to any kind of visualization whatsoever. All these positions indicate the authors' very keen sense of the paratextual capacity—whether apposite or ill advised—of illustrations. To examine this subject in its full scope, one would need not only the historical information I don't have but also a technical and iconological skill (think of the illustrations and frontispieces of the classical period) I will never have. Clearly, that study exceeds the means of a plain “literary person.”⁶¹⁸

⁶¹⁷ Genette, *Paratexts*, 405-6.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid., 406.

While Genette does not think himself up to the task of analyzing the role of illustrations as paratextual elements, his inclusion of them as one of the practices he has “left out” of the discussion is enough to warrant their inclusion in *this* study of the paratextual elements of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Illustrations in Chaucer’s works have long been an area of interest for scholars and students of the *Tales*. Both Chaucerians and book historians have become interested, even fascinated, in the use of images within the context of the publication of Chaucer’s most famous text. Entire websites have been dedicated to the illustrative representations of Chaucer and his pilgrims.⁶¹⁹ In addition, countless articles and book chapters have been written on the topic of illustrating Chaucer’s works. From William Caxton’s second edition of the *Tales* in 1483, images of the poet and his pilgrims has been appearing in printed editions of the text.

The illustrating of the *Canterbury Tales*, however, did not come about with the advent of printing in England. The illustrative roots of the pilgrims can be seen stretching back to the days of manuscripts, when Chaucer’s written descriptions of his characters inspired artists to portray them in image-form:

That skill at description has prompted many artists to illustrate the *Canterbury Tales*, beginning, insofar as we know, with the miniaturist of the renowned Ellesmere manuscript, dated to the decade after Chaucer’s death, and continuing to the present.⁶²⁰

The illustrations appearing in the Ellesmere manuscript are beautifully reproduced in a 1999 publication that featured descriptions of the images by Herbert Schultz, curator of

⁶¹⁹ See, for example, the “Visualizing Chaucer” site hosted by the University of Rochester (<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/chaucer>) and Robert Simola’s “Chaucer Editions” (<https://chaucereditions.wordpress.com>) for websites dedicated to the illustrated editions of Chaucer’s work.

⁶²⁰ Miriam Youngerman Miller, “Illustrations of the *Canterbury Tales* for Children: A Mirror of Chaucer’s World?” *The Chaucer Review*, 27, no. 3 (1993): 293.

manuscripts at the Huntington Library from 1940 to 1971. This edition, which was published after Schulz's death, reproduces each of the twenty-three pilgrims (including Chaucer) who are illustrated in the manuscript. The only significant characters who do not appear in illustrative form in the Ellesmere manuscript are the Plowman and the Host (Herry Bailly). All pilgrims who tell tales in Chaucer's work are represented in visual form in the manuscript—in images that match Chaucer's detailed descriptions:

One of the most notable features of the paintings is the care exercised by the artists in following, as closely as conditions would permit, the descriptions of the Pilgrims given by Chaucer in his General Prologue. The Squire's enormously long sleeves flapping in the breeze and his immodestly short jacket in the latest fashionable cut are graphically shown...Even such minutia as the Miller's gilded thumb was not overlooked by the artist.⁶²¹

The attention to detail on the part of the artist is reflected in the images presented in the manuscript. They also demonstrate the great detail that Chaucer himself provided through the text—in particular within the opening prologue.

It might seem unnecessary, in a book about the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*, to focus so much attention on illustrations within a manuscript that was produced 60-70 years before the first printed edition of the *Tales* was completed. The influence of manuscript portraits was an essential part of the early printing history of Chaucer's work. The use of images in both manuscript and print formats were intended not only to provide decorative elements to the text, but “were intended to serve not only as rubrics but also as commentary...such images inform the reader's approach to the individual tales.”⁶²²

⁶²¹ Schulz, *The Ellesmere Manuscript*, 16-7.

⁶²² Finley, William K. and Joseph Rosenblum, “Introduction” in *Chaucer Illustrated: Five Hundred Years of the Canterbury Tales in Pictures*, edited by William K. Finley and Joseph Rosenblum, New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2003, xxii.

The importance of illustration to the history of the production of the *Canterbury Tales* (from manuscript to print) is most extensively explored in the 2003 collection *Chaucer Illustrated: Five Hundred Years of the Canterbury Tales in Pictures* edited by William K. Finley and Joseph Rosenblum. The collection brings together essays from eleven Chaucerian scholars and book historians who explore the long history of illustrations of Chaucer's most significant work.

As is clearly evident from both Genette's text above and the essays in Finley and Rosenblum's collection, the paratextual element of illustration is just as significant to the story of the printing of the *Canterbury Tales* as any textual elements previously discussed in this dissertation. The medium is very different, but the impact on the reader (as will be explored at length below) is equally significant. In fact, to separate illustrations from written paratextual material would be a disservice to the printed editions. The illustrations are an essential part of the paratextual narrative. Nowhere is this clearer than in the essays that make up *Chaucer Illustrated*.

The focus of those essays that address print production during the handpress period focus on two primary formats of illustration: simplistic woodcuts that dominated the early editions and more complex engravings that populated the eighteenth and nineteenth-century editions. It is these two forms that will be the focus of this chapter. In total, thirty-three printed editions included some form of illustration to accompany the *Canterbury Tales*. That represents about 23% of the total print editions produced in the handpress period. Of these editions, only thirteen contain three or more illustrations. The remaining twenty contain only one or two images, with most of those being images of Chaucer himself. These twenty editions are worth mentioning on occasion, but the main

focus of this chapter will be the thirteen more heavily-illustrated editions produced between 1477 and 1830.

Regardless of the quantity or quality of the illustrations, their presence can be significant to the reader's interaction with and understanding of the text. As Finley and Rosenblum explain in the introduction to their edited volume, the use of illustrations "serve a further function in helping the reader visualize and judge the characters" who make up the tellers and the tales.⁶²³ As will be explored in the sections below, the editors, printers, and publishers who created printed editions of Chaucer's work used illustrations to convey meaning, aid in understanding, and support narrative memory. These are not mere decorations or space-fillers; they are purposeful, visual representations of Chaucer's *Tales* and are as significant paratextual elements as the prefaces, footnotes, etc. that have been previously discussed in this dissertation. They are, to echo Gerard Genette, an "immense continent" of material that has "great force" in its ability to provide commentary on a text. This chapter will explore that continent, or at least the parts of it populated by the illustrated Chaucer.

Beginning With Woodcuts

As with many of the chapters in this dissertation, we start with William Caxton. In 1483, Caxton commissioned a set of twenty-three woodblocks to accompany his revised second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. In addition to completely updating the text, Caxton intended to enhance his edition with visual elements. The twenty-three woodcuts were used throughout the edition, with many of them repeated, resulting in forty-seven

⁶²³ Finley and Rosenblum, xxi.

illustrations accompanying the text. The images were placed squarely within the frame of the text block and were almost uniformly consistent in their placement and appearance:

With the exception of an illustration showing the whole group of pilgrims seated together at table, all of the illustrations are equestrian portraits of single pilgrims; and without exception, all of the illustrations take the form of framed rectangles, printed within the single text-column of Caxton's page, in space that would otherwise have been occupied by type-set verses.⁶²⁴

Based, in part, on this placement, David Carlson suggests that the images of individual pilgrims (each astride a horse) were inspired or copied from manuscript illustrations in existence at the time. Their placement within Caxton's second edition, as Carlson notes, fell within the text area. This is similar, he contends, to how the illustrations appeared in the Oxford Fragment manuscript:

Unlike the Ellesmere miniatures, which appear in the outer margins of pages, the Oxford Fragments miniatures and the Caxton woodcuts occur within the text area, across columns of writing...the Oxford Fragments miniatures and the Caxton woodcuts are framed on four sides by straight lines, single in the printed edition and double in the Oxford Fragments.⁶²⁵

The placement and style are not the only similarities, according to Carlson. The Oxford images (at least those few that remain) have some similar style and details to Caxton's edition. The Man of Law and the Miller, in particular, share visual parallels that support the connection. While these connections are rather tenuous, as Carlson admits, one can both understand and appreciate the linkage between manuscript illustrations and the printed woodcuts.

Regardless of the source of their inspiration, Caxton's woodcuts stand as the first use of illustrations in the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales* and were extremely

⁶²⁴ Carlson, David R., "The Woodcut Illustrations in Early Printed Editions of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," in Finley and Rosenblum, *Chaucer Illustrated*, 75.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 76-7.

influential to the printers and editors who followed. The woodcuts were reused and copied for over a century, the first of two significant series of woodcuts:

The first was cut for William Caxton's second edition of the *Tales*, published in 1483, and this series was reused, more or less intact, in Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 *Tales*, the 1532 edition of Chaucer's complete works, edited by William Thynne and printed by Thomas Godfray, and the 1542 reprint of the 1532 edition, produced by Richard Grafton. Individual woodcuts added to the Caxton series after its initial appearance recurred in the 'Printers' edition of c. 1550, the Stow edition of 1561, and the Speght editions of 1598 and 1602.⁶²⁶

The second significant series of woodblocks, commissioned by Richard Pynson for his 1492 edition and reused in two later editions, was copied from Caxton's originals, essentially meaning that all editions printed between 1483 and 1602 containing illustrations were directly influenced by Caxton's first set. The longevity of these woodcut series was really only limited by the eventual wearing down of the woodblocks.

The choice to use illustrations has been somewhat crassly reduced to an "effective marketing device" by Carlson and others.⁶²⁷ This may very well have been part of the decision-making process for Caxton and those who followed, but I believe that Caxton's desire to do right by Chaucer's text (as has been discussed in earlier chapters) also influenced his decision to include the illustrations as a way to further raise the printed work to a higher level of sophistication. It was also, perhaps, a nod to the manuscript tradition. Caxton, if David Carlson is right, was using an illustrated manuscript as source for his text. He may have commissioned the woodcuts to further connect his printed edition to the "original" Chaucer manuscript that was his inspiration. Regardless of the reason behind his decision, Caxton's inclusion of illustrations to support the text of the *Canterbury Tales* was both significant and influential to future printings of the text.

⁶²⁶ Ibid., 73.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., 75.

Even more significantly for this dissertation, they were influential to readers as well. As noted above, the illustrations help readers to visualize the tales and their tellers in a way that can enhance Chaucer's own descriptions and language. Each of the twenty-two pilgrims described in the Prologue who has a story appear in the *Tales* is illustrated in Caxton's edition.⁶²⁸ Their images are placed alongside the textual descriptions of the characters, such as the Squire (fig. 6.1).



Fig. 6.1 – Woodcut illustration of the Squire from the *General Prologue* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

The images of twenty-two pilgrims precede or accompany the textual descriptions and help the reader to more easily and readily identify the figures as they are reading.

Each of the figures, as mentioned above, appears on horseback. The images often show

⁶²⁸ That is, all except for Chaucer himself. The poet, though he is one of the pilgrims and one of the storytellers, is not illustrated in Caxton's edition of the Prologue. A later illustration accompanies both the *Sir Thopas* text and the *Tale of Melibee* and it can be concluded that the image is intended to represent Chaucer. The poet, however, is not clearly identified in any of the Caxton woodcuts.

the pilgrims (or, rather, their horses) in motion as if they are captured mid-stream on the very pilgrimage which Chaucer is describing. The movement conveys action and liveliness, but the horses and their accoutrements also allow for the representation of wealth, power, and status to be shown to the reader in an illustrative format. The knight and his horse are, unsurprisingly, well-dressed and regal in heavy armor; the image seems to ooze strength, valor, and bravery (fig. 6.2).



Fig. 6.2 – Woodcut illustration of the Knight from the *General Prologue* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

The practical nature of riding in full armor from London to Canterbury may need to be set aside by the reader, but the visual evidence of the Knight's power and prowess cannot be denied. The grandeur and gallantry are evident in Chaucer's description as well:

A Knyght ther was a worthy man
 That fro the tyme that he first began
 To ryden out, he loved chyvalrye
 Trouthe & honour fredom and curtesye⁶²⁹

Though the description of the man's chivalry is clear, Chaucer is not so generous in his physical description of the Knight. In the *Prologue*, Chaucer describes him as neither richly attired ("not gay") nor clean ("al besmered wyth hys habergeon"⁶³⁰).⁶³¹ His physical decrepitude, however, seems not to have negatively influenced the opinions of Chaucer, his fellow pilgrims, or the artist who produced Caxton's woodcuts.

While the illustrative depiction of the Knight may not fully correspond with the written description, readers would easily recognize the Knight from his image and clearly connect him with the pilgrim being introduced at the beginning of the *General Prologue*. The recognizability of the images was a primary way in which they aided in readership of the text. Aligning the woodcuts with the introductory descriptions in the *General Prologue* helped readers to connect image with individuals; this would come into play later in Caxton's edition when the same images were reused as part of the introduction of each pilgrim's particular tale. As Carlson describes, this duplication was purposeful within the edition, making it easier for the reader to remember each tale and teller:

The doubling also made using and appreciating the book easier, by guiding the book's users from pilgrim to tale, encouraging them to see connections between the prologue with its framing fiction and the individual tales within, the connections between tellers and tales.⁶³²

⁶²⁹ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, 3v.

⁶³⁰ Covered in rust stains from his armor.

⁶³¹ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, 4r.

⁶³² Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 79.

Readers navigating Caxton's edition, therefore, had three means of connecting pilgrims to their tales: titles, descriptions, and illustrations. This triple-layering of connection surely helped to further join the tales and tellers in the reader's mind.

The only image within Caxton's edition that does not correspond to the repetitious single-pilgrim-on-horseback theme is an image of the entire group of travelers seated together at a table (fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3 – Woodcut illustration of the pilgrims at supper from the *General Prologue* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

This image depicts twenty-four individuals: presumably the twenty-two pilgrims depicted on horseback throughout the rest of the *General Prologue* as well as Herry Bailly (the Host) and Geoffrey Chaucer himself. The image appears at the end of the *General Prologue* and serves as a bringing together of all of the characters who have been introduced in the *Canterbury Tales*. The image also corresponds, in both placement and depiction, with the introduction of the Host and the description of the pilgrim group sitting down to supper:

Gret chere made our ost to us everychon
 And to soupere sette he us anon
 He served us wyth vytayll at the beste
 Strong was the wyne & wel drynke us lyste⁶³³

The pilgrims gather for a meal together before setting out on the road towards Canterbury. In the Caxton edition this image comes at the end of the *General Prologue* and provides the reader with an image of togetherness and connection among the fellow travelers. It is the perfect image to end the introductory section and begin the journey through the tales that are to follow.

The image clearly stands out from all the others in Caxton's edition, but does not seem out of place or erroneous. Rather, it serves as another valuable tool for the reader to help place them within the context of the pilgrimage and to fully understand the social nature of Chaucer's work and its interwoven aspects. The pilgrims, though wholly independent and introduced by themselves (with their accompanying horse-riding images), are part of a larger group that is sharing in this experience together. And, just as they sit down together at the end of the *General Prologue* to join in a meal and get to

⁶³³ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, 20r.

know one another, so too does the reader “join” in their group revelry and merriment before heading out on the road.

Aside from this group image, the introductory images that populate the *General Prologue* are focused on the individual. As noted above, this can help the reader to make a stronger connection between the teller and the tale. Sometimes, however, the illustrations could be more of a distraction or cause of confusion than an asset. This was caused, particularly, by the repetition of certain portraits to depict different characters throughout the text. This repetition could cause bewilderment and doubt in the reader’s mind as they try to navigate these duplicated images. Take, for example, the following three illustrations of the Shipman and the Canon’s Yeoman taken from throughout Caxton’s 1483 edition (figs. 6.4-6.6).



Fig. 6.4 – Woodcut illustration of the Shipman from the *General Prologue* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

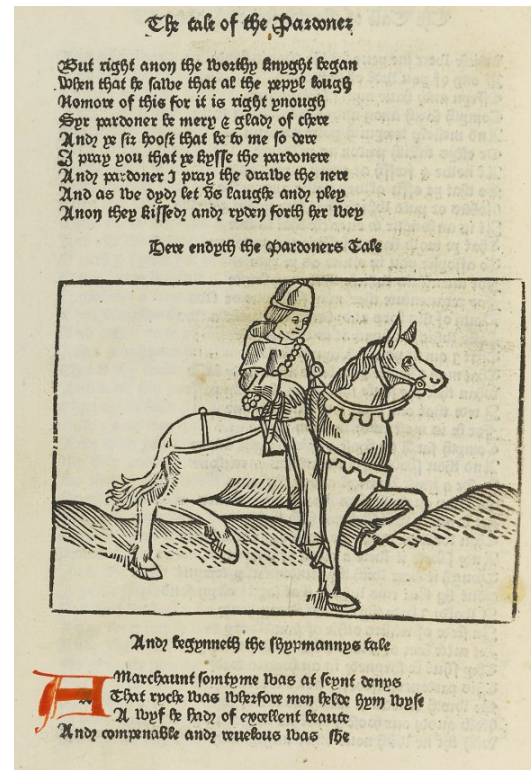


Fig. 6.5 – Woodcut illustration of the Shipman from the *Shipman's Tale* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

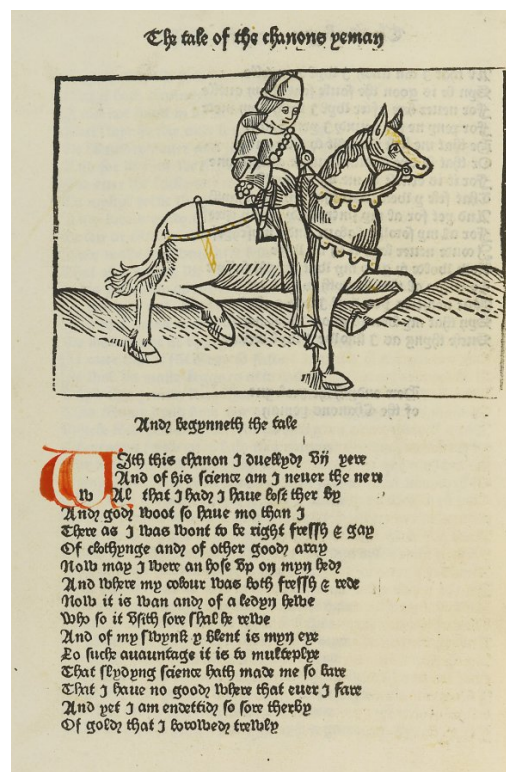


Fig. 6.6 – Woodcut illustration of the Canon's Yeoman from the *Tale of the Canon's Yeoman* from Caxton (1483). By permission of the British Library.

As is evident, each of these images is identical. The same woodcut was used for both pilgrims. The Canon's Yeoman does not appear in the *General Prologue* because he (and the Canon) arrive late to join the pilgrimage and only come into the story after the *Second Nun's Tale*. Their appearance is something of a surprise to Chaucer and the other pilgrims. In many ways it is an intrusion into the flow of the narrative, but perhaps a purposeful one that Chaucer inserted in order to keep his readers (like his pilgrims) on their toes. Regardless of the reason for the intrusion, the Canon and his Yeoman appear late to the story and are not, therefore, already established in the reader's mind either in written description or image. It is curious, then, that Caxton would choose to repeat an image of another pilgrim as a stand-in for the Canon's Yeoman. It would have been less confusing for there to be no image at all to accompany the Canon's Yeoman's story.

The Shipman/Canon's Yeoman duplication is not the only one in Caxton's edition. Duplication of illustration occurs with numerous other characters: the Parson and Physician; the Manciple and the Franklin (image from the *Franklin's Tale*); and the Merchant, Summoner, and Franklin (image from the *General Prologue*).⁶³⁴ Carlson argues that this duplication was somewhat to be expected. The images are drawn rather generically and do not necessarily match perfectly with the physical descriptions written by Chaucer (such as the Knight); instead, they are "more or less stock figures" drawn to represent a typical image of that type of person.⁶³⁵ This trope-like approach to the illustrations could serve a purpose to further help the reader identify (and remember) the

⁶³⁴ A large part of confusion within these duplications is the use of two different woodcuts to represent the Franklin. The image appearing in the *General Prologue* does not match the image used for the *Franklin's Tale* later in the edition.

⁶³⁵ Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 79.

pilgrims throughout the edition while also making it easier on the artists and cheaper for Caxton to commission the woodcuts.

Regardless of the possible confusion caused by repetition of illustrations and duplication of images, the woodcuts can very clearly act as an aid for readers encountering Chaucer's text for the first time. In addition, they helped Caxton to produce an edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that was far more complex and sophisticated than the first edition from a few years prior. Such sophistication could not only attract a higher-end audience for the text, but also garner a higher price. The best evidence for the success of Caxton's illustration is not book sale numbers or book reviews (neither of which exist) but, rather, the reuse of these illustrations by Caxton's acolytes Richard Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde.

Following Caxton's death in 1491, the woodblocks, like the rest of Caxton's printing materials and shop, were inherited by de Worde. He used the woodblocks in the printing of his 1498 edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. During the fifteen years between Caxton's second edition and de Worde's first, however, some of the woodblocks seem to have gone missing. Instead of Caxton's twenty-three woodblocks, de Worde had twenty-two: twenty originally from Caxton and two newly crafted ones.⁶³⁶ This combination of old and new blocks was used by de Worde in thirty-two places throughout his edition. That is fifteen fewer than Caxton used in his 1483 edition.

The ways in which the woodblocks were used was also rather different from Caxton's version. de Worde did not follow the formula of matching each pilgrim image

⁶³⁶ The two newly crafted images created to replace two lost woodblocks are of the Knight and the Merchant. In addition, the image that Caxton used for the Plowman in his *General Prologue* is used by de Worde as the illustration for the Parson—which is the last of the three lost images. Finally, the Second Nun's image and the Prioress's image are swapped in de Worde's edition. The assumption is that either the printer or one of his assistants simply mixed up the two images since they are similar in nature.

with the introductory description presented in the *General Prologue*. Rather, he only used six images in the opening section: an image of Chaucer (which precedes the *Tale of Melibee* in Caxton's edition); the image of the pilgrims gathered for supper at the table; the Physician; the Summoner; the Pardoner; and the table image again. These six images (with one repeated) make up the entirety of the illustrations for the *General Prologue*—a far cry from the twenty-three images that decorated Caxton's 1483 edition.

The way in which de Worde used woodcuts, both in the *Canterbury Tales* and his other printings, makes it clear that while he did not mind reusing Caxton's type, text, and woodblocks, he reinterpreted the order and layout continuously. This behavior has been explored at some length by Martha Driver in articles and book chapters. Driver discusses the myriad ways de Worde repurposed text and images to craft editions of works that were both an homage to earlier editions (including Caxton's) and a distinctly new production in their own right:

The illustration of books produced by Wynkyn de Worde is a complex issue. After examining some three hundred illustrated editions first hand in British and American collections, as well as numerous facsimiles, I can say conclusively that each book is an adventure unto itself and that few generalizations apply. It seems de Worde did not just find one method of illustrating and stick to it. He did not, for example, always follow the picture layout of an exemplar, or include the same number of illustrations, or always put pictures in the same places as a previous printed or manuscript copy.⁶³⁷

So, while de Worde inherited the press, the type, and the blocks from Caxton, he felt no obligation to completely follow his mentor's layout and order, especially when it came to illustrations.

⁶³⁷ Martha Driver, "The Illustrated de Worde: An Overview," *Studies in Iconography* 17 (1996): 349.

The one area where de Worde did follow Caxton closely was with illustrating the tales themselves. A woodcut image illustrates twenty-three of the stories in the collection, with only the *Tale of Sir Thopas* not having an accompanying image. Like Caxton's edition, de Worde offers his readers a visual cue and connection from the teller to the tale in the form of the woodcut illustrations. In fact, the similarities were such that de Worde's arrangement "in no sense" compromised or disrupted Caxton's original vision for his edition.⁶³⁸

There is, however, one rather noticeable thing about de Worde's use of the woodblocks: it is clear that they were starting to wear down. In numerous instances, the illustrations are faded, broken, or softened by the physical breaking down of the woodblocks. It is particularly evident in the images depicting the Man of Law (fig. 6.7) and the Wife of Bath (fig. 6.8).



Fig. 6.7 – Woodcut illustration of the Man of Law from de Worde (1498). Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

⁶³⁸ Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 84.

Here endith the man of lawes tale
 And here begynneth the prologe of the wyf of bathes tale



Fig. 6.8 – Woodcut illustration of the Wife of Bath from de Worde (1498). Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

The worst spots of wear and tear are noticeable on the head of the Man of Law and the head and face of the Wife of Bath's horse. In addition, the frames around both images is broken or inconsistent, which is further evidence of the breaking down of the woodblocks. It is no surprise that the images were beginning to break down. They had served Caxton for his second edition in 1483 and de Worde for his first edition in 1498. The woodblocks were in use up until 1542, when they were included as part of a reprinting of William Thynne's second Chaucer edition. In addition, Richard Pynson used the same woodblocks as inspiration for design of his own illustrated edition of the *Canterbury Tales* in 1492. Pynson, in many ways, helped to keep Caxton's vision of Chaucer's greatest work alive far longer than did Wynkyn de Worde. For it was Pynson who printed the first edition of the *Tales* after Caxton's death as well as the first illustrated edition of the sixteenth century in 1526.

Pynson's 1492 edition was the first after Caxton's to use woodblocks to populate the work with illustrations. Though de Worde inherited Caxton's blocks in 1491, it took

him seven years to put together an edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. Pynson, meanwhile, finished his edition within two years of the great printer's death—and commissioned his own set of new woodblock illustrations during that time. Pynson's set of images was directly inspired by Caxton's illustrations:

Pynson copied Caxton. The woodcuts making up his 1492 series were executed with greater sophistication, perhaps, and by their banners, longer and more skilful curves, and relative wealth of detailed work, suggest a knowledge of contemporary continental woodcutting on his artist's part that Caxton's artist did not possess or would not use. Nevertheless, all of Pynson's woodcuts derive from Caxton's as adaptations or free copies; and for placing impressions of his copies in his first edition of the *Tales* in 1492, Pynson likewise simply followed what Caxton had done. He illustrated his edition in precisely the same forty-seven places Caxton had illustrated in 1483...The result was that, in terms of its program of illustrations, Pynson's first edition mostly reprints Caxton's, substituting new derivative woodcuts for the old.⁶³⁹

Though more complex and sophisticated than Caxton's woodblocks, Pynson's images served much of the same purpose for his edition.

The most significant difference in the two sets of illustrations was that Pynson's images were more detailed and ornate. This includes a greater focus on the costumes and ornamentation of the pilgrims and their horses. Like each of the Caxton images, all of the pilgrims are shown on horseback and in motion. Unlike Caxton's edition, however, the characters are illustrated with more detail related to their societal positions and occupations—even when they don't quite match the descriptions in Chaucer's text.

⁶³⁹ Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 85-7.



Fig. 6.9 – Woodcut illustration of the Knight from Pynson (1492).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

Once again we can look at the Knight as an example of a recognizable but misinterpreted image of one of the pilgrims. As noted above, the Knight is described by Chaucer as gallant and chivalrous, but rather dingy in appearance. Even more so than Caxton, Pynson's edition shows an opulent version of the Knight and his horse (fig. 6.9). The Knight depicted above is younger, wealthier, and more richly attired than described in the *General Prologue*. The image itself does not look like it would have come from a pilgrimage. The armor, weaponry, and decoration seem to fit more closely with a knight who is riding into battle, not riding towards Canterbury. The other images of the pilgrims that we have seen look like they could be part of a pilgrimage, whereas Pynson's knight looks more battle-ready. That being said, while the image does not accurately match Chaucer's description, it is most certainly recognizable to the reader as a Knight both in

his stature and his costuming. And it helps that he is accompanied by a floating ribbon that labels him as “The Knyght”.

A ribbon or banner is included in about half of the images in Pynson’s edition. These banners, like the Knight’s above, were intended to help identify the individual being displayed. The problem with this approach is that the banners are rather useless if left blank, as they are for nearly all of the pilgrims. The Knight and the Clerk are the only two pilgrims whose banners are labeled. The other twelve illustrations that include banners are left blank, such as the Prioress (fig. 6.10). Out of context, it is difficult to properly identify the characters as themselves, especially when the visual cues (such as a cross or rosary beads) could be used to identify multiple pilgrims.

Fortunately, the image precedes text introducing the Prioress in the *General Prologue*, so it is not difficult for the reader to determine who is being represented.



Fig. 6.10 – Woodcut illustration of the Prioress from Pynson (1492).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

Having a labelled banner, however, would eliminate all questions or confusion. What is particularly interesting about the Prioress image is that it is used later in the edition to represent the Second Nun in the introduction to her tale. While it may be confusing for the reader to see the same image used for multiple pilgrims, labelling the banners could help to show that the image could represent both female religious figures—they are both nuns after all.

One particular banner that goes unused in the *General Prologue* could lead to real confusion for the reader (fig. 6.11). It belongs to a pilgrim who is not clearly identified in

Prologue

a Frankleyn Was in his compaignye
 White Was his berd as is the deysie
 And of his complexioun Was sanguyn
 Wele touned he by the morowe a cuppe of Wy
 Tolpue in delite Was euer his wone
 For he Was eppurtes owen sone
 That heid opunpon that playn delite
 Was berzap felicitye parfitte
 In house holder and that a grete Was he
 Seint Julian he Was in his contre
 His brede his ale Was arwey after one
 A better Wiued man Was no where none
 Withoute bahe mete Was he neuiz in house
 His fische his flesche and that so porentous
 It fne wed in his house of mete and drinke
 Of alle denteres that men coude thinke
 After the sounry season of the yere
 So changed he his mete and his soupere
 In le many a fatte partriche hadde he in me We
 And many a brewe and lue in ste We
 Woo Was his coke but his sawe Were
 Poynaunt and sharp and redy alle his gere
 His table dozmaunt in his hall at wey
 Was redy couered alle the long dape
 At sessions thez Was he lord and sire
 Fulle oft tyme he Was knyght of the shire
 A anlace and a gypsey al of sikke
 King at his girdel as white as morowe mythe
 A shereue hadde he he and coronoure
 Was nowhere suche a Worthy haue soure

Prologue



a Ma herdaßher thez Was and a carpenters
 A webbe a dpez and a tapper
 And they Were clothed alle in one quere
 Of a solempne and grete fraternyte
 Fulle fresche and new theiz yere pyked Was
 Theire lincupes chapd Were nat With braße
 But al With sikkez wrought fulle kene and wele
 Theiz girdles and their pouches euery dape
 Wele semed ech of theym a faire burgees
 To sitten in the yelde hall at the dese
 Eueriche for the wisdom that he can
 Was happely for to be an alderman
 For catel hadde they pnow and rent
 And theiz wyues wolde it wele assent
 And elles certeyn they Were to blame
 It is fulle faire to be called madame
 And go to the Vygylles alle bifoze
 And haue a mantel rialy y boze

Fig. 6.11 – *General Prologue* with woodcut illustration from Pynson (1492).
 Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

the accompanying text. The difficulty for the reader here is in identifying the image of the pilgrim on the right-hand page. The left-hand page introduces the reader to the Franklin, whose illustration appears on the previous page. The right-hand page notes that “An haberdasher ther was and a carpenter/A webbe a dyer and a tapyser” were in the group of pilgrims.⁶⁴⁰ What is not clear, however, is exactly which of those individuals is being portrayed in the included illustration.

While the pilgrim image includes a banner, there is no label or other identifying text. The reader is left to interpret the image and try to make a best guess as to who is being represented. Based on the costume, particularly the cloak and hat, one might assume that the image is intended to represent the haberdasher, though it is not entirely clear. Carlson and others have assumed that the image is intended to generally represent all of the guildsmen introduced in that section—that the image is depicting Chaucer’s description of them as “they were clothed alle in one lyvere” of a guild.⁶⁴¹ And, since none of these pilgrims appear again in the edition and none have a tale told on the journey, the reader must be satisfied with their best guess and move along to the next pilgrim. Confusion aside, the images are as helpful to the reader as Caxton and de Worde’s editions from the original woodblocks.

Pynson’s next edition, over thirty years later, of the *Canterbury Tales* continues this same trend, although with fewer images than his 1492 edition. In 1526, Pynson produced his final edition of the *Tales* at the rather advanced age of 78. This edition was the most compact and condensed edition of the *Tales* yet to be produced. Unlike Caxton’s editions, de Worde’s edition, and Pynson’s own fifteenth-century edition, this volume

⁶⁴⁰ Pynson, *Canterbury Tales*, 1492, B2r.

⁶⁴¹ Ibid.

Likewise, the image of the Knight is truncated to a quarter-page size rather than a full-width image that takes up nearly half a page. The Knight looks almost imprisoned in such a small space, with his horse barely fitting into the frame (in fact his tail is somewhere out of the box). The compact page layout continues for the rest of the edition, though the illustrations are given more space to breathe when they are introduced later in the *Tales*. Each of the illustrated pilgrims appears only in the context of the tale they tell, leaving the Knight as the only pilgrim who appears in the *General Prologue*. The only other image in the *Prologue* is a group illustration of the pilgrims gathered for supper. Unlike previous editions, however, the image only represents about half of the pilgrims on the trek (fig. 6.13).



Fig. 6.13 – Woodcut illustration of the pilgrims at supper from Pynson (1526).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

Only fourteen of the pilgrims are depicted in the image and they are clustered together in a way that makes it difficult to determine who is who. The woodcut is a

replacement for the original Caxton image of the pilgrims at supper and is both more detailed and harder to decipher than its older counterpart. The sense of community and togetherness, however, is still evident in the image and clearly shows the reader the connectedness of the travelers.

When the reader turns to the tales themselves, they are provided illustrations for twenty-three of the stories. Only the Merchant is not depicted in the images presented to the reader. Two of the tales repeat images, with the same illustration being used for the Prioress and the Second Nun and the same illustration being used for Sir Thopas and Melibee (both Chaucer's stories). The number of images with banners is significantly reduced from Pynson's prior edition: from fourteen to three. Only the Clerk and Prioress/Second Nun images have banners.

The images are inspired by or copied from both Caxton's originals and the 1492 edition. Carlson points out that ten of the woodblocks from 1492 were reused in 1526. The remaining woodblocks were made brand new for Pynson, partially inspired by Caxton's first illustrated edition:

Pynson must have had access to a copy of the 1483 Caxton edition as he was preparing to print his 1526 edition, inasmuch as he had new illustrations copied from it. The Caxton edition may also have served Pynson as a model for distributing his now substantially recut series throughout his new edition.⁶⁴²

Pynson, then, returns not only to his own first edition from the late fifteenth century, but looks back even further to Caxton's edition from over forty years beforehand.

Inspiration and influence of that seminal 1483 edition did not end with Pynson's death in 1529. Use of the Caxton woodblocks, and Pynson's series that were inspired by them, continued well into the sixteenth century:

⁶⁴² Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 89.

Caxton's and Pynson's books remained accessible, as repositories of models for individual illustrations and arrangement; and, more importantly, perhaps, many of the original blocks of the two series remained capable of use for a long time, for nearly seventy years in the case of some of Pynson's 1492 blocks.⁶⁴³

The longevity of the two woodblock sets is evident in the editions of William Thynne (1532, 1542, & 1550), John Stowe (1561), and Thomas Speght (1598 & 1602).

Thynne's editions represent the final significant usage of traditional woodblocks which first appeared in Caxton's edition. In both 1532 and 1542, Thynne's editions featured twenty or more illustrations depicting the pilgrims and their tales. While not as populated as any of the previous editions by Caxton, de Worde, or Pynson, these illustrations were still beneficial to the reader as visual cues for understanding the relationships between teller and tale. It is worth noting, before delving into the use of illustration in Thynne's *Canterbury Tales*, that his edition is a complete works of Chaucer. The *Tales*, however, are the only work that feature illustrations or supporting imagery of any kind. The rest of Chaucer's works in the edition are textual only and unadorned.

It is easy to assume that the reason for the *Canterbury Tales* being the only illustrated text is because the woodblocks needed to illustrate the text were already in existence and available to the printers and publishers of Thynne's editions. As Carlson describes, Thynne's edition was decorated somewhat minimally but with reliance on Caxton's original blocks:

By 1532, thirteen blocks remaining from Caxton's series had come into the possession of the London printer Thomas Godfray, who used them for illustrating the *Canterbury Tales* portion of an edition of Chaucer's complete works prepared by William Thynne. The book is not illustrated elsewhere. With two new blocks—another new Knight, and a figure used

⁶⁴³ Ibid., 97.

for the Squire...Godfray had fewer blocks at his disposal, only fifteen, and he used them still less lavishly, to make only twenty illustrations.⁶⁴⁴

With a limited selection of woodblocks to work with (although it is impressive that eleven of the original Caxton woodblocks survived to this time) some pilgrims were not able to be illustrated. This included both Chaucer tales (Sir Thopas and Melibee) as well as the Monk and the Nun's Priest. In addition, Godfray and Thynne made the decision to only decorate the individual tales and not the *General Prologue*. This edition represents the first illustrated version in which not a single image decorates the *Prologue*. Instead, because of limited real estate in a very lengthy complete works, Godfray is realistically only able to fit the illustrations into the main body of the text.

Even with the lack of real estate, the text layout and inclusion of the images is nicely spaced out and easy to read. Out of the twenty images only two are positioned as quarter-page visuals, the Squire (fig. 6.14) and the Friar (fig. 6.15). The other eighteen images in the edition are all half-page in size and do a good job of breaking up the text as the tales transition from one to another. In addition, they help to identify the storyteller through the same visual cues and identifiers as Caxton, de Worde, and Pynson used in earlier editions. In this way, they aid the reader's memory of the pilgrims and who is on the journey that has set out for Canterbury. There is, however, one area of confusion and possible misinterpretation in Thynne's edition: the repetition of images to represent different characters.

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., 84.

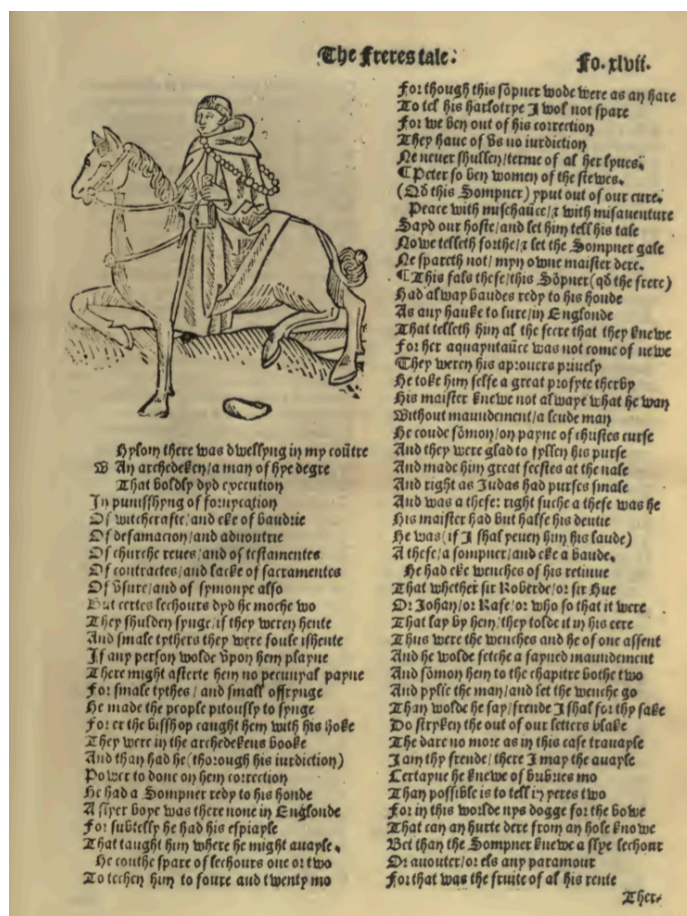
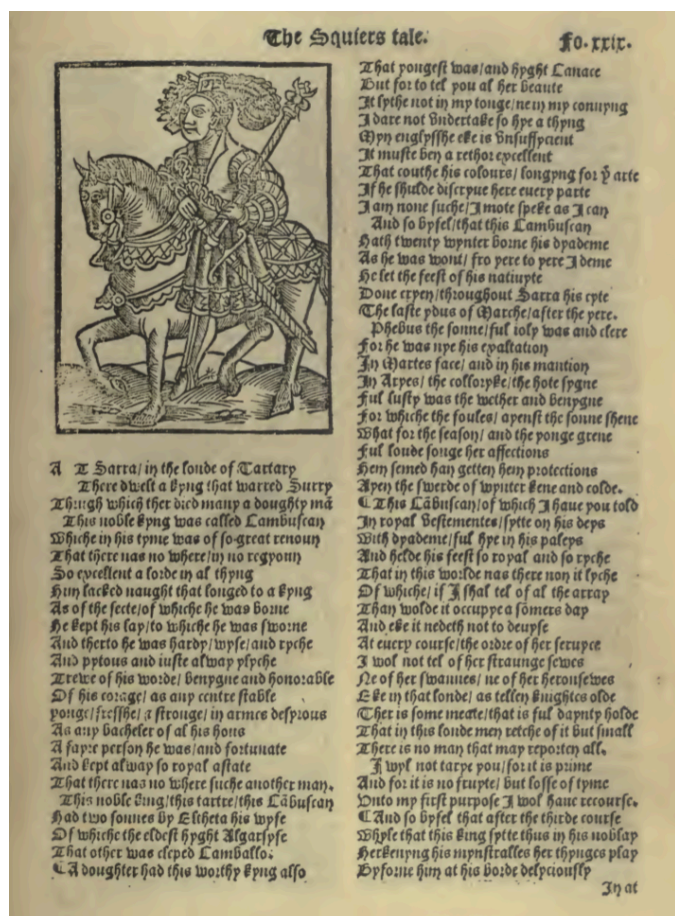


Fig. 6.14 – Woodcut illustration of the Squire from Thynne (1532)

Fig. 6.15 – Woodcut illustration of the Friar from Thynne (1532)

Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

As noted above, Godfray was somewhat limited in his options for the woodblocks.

In addition to the eleven original blocks, two new images were created to represent the Knight and the Squire. This meant that at least eight pilgrim storytellers did not have woodblocks to represent them. To make up for this, Godfray reused blocks to signify numerous figures. The characters who shared images included: the Clerk and the Canon's Yeoman, the Prioress and the Second Nun, and the Merchant, the Franklin, and the Manciple. Three images were used to represent seven individuals.

As has been discussed already, this duplication without proper labelling could potentially cause confusion and misunderstanding among readers. This was somewhat mitigated, however, by purposeful placement of the images near obvious points of transition between tales. As seen in the example of the Merchant, Franklin, and Manciple, this placement decision can make the images that much more clear to the reader (figs. 6.16-18).

Godfray and Thynne produced an illustrated version of the *Canterbury Tales* that maximized limited page space without producing an overly crowded page like Pynson's second edition. And they did so while retaining most of the woodblock illustrations that were identified with Caxton's superior second edition of the text. This edition, published only six years after Pynson's last, point to an active audience for Chaucer's texts. This potential customer base would most likely be accustomed to an illustrated version of the *Canterbury Tales* since that is all that had been produced in most of their lifetimes.

The Marchauntes prologue

Fo. xxxiii.

Quod the marchaunt/ and so haue other mo
 That wedded be/ I trowe that it be so
 For wel I wote it fareth so by me
 I haue a wife the worst that may be
 For though the fende coupled to her were
 She wolde him ouermatch I dare well swere
 What shulde I reherce in speciall
 Her high malice: she is a shrew at all
 There is a longe and a large difference
 Betwixt Cristploo great patience
 And of my wife the passing cruelte
 Were I vnbounde/ also mote I the
 I wolde neuer este come in the snare
 We wedded men lyue in sorow and care
 Assay who so wol/ and he shal fynde
 That I say soth/ by saynt Thomas of Aude
 As for the more parte/ I say nat all

God shalde that it shulde so befall
 Ah good sir host/ I haue wedded be
 These monethes two/ and more nat parde
 And yet I trowe he that all his lyfe
 Hath wedded be/ though men him rife
 In to the hert/ ne couthe in no manere
 Tell so moche sorow/ as I now here
 Coude tell/ of my wyues cursednesse
 Now qd our host marchaunt/ so god y blesse
 Syn pe be so moche knowe of that arte
 Full hertely I pray you tell us parte
 Gladly quod he/ but of myn owne soze
 For soþ hert I tell may no more.

¶ Here endeth the marchauntes prologue/
 and here foloweth his tale.



Whilom there was dwelling in Lombardy
 A worthy knyght/ that borne was at Paup
 In whiche he lyued in great prosperite
 And sixty yere a wise man was he
 And folowed aþer his bodely desyre
 In women/ there as was his appetyle
 And don these folow that ben seculeres
 And whan that he was past sixty yeres

Were it for holpnesse or dotage
 I can not sayn/ but such a great courage
 Had this knyght to ben a wedded man
 That day and nyght he dothe al that he can
 To espy/ where that he wedded myght be
 Prapeng our soide to graunte him that he
 Wighen ones knowen of that blissfull lyfe
 That is bitwixt an husbunde and his wyfe
 A.iii. And

Fig. 6.16 – Woodcut illustration of the Merchant from Thynne (1532).
 Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

Fig. 6.17 – Woodcut illustration of the Franklin from Thynne (1532).
 Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

The frankeleyns tale.



¶ Here begynneth the fran-
 keleyns tale.

In Armoike/ that called is Britayne
 There was a knyght/ y lounde a dpyd his payne
 To serue ladies in his beste wyse
 And many a laboure/ a many a great anpise
 He for his lady wrought/er she were womie
 For she was one the sayest vnder soune
 And eke theto comen of hys knyghte
 That wel vnneth durst this knyght for drede
 Tell her his wo/his payne/and his distresse
 But at the laste/ she of her worthynesse
 And namely for his meke obeysaunce
 Hath such a pyte caught of his penaunce
 That purely she fyll of his acorde
 To take him for her husbunde a her soide
 Of such lordship/ as me haue ouer her wyues
 And for to lode in the more blisse her lyues
 Of his fre wyl/ he swore her as a knyght
 That neuer in al his lyfe/ day ne nyght
 He shulde he take vpon him no maiestyte
 Agayne her wyl/ ne by the her idouspe
 But her obey/ and folowe her wyl in all
 As any souer to his lady shal
 Haue that the name of souerapnte
 That wolde he haue/ for shame of his degre.

She thowked him/ a with ful great humbleste
 She sayd/ sir/ sythe of your gentpnesse
 Ye profred me to haue so large a rayne
 Ne wolde god neuer byt wyppd us twayne
 As in my gylte/ were eþer were or styte
 Sir/ I wol be your trewe humble wyfe
 Haue here my trouthe/ tpt that my hert breste
 I haue ben they bothe in quiete and in rest.
 ¶ For one thyng sir/ safely dare I seyne
 That fendes/ euerþe other must obeyne
 If they wol longe holden compaigne
 Loue wol not be constreyned by maistryte
 Whan maistryte cometh/ the god of loue anon
 Beateth his wynges/ and farewel he is gon
 Loue is a thyng/ as any spyte free
 Women of kynde despyen lyberte
 And not to be constreyned as a thall
 And so done men/ if I sothe say shal
 Loke who that moste pacient is in loue
 He is at his auantage al aboute
 Patience is an hys vertue certayne
 For it venquisseth/ as these clerkes sayne
 Thynge that rygour shal neuer attayne
 For every woide me may not chye o: playne
 I trowe to suffre/ or els so mote I gone
 Ye shal it lerne/ whether ye wol or none
 For in this world certayne no wyght ther is
 That

The Manciple tale.



¶ Han Phebus dwelled here in erth about
 As olde booke make mencion
 He was the moste lusty bacheler
 Of al the world/ and eke the best archer
 He slough Pheon the serpent/ as he lay
 Sleppyn apenst the soune vpon a day
 And many a nother noble worthy dede
 He with his bowe wrought/ as me moure rede
 Play he coude on every mynstrelpe
 And spynge/ that it was a melodye
 To here of his cleer voyce the soune
 Certes the ying of Acheon/ Amphion
 That with his song/ walled the cite
 Coude neuer spynge halfe so wel as he
 Therto he was the semelyst man
 That is or was/ sythe the world began
 What nedeth it his fature to dyscuse:
 For in this world nas none so fapre a lyue
 He was therwith suffylled of gentpnesse
 Of honoure/ and of peryte worthynesse
 This Phebus/ y was floure of bachelerpe
 As wel in fredome/ as in chualtepe
 For his dispoite/ in figure eke of victoie
 Of Pheon/ so as tellth us the story
 Was woune to beare in his honde a boue
 Now had this Phebus in his house a crowe
 Withyn a cage/ sofred many a dape

And taught it speche/ as men teche a iape
 Whyte was this crowe/ as is a whyte sway
 And countreseyte the speche of every man
 He coude/ whan he shulde tel a tale
 There was in al this world no nyghtyngale
 He coude/ by an hundred thousand dele
 Synge so wonderly mery and wele
 Nowe had this Phebus in his house a wyse
 Whiche that he lound more than his lyse
 And nyght and day/ dpyd cur his dyspense
 Her for to plesse/ and do her reuerence
 Haue onely/ if I sothe shal sayne
 Aclous he was/ a wolde haue kept her sayne
 For him were sothe iaped for to be
 And so is every wyght/ in such degre
 But al for naught/ for it auapleth nought
 A good wyse/ that is cleue of webe/ a thought
 Shulde not be kept in none a wyte certayne
 And trewly the laboure is in vayne
 To kepe a shyew/ for it wol not be
 This folde I for a very nyete
 To spyll laboure/ for to vpe wyues
 This witen olde clerkes in her lyues
 But now to purpose/ as I first began
 This worthy Phebus/ dothe al that he can
 To plesse her/ wenynge thowgh such plesaire
 And for his manhode/ a for his gouernaunce
 That

Fig. 6.18 – Woodcut illustration of the Manciple from Thynne (1532). Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

While continuing the traditional woodblock-illustrated editions from the fifteenth century, the 1532 publication also set the groundwork for future editions, including the 1542 Thynne printed by Richard Grafton. Grafton copied Godfray's illustration layout almost exactly. There were only a few changes over the ten-year span, with most of the illustrations being exactly the same as their earlier counterparts. The biggest change, perhaps, was the image of the Knight. In 1532, Godfray had to commission a new image to accompany the text (fig. 6.19).



Fig. 6.19 – Woodcut illustration of the Knight from Thynne (1532).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

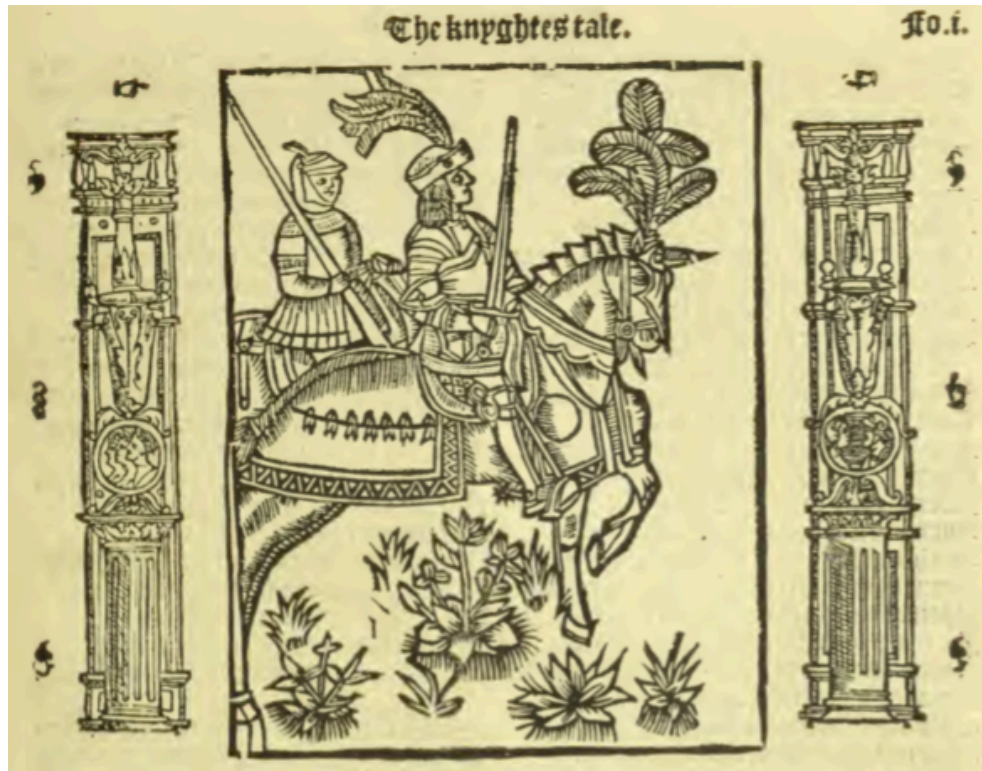


Fig. 6.20 – Woodcut illustration of the Knight from Thynne (1542).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

The 1542 edition saw Grafton in the same position, with the need to create another version of the Knight (fig. 6.20). It is not entirely clear why Godfray's version was not available (or was not acceptable) just ten years later, but the result was the same—a new image had to be made.

Both Knight images are elaborately decorated and complete with full armor and weaponry. Like all prior images of the Knight, both versions do not match up with Chaucer's description of the chivalric pilgrim. The most significant difference between the two images is that Grafton's version adds in the character of the Squire riding alongside (and slightly behind) the Knight. This would allow Grafton to repurpose the

image fifty pages later to introduce the *Squire's Tale*. This, of course, means that the two Squire images do not match between editions.

Two other changes occur between the two editions. The first is rather minor, involving the repurposing of the Pardoner image to illustrate the Franklin (as opposed to Godfray's edition which used the Merchant/Manciple image for the Franklin). The second is more significant not for its illustrative differences but for its textual difference. While all previous editions of the *Canterbury Tales* discussed in this chapter ended with the *Parson's Tale*, the 1542 Thynne edition ends with the *Plowman's Tale*. The corresponding image that accompanies this spurious tale is a duplicate of the Miller's image. The inclusion of the *Plowman's Tale* in the 1542 edition had a profound and long-term effect on Chaucer's oeuvre and validated the belief that it was written by Chaucer to include as part of the *Canterbury Tales*.

The history of inclusion of the Plowman and his story in the *Tales* has been the focus of countless articles, book chapters, and monographs and does not need to be regurgitated here.⁶⁴⁵ But the presence of the image to accompany the *Tale* is interesting to consider. Though included for the first time in print, it seems that the tale is not fully integrated into the larger story arc of the *Canterbury pilgrims*. Grafton sticks it on at the end of the *Tales*, following the usual closing story by the Parson. In addition, the tale does not seem to warrant a new or individualized woodblock to accompany it. Rather, Grafton repurposes the Miller's image as a stand-in for the Plowman.

⁶⁴⁵ See, for example, Brian Cummings, "Reformed Literature and Literature Reformed," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 821-51; Alexandria Gillespie, "Unknowne, unknow, Vncovthe, uncouth: From Chaucer and Gower to Spenser and Milton," in *Medieval into Renaissance: Essays for Helen Cooper*, eds. Andrew King and Matthew Woodcock (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016), 15-30.; Brendan O'Connell, "Putting the Plowman in His Place: Order and Genre in the Early Modern *Canterbury Tales*," *The Chaucer Review* 53, no. 4 (2018): 428-48; and Greg Walker, *The Plowman's Tale and the Politics of 1532: A Cautionary Tale?* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013.



Fig. 6.21 – Woodcut illustration of the Plowman from Pynson (1492).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

In reviewing the rather lengthy, but largely overlapping, history of woodblock illustrations of the *Canterbury Tales* one must wonder why Grafton did not turn back to the 1492 Pynson edition, which is the only edition to show an image of the Plowman (fig. 6.21). The image in that 1492 edition was placed in the *General Prologue* at the introduction of the Plowman.

Pynson's first edition includes an image of the Plowman but not his tale. Thynne's second edition includes the *Plowman's Tale*, but no corresponding image. Based on the location of the tale and the lack of an image, it could be assumed that the inclusion of the tale was a later decision, well after the time when new woodblocks would be able to be made.

The *Plowman's Tale* continued to appear in Thynne's editions in 1550 and 1561 as well as Speght's editions of 1598 and 1602. The other thread that continued throughout this century-plus of publishing was the presence of woodblock illustrations—though the number of illustrations was significantly reduced. The 1550 edition featured only two images (the Knight and the Squire) while the 1561, 1598, and 1602 editions only included one image (the Knight). After these publications, the use of woodblock images that stretched back to William Caxton's day was essentially over.

Etchings and Engravings

Following the reign of woodblocks, heavily illustrated editions of Chaucer's works disappeared for a while. Between Speght's 1602 edition and John Urry's illustrated edition in 1721, only one publication included a significant illustration: a reprint of Speght's work published by Francis Beaumont in 1687. The only image featured in this edition was the detailed "Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer" woodcut discussed earlier in chapter 2. This image was reprinted from Speght's 1598 edition and was the only illustration in the text. No other editions during this time featured images of the pilgrims (in whole or in part) like Caxton and Pynson had commissioned.

This gap in illustrations was due, in part, to the lack of readily available resources. As discussed above, the woodcuts produced for Caxton and Pynson had outlived their usefulness and the cost to commission a new set of woodcuts would have been prohibitive for printers and publishers. Another reason for the lack of illustration is the types of editions that were produced between Speght and Urry. There are a number of miscellanies (from Dryden, Pope/Betterton, Cobb, and others) that only include one or

two modernized *Tales*. These publications have relatively few illustrations at all, so it is not surprising that they did not include images to accompany Chaucer's stories. Other publications during the time, such as Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652) and Richard Brathwait's *A Comment Upon the Two Tales...* (1665), are directed to a more academic audience who do not expect or require illustrations in their editions. Finally, the last group of editions during this period are cheaply-produced retellings of Chaucer's works that are intended to be sold to the masses in high numbers. These editions, such as William Pittis's *Chaucer's Whims* or John Morphew's *Brown Bread and Honour*, do not have high production value like Thynne or Speght's editions.

The rather lengthy illustration gap also makes sense in the broader environment of illustration technology. The use of woodcuts that dominated the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was beginning to wane:

To the extent that woodcut illustrations for the *Canterbury Tales* originated as a marketing tool, neglect of them, finally to the point of their disappearance, bespeaks the obsolescence of their appeal to Chaucer's printers' markets over the course of the sixteenth century.⁶⁴⁶

What took their place was better quality, more detailed, but ultimately more expensive illustrative technology: engravings and etchings done on metal plates. It took almost 120 years from Speght's edition for the next highly illustrated Chaucer text to be produced.

It was not until 1721 that the next fully illustrated edition of the *Canterbury Tales* was published in England. That edition, produced partially after the death of its progenitor John Urry, begins by illustrating the pilgrim's journey from the Tabard Inn.⁶⁴⁷ It was, in many ways, the first active portrayal of the pilgrimage. While Caxton/Pynson had used images of pilgrims on horseback to denote movement and activity, the medium

⁶⁴⁶ Carlson, "Woodcut Illustrations," 98.

⁶⁴⁷ Finley and Rosenblum, *Chaucer Illustrated*, xxv.

of the woodblocks left the images feeling somewhat frozen in place. The Urry edition illustrations are from copperplate engravings, a format that allowed for far more detail and subtlety than the more clunky woodblock process.⁶⁴⁸

Because of this change in the illustration process, the 1721 Urry edition presented far more active and dynamic images of the pilgrims on their journey. The edition contains twenty-seven images related to the *Canterbury Tales* plus additional images of Chaucer and Urry at the beginning of the book. This is the most heavily illustrated edition since Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 version containing thirty-two illustrations. What makes the Urry edition even more significant is the lack of repetition of illustrations. All twenty-seven images accompanying the *Tales* are used only once and not duplicated to represent more than one pilgrim.

Like their woodblock predecessors, each image represents the pilgrims on horseback. As mentioned above, the images evoke movement and action similar to the woodcut images from Caxton and Pynson. Even the illustration of the group of pilgrims has been changed to a more active image, depicting the pilgrims riding out from the Tabard Inn rather than sitting around a table for supper (fig. 6.22). The image appears at the beginning of the *General Prologue* at the top of the page.

The image is seen from the perspective of someone watching the pilgrims make their way out of town and on the road to Canterbury. The horses and their riders are moving purposefully and, in some cases, excitedly towards their eventual destination. The image itself and its placement at the head of the prologue is well thought out and brings the reader directly into the text. By positioning the reader as a "viewer" of the pilgrims, the image helps to provide a sense of inclusion that almost invites the reader to

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., xxv.

observe the pilgrim's journey. It is an appropriate starting point for the text, which also invites the reader to join in the group's travels.

Fig. 6.22 – Illustration of pilgrims leaving the Tabard Inn from Urry (1721).
Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Though the *General Prologue* is not otherwise illustrated, this group image suffices to show the size of the company and demonstrate the eagerness of their journey. Unlike the woodcut illustrations that depicted the group around the supper table—a nod to the Host introduced towards the end of the prologue—this image more closely resembles Chaucer's description at the beginning of the prologue:

At night wer come into that Hostery
Wele nine and twenty in a company
Of sundrie folk, by aventure yfall
In felaship; and Pilgrimes wer they all;
That toward Canterbury wouldin ride.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ Urry, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1.

Their desire to ride to Canterbury is evident in the opening image and sets up the movement of the party throughout the *Tales*. The image also evokes Chaucer's later description of the journey from the tavern, in which he describes the group of pilgrims as "gathrid together on a flock."⁶⁵⁰ This "flock" of pilgrims is clearly eager to set forth for Canterbury—with some of the horses rearing up in anticipation of the journey ahead. All the while, the pilgrims are contemplating the stories they will be telling along the way.



Fig. 6.23 – Illustration of the Knight from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

Beginning with the Knight, each of the tales in Urry's edition is accompanied by a single pilgrim illustration. For the first time in the history of the printing of the

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., 7.

Canterbury Tales the reader sees an image of the Knight that actually looks as simple and unadorned as Chaucer's describes him. His coarse tunic and modest dress is certainly more believable in this illustration (fig. 6.23) than in any of the earlier representations discussed above. The knight still looks respectable, but not fully armored as in previous images. This depiction is far closer to Chaucer's description, but it does make the Knight a bit harder to identify solely based on the image. Placement of the illustration at the beginning of the *Knight's Tale* would help the reader to clarify who they are looking at, but the chance of some misunderstanding is still possible.



Fig. 6.24 – Illustration of the Wife of Bath from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

Accurately depicting the pilgrims seems to have been a priority for the artist who created the illustrations.⁶⁵¹ The Wife of Bath, for example, is described as wearing, on her head, “covercheifes [that] were large and fine of ground”⁶⁵² (both long and of high quality). The artist reflected this description quite accurately, with the Wife’s head-covering flowing down and around her body (fig. 6.24). This attention to detail certainly differs from the woodblock artist approaches under Caxton and Pynson. With those images the accuracy of depicting the pilgrims as Chaucer described them seemed to be of little concern. Representation over precision was the *modus operandi* for the woodblock artists. The Urry illustrator, on the other hand, either read the text and followed Chaucer’s descriptions almost to the letter or was given very specific instructions by the editors and/or publishers to make the pilgrims look a particular way that matched the text.

⁶⁵¹ The identity of the Urry artist has been of some debate among Chaucerian scholars in recent years. In 2003, Betsy Bowden suggested that the artist may have been John Vanderbank. For more details on Bowden’s first proposal, see chapter 4 “Tales Told and Tellers of Tales: Illustrations of the Canterbury Tales in the Course of the Eighteenth Century” in *Chaucer Illustrated: Five Hundred Years of The Canterbury Tales in Pictures*, edited by William K. Finley and Joseph Rosenblum (2003). Contrastingly, in 2006, Stephen R. Reimer concluded that the illustrations were completed by George Vertue, as explained in his 2006 article, “The Urry Chaucer and George Vertue” in *The Chaucer Review*. His conclusion is based, in part, on Alice Miskimin’s 1979 article in *Modern Philology*, “The Illustrated Eighteenth-Century Chaucer.” Bowden responded to Reimer in 2007 with a different claim, namely that the artist was a student of John Vanderbank’s by the name of J. Chalmers. In “A Note on the Urry-Edition Pilgrim Portraits” in *The Chaucer Review*, Bowden disputes Reimer’s findings and dismisses Miskimin’s original article and its conclusions. Bowden supports her claim that Chalmers is the artist based on original, signed drawings of his that she found in the British Library matching the Urry illustrations.

⁶⁵² Urry, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 5.

Beyond the accuracy of the illustrations, the artist also took care to ensure that none of the images would look the same as one another. In previous editions we have seen that the Prioress and the Second Nun are often represented with the same exact image. This is not all too surprising a decision on the part of editors and printers; the two characters are both nuns after all. It was far easier and cheaper to reuse the image of the Prioress as the Second Nun than to create an entirely new image. The Urry illustrator saw no such need. Rather than reproducing the same image twice (or only using it to illustrate the Prioress), the Urry edition has separate images for both women. Though somewhat similar in dress, the image of the Prioress (fig. 6.25) and the Second Nun (fig. 6.26) are distinct enough in their posture to be distinguishable by the reader. Even their horses carry themselves distinctly from one another.



Fig. 6.25 – Illustration of the Prioress from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

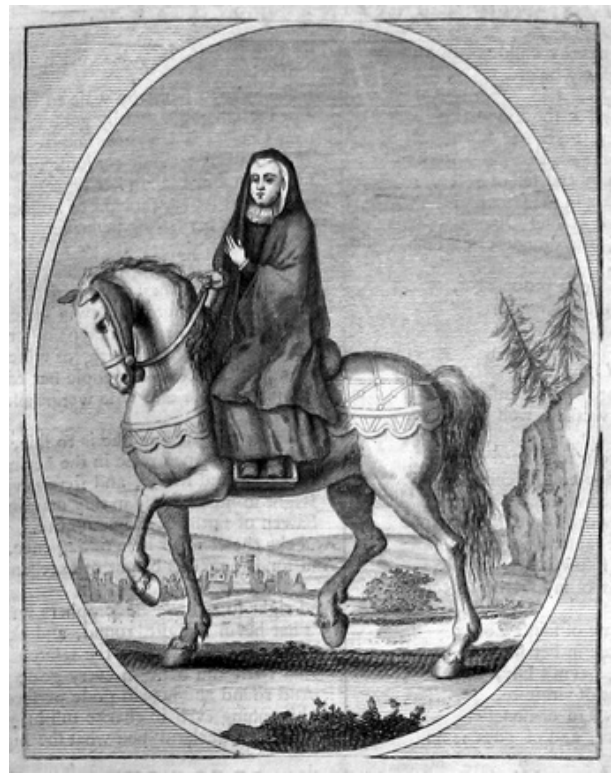


Fig. 6.26 – Illustration of the Second Nun from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

The final pilgrim worth mentioning within the Urry illustrations is Chaucer himself. As in some of the previous illustrated editions, Chaucer is portrayed within Urry's text as a character telling his tales. The first tale, the *Rime of Sir Thopas*, was supposed to be illustrated with an image of Sir Thopas but there was an error or mix-up at the printer. Instead of placing the image alongside the tale, the publishers were forced to place it at the end of the Table of Contents along with a notation about the error (fig. 6.27).⁶⁵³

*N.B. The followingⁱⁿ Cut should have been placed before
the Rhime of Sir Thopaz.*



Fig. 6.27 – Illustration of Sir Thopas from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

⁶⁵³ Ironically, the explanation of the error itself contained a typographical mistake, which has been corrected *supra* linearly by a reader.

While the image was not placed correctly in the edition, it is easy to see how the editors envisioned the image to work with the text. Alongside where the illustration was meant to go is the following description of the tale:

A Northern Tale of an outlandish Knight, purposely utter'd by Chaucer in a Rime and Style differing from the rest, as though he himself were not the Author, but only the Reporter of the other Tales.⁶⁵⁴

This introduction to the Rime of Sir Thopas provides readers with two important contextual notes: first, that the tale is about a knight who does not follow the conventional chivalric behavior (which the image would have nicely reinforced), and, second, that Chaucer is one of the pilgrims on the journey who is telling tales. While he is the “author” of the book, he is also a character within it. This point is reinforced strongly with the inclusion of the next image in the edition: that of Chaucer the pilgrim.

After the Host cuts off the story of Sir Thopas, Chaucer switches to an entirely different story: the *Tale of Melibeus*. The story is among the longest and driest of the tales, being grounded in a debate on morality, philosophy, and religion. Unlike *Sir Thopas*, which is the only tale accompanied by an image related to the story and not the teller, the image accompanying *Melibeus* is that of the pilgrim telling the tale—Chaucer (fig. 6.28). Like all of the other pilgrim illustrations in the Urry edition, Chaucer is depicted on horseback and in motion. His horse is active and even slightly out of control, with one hoof breaking through the oval frame that surrounds the image. The image of Chaucer upon the horse, however, is far more stolid and static than any of the other pilgrims. While most of the pilgrims seem to have some sort of movement to their features or limbs, Chaucer sits bolt upright and seems almost statuesque.

⁶⁵⁴ Urry, *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 145.



Fig. 6.28 – Illustration of pilgrim Chaucer from Urry (1721). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

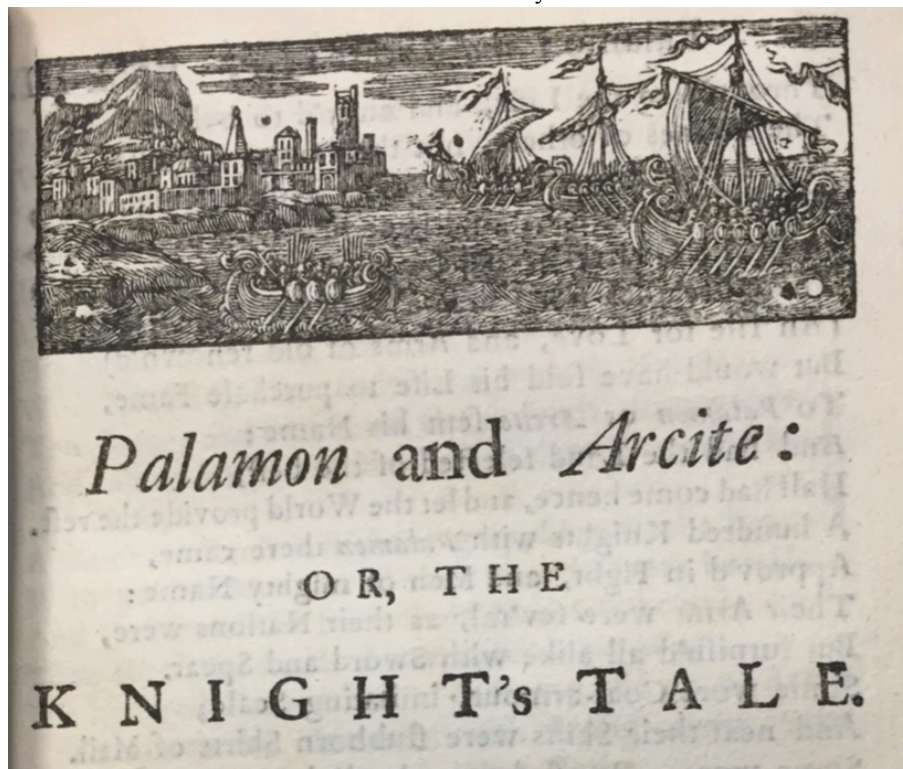
Including the Chaucer image, the illustrations within the 1721 Urry edition are significant for their detail and connection to the text. More so than the woodblock images that came beforehand, the Urry illustrations have a depth and detail that had not previously been seen in a Chaucer printing. They marked a major shift in the look and feel (not to mention format) of Chaucer illustrations. There is, however, one major parallel between the woodblock editions and the Urry edition: once again the *Canterbury Tales* are the only portion of the text deemed worthy of illustrating. This is a trend that would continue with other complete works in the eighteenth century and beyond.

Following Urry's edition there was a period of more than sixty years in which no edition featured more than two illustrations. The reasons for this gap are identical to those described above, mostly due to the types of editions being produced (miscellanies, academic-focused, and penny prints). The scantily-illustrated editions were:

- Dryden, 1734: Two illustrations
- Morell, 1737: One illustration
- Morell, 1740: One illustration
- Ogle/Urry, 1741: One illustration
- Dryden, 1760: One illustration
- Dryden, 1767: One illustration

All of these editions featured illustrations as purely decorative elements. Most of them included just a single illustration of Chaucer as a frontispiece, with only Dryden's 1734 edition presenting the reader with an image that was related directly to the action of the *Canterbury Tales* (fig. 6.29). This image, which precedes the *Knight's Tale*, represents the story of Palamon and Arcite. Other than this illustration, the editions listed above did not use images to help connect the reader to the text.

Fig. 6.29 – Illustration of sea battle from Dryden (1734). By permission of the British Library.



It was not until 1782, with the large multi-volume set produced by John Bell, that illustrations began to work their way back into the content. The illustrations in Bell's edition were rather minimal but consistent. Each of the fourteen volumes in the set had an image that connected to the content in that particular volume. The first volume contained two illustrations, one of Chaucer and one of the Host speaking to the pilgrims before they all set off on their journey (fig. 6.30).

Within each illustration, which served as the title page for each volume, Bell included a quotation from the text that matched the image. In the case of the Host's image (which is difficult to read in the version included below), the text comes from the General Prologue:

Fayn wolde I do you mirthe and I wiste how;
And of a mirthe I am right now bethought
To don you ese⁶⁵⁵

The image, the text, and the placement at the beginning of the first volume make this illustration a multi-purpose tool for the reader. It grounds them in the physical space of the *General Prologue* (the Tabard Inn), it introduces a variety of characters who will recur throughout the telling of the tales, and it sets up the purpose of the text: to entertain the reader and make them happy.

While the events depicted in the image take place prior to the pilgrims heading out on their journey to Canterbury and telling tales to amuse, educate, and entertain one another, there is certainly a feeling of comradery and friendship that seems to be taking place in the Bell illustration. The pilgrims looking upward at the Host seem to be smiling and at least one, the woman on the right side of the image, seems to be laughing. Merriment and (as can be seen in the background) food and drink are aplenty. And, like

⁶⁵⁵ Warton and Bell, eds., *Poetical Works*, 2:52.

all of the Bell illustrations, provides the reader with insight into the activity of that particular part of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Fig. 6.30 – Illustration of the Host and pilgrims at the Tabard Inn from Bell (1782).
Courtesy of Early English Books Online.



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London Printed for John Bell British Library Strand Aug 1. 1782

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Bell continues this arrangement for each of the fourteen volumes. Only the first six volumes contain the *Canterbury Tales*, but each of those volumes is decorated with an image related to one of the *Tales*. This is essentially the first time that readers have seen illustrations of the stories themselves rather than the pilgrims who are telling them. Other than the small image of the sea battle before Dryden's *Knight's Tale* (fig. 6.29) the illustrations included with Chaucer's texts up to this point have only illustrated the pilgrims and the poet. Bell is the first to have extensive images from the actual stories. This shift in focus of the illustrations is very significant and begins a trend of illustrating the stories rather than the tellers that continues through the rest of the handpress period.

The stories chosen by Bell to highlight with illustration are worth noting. With only five images available (the first volume having been taken up with the Host image) Bell was restricted in his choices. The stories he selected were somewhat dictated by what text was in each volume (he could not, for example, illustrate both the *Knight's Tale* and the *Miller's Tale* since they appear in the same volume). Given the restrictions, Bell chose the following tales to illustrate (with his titles/spelling):

- Volume 1: *The Prologue*
- Volume 2: *The Knightes Tale*
- Volume 3: *The Wif of Bathes Tale*
- Volume 4: *The Shipmannes Tale*
- Volume 5: *The Second Nonnes Tale*
- Volume 6: *The Coke's Tale of Gamelyn*⁶⁵⁶

All of these images were illustrated by Thomas Stothard, an English artist whose work was engraved for other authors in Bell's *British Poets* series. Stothard is probably better known for his stand-alone portrait of the Canterbury pilgrims that he painted in 1806-7.

⁶⁵⁶ The *Tale of Gamelyn*, along with the *Plowman's Tale*, the *Pardonere and Tapstere*, and the *Merchant's Second Tale* are all included in Volume 6 as the conclusion to the *Canterbury Tales*. Each of these tales has been proven to be spurious works, though at the time Bell included them since there was some belief that they should be part of the *Canterbury Tales*.

Stothard's illustrations are the most detailed and intricate that we have yet seen in printings of Chaucer's works. He was a "hard-working artisan" and an extremely proficient and productive artist:

By the time of his death in 1834, just short of his eightieth birthday, he had created so many book designs that one might more easily list the major British authors whose works Stothard did not illustrate than those he did. By his own estimate he created about 5,000 designs including, but by no means limited to, book illustrations.⁶⁵⁷

Stothard's work in Bell's collection is emotive, active, and extremely detailed. The images, based on their placement at the beginning of each volume, are descriptive enough to act as a preview of sorts for the readers.

The image for the Knight's Tale (fig. 6.31) is a good example of the "teaser" aspect of Stothard's work. It portrays Emilie, the story's object of lust, desire, and (eventually) violence, in the garden plucking flowers to make a garland. The act in and of itself is not necessarily that thrilling to look at, but Stothard includes numerous important nods to other aspects of the tale in the illustration. The most significant of these is the intruding male gaze on the right side of the image. This figure, intended to represent Palamon, lurks on the side and looks lustily and longingly after Emilie who is dressed in a revealing manner, as described by Betsy Bowden:

Emelye's seamless, tight-fitting upper garment clings to biceps and forearms appropriate to her Amazonian heritage. Likewise, it lightly covers her breasts, including a nipple more noticeable in the enlargement than on the Bell-edition page. Emelye's large hand fearlessly grasps a rose's thorny stem.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁷ Betsy Bowden, "Tales Told and Tellers of Tales: Illustrations of the Canterbury Tales in the Course of the Eighteenth Century," in Finley and Rosenblum, *Chaucer Illustrated*, 126.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 132.

Bowden goes on to discuss how Stothard's image provides Emilie with "hints of female strength and freedom" that are in contrast to the restrained masculinity of the leering male



Fig. 6.31 – Illustration of Emilie from the *Knight's Tale* from Bell (1782).
Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

figure at the window. In addition, the image includes a helmet and lance at the top of the oval frame, hinting at the fighting and competition over Emilie that dominates the story.

Stothard's other images are similarly multi-layered. The illustration that represents the *Wife of Bath's Tale* (fig. 6.32) seems fairly straightforward: the knight at the center of the tale encountering a "fouler wight" than any man could imagine.⁶⁵⁹ The woman in front of the tree is aged and grotesque, matching the description in Chaucer's

⁶⁵⁹ Warton and Bell, eds., *Poetical Works*, 3:47.

text. The knight, meanwhile, is seen on his horse looking down on the old woman and judging her from his elevated (and youthful) position. Stothard positions the knight in a rather humorous manner, however. He undercuts the knight's position of superiority by showing the rear end of his horse; the knight's hand resting upon the equine rump. The knight is represented in picture as he is in poetry: a horse's ass. In addition, the illustration above the oval depicts a young woman, hinting at the transition of the old woman into one who, at the end of the tale, is seen as "so faire...and so yonge."⁶⁶⁰



Fig. 6.32 – Illustration of the *Wife of Bath's Tale* from Bell (1782).
Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

⁶⁶⁰ Warton and Bell, eds., *Poetical Works*, 3:57.

Bell and Stothard's focus on the tales rather than the tellers represented a shift in the illustration of Chaucer's work. Over the next 50 years, this approach dominated illustrations of the *Canterbury Tales*. No longer were the pilgrims the focus of the images; instead the tales themselves were the focus. From a reader's perspective this placed a greater emphasis on the individual stories and less on the overall construction of the project that Chaucer had put together. In addition, reinterpretations and translations of the work by John Dryden, Thomas Tyrwhitt, John Penn, William Greethead Lewis, and others shifted the focus away from Chaucer and his pilgrims and towards the stories.

The person most likely to supplant and overshadow Chaucer with his own edition of the *Tales* was John Dryden. Even a century or more after his death, Dryden's version was still being reissued with regularity. Three separate editions (1797, 1806, and 1822) were produced towards the end of the handpress period, each of which contained different illustrations to accompany Dryden's modernized versions of selected *Tales*. Illustrations accompanied the *Knight's Tale*, the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*. Each edition handled the illustrations differently but they all focused on the story and ignored the pilgrim and the poet.

The purpose of the images was to illustrate adventurous moments in the stories, with elaborate and detailed illustrations that evoked feelings of action and excitement in the reader. No matter the edition or artist, each publication provides an illustration of the drama of the stories, such as in the following battle scenes from the *Knight's Tale* (figs. 6.33-5). Each them is highly active, with swords flashing, horses rearing, and armor glistening. They provide the reader with a visual entry into the action of the story and a way to envision the details of the *Knight's Tale*.



Fig. 6.33 – Illustration of the *Knight's Tale* from Dryden (1797). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

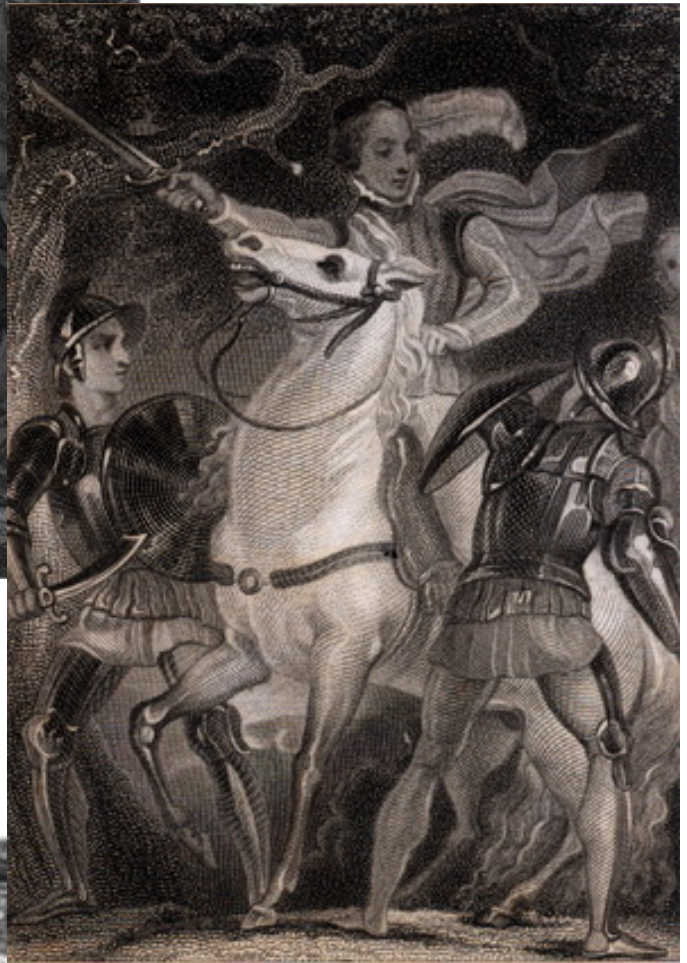


Fig. 6.34 – Illustration of the *Knight's Tale* from Dryden (1806). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Fig. 6.35 – Illustration of the *Knight's Tale* from Dryden (1822). Courtesy of Early English Books Online.

With only three *Tales* in each of the Dryden editions the editors and publishers dedicate numerous illustrations to each story. This allows for multiple parts of the stories to be shown to the reader. The number of images per story breaks down rather consistently across the editions with the *Knight's Tale* having more illustrations than either of the other tales:

- 1797: *Knight's Tale* (8), *Nun's Priest's Tale* (3), *Wife of Bath's Tale* (3)
- 1806: *Knight's Tale* (2), *Nun's Priest's Tale* (1), *Wife of Bath's Tale* (1)
- 1822: *Knight's Tale* (6), *Nun's Priest's Tale* (2), *Wife of Bath's Tale* (2)

Dryden's *Knight's Tale* is longer than the other two so it is not surprising that there are more illustrations for that story. In addition, the action of the tale lends itself to a diversity of images from warring to romantic to funereal.

In 1824, William Greatheed Lewis published an edition of the *Canterbury Tales* that was the most heavily illustrated since the Urry edition of 1721. Though a century had passed between them, Lewis's edition was approached from a similarly academic perspective. As noted on the title page, the edition included "A Sketch of the History of English Poetry, A Life of Chaucer, and Observations on His Language and Versification." This in addition to the *Canterbury Tales* and other selected poems.

Like the Urry edition, Lewis populated his two-volume set with illustrations that helped to introduce the various tales. The focus was on the events of the stories more so than the pilgrims who told them. There were a few exceptions to this, however. The half-title page included an image of the pilgrims setting out for Canterbury, complete with stations of the cross and Canterbury Cathedral in the distance (fig. 6.36). The group of

pilgrims fill the middle landscape of the image and seem to pull the reader into the image, inviting them to join in the journey.



Fig. 6.36 – Half-title illustration of pilgrims from Lewis (1824-5). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

Once they have joined-in, the reader is presented with images from the stories of many of Chaucer's pilgrims: the Knight, the Reeve, the Wife of Bath, the Clerk, the Pardoner, the Prioress, Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*, the Monk, the Nun's Priest, the Second Nun, and the Man of Law. This is a rather thorough representation of the *Tales* in illustrated form; even without hitting all of the stories, the images still account for nearly half of the tales. In addition, Lewis includes illustrations for a few of Chaucer's other

works: *Legend of Good Women*, *Book of the Duchess*, and *House of Fame*. None of these works, however, receive the illustrative coverage that is given to the *Canterbury Tales*.

Of all of the images related to the various *Tales*, only one is included that illustrates the pilgrim and not the tale. That image, located in the first volume, accompanies the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and depicts the Wife in her younger years (fig. 6.37). Like all of the other internal images, this illustration is aligned with text from the poem. Similar to the format that readers encountered in Bell's edition, the image is tied directly to the text. In the case of the Wife's story, she is discussing her romance with, and eventual marriage to, her fifth husband—a clerk from Oxford. The image is intended to demonstrate the romance and love between the Wife and her clerk, strolling along the fields on a moonlit night while in close embrace. The image also displays the Wife's sexuality and strongly hints at the “daliance” that is mentioned in the text.

The other illustrations in Lewis's edition all represent action from the stories

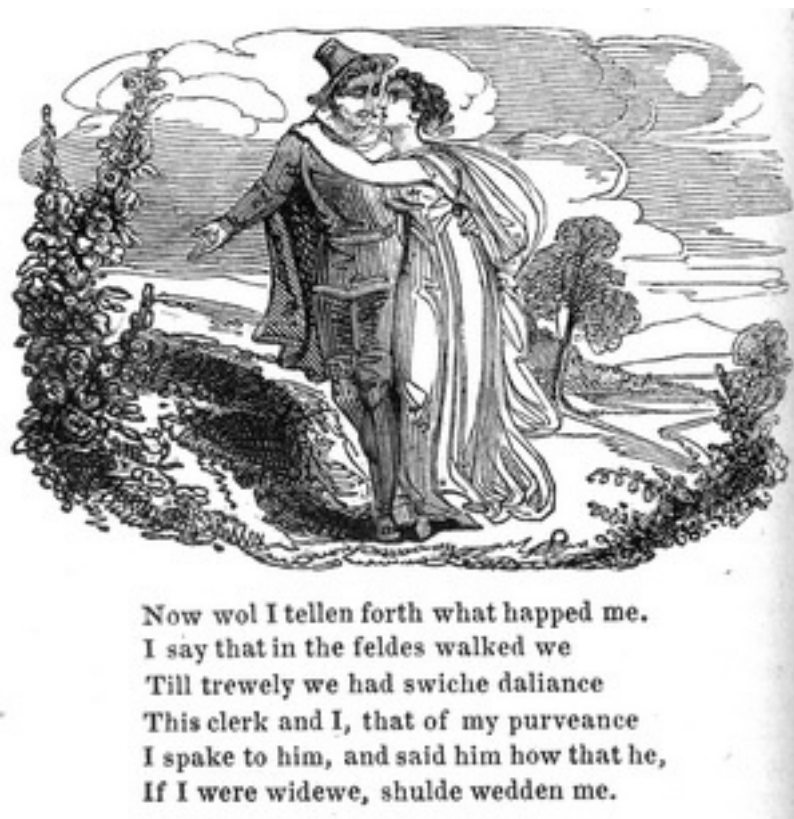


Fig. 6.37 – Illustration of the *Knight's Tale* from Lewis (1824-5). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

themselves, though they are as reflective of their quoted text as is the *Wife of Bath's* Prologue image. The *Reeve's Tale*, which is rarely illustrated in printed editions up to this point, is a clear example of where the image and the text are completely in unison (fig. 6.38). For the reader, this can be seen either as a helpful tool for understanding the text or a simple restating of the events in image form—verging on a sort of childish illustration.

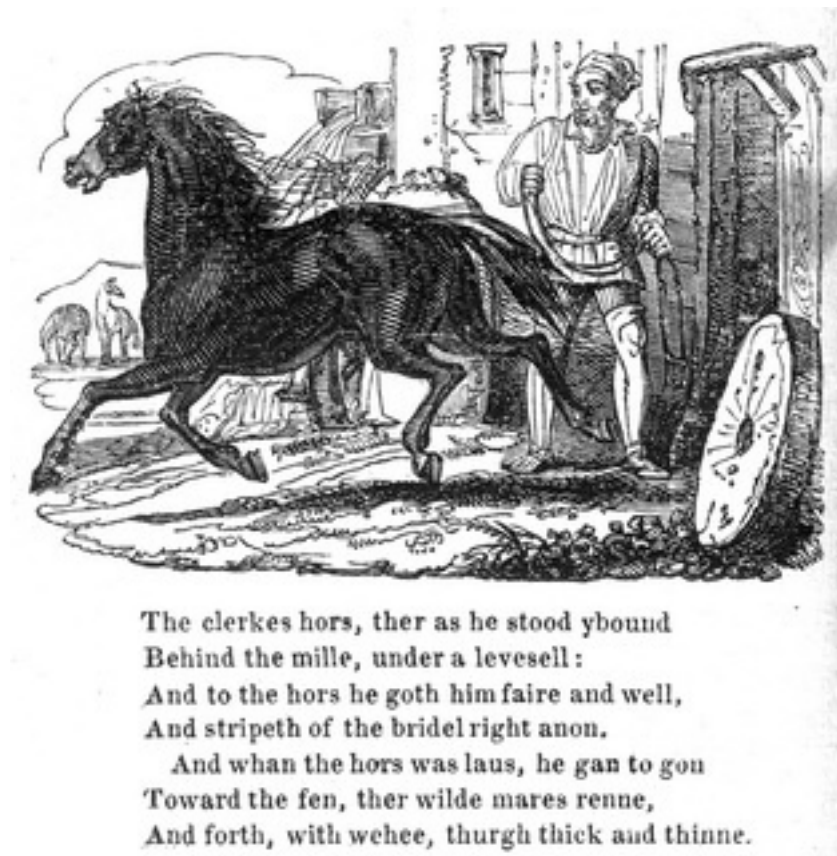


Fig. 6.38 – Illustration of the *Reeve's Tale* from Lewis (1824-5). Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

The illustrations, while detailed and fairly sophisticated, differ from earlier examples that were discussed above. The quality and depth of artistry that we saw in Bell, Dryden, or even Urry's editions is lacking from Lewis's illustrations. There is almost a feeling of incompleteness to these images that is not present in the other illustrated

editions. The images feel as if they would be better suited in the pages of a newspaper or magazine rather than a two-volume edition of Chaucer's works. This is not to say that the images fail in their objective to graphically represent the events of the selected *Tales*—this they do without any problem. From the reader's perspective one has to wonder if the images would feel too childlike and ephemeral to accompany text from the Father of English Poetry.

In some ways, Lewis was ahead of his time. His illustrated edition can be seen as a foretelling of the coming wave of cheaply illustrated editions (both for adults and children) that would fairly flood the market in the latter half of the nineteenth century. While far more complex and detailed than the woodblock images of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these images do not have the grace and intricacy of their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors. Coming at the end of the handpress period, perhaps it is right that Lewis's edition presages the approaching era of mass production and quantity over quality.

Pictures of the Poet

The large majority of this chapter has been concerned with the thirteen editions that contain more than two illustrations. Other than a brief mention here and there, those editions with only one or two images have largely been skipped over. This approach has been quite purposeful, mostly because the amount of attention and real estate that is needed to cover the more heavily-illustrated editions. There is, however, one important area in which it is necessary to focus on those single and double illustrated publications: images of Geoffrey Chaucer himself.

Many of the editions containing only one or two illustrations include images of Chaucer as their primary image. In most cases these images represent Chaucer the poet, as opposed to Chaucer the pilgrim in the *Canterbury Tales*. Most of the illustrations of Chaucer in all thirty-three editions portray him as an author and not a character. In summarizing all editions considered in this chapter the statistical breakdown is as follows:

	# of Editions	# w/ Chaucer as Poet	# w/ Chaucer as Pilgrim	# w/o Chaucer image
1-2 Illustrations	20	12	0	8
3+ Illustrations	13	3	5	6
Total⁶⁶¹	33	15	5	14

With only five of the editions portraying Chaucer as pilgrim, it is clear that the editors, publishers, and printers preferred to give the reader a visual of Chaucer as poet—if they included an image of him at all.

Of the fifteen illustrations of Chaucer as poet, there is a somewhat common “look” to be found. The source of this look comes from a few places. First from a contemporary image of Chaucer done by his friend Thomas Hoccleve in 1400-1410 (fig. 6.39) and second from a late-sixteenth century portrait housed at the British Library (fig. 6.40). Whatever the inspiration source, the result was a series of images in print that looked very similar to (or even matched) these two early illustrations. The first appearance of such an illustration can be found in Thomas Speght’s 1598 edition (fig. 6.41) which includes a full-figure image of Chaucer, done by John Speed, that resembles MS5141. As

⁶⁶¹ Note that the total number is thirty-four, not thirty-three. This is due to one edition (Urry, 1721) being counted twice. It is the only edition that includes an image of Chaucer as poet and a separate image of Chaucer as pilgrim from the *Canterbury Tales*. It is, therefore, listed in both columns of the chart.

already discussed in chapter 2, this image was included in Speght's edition as part of a coat of arms and family history to establish Chaucer's gentility.

The two images both show Chaucer with his head tilted downwards and eyes



Fig. 6.39 – Hoccleve illustration of Chaucer (c. 1400-1410). By permission of the British Library.

Fig. 6.40 – Illustration of Chaucer, BL MS5141 (c. late 16th Century). By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 6.41 – Close-up of John Speed's illustration of Chaucer from Speght (1598/1602/1687). By permission of the British Library.

partially closed. The clothing, hairstyle, and even facial hair are nearly identical. Finally, the accoutrements are the same: rosary beads held at waist height in one hand and a necklace around his neck. This same look is carried forward into the next 240 years (figs. 6.42-6.49).

Fig. 6.42 – Urry (1721) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Fig. 6.43 – Morell (1737/1740) By permission of the British Library.



Fig. 6.44 – Ogle & Urry (1741) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Fig. 6.45 – Dryden (1760/1767) Courtesy of Early English Books Online.



Fig. 6.46 – Bell (1782) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

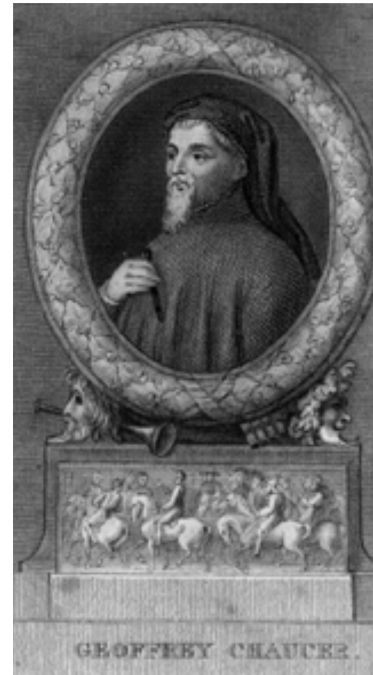


Fig. 6.47 – Singer (1822) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Fig. 6.48 – Tyrwhitt (1822/1830) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.



Fig. 6.49 – Lewis (1824-5) Courtesy of Robert Simola, *Chaucer Editions*.

While Chaucer the pilgrim may have changed shaped and appearance (or even looked like some of the other pilgrims on the road to Canterbury) Chaucer the Poet seems to have been rather consistently presented to the reader as a single, uniform figure. No matter the editor, printer, publisher, artist, or year of publication, the look of Chaucer is decidedly similar from the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century.

For readers of Chaucer's works there is something valuable in this consistency. As was explored in earlier chapters, the biographical study of Chaucer's life was not always accurate or consistent. His image, however, seems to have been safe from the rewrites and modernizations of the centuries. The poet looks the part; and that part does not change much over the course of the handpress period.

Conclusion

Whether illustrating the poet or his creations, the editions explored in this chapter are intent on providing readers with visual cues and illustrative clues to more actively engage the text of the *Canterbury Tales*. From the simplest of woodblock prints to the detailed engravings of master artisans, the result is fairly standard: a more robust and interactive experience for the reader. Martha Driver puts it rather succinctly:

Illustration provides one key to understanding how designers, printers and publishers of English printed books used a range of visual resources 'to help direct their readers' responses to the verbal language of the text.'⁶⁶²

Through the study of illustration, then, we can better see how the producers of the text and the consumers of the text interact. The relationship is a complex one when only text

⁶⁶² Martha Driver, "Woodcuts and Decorative Techniques," in *A Companion to the Early Printed Books in Britain, 1476-1558*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 95-123.

is involved. Adding images and illustration only serves to complicate the relationship further.

At the core of the relationship is the great triumvirate that dominates this entire dissertation: Chaucer, editor/publisher, and reader. Chaucer's work is significant enough to inspire the editing and publishing team to look outwards towards illustrators to make their editions even more appealing and engaging for their potential reader. Illustrations, then, are perhaps the most concrete sign of a dedication to the text. The cost (in both money and time), aggravation, and attention to detail needed to include illustrations in a printed edition make that decision a weighty one—and not one to be taken lightly.

The decision to include illustrations was first made by William Caxton as a way to make up to both Chaucer and his readers the fact that his first edition was so mistake-ridden and poorly representative of the true *Canterbury Tales*. It may have also been a marketing ploy, but I believe that the decision was not entirely based on monetary results. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that Caxton wishes his readers to “*see and read*” the text.⁶⁶³ This is a text that is visually stimulating and imaginative. As we have seen above, some of these visualizations are worth putting on the page for all to see and explore.

⁶⁶³ Caxton, *Canterbury Tales*, 1483, 2v. (emphasis added)

CONCLUSION

In his chapter on Geoffrey Chaucer in the *Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, Glending Olson describes Chaucer as “the most famous writer of the Middle English period and one of the most celebrated authors in the history of English literature.”⁶⁶⁴ His description of the poet is accurate, though the reasons for this fame and celebration are not straightforward. Chaucer is acknowledged as the Father of English Poetry and, undoubtedly, as a member of the English literary canon—but the credit is not all his. Chaucer “is a major cause of his own dehistoricizing.”⁶⁶⁵ He is an author surrounded by much mystery, particularly in regards to his most well-known work:

Certainly the Chaucer that we have is the Chaucer of fifteenth-century manuscripts, and what emerges in them is the product not only of his writings but of readings of it based on varied fifteenth-century concerns...*The role of Chaucer’s early readers/editors is particularly important* in regard to the *Canterbury Tales*, left unfinished at his death; questions abound in regard to the order of the tales and the plan of the work, and none can be answered with certainty.⁶⁶⁶

This lack of certainty leaves wide-open the windows of interpretation for people to gaze through and proclaim what they see.

In many ways, it is this window-gazing by printers, publishers, editors, and artists that has kept Chaucer alive through the centuries. For more than 600 years, people have been looking for answers to the questions that Chaucer left behind. Since William Caxton first took “his boldest step” and selected the *Canterbury Tales* as one of the first English-language productions in his print shop, the world has had access to Chaucer’s texts

⁶⁶⁴ Glending Olson, “Chapter 21: Geoffrey Chaucer,” in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 566.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., 587. (emphasis added)

through the reproducibility of the printing press.⁶⁶⁷ For the next 350-plus years, hundreds of editors, publishers, printers, and artists prepared more than 140 editions of the *Canterbury Tales* for England's reading public to consume. These 143 editions helped to solidify Chaucer's place in the English literary canon, put him upon a pedestal of English authors, and attempted to answer the unanswerable questions.

The way this was done, as was explored throughout this dissertation, was through the paratextual landscapes of editors and publishers: prefaces, appendices, prologues, glosses, notations, illustrations, and so on. These elements, to return to Barbara Mowat, seem "designed to bring to life the writer of the text as a powerful presence."⁶⁶⁸ That they do. And the writer that is brought to life is not Chaucer as he was in life or even in manuscript form. Instead, it is the Chaucer seen through the eyes of Caxton, Pynson, Thynne, Speght, Tyrwhitt, Urry, Dryden, Cobb, Pope, etc. That is the Chaucer that greets the reader upon opening the pages of one of the editions discussed in this dissertation. It is a vision of the author as seen through the window of interpretation.

In their preface to *Historians on Chaucer*, Stephen Rigby and Alastair Minnis note that "to read Chaucer today is, in some measure, to read him historically."⁶⁶⁹ I would suggest that to read Chaucer today is to read him paratextually. For it is through the mechanisms and mediation of paratextual material that we have come to know Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales*. It is through those prefaces and life sketches that readers learned about the Father of English Poetry. It is through translation, modernization, and retelling that readers encountered his texts through the pen of Dryden, Pope, and others.

⁶⁶⁷ Hellinga, *William Caxton*, 57-8.

⁶⁶⁸ Mowat, "Constructing the Author," 96.

⁶⁶⁹ Stephen H. Rigby and Alastair J. Minnis, preface to *Historians on Chaucer*, eds. Stephen H. Rigby and Alastair J. Minnis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

These mediations and modulations of Chaucer's texts in print were produced for larger audiences than the manuscripts could reach, but this "emerging, if restricted public sphere of print directed Chaucer's texts and the work of his editors and commentators into a commercial context."⁶⁷⁰ The commercial nature of print can be credited with change both positive (see Caxton's use of woodblocks) and negative (see Dryden's modernizations as an effort to make Chaucer more palatable). With each of these changes, there is paratextual material to accompany the editorial insertion. From Caxton's illustrations to Dryden's explanations, the reading public was given a framework for Chaucer's text that had nothing to do with the work originally written by the poet.

The *Canterbury Tales*, in particular, left itself open to more editorial interpretation and modulation than any other Chaucerian text. As Stephanie Trigg argues, the "collection of tales and characters seemed to capture the imagination as an idea, as an inclusive set of possibilities for narrative."⁶⁷¹ The window of interpretation is more wide open for the *Canterbury Tales* than for any other of Chaucer's works because it is incomplete and not clearly organized. As has been discussed throughout this dissertation, the editorial manipulation of the *Tales* is present in every edition—whether through translation, modernization, notation, illustration, or organization. This is what makes the *Canterbury Tales* the perfect literary work for this study. No other text has the consistency and longevity of printed publication during the handpress period. And no other text has the same level of consistency with its paratextual elements.

The reading audiences of the handpress period were influenced not only by the editions they encountered but, even unknowingly, by the editions that came beforehand.

⁶⁷⁰ Stephanie Trigg, "Chaucer's Influence and Reception," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 313.

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 319.

The editors themselves looked backwards to see what worked and what did not, taking bits and pieces of some editions and leaving others behind. This led to a chain of influence that began with the reception of the manuscripts during the fifteenth century:

Sixteenth-century readers come to Chaucer mediated by his fifteenth-century reception and, in turn, the lines of emphasis defined by that fifteenth-century reception help shape the lines of emphasis for sixteenth-century readers...It bears witness too to the ways in which Chaucer was invoked in order to define generational distance. Whether in family history or in literary history, there are parents and children. By articulating generational distance, readers and writers give voice to a notion of historical change and, therefore, to a concept of modernity.⁶⁷²

Lerer's generational schema fits directly into the printing history of the *Canterbury Tales*. There is a connection from one "generation" of print to another. From Caxton and his contemporaries to the editions of the early nineteenth century, each of the editors who prepare and present Chaucer's work to English reading audiences have descended from editors and publishers who came before. There is an inheritance from one to the next; an inheritance often recorded in the paratextual elements of the printed editions.

It is these paratextual elements that have given Chaucer and his texts his due and allowed him to prosper from one generation to the next. Indeed, as Gerard Genette argues, without the paratext there is no text: "In this sense, one may doubtless assert that a text without a paratext does not exist and never has existed."⁶⁷³ Without the printed editions of his works, Chaucer would not be the poet we know and canonize today. And without the paratextual elements from editors, printers, publishers, and artists, the printed texts would not exist in the same way that we know today. The generations of editors explored in this dissertation provide the paratextual context and framework for readers to engage with and understand Chaucer and his *Canterbury Tales*.

⁶⁷² Lerer, "Receptions," 90.

⁶⁷³ Genette, *Paratexts*, 3.

In closing, let us return to 1803, when William Godwin published his *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*. In that biography, Godwin states that Chaucer (along with Shakespeare) does “the greatest honour to the annals of English literature” and that “no production of man...displays more various and vigorous talent than the Canterbury Tales.”⁶⁷⁴ Godwin credits Chaucer with being the “father of our language” and restoring English to literature and the muses.⁶⁷⁵

This hagiographic treatment does not come wholly out of Godwin’s own mind. Rather, he points to books of “antiquities” that have inspired him to share the story with his reader and “enable him to feel for the instant as if he had lived with Chaucer.”⁶⁷⁶ This he does, in part, by calling upon generations past to help tell the story, including William Caxton, Thomas Speght, John Dryden, Alexander Pope, John Urry, Thomas Tyrwhitt, and George Ellis. These editors help Godwin shape the story of Chaucer’s life. They form much of the foundation for his biography and support Godwin’s perception of Chaucer as one of the most significant figures in English literary history.

The “generational distance” between Chaucer and Godwin is rather large (more than 400 years between the poet’s death and Godwin’s *Life of Chaucer*). Yet this generational gap is bridged by manuscripts and printed texts that connect over the years to bring the poet to Godwin’s eyes. Printed editions, and the paratextual elements that link them together, provide Godwin and all readers during the handpress period, with access to and engagement with Chaucer’s works. It is within these printed editions and their paratextual components that readers can find proof of Chaucer’s greatness and see that his work never dies.

⁶⁷⁴ Godwin, *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 1:i.

⁶⁷⁵ Ibid., 1:iv.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., 1:x-xi.

APPENDIX A
EDITIONS OF THE *CANTERBURY TALES* PUBLISHED IN ENGLAND, 1477-1830⁶⁷⁷

Title	Author	Editor	Printer/Publisher	Location of Publication	Year
<i>[Canterbury Tales]</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	William Caxton	Westminster	1477
<i>[Canterbury Tales]</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	William Caxton	Westminster	1483
<i>The Boke of the Tales of Caterburie</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	Richard Pynson	Westminster	1492
<i>The Boke of Chaucer Named Caunterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	Wynkyn de Worde	Westminster	1498
<i>The Boke of Canterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	Richard Pynson	London	1526
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Thomas Godfray	London	1532
<i>The Ploughmans Tale; in verse</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	Unknown	Thomas Godfray	London	1533
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Richard Grafton for John Reynes	London	1542
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Richard Grafton for Wyllyam Bonham	London	1542
<i>The Plowmans Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	Unknown	William Hill	London	1548

⁶⁷⁷ This list includes all 143 editions that were part of the methodological study of this dissertation. This includes some editions that I have previously categorized as “false flags” and were not written by Geoffrey Chaucer (see Chapter 2 for more information). Editions misattributed to Chaucer have been noted with an asterisk (*), after the author entry. This list, as with the dissertation as a whole, attempts to cover all known editions of the *Canterbury Tales* whether in part or in whole and includes as much publishing information as was available. Titles are listed with their original spelling retained.

<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Nicholas Hill for Robert Toye	London	1550
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Nicholas Hill for William Bonham	London	1550
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Nicholas Hill for Thomas Petit	London	1550
<i>The Workes of Geffray Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne	Nicholas Hill for Richard Kele	London	1550
<i>The Woorkes of Geffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne & John Stow	John Kingston for John Wight	London	1561
<i>The Woorkes of Geffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Thynne & John Stow	Henry Bradshaw	London	1561
<i>The Workes of Our Antient and Lerner English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Adam Islip for Bonham Norton	London	1598
<i>The Workes of Our Antient and Lerner English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Adam Islip for Thomas Wight	London	1598
<i>The Workes of Our Antient and Lerner English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Adam Islip for George Bishop	London	1598
<i>The Workes of Our Antient and Lerner English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Adam Islip for George Bishop	London	1602

<i>The Workes of Our Antient and Lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Adam Islip	London	1602
<i>The Plough-mans Tale.</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	Unknown	George Eld for Samuell Macham and Mathew Cooke	London	1606
<i>A Canterbury Tale, Translated out of Chaucers Old English into our now usuall language</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	A. B.	William Laud	London	1641
<i>Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum (The Tale of the Chanons Yeoman)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Elias Ashmole	J. Grismond for Nathaniel Brooke	Cornhill	1652
<i>A Comment upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr Jeffray Chaucer, Knight</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Richard Brathwait	William Godbid for Robert Crofts	London	1665
<i>A Comment upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr Jeffray Chaucer, Knight</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Richard Brathwait	William Godbid for Robert Clavell	London	1665
<i>A Comment upon the Two Tales of our Ancient, Renowned, and Ever Living Poet Sr Jeffray Chaucer, Knight</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Richard Brathwait	William Godbid for Peter Dring	London	1665

<i>Chaucer's Ghoast: or, A piece of Antiquity</i>	Ovid	Charles Cotton	T. Ratcliff and N. Thompson for Richard Mills	London	1672
<i>The Works of Our Ancient, Learned, & Excellent English Poet, Jeffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Speght	Unknown	London	1687
<i>Canterbury Tales Composed for the Entertainment of All Ingenuous Young Men and Maids</i>	Chaucer Junior	Chaucer Junior	J. Back	London	1687
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	Jacob Tonson	London	1700
<i>Canterbury Tales, Rendred into Familiar Verse</i>	William Pittis	William Pittis	Unknown	London	1701
<i>Chaucer's Whims</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	William Pittis	D. Edwards	London	1701
<i>The Works of the Late, Famous Mr. John Dryden</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	Jacob Tonson	London	1701
<i>January and May; or the Merchant's Tale, from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Alexander Pope	Jacob Tonson	London	1709
<i>The Carpenter of Oxford, or, the Miller's Tale, from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Samuel Cobb & Matthew Prior	E. Curll, R. Gosling, and J. Pemberton	London	1712
<i>The Miller of Trompington, or the Reve's Tale from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Betterton	Bernard Lintot	London	1712
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Various	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1712

<i>Earl Robert's Mice. A Poem in Imitation of Chaucer</i>	Matthew Prior	Samuel Cobb	A. Baldwin	London	1712
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	Jacob Tonson	London	1713
<i>The Wife of Bath: A Comedy</i>	John Gay	John Gay	Bernard Lintot	London	1713
<i>Poetical Miscellanies, Consisting of Original Poems and Translations by the Best Hands</i>	Various	Richard Steele	Richard Steele and Jacob Tonson	London	1714
<i>The Carpenter of Oxford, or, the Miller's Tale from Chaucer. Attempted in Modern English</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Samuel Cobb	E. Curll, R. Gosling, and J. Pemberton	London	1714
<i>Characters or The Introduction to the Canterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Betterton	Bernard Lintot	London	1714
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands, 2nd Edition (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Various	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1714
<i>The Miller of Trompington: Being an Exercise Upon Chaucer's Reeve's Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Betterton	Jonas Brown and J. Roberts	London	1715
<i>Miscellany Poems Containing Variety of New Translations of the Ancient Poets; Together with Several Original Poems (including January and May; or the Merchant's Tale, from Chaucer)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	John Dryden (including Alexander Pope)	Jacob Tonson	London	1716

<i>Proposals for Printing By Subscription, the Works of the Celebrated and Ancient English Poet Geoffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Urry	William Bowyer for Bernard Lintot	London	1716
<i>Brown Bread and Honour, a Tale. Moderniz'd from an Ancient Manuscript of Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Morphew	John Morphew	London	1716
<i>The Miller of Trompington: being an exercise upon Chaucer's Reeve's Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Betterton	Jonas Brown	London	1720
<i>Canterbury Tales Composed for the Entertainment of All Ingenuous Young Men and Maids</i>	Chaucer Junior	Chaucer Junior	T. Norris	London	1720
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands, 3rd Edition (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Various	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1720
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	Jacob Tonson	London	1721
<i>The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Urry & Timothy Thomas	William Bowyer for Bernard Lintot	London	1721
<i>Three New Poems</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Markland	E. Curll	London	1721
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands, 4th Edition (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Various	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1722
<i>The Miller's Tale from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Samuel Cobb	Unknown	London	1725

<i>Popeana</i>	Alexander Pope	Alexander Pope	Edmund Curll	London	1726
<i>Miscellany Poems Containing Variety of New Translations of the Ancient Poets; Together with Several Original Poems, 6th Edition (including January and May; or the Merchant's Tale, from Chaucer)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	John Dryden (including Alexander Pope)	Jacob Tonson	London	1727
<i>The Altar of Love. Consisting of Poems, and other Miscellanies. By the Most Eminent Hands</i>	Various	Henry Curll	Henry Curll	London	1727
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands, 5th Edition (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Various	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1727
<i>Canterbury Tales Composed for the Entertainment of All Ingenuous Young Men and Maids</i>	J. Chaucer, Junior	Samuel Sanders	William Dicey and Co.	London	1730
<i>The Wife of Bath: A Comedy</i>	John Gay	John Gay	Bernard Lintot (for)	London	1730
<i>Miscellaneous Poems and Translations by Several Hands, 6th Edition (Lintot's Miscellany)</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Alexander Pope	Bernard Lintot	London	1732
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	Jacob Tonson	London	1734

<i>Proposals for Printing By Subscription in Two Volumes Folio, the Works of That Most Learned, Facetious, and Ancient English Poet Sir Geoffrey Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Entick	Unknown	London	1736
<i>A Collection of Merry Poems, 2nd Edition (including The Miller's Tale from Chaucer)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Samuel Cobb	T. Cooper	London	1736
<i>The Muses Library, or A Series of English Poetry</i>	Various	Elizabeth Cooper	J. Wilcox, T. Green, J. Brindley, and T. Osborn	London	1737
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, in the Original, from the Most Authentic Manuscripts</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Morell	Unknown for Thomas Morell	London	1737
<i>The Historical and Poetical Medley; or Muses Library; Being A Choice and Faithful Collection of the Best Antient English Poetry</i>	Various	Elizabeth Cooper	T. Davies	London	1738
<i>Gualtherus and Griselda: or, the Clerk of Oxford's Tale</i>	Giovanni Boccaccio, Francesco Petrarch, and Geoffrey Chaucer	George Ogle	Unknown for R. Dodsley	London	1739
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, in the Original, from the Most Authentic Manuscripts, 2nd Edition</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Morell	Unknown for J. Osborn	London	1740
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	Edmund Curll	London	1741

<i>The Muses Library, or A Series of English Poetry</i>	Various	Elizabeth Cooper	James Hodges	London	1741
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Modernis'd by Several Hands</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	George Ogle	Unknown for J. & R. Tonson	London	1741
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 3rd Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1744
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	J. & R. Tonson and S. Draper	London	1745
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 4th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1745
<i>Chaucer's Farmer and Friar</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer*	Unknown	M. Cooper, G. Jones, G. Woodfall	London	1746
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 5th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1746
<i>Matrimonial Scenes...All Modernized from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Andrew Jackson	Andrew Jackson	London	1750
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 6th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1751
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	J. & R. Tonson and S. Draper	London	1755
<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	Unknown	London	1760

<i>The Miscellaneous Works of John Dryden, Esq.</i>	John Dryden	Samuel Derrick	J. & R. Tonson	London	1760
<i>The Poetical Tell-Tale; or Muses in Merry Story (including The Miller of Trompington)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer and Alexander Pope)	Unknown	J. Fletcher	London	1764
<i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Thomas Percy	J. Dodsley	London	1765
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 7th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1766
<i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets, 2nd Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Thomas Percy	J. Dodsley	London	1767
<i>The Miscellaneous Works of John Dryden, Esq.</i>	John Dryden	Samuel Derrick	J. & R. Tonson	London	1767
<i>Canterbury Tales</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	Unknown	London	1770
<i>Canterbury Tales Composed for the Entertainment of All Ingenuous Young Men and Maids</i>	J. Chaucer, Junior	Unknown	Unknown	London	1770
<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	A. Kincaid, W. Creech, and J. Balfour	London	1773

<i>Fables Ancient and Modern: Translated into Verse</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	T. Davies, B. White, C. Say, B. Law, S. Crowder, T. Becket, T. Caslon, T. Cadell, J. Robson, R. Baldwin, and E. Johnston	London	1774
<i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets, 3rd Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Thomas Percy	J. Dodsley	London	1775
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Tyrwhitt	T. Payne and Son	London	1775-1778
<i>The Poets of Great Britain Complete from Chaucer to Churchill</i>	Various	John Bell	G. Cawthorn for John Bell	London	1777
<i>A Collection of the Pieces Formerly Published by Henry Brooke; To Which Are Added Several Plays and Poems (including "Man of Law's Tale")</i>	Henry Brooke	Henry Brooke	Unknown	London	1778
<i>The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: in Fourteen Volumes</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Warton	Cadell and Davies	London	1782
<i>The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales By the Most Eminent Poets, 8th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Various (including Samuel Cobb, Thomas Betterton, and Alexander Pope)	F. & J. Noble	London	1785

<i>Poems and Plays by Henry Brooke, Esq. (including "Man of Law's Tale")</i>	Henry Brooke	Henry Brooke	J. Sewell	London	1789
<i>Specimens of the Early English Poets</i>	Various	George Ellis	Edwards	London	1790
<i>The Good and Bad Priests</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	Fowler	Salisbury	1790
<i>The Miller's Tale from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	J. Ridgway	London	1791
<i>The Pardoner's Tale from Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Lipscomb	T. Cadell	London	1792
<i>A Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Robert Anderson	John & Arthur Arch, Bell & Bradfute, and I. Mundell	London	1793
<i>The English Anthology</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Joseph Ritson	C. Clarke for T. & J. Egerton	London	1793-1794
<i>Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and other Pieces of our earlier Poets, 4th Edition</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Thomas Percy	John Nichols for F. & C. Rivington	London	1794
<i>"The Squire's Tale" in Poems</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Penn	Unknown (Privately printed)	London	1794
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, Completed in a Modern Version</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Lipscomb	J. Cooke and G.G. & J. Robinson	Oxford	1795
<i>The Works of the British Poets... Volume 1, Containing Chaucer, Surrey, Wyatt, Sackville</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Robert Anderson	J. & A. Arch	London	1795
<i>Canterbury Tales for the Year 1797</i>	Harriet and Sophia Lee	Harriet and Sophia Lee	G.G. & J. Robinson	London	1797

<i>Palamon and Arcite; or, the Knight's Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Dryden	G. Bancks and Lee & Hurst	Manchester	1797
<i>The Fables of John Dryden</i>	John Dryden	John Dryden	T. Bensley for J. Edwards and E. Harding	London	1797
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer, 2nd Edition</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Tyrwhitt	Clarendon Press	Oxford	1798
<i>Canterbury Tales, 2nd Edition</i>	Harriet and Sophia Lee	Harriet and Sophia Lee	G.G. & J. Robinson	London	1799
<i>Palamon and Arcite; or the Knight's Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Dryden	G. Bancks and Lee & Hurst	Manchester	1800
<i>Chaucer's Canterbury Tales [Facsimile of Caxton's 2nd Edition]</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	William Caxton	Vincent Figgins	London	1800
<i>The Story of Patient Griselda (from the Clerk's Tale of Geoffrey Chaucer)</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Unknown	Routledge	London	1800
<i>"The Squire's Tale" in Poems</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Penn	W. Bulmer	London	1801
<i>Canterbury Tales, Part 1 & Part 2</i>	Ann Lemoine	Ann Lemoine	T. Maiden	London	1802
<i>Canterbury Tales, 3rd Edition</i>	Harriet and Sophia Lee	Harriet and Sophia Lee	G. & J. Robinson	London	1803
<i>Fables: Consisting of Select Parts from Dante, Berni, Chaucer, and Ariosto</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Richard Wharton	T. Bensley for Payne & MacKinlay	London	1804
<i>Canterbury Tales, 4th Edition</i>	Harriet and Sophia Lee	Harriet and Sophia Lee	G. & J. Robinson	London	1804
<i>Cambuscan, an Heroic Poem, in Six Books</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Richard Wharton	Payne & MacKinlay	London	1805
<i>Fables from Boccaccio and Chaucer</i>	Giovanni Boccaccio and Geoffrey Chaucer	John Dryden	W. Flint for T. Cadell & W. Davies	London	1806

<i>The Poetical Register and Repository of Fugitive Poetry for 1804, 2nd Edition (including "The Squire's Tale")</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Unknown	Bye and Law for F. & C. Rivington	London	1806
<i>The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer; in Fourteen Volumes</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Tyrwhitt and Thomas Warton	Cadell & Davies and Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme	London	1807
<i>Imitations and Translations from the Ancient and Modern Classics</i>	J. C. Hobhouse	J. C. Hobhouse	Longman, Hurst, Rees, & Orme	London	1809
<i>Works of the English Poets from Chaucer to Cowper</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Alexander Chalmers & Samuel Johnson	J. Johnson, etc.	London	1810
<i>Canterbury Tales, Composed for the entertainment of all ingenious young men and maids</i>	John Chaucer, Junior	John Chaucer, Junior	Howard & Evans	London	1810
<i>New Canterbury Tales, or the Glories of the Garrison</i>	Oliver Outline	Edward Quillinan	H. Colburn	London	1811
<i>The Poetical Works of John Dryden, Esq. (including Select Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer)</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	John Dryden, Joseph Warton, & John Warton	Law and Gilbert for F. C. & J. Rivington, T. Payne, J. Nunn, R. Lea, Lackington & Co., J. Richardson, Longman & Co., Cadell & Davies, and Wilson & Son	Clerkenwell	1811
<i>Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Tale</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	John Dryden	Unknown	London	1820
<i>Arcita and Palamon: After the Excellent Poet Geoffrey Chaucer</i>	Edward Hovel Thurlow	Edward Hovel Thurlow	William Booth	London	1822

<i>The British Poets, including Translations</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	Samuel Weller Singer	C. Whittingham	Chiswick	1822
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Tyrwhitt	W. Pickering and R. & S. Prowett	London	1822
<i>Fables, from Boccaccio and Chaucer</i>	Giovanni Boccaccio and Geoffrey Chaucer	John Dryden	C. Whittingham for T. Tegg, R. Jennings, A. K. Newman & Co., J. Sutherland, and Richard Griffin & Co.	Chiswick	1822
<i>Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Other Poems</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	W. Greatheed Lewis & John Cumberland	Thomas Dolby	London	1824-1825
<i>The Canterbury Tales of the late Sophia Lee, 5th Edition</i>	Harriet and Sophia Lee	Unknown	Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, & Green	London	1826
<i>Poetry and Poets: Being a Collection of the Choicest Anecdotes Relative to the Poets of Every Age and Nation</i>	Richard Ryan	Richard Ryan	D. S. Maurice for Sherwood, Gilbert, & Piper	London	1826
<i>The Beauties of the British Poets</i>	Various (including Geoffrey Chaucer)	George Croly	R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside	London	1828
<i>The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer	Thomas Tyrwhitt	W. Pickering	London	1830

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Educational Institutions:

<u>School</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Degree</u>	<u>Date</u>
Hopewell Valley Central HS	Pennington, NJ	HS Diploma	1998
American University	Washington, DC	BA	2002
Simmons University	Boston, MA	MSLIS	2013
Drew University	Madison, NJ	MA	2016
Drew University	Madison, NJ	PhD	2019