

## FROM TEXT TO MAN: RE-CREATING CHAUCER IN SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PRINT EDITIONS

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According to Seth Lerer, the moment when Chaucer can no longer “share in the remembrances of cult or circle[, or] . . . serve as a master to a reverent class of pupils” is the moment when reading Chaucer “necessitates recovering him.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, when Chaucer no longer exists as a person in an individual’s memory, or no longer can be constructed as such, he must be re-created, represented in a new context so as to speak to those who are removed from him by the passage of time. Such re-creation becomes necessary, according to Lerer, from the last quarter of the fifteenth century onwards.<sup>2</sup> Among the early efforts at such renewed representations of Chaucer are sixteenth-century print editions of Chaucer’s works, books nowadays often excoriated for their editors’ methods of recovering and re-creating Chaucer. Alice Miskimin, for example, notes that “the proportion of spurious to genuine poems in every edition of Chaucer’s *Works* rises throughout the sixteenth century,” and this creates what she terms a “contaminated canon.”<sup>3</sup> Other scholars, too, refer to “the omnivorous character of sixteenth-century Chaucerian editing,”<sup>4</sup> or state that “the effect of this print creation of the *Works* was to present Chaucer as a monolithic authorial enterprise in which the distinctiveness of his individual achievements . . . was irretrievably obscured.”<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, sixteenth-century editors of Chaucer are taken to task for publishing works manifestly not by Chaucer (and, indeed, explicitly acknowledged as belonging to other writers) in a supposed collection of Chaucer, and for publishing works which, while not ascribed to other writers, evidently cannot be by Chaucer either because of dates recorded in them, or because of a clearly non-Chaucerian style. Sixteenth-century editors are charged with confusion of the true Chaucer canon and cited as examples of what readers had to endure until the publishing efforts of Thomas Tyrwhitt in the eighteenth century when “the making of a Chaucer edition was finally submitted to the workings of a truly learned mind and freed from

<sup>1</sup>Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers: Imagining the Author in Late Medieval England* (Princeton 1997) 160.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>Alice Miskimin, *The Renaissance Chaucer* (New Haven 1975) 229, 234.

<sup>4</sup>Lerer, *Chaucer*, 118.

<sup>5</sup>A. S. G. Edwards, “Chaucer from Manuscript to Print: The Social Text and the Critical Text,” *Mosaic* 28 (1995) 4.

the taint of dilettantism.”<sup>6</sup>

The problem with such criticism, however, is that it criticizes sixteenth-century editors for not defining “reading Chaucer” as we do. For us, reading Chaucer means reading the texts written by an Englishman who lived from the early 1340s to 1400 and received financial grants from Edward III, Richard II, and Henry IV.<sup>7</sup> This focus on the author is reflected in the title of the most recent comprehensive edition of Chaucer’s works, the *Riverside Chaucer*.<sup>8</sup> The sixteenth century, however, focused on the *Workes of Geffray Chaucer*, as all titles from the period indicate. The canon, at this point, centered itself more on texts than on their authors, a situation that reflects the period’s medieval inheritance. Lerer explains that “in the anonymities of earlier manuscript compilations, . . . the author’s name is often absent, unnecessary to a literature pressed into service of a specific social function, be it education, entertainment, or group identification.”<sup>9</sup> Admittedly, Lerer also claims that, in contrast, sixteenth-century print editions associate “authorship with the name, the externalization of a style, an origin, a status onto a persona with a history.”<sup>10</sup> He does note, however, that “there is much about the uses of the early printed book in England to challenge the firm distinctions between script and print.”<sup>11</sup> This statement, although unexplored by Lerer, is probably the more accurate characterization of sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer. In a period negotiating the move from script to print, sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer reflect the transition between the two models of compilation set out by Lerer. In these editions, one can see the movement from an interest in the specific content of Chaucer’s writings to readings of his writings shaped by an abiding interest in Chaucer the man. To show this progressive shift in focus, it is necessary to examine how sixteenth-century editions represented Chaucer visually and verbally, and what aspect of this representation they emphasized as a method for recovering Chaucer, that is to say recontextualizing him so that he spoke to an audience removed from his personal experience.

The scope of this paper is such that it would be impossible to examine all editions of Chaucer from the sixteenth century. Therefore I limit my discussion to three editions spanning the century: William Thynne’s 1532 edition, “the first comprehensive, single-volume collection of

<sup>6</sup>Paul Ruggiers, intro., *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers (Norman 1984) 6.

<sup>7</sup>Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford 1992) 11, 47–48, 95, 273–275.

<sup>8</sup>*The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York 1987).

<sup>9</sup>Lerer, *Chaucer*, 180.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 212.

Chaucer's works";<sup>12</sup> John Stowe's 1561 edition; and Thomas Speght's 1602 edition.<sup>13</sup> As Miskimin writes, "The Renaissance Chaucer takes shape in these editions,"<sup>14</sup> and so they offer a representative survey of the sixteenth century's notions of Chaucer. In each edition, I will examine pictorial elements in the re-creation of Chaucer and his texts—such as title pages, illustrations, and typeset as well as print elements of this re-creation, such as the prefatory material, the selection of texts, and the ordering of textual elements. These examinations will reveal the various ways in which Chaucer and his texts were presented, and, ultimately, what methods of recovery, text-focused or author-focused, predominate in each edition.

William Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer opens with a title page that fills about two-thirds of the space on the folio (see fig. 1). An ornate rectangular border surrounds the following words, printed in descending font sizes (/ marks the place where the font diminishes): "The Workes of Geffray Chau//cer newly printed with dyvers workes whi//che were never in print before: As in the table more playnly dothe appere." A space follows these words and then, in print as large as that of "The Workes of Geffray Chau//," "Cum privilegio" appears, short for the "Cum privilegio a rege indulto" printed in full on the last page of the book. As a comment on the relative importance of Chaucer and his texts, the print is telling: this is an edition by the "chefe clerke of [the royal] kechyn"<sup>15</sup> in which royal privileges and support are emphasized, as becomes evident in the prefatory dedication "To the kynges hyghnesse / my most gracious soveraygne lorde Henry the eight / by

<sup>12</sup>Edwards, "Chaucer from Manuscript to Print," 4.

<sup>13</sup>While the necessity of examining Thynne's 1532 edition seems clear, a few words should be said explaining my two other choices. Although Stowe's edition "added little to knowledge of the [Chaucer] canon and offered no improvement in the texts already published by Thynne" (Anne Hudson, "John Stow," in *Editing Chaucer*, 68), it reflects a mid-century attitude to editing Chaucer and helps to chart the progression I argue. Speght's 1602 edition, too, necessitates inclusion because it reflects a significant change in the approach to Chaucer. Admittedly, Speght's 1598 edition reflects this change as well, but Speght came late to the 1598 project (Derek Pearsall, "Thomas Speght," in *Editing Chaucer*, 72) and so was unable to execute his ideas fully there. Taken to task by Francis Thynne in 1598, and desirous of completely executing his own editorial notions, Speght revised the project and re-released it in 1602. As such, the 1602 edition reflects Speght's attitudes and principles more fully than the 1598 version, for which reason the 1602 edition will be studied here.

<sup>14</sup>Miskimin, *Renaissance Chaucer*, 239.

<sup>15</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Works: 1532 with Supplementary Material from the Editions of 1542, 1561, 1598, and 1602*, facsimile, ed. D. S. Brewer (London 1976). Because the prefatory matter is unpaginated, I will designate it by reference to its title rather than its folio number. Other quotations will be designated by folio number. All quotations from the 1532 edition are taken from the Brewer facsimile unless otherwise noted.

FIG. 1. Detail. Reproduced with permission.

the grace of god kyng of Englande and of Fraunce / Defensor of the fayth / and lorde of Irland.&c.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, if the print on the title page is any indication, the royal personage whose privilege underlies the printing of this book is as important as the works printed.

Having said that, though, it should be noted that visually at least Chaucer and his works are represented by more than print on this title page. The top frame of the border is centered on the head and shoulders of a laurel-bearing man, indicative perhaps of a reading of Chaucer as a laureate poet, that is to say as “an exemplar of ancient practice, as a model for the pursuit of poetic fame, as a monument of literature.”<sup>17</sup> This is certainly in keeping with Thynne’s prefatory commendation of Chaucer as “an eccellente Poete” whose development of a “rude and imperfite” tongue would not have gone unnoticed among renowned classical authors such as Cicero.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly enough, however, the counterpart to this top border with the laureled head is a bottom border depicting a riotous parade of cherubs. Among these cherubs, one plays a pipe somewhat similar to that carried by the Miller in the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* and represented in the illustrative woodcut opening his tale.<sup>19</sup> While it is unlikely that this is a direct representation of the pilgrimage, the riot and forward movement of this border certainly connote much of the content of the *Canterbury Tales*. Accordingly, the bottom border nicely balances the top’s emphasis on the figure of the poet with a visual connotation of the event depicted in one of the author’s works. Thus, as a whole Thynne’s title page does not so much venerate Chaucer as locate him in relation to political power and the content of his works. The man is not the central focus of this edition, but an aspect of its project.

The focus on textual content also appears in illustrations within the body of the edition. The same title page, with different words, introduces *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *Troylus and Creseyde*, *How Pite is Ded and Beried in a Gentyll Hert*, *Boetius de consolacione philosophie*, *The Testament of Love*, the *Dream of Chaucer* (now known as *The Book of the Duchess*) and *The Conclusions of the Astrolabie*. Given that no other texts receive such introduction, these title pages seem to indicate a valorization of the eight texts so introduced. At first glance, the valorization seems to reflect textual length. The *Canterbury Tales*, the *Romaunt of the Rose*, *Boetius de consolacione philosophie*, and the *Conclusions of the Astrolabie* together constitute a sizable portion of Thynne’s edition. The situation is

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Lerer, *Chaucer*, 149.

<sup>18</sup>Chaucer, 1532, preface.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., fol. 14r.

more complex than this though, because length does not explain why longish poems like the *House of Fame* are introduced by nothing more than a large font when texts such as the *Dreame of Chaucer* and *How Pite is Ded and Beried in a Gentyll Hert*, which are shorter, merit a title page. The answer seems to lie in the content of these texts. Of the eight texts introduced by title pages, five directly relate some matter of love (six if one counts the *Canterbury Tales* as making some comment on the topic), and the others are quite long. The deployment of title pages thus characterizes Thynne's re-creation of Chaucer as one heavily invested in representing Chaucer as a poet of love. The editor's presentation of Chaucer is accordingly shaped by thematic, textual interests rather than by the notion of Chaucer as a person.

The other visual components of Thynne's edition are his woodcut illustrations of the *Canterbury Tales*. Each tale is headed by a pictorial representation of the teller. According to Skeat, "[the woodcuts of] the Knight and the Squire, for all I know to the contrary, appear here for the first time . . . But the other figures are not new, for they may also be found in the second edition of the *Canterbury Tales* by Caxton."<sup>20</sup> If this attribution by Skeat is correct, it indicates an interest in refashioning the two aristocratic Canterbury pilgrims. The Knight and his horse are certainly more ornately decorated than any other woodcut in the text, indicative perhaps of an investment in the martial and aristocratic world the Knight represents. Such an investment certainly accords well with Thynne's veneration of the aristocratic in his dedication. Re-creating the noble Squire also reflects such veneration. Given the Squire's experience in matters of courtly love, this particular re-creation also reiterates the emphasis on love in Thynne's inner title pages.<sup>21</sup> Thynne's adaptations of illustrations thus reflect a valorization of textual creations for their characteristics rather than a valorization of Chaucer the man. The reuse of Caxton, too, is quite telling: it shows Thynne's incorporation of previous editors' texts of Chaucer into his own. Apparently, textual precedents are not something to be overcome so much as something to be used to the benefit of the text. Editions of Chaucer thus come to inscribe the material history of their print reproduction as well as the texts of the author. As a whole, Thynne's illustrations make the text, not its author, a center of attention.

While the visual components of a text most obviously include title pages and illustrations, they also include the typeset of the words. In

<sup>20</sup>*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and Others; being a reproduction in facsimile of the first collected edition 1532, from the copy in the British Museum*, ed. Walter Skeat (London 1905) xxix.

<sup>21</sup>Consider, for example, the Squire's presentation in the *General Prologue* where he is described as "A lovyere and a lusty bacheler" who "koude songs make and wel endite, / Juste and eek daunce, and weel purtreye and write" (*Riverside*, lines 80, 95–96).

Thynne's 1532 edition, the type is uniformly black-letter, a quasi-Gothic script which resembles in some ways manuscript hands used for Middle English texts. This script was used in Thynne for all titles, texts, folio headings, and prefatory matter. Even in *Boetius de consolacione philosophie*, where Latin words are set off from the text, the Latin words are not distinguished by kind of type, but by size. As a result, there is no differentiation of the writings of Chaucer from those of his explicitly identified fellow writers, of his sources, or of his editor. For Thynne, one and all are elements of the same larger text of Chaucer that he is producing. Textual unity is established and maintained as the incorporation of many different voices into the production goes unacknowledged in typeset. The focus is the text, not its producers.

The prefatory material of Thynne's 1532 edition is another important component of Thynne's re-creation of Chaucer. The material includes Thynne's prefatory address to Henry VIII,<sup>22</sup> and a collection of poems comprised of *Eight Goodly Questions With Their Aunswers, To the Kynges Most Noble Grace and to the Lordes and Knyghtes of the Garter*, and eight lines of verse usually described as *Three Sayings*. This section opens with Thynne's preface, a text which clearly locates the value of his editorial work not in the reclamation of Chaucer as a man, but in the reclamation of Chaucer's works as national treasures and loyal servitors of the king. For example, Thynne introduces his interest in Chaucer as the product of "a certayne inclynacion and zeale, which I have, to here of any thyng soundyng to the laude and honour of this your [Henry VIII's] noble realme."<sup>23</sup> Chaucer is an object of effort and study not as a historical personage but as "an ornament of the tonge of this your realme," and Thynne uses him as an example of how, as among the French and the Germans, there "hath . . . nat lacked amonges us Englisshmen, which have right well and notablie endevoired and employed themselves, to the beautifying & bettrynge of thenglysh tonge."<sup>24</sup> Chaucer's value lies in his texts, in the polished English they present to the reader's view which ensures England may hold her head up among other nations for the beauty of her language. Thynne even extends this claim backwards in time to say that Chaucer's polishing of the national language would still have been, in the time of Demosthenes and Cicero, "a thyng right rare and straunge, and worthy perpetuall laude, that any clerke by lernynge or wytte, coulde than have framed a tonge before so rude and imperfite, to soche a swete ornature and

<sup>22</sup>According to a note on one of the 1532 editions, this preface was actually written for Thynne by Sir Brian Tuke, a member of Henry VIII's household. Nevertheless, the preface contains the enunciation "I, William Thynne," for which reason I will not confuse matters by referring to it as anything other than Thynne's preface.

<sup>23</sup>Chaucer, 1532, preface.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

composycion.”<sup>25</sup> For Thynne, “Chaucer” is a term denoting the perfection and elevation of English. Thynne re-creates Chaucer’s works as a national treasure for this, making sure that this value is clear in his readers’ minds by ascribing to Chaucer’s works a catalogue of qualities valued by Renaissance rhetoricians<sup>26</sup> such as “compendiousnesse in narration, . . . sensyble and open style, lacking neither maiestie ne mediocritie, . . . [and] quicknesse in conclusyon.”<sup>27</sup> Ultimately, in the conclusion to the preface, Thynne advances his edition as something to “go forth in publyke and prevayl over those that wolde blemyshe, deface, and in many thynges clerely, abolyssh the laude, renoume and glorie heretofore compared, and meritoriously acquired by dyvers princes, and other of this said most noble yle.”<sup>28</sup> Chaucer’s works thus become in themselves part of an expeditionary force devoted to the increase of the glory acquired for England by her princes. The texts are now “loyal servitors” of a kind.

The other prefatory material of Thynne’s edition begins with the poem *Eight Goodly Questions*. This text constitutes a set of moral principles for both men and women, addressing questions such as “what erthly thyng / Is best and to god moost commendable?” or “what is the best dower / That maye be to a wyfe appropriate?”<sup>29</sup> This text together with Saying #2, which advises one to speak the truth about others to their faces and to say the best one can about them behind their backs, present a vision of Chaucer’s works, the matter being introduced, as a source of practical wisdom about how to proceed in life. Saying #3, too, advises on issues of “gentil” behavior. The three poems thus accord rather well with texts such as *Boetius de consolacione philosophie* and indicate the moral value to be found in further perusal of the volume. These three prefatory texts introduce what R. F. Yeager calls the “‘moral’ Chaucer . . . [that] Thynne’s volume mak[es] available to Renaissance readers.”<sup>30</sup> They alert readers to the value of the contents of the *Workes* rather than to the value of its author.

The remaining prefatory poems, *To the Kynges Most Noble Grace* and *To the Lordes and Knyghtes of the Garter* and Saying #1, also solicit the reader’s perusal of Thynne’s edition by drawing attention to the subject matter within. The first poem, now believed to be by Hoccleve, identifies the royal court as the wellspring of a nation’s good and exhorts ruler and lords to Christian defense and rule. Saying #1 elabo-

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>James Blodgett, “William Thynne,” in *Editing Chaucer*, 35.

<sup>27</sup>Chaucer, 1532, preface.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>R. F. Yeager, “Literary Theory at the Close of the Middle Ages: William Caxton and William Thynne,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 6 (1984) 164.

rates on this by prophesying the downfall of England “Whan faithe fayleth in preestes sawes.” At the date of publication, these texts would have resonated strongly with readers as Henry VIII began to challenge the authority of the papacy and promulgate the “theocratic model of the divine right of kings.”<sup>31</sup> As R. F. Yeager states, these texts share “the same sort of anticlerical, sweepingly nationalistic and aristocratic tone.”<sup>32</sup> As such, they provide a taste of the contents of a volume which included such anticlerical works as the *Summoner's Tale* and the *Friar's Tale*, such nationalistic works as Gower's *Unto the Worthy and Noble Kynge Henry the Fourth*, and such aristocratic works as the *Knight's Tale* and the *Dreame of Chaucer*. The prefatory matter, then, reflects and foreshadows the contents of the edition rather than examining the author underlying their creation.

Thynne's method of selecting material for his *Workes* has been the subject of much inquiry. Most scholars agree, however, that Thynne made a concerted effort to “recover Chaucer's works and to purge the printed editions of their corruptions.”<sup>33</sup> While it is evident that considerations of authorship influenced his work, it is also clear that these were not his sole, nor even necessarily his predominant, concerns. Given the anonymity of manuscript evidence,<sup>34</sup> Thynne seems to have based his judgments “on stylistic and thematic grounds,” and “on the exigencies of present politics.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, Thynne's re-creation of Chaucer for his audience relies on emphasizing Chaucer's works as comments on moral, courtly, political, and religious aspects of life in 1532 England. The issue of whether a text is Chaucer's seems to have been subordinated to these larger thematic concerns. For example, one of Thynne's foci in selecting material was love. According to James Blodgett, “Thynne's additions show him especially susceptible to love poetry . . . for he prints for the first time Robert Henryson's *Testament*

<sup>31</sup>John Guy, “Tudor Monarchy and Political Culture,” *The Oxford History of Tudor and Stuart Britain*, ed. John Morrill (Oxford 1996) 227. According to Guy, “By 1529 Henry's attempts to secure a divorce [from Catherine of Aragon] had clearly failed” (271). As a result, Henry began to cultivate independence from the papacy, and in 1532, the year of Thynne's publication of the *Workes*, he achieved “submission of the clergy,” a law allowing him control of the clergy's power to make laws for the church. For another discussion of the connections between Thynne's edition and Henry VIII's political projects, see John Watkins's comments in “‘Wrastling for this world’: Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer,” in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainsville 1998) 22–26.

<sup>32</sup>Yeager, “Literary Theory,” 151.

<sup>33</sup>Blodgett, “William Thynne,” in *Editing Chaucer*, 50.

<sup>34</sup>Lerer, *Chaucer*, 180.

<sup>35</sup>Thomas Heffernan, “Aspects of the Chaucerian Apocrypha: Animadversions on William Thynne's Edition of the Plowman's Tale,” in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge 1990) 158.

of *Creseid*, *The Flower of Courtesy*, *The Assembly of Ladies*, *A Praise of Women*, *The Remedy of Love*, Thomas Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid*, *The Book of Cupide*, and a few ballades."<sup>36</sup> In selecting these additions, Thynne deliberately chooses not to heed evidence of non-Chaucerian authorship. Walter Skeat, in the introduction to his facsimile of the 1532 *Workes*, claims that "It is almost certain that Thynne intentionally included [the *Testament of Creseid*] as illustrating Chaucer's Troilus, well knowing that it was not Chaucer's."<sup>37</sup> The poem's references to Chaucer as a distinct author apart from the narrating "I" support this claim,<sup>38</sup> as does Henryson's overt suggestion of non-Chaucerian authorship:

I wotte nat if this narration  
Be authorysed or forged of the newe  
Of some poete by his invention  
Made to reporte the lamentation  
And woful ende of this lusty Creseyde.<sup>39</sup>

There is also the tantalizing question of whether Thynne's anglicized version of the poem was anglicized by him or inherited in that form.<sup>40</sup> If Thynne did anglicize the text, that would suggest that he did not perceive non-Chaucerian dialect as a reason to exclude from his edition a text thematically and textually linked to Chaucer's works. A similar disregard of authorship issues underlies Thynne's inclusions of politically pertinent textual matter. For example, he includes in the *Workes* a poem explicitly identified as Gower's, namely *Johan Gower / Unto the Worthy and Noble Kynge Henry the Fourth*.<sup>41</sup> Among the politically relevant lines in this text is the admonition to kings to take over from the pope the task of "sett[ing] peace and love" among the people:

But though the heed of holy churche above  
Ne do nat al his hole busynesse  
Amonge the people to sette peace and love  
These kinges oughten of her rightwysnesse  
Her owne cause among hem selfe redresse  
Tho Peters shyp as nowe hath lost his stere

<sup>36</sup>Blodgett, "William Thynne," in *Editing Chaucer*, 41.

<sup>37</sup>Skeat, *The Works*, xxxi.

<sup>38</sup>Consider, for example, these lines: "I toke a queare . . . / Written by worthy Chaucer glorious"; Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Creseyde*, in Chaucer, 1532, fol. 219r.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. 219v.

<sup>40</sup>Denton Fox, intro., *The Testament of Cresseid* (London 1968) 16.

<sup>41</sup>Chaucer, 1532, fol. 375v. This poem is also known by the title "To King Henry the Fourth In Praise of Peace," as in John Gower, *The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (London 1901) 2.481.

It lyth in hem the barge for to stere.<sup>42</sup>

The resonances of such poems at a time when Henry VIII was engaged in a power struggle with the papacy are strong and may explain the signal honor accorded Thynne of waiting on Anne Boleyn at her coronation feast in 1533.<sup>43</sup> All told, for Thynne, authorship is not as important a factor in his selection of Chaucerian works as a text's thematic content and political relevance.

Thynne's ordering of elements seems to reflect this emphasis on textual content as well. His edition shows a careful attention to the placement of works so that they are read in relation to, and comment on, other works. A very Chaucerian approach to textual construction (note the structure of Fragment 1 of the *Canterbury Tales*), this policy constitutes a careful crafting of the reading experience. For example, Thynne places *A Goodly Balade of Chaucer*, which mentions God's providence and the need to accept fate "in humble pacience,"<sup>44</sup> directly ahead of *Boetius de consolacione philosophie*. Similarly, *How Pite is Ded and Beried in a Gentyll Hert* immediately precedes *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*. These two works can both be read as tales of women's cruelty to their lovers. Immediately following these two poems, however, Thynne inserts *Of Quene Annelida and False Arcite* and *The Assemble of Ladies*, two poems detailing, at least in part, men's perfidy to women. The four poems thus constitute a stimulating dialogue for the reader's perusal. To charge this sixteenth-century editor with failing to consider "readers' responses" in his compilation is thus simply unfair.<sup>45</sup> Thynne carefully deploys his chosen texts such that, officially Chaucer's or not, they speak to, and about, each other in a very rich Chaucerian manner.

From the above examination of elements in Thynne's visual and verbal representations of Chaucer, it seems clear that Thynne's text is concerned more with Chaucer's products than with their relationship to Chaucer. His title page and preface manifest a focus on Chaucer, as the poet's products intersect with Henry VIII's vision of himself and of England. Chaucer is valued because his works constitute "an ornament

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., fol. 376v.

<sup>43</sup>Blodgett, "William Thynne," in *Editing Chaucer*, 39.

<sup>44</sup>Chaucer, 1532, fol. 234v.

<sup>45</sup>Edwards, "Chaucer from Manuscript to Print," 4.

FIG. 2. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

of the tonge of this your realme.”<sup>46</sup> “Chaucer” is a sign of the worth of Henry’s realm, not a sign designating a historical individual. The value of Chaucer’s texts thus lies not in their authorship, but in how well they speak to the courtly, political, and religious concerns of Henry and his court. Content, not authorship, makes the works valuable, as the prefatory poems show by highlighting the thematic content of Chaucer’s works rather than the situation surrounding the works’ creation. The same valorization of content means that Thynne need not omit texts because of their authorship. The grounds for eligibility are textual content, so Henryson and Gower may appear unabashed. Thynne’s edition then re-creates Chaucer not by situating his works in relation to him and to his history, but by selecting texts that speak to contemporary social, political, and religious concerns and by presenting them in a manner that emphasizes their dialogue among themselves and their resonance with the central issues of the readers’ day. The texts are to be appreciated for what they say, not for who wrote them.

John Stowe issued his edition of Chaucer’s works in 1561. His recreation of Chaucer reiterates some of the strong textual focus found in Thynne’s, but also reflects a stronger interest in, and concern with, the author underlying the texts presented. Essentially, Stowe attempts to communicate Chaucer to his audience by presenting a tightly knit body of texts valorized for both their content and their authorship. Thynne’s attention to the details of textual deployment reappears, but with it comes a decreased foregrounding of contemporary political concerns and an increased concern with the accurate ascription of authorship, although we still have not reached the point at which non-Chaucerian elements are deemed unworthy of inclusion.

The title page of the Stowe Chaucer at Notre Dame (see fig. 2) announces the volume as *The woorkes of Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed, with divers addicions, whiche were never in printe before: With the siege and destruccion of the worthy citee of Thebes, compiled by Jhon Lidgate, Monke of Berie. As in the table more plainly dooeth appere*.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup>Chaucer, 1532, preface.

<sup>47</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Woorkes of Geffray Chaucer newlie printed with divers addicions, whiche were never in printe before: With the siege and destruccion of the worthy citee of Thebes compiled by Jhon Lidgate*, ed. John Stowe (London, 1561). All references to the Stowe Chaucer are to this edition and are indicated by folio number where possible. According to Derek Brewer’s unpaginated introduction to his facsimile, editions of Stowe with this title page belong to the second issue of 1561 and should not have any of the woodcuts included in the first issue’s presentation of the *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*. The Notre Dame edition is an anomaly, however, since it does contain both this title page and the Canterbury woodcuts. Reinforcement of the title page and prologue leaves may, however, suggest addition of these anomalous illustrations subsequent to original publication. According to Brewer, the two issues (which both date from 1561) differ primarily in the matter of these woodcut illustrations

As the title makes clear, the inclusion of non-Chaucerian elements in this text is not something to be ashamed of; rather, it is something to be trumpeted as a selling point of the text. As in Thynne, texts appear to be valorized for themselves rather than for their Chaucerian authorship. This is not to say, however, that Chaucer is not present in this title page. Below the words appears a coat of arms surmounted by a knight's visor and, above that, a unicorn's head. The knight and the unicorn bring to mind nobility and aristocracy and thereby announce the instantiation in this text of the courtly and aristocratic literature associated with Chaucer in Thynne's re-creation of him. The coat of arms below these heads, though, is an interesting revision of that idea. It consists of a shield divided into six sections by a central vertical line intersected by parallel diagonal lines descending from the top left to the bottom right of the shield. The sections of shield created by these lines are shaded alternately so that there are three shaded sections and three unshaded sections. This, according to the herald cited in Speght's 1602 edition, constitutes Chaucer's coat of arms. Thus, in Stowe one finds Chaucer associated with nobility not only through his texts and their content (as in Thynne), but also through his personal coat of arms. The poet's body becomes a locus for his nobility and intrudes itself into Stowe's edition in a manner unthinkable in Thynne's. This intrusion of Chaucer as a bodily presence is further advanced by the motto inscribed beneath the coat of arms: "Vertue florisheth in Chaucer still / Though death of hym, hath wrought his will." The reference to Chaucer's death makes him an embodied presence, albeit a dead one. His works thus become implicated in a pictorial rhetoric of personal, authorial possession. The motto also implies a need to assert Chaucer's worth in the face of the progression of time. When focusing a presentation of Chaucer on textual contents and their relations to contemporary issues, such assertion is not necessary since Chaucer really does not figure as an embodied presence. Having embodied Chaucer, however, one is forced to defend the decision to reproduce his works centuries after his death. Thus, the motto stresses the continuing worth of Chaucer with the word "still," and this, in conjunction with the word "vertue," directs attention to the living textual remains of Chaucer as contrasted, in the next line, with his physical remains. Stowe's title page thus reasserts some of the text-focused principles of inclusivity found in Thynne, while simultaneously manifesting the body and person of the author in an unprecedented manner.

Among the illustrations within the body of Stowe's edition are two identical title pages, one introducing the *Canterbury Tales* and another the *Romaunt of the Rose* (see fig. 3). As in Thynne, the choice of works

and title pages (Chaucer, 1532, unpaginated introduction).

FIG. 3. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

to be thus introduced probably signifies a valorization of them. Unlike Thynne, however, the illustrations on the title page are perhaps more significant than the works designated. These two pages depict pictorially the passage of the crown to Henry VIII through the descendants both of John, duke of Lancaster, and Edmund, duke of York. A motif of climbing roses charts Henry's descent, on the left side of the text's title, from John of Gaunt (bottom left) and, on the right side of the text's title, from Edmund of York (bottom right). The portraits closest to the title on either side are kings from the respective families, while other important descendants are pushed to the outer edges of the page, away from Chaucer's titles. The title is surmounted by the portraits of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York and, ultimately, Henry VIII. According to Gabrielle Spiegel, "a medieval genealogy displays a family's intention to affirm and extend its place in political life."<sup>48</sup> In Stowe's case, however, given that the genealogies culminate in Henry VIII rather than Elizabeth I, the genealogy seems to display an intention to relate Chaucer's works to contemporary political life in a manner rather more indirect than Thynne's strongly political prefatory material. The genealogies do subtly reaffirm Elizabeth's right to rule by reaffirming her father's right to do so. They do not, however, constitute a direct intervention in, or commentary on, the issue of her right to rule as related to the preceding rights of her half-siblings or to her religious stance. The genealogies do, however, cast an interesting light on Chaucer's interaction with politics both personally, and posthumously through his texts. The Stowe genealogies depict the political and dynastic intrigues shaping English history from the point of Chaucer's personal interaction with them, as John of Gaunt's poetical servitor (consider, for example, the *Book of the Duchess*), to Chaucer's interaction with politics by way of his texts in Thynne's deeply politicized reading of them during Henry VIII's reign. This aspect of the genealogy relates to the concern with Chaucer's bodily presence evinced in the title page to the *Woorkes* as a whole. As Gabrielle Spiegel notes, genealogies "ground [time] in biology, transforming the connection between past and present into a real one, seminally imparted from generation to generation."<sup>49</sup> The genealogy of Chaucer's royal patrons, then, can be read as a depiction of time that relates Chaucer's recently patronized textual body to his original patronized physical body. The genealogy thus serves to vivify Chaucer by linking his historical existence to a recent manifestation of his textual existence. Stowe's illustrations once more instantiate Chaucer's physical presence while introducing the reader to the poet's

<sup>48</sup>Gabrielle Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22 (1983) 47.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 50.

textual remains.

The use of typeset in Stowe's edition can also be read as part of the attempt to reinscribe and identify Chaucer's status as author. In this book, Chaucer's texts and those of other writers anthologized with him are presented in the black-letter type used in the 1532 edition. This edition, however, usually prints Latin and French words, including the editorial "Incipit" and "Explicit" in roman font (see fig. 4).<sup>50</sup> Roman italic font is also used for parts of some titles. This mixture of fonts highlights both editorial intervention and diverse literary and linguistic influences. The *Woorkes* thus begins to acknowledge the different origins of voices appearing in the texts rather than subsuming these into one interlinked and monolithic black-letter utterance. Authorial presence makes itself felt by visual differentiation, and this in itself promotes a greater recognition of authorial production.

The prefatory material of Stowe's *Woorkes*, like the title pages, also acknowledges history, but here the acknowledgment is more concerned with Chaucer's texts than with his historical body. Rather than rewriting or replacing Thynne's prefatory materials, Stowe retains them intact with a few minor spelling changes. Chaucer's texts are thus once more introduced with reference to their political, social, and moral contents. In this manner, Stowe enacts a certain veneration of his editorial predecessors. While his edition may not foreground textual content to the same extent that Thynne's does, by retaining Thynne's preface Stowe acknowledges the validity of his predecessor's approach. He also enshrines, as Thynne's illustrations do, the material history of the *Woorkes* as an object worthy of readerly perusal. Including Thynne's prefatory material also allows Stowe to show a venerable royal history of Chaucerian editing, a history which complements his title page's emphasis on nobility and aristocracy. Thus, by incorporating Thynne's texts within his own, Stowe both furthers some of his emphases in re-creating Chaucer and acknowledges that, while his edition may introduce the historical figure of Chaucer as something for readers to consider, it also retains Thynne's focus on textual content.

The selection of texts added by Stowe to the *Woorkes* reflects these two different approaches to the re-creation of Chaucer.<sup>51</sup> First, as mentioned before, Stowe seems particularly interested in representing Chaucer's historical and authorial existence. This is entirely natural

<sup>50</sup>Chaucer, 1561, fol. 330v. Similarly, Latin phrases in *Boetius* appear in roman font, as on fol. 235r.

<sup>51</sup>I should point out that each of the books described in this paper builds onto its predecessors. An edition is defined not by how it rewrites its predecessor, but by what it adds to the core of texts presented by a previous editor. Addition, not change of selection, is the sixteenth-century policy.

FIG. 4. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

given Stowe's extensive efforts to track down Chaucerian material for his edition. Anne Hudson, for example, writes that "it is plain that a number of important Chaucer manuscripts passed through his hands and that Stowe came to a knowledge of Chaucer's works that far outreached the limited grasp of that early edition [1532]."<sup>52</sup> Two of his additions, in particular, reflect this interest in Chaucer as author. First, before the colophon indicating his new additions to the *Woorkes*, Stowe presents *A Balade in the Praise and Commendacion of Master Geffray Chaucer, for his Golden Eloquence*. This poem praises Chaucer in terms and images reminiscent of Thynne (albeit slightly more author-centered), calling Chaucer "The noble Rhetorician, and Poet of great Britaine / That worthy was, the laurer of Poetry to have."<sup>53</sup> The poem clearly differs from Thynne's vision, however, in its opening reference to "Master Geffray Chaucer, that now lithe in grave,"<sup>54</sup> a reference which, like other components of Stowe's text, reiterates and affirms Chaucer's corporeal existence. With this poem, Stowe again foregrounds Chaucer's physical body and venerates Chaucer the man in a manner unseen in Thynne. Stowe also adds, at the end of his main section of additions, *Chaucer's Woordes unto his owne Scrivener*. This poem provides a new vision of Chaucer as someone with a personal stake in what is being done with his writings. It is impossible to ignore the claim of authorship inherent in the appeal to Adam "to write more true" and to cease his scribal "negligence and rape" when copying the narrator's texts.<sup>55</sup> These two additions, then, reflect Stowe's increased interest in the notion of Chaucer as a once physical writing presence.

This rising interest in Chaucer the man is balanced, however, with a continued definition of Chaucer by particular thematic content. Among the works added to this edition are texts such as *A Balade Made by Chaucer, Teaching what is Gentilnes, or Whom is Worthy to be Called Gentil*.<sup>56</sup> As in Thynne's edition, "Chaucer" signifies guidance about how to behave in public and in private.<sup>57</sup> A number of texts discussing love are also added, such as the *Courte of Love* and *The .x. Commandementes of Love*, further promulgating one of Thynne's major definitions of Chaucer. Most interesting among the additions, though, is the highly touted *Siege and Destruction of Thebes* by John Lydgate. Given Stowe's extensive research into Chaucer and his manifest interest

<sup>52</sup>Hudson, "John Stow" in *Editing Chaucer*, 53.

<sup>53</sup>Chaucer, 1561, fol. 337v.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. 355v.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, fol. 340r.

<sup>57</sup>Seth Lerer discusses this use of Chaucer in "The Courtly Body and Late Medieval Culture," *The Book and the Body*, ed. Dolores Frese and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Notre Dame 1997) 80.

in Chaucer as physical author, it seems odd that he should willingly choose to append this piece, identified as written by another, to an edition of Chaucer. To be puzzled by this addition, though, is to assume that Stowe had completely abandoned the text-centered focus of Thynne; he had not.

*The Siege of Thebes* is a fascinating appropriation of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. In its prologue, the narrator meets up with the pilgrims as they rest at an inn in Canterbury, about to begin their homeward journey. The Host greets the narrator and offers him the opportunity to join their company. The narrator, explicitly identified as "Lidgate, / Monke of Burie,"<sup>58</sup> joins their company and tells the story of the siege and destruction of Thebes. The thematic links between this tale and Chaucer's oeuvre are many. Not only is it a version of the matter being read to Criseyde when Pandarus first comes to her to speak of Troilus,<sup>59</sup> but it is also a reference underlying Troilus's dream of the boar at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, as Cassandra makes clear by describing in her explication of the dream "how Tideus . . . / Unto the stronge citee of Thebes, / To cleyment kyngdom of the citee, wente."<sup>60</sup> The tale also fits its prologue's intervention into the *Canterbury Tales*. It narrates the history of the situation Theseus happens upon at the beginning of the *Knight's Tale* and frequently cites the *Knight's Tale* as a complementary narration. Thus, while the *Siege of Thebes* does not belong to the *Woorkes of Geffray Chaucer* in terms of authorial production, it most certainly does so in terms of content. Accordingly, this addition of Stowe's bears witness to his continued investment in the thematic principles governing Thynne's edition of Chaucer's *Workes* while he simultaneously develops the notion of Chaucer as authorial presence and historical personage.

The same appreciation of thematic content can be seen to underlie Stowe's ordering of elements within his edition of Chaucer. For example, like Thynne, Stowe alternates works depicting a positive love relationship with those depicting a negative one. He prints *The Craft of Lovers*, the story of a successful pursuit of a lady, and adds immediately following it *A Balade* depicting the woes that await such successful pursuits once the lovers marry and women's "cruel hartes beginneth to awake."<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Stowe's placement of the *Siege and Destruction of Thebes* at the very end of his edition constitutes effective textual crafting. The text and tale which opened the *Woorkes* proper are here

<sup>58</sup>Chaucer, 1561, fol. 356r.

<sup>59</sup>Criseyde and her maidens "Herden a mayden reden hem the geste / Of the siege of Thebes" (*Riverside* 2, lines 83–84).

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 5, lines 1485–1487.

<sup>61</sup>Chaucer, 1561, fol. 341v.

revisited as characters in the *Knight's Tale* and the larger *Canterbury Tales* reappear to close a text representing their creator anew to a group of readers remote from him in time. Textual content again unifies the portrait of Chaucer.

Thus, in Stowe's edition of Chaucer's *Woorkes* "Chaucer" signifies both a flesh-and-blood historical personage and textual content. Stowe introduces in his title page and in some textual additions a notion of Chaucer as historically-located personage. He also, however, reenacts Thynne's definition of Chaucer as a collection of texts addressing certain thematic issues. For this reason Stowe retains works previously attributed to Chaucer now shown to be Lydgate's while deliberately increasing the number of works by this author and announcing them as selling points on his title page. For Stowe, then, re-creating Chaucer means introducing the notion of a historically-located author while simultaneously maintaining and developing the notion that reading Chaucer's *Woorkes* is both a perusal of certain content matter and an experience of intertextual dialogue and communication. All told, thematic coherence and unity are still a matter of content, but with Stowe the path is also opened for authorial attribution to become the defining and unifying characteristic of a collection of Chaucer's *Woorkes*.

Thomas Speght's editions of Chaucer constitute an interesting comment on canon formation when juxtaposed against those of his editorial predecessors. In Speght, the balance shifts from centering the canon on textual content to centering the canon on the person of Chaucer as author. Admittedly, Speght does not use this shift in emphasis as a reason to pare down his matter. He maintains the texts of previous editions as he has received them, thereby revealing his refusal to abandon completely the editorial principles of his predecessors. Nevertheless, Speght's own additions to the edition indicate a belief that to re-create Chaucer for his audience, Speght must situate the poet historically. His additions also manifest a refusal to let the texts speak for themselves. As Chaucer's texts become the physical products of a historical personage, they no longer have merit in and of their own textual content, but must be shown to have withstood the test of time and to be worthy of reader investment in 1602.

The title page opening Speght's 1602 edition reflects his larger editorial principles. Framed by an archway,<sup>62</sup> the following title appears:

<sup>62</sup>Tongiorgi Tomasi notes that since title pages serve as a "metaphysical entryway into the text," their "composition [in the sixteenth century] frequently took on the aspect and typology of a door or triumphal arch, one introducing the reader into entrance halls or mysterious spaces behind which were concealed a wealth of knowledge, curious adventures, and the realm of the unknown." See "Image, Symbol and Word on the Title Pages and Frontispieces of Scientific Books from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *Word and Image* 4 (1988) 373.

*The Workes Of Our Ancient and learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed* (see fig. 5).<sup>63</sup> One of the most noticeable things that Speght has done is to add the two adjectives “ancient” and “learned.” These words, however, are not intended to describe Chaucer’s works, but rather the poet himself. As Derek Pearsall notes, “‘Ancient and learned’ are epithets newly applied to Chaucer, and the whole emphasis of the title page . . . is to present Chaucer as a ‘classic,’ a writer of established reputation, a man of learning, whose writings deserve the interpretive apparatus appropriate to his stature.”<sup>64</sup> As Pearsall states, the focus is on the man, not on the texts contained within, in contrast to Stowe’s proud annunciation of the *Siege and Destruction of Thebes* in his 1561 title page. The words “ancient and learned” also reflect a desire to emphasize Chaucer’s historicity, perhaps even to exaggerate it so as to inscribe Chaucer among the classical authors so revered at this time. This desire may also shape the title page’s use of image. The title and other written matter are contained within an archway, the two columns of which consist of two classically-draped women, one of whom carries a sword and the scales of balance, and the other of whom leans on a T-shaped support while carrying a book in her right hand and a pouch slung over her right arm. Cherubs are set both below and above the women at the ends of the columns, and the archway is covered over with clusters of grapes. Below the archway, however, appears a rather chilling reminder of Chaucer’s bodily presence: a teardrop shaped space is held in place by the heads of two goats, and in this “teardrop” are a skull and crossbones with a snake entwined among the crossbones. This motif accords well with the activities of the two cherubs at the bottom of the columns, one of whom plays with an hourglass and the other of whom plays with apples and a snake. These two pictorial references, one to the passage of time and the other to the Fall, which brought death to humanity, appropriately frame the bones acknowledging mortality. As Tongiorgi Tomasi notes, “in the pediment[s] of sixteenth-century title pages] were inserted elements which alluded, in one way or another, to the contents of the book, to its author or to the person to whom the work was dedicated.”<sup>65</sup> Here, any allusion to the author is a rather chilling reference to his corporeal existence, entirely in keeping with Speght’s renewed focus on the author.

<sup>63</sup>Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Workes of Our Ancient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed*, ed. Thomas Speght (London 1602), title page. All quotations from the Speght Chaucer are to this edition and will be indicated by folio number where possible.

<sup>64</sup>Pearsall, “Thomas Speght,” *Editing Chaucer*, 75.

<sup>65</sup>Tomasi, “Image, Symbol and Word,” 373.

FIG. 5. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

The title page's list of items added to the 1602 edition also reflects this awareness of Chaucer's bodily existence and the concomitant recognition of the passage of time. Speght lists the following selling points:

1. In the life of Chaucer many things inserted.
2. The whole worke by old Copies reformed.
3. Sentences and Proverbes noted.
4. The Signification of the old and obscure words prooved: also Characters shewing from what Tongue or Dialect they be derived.
5. The Latine and French, not Englished by Chaucer, translated.
6. The Treatise called *Iacke Upland*, against Friars: and Chaucers A. B. C. called *La Priere de nostre Dame*, at this Impression added.

This list constitutes an interesting comment on Speght's editorial policies. The new focus on Chaucer's body is clear from the first point. The concomitant need to address the passage of time, which arises with acknowledgment of the author's historical body, is evident in the announced reclamation of "old and obscure words" and in the use of "old Copies" to make sure that the latest edition accurately reinscribes the product of many years ago. Two other points, however, reaffirm Speght's policy of not completely breaking with his sixteenth-century editorial predecessors. First, the point that "Sentences and Proverbes [are] Noted" rearticulates Thynne's emphasis on "moral" Chaucer, the Chaucer defined by texts that offer readers precepts by which to live. Speght uses little fists with pointing fingers to highlight these precepts and ensure no reader misses them.<sup>66</sup> The sixth point, too, marks a return to the definition of Chaucer by textual content. *Jack Upland*<sup>67</sup> and an alphabetical *Prière de nostre Dame* reflect and reinscribe Thynne's presentation of Chaucer as a religious and reform-minded poet. Speght's title page thus bears witness to the two trends dictating his editorial policy, but, as we shall see, the instantiation of the poet begun on this title page becomes the keynote for Speght's edition as a whole.

The other illustration of note in Speght's edition is the pictorial representation of "The Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer" in his prefatory ma-

<sup>66</sup>For a detailed discussion of Speght's use of these fists in *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Clare R. Kinney, "Thomas Speght's Renaissance Chaucer and the *solaas of sentence* in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainsville 1998) 66–84.

<sup>67</sup>It is interesting to note that Speght details the potential links between the A. B. C. and Chaucer in the table and in his argument to that text, but that he makes no explicit claim to Chaucerian authorship of *Jack Upland* in either the title page or the argument to that text. Perhaps Speght had doubts about identifying this work (now considered not by Chaucer) as a Chaucerian piece. For current identification, see Chaucer, 1532, unpaginated introduction.

terial (see fig. 6). This illustration reflects Speght's desire to discuss, and foreground, the physical person of Chaucer. It also testifies to his continuation of Stowe's presentation of Chaucer's nobility as both a biological and a literary fact. Dominating this page is a full-length portrait of Chaucer, flanked on the right by his descendants and on the left by the descendants of John of Gaunt, who is presented as Chaucer's brother-in-law.<sup>68</sup> Royal figures, such as Henry IV and Henry VII, thus complement and balance Chaucer's own descendants. The specifically Chaucerian progeny, however, are not without nobility of their own. Beginning with Chaucer's marriage to the daughter of a knight, this text charts the rise of Chaucer's family so that Chaucer's grand-daughter is identified as Alice, countess of Salisbury and duchess of Suffolk; and the genealogy culminates in Edmund de la Pole, duke of Suffolk. Here, then, Chaucer becomes the root of an illustrious corporeal genealogy. In addition, the genealogy of kings and patrons represented in Stowe's inner title pages becomes Chaucer's own genealogy. The poet is fully inscribed as noble and aristocratic in his own right, as the presence of over forty coats of arms makes clear. Indeed, to ensure recognition of Chaucer's nobility, his portrait is framed in the upper corners by the arms identified by Speght as his.<sup>69</sup> The literary aspect of Chaucer is not entirely forgotten however. It, too, is rooted in corporeal history by the capsule identifying the picture as "the true portraiture of Geffray Chaucer the famous English poet as by Thomas Occleve is described who lived in his time, and was his Scholar." Thus biological offspring are displayed around a portrait made by one of Chaucer's literary offspring. As a whole, the illustration strongly asserts Speght's focus on Chaucer as a man. Rather than "an ornament of the English tonge," here we get a flesh-and-blood man whose nobility inheres not only in his textual matter, but in his biological matter as well.

This illustration of Chaucer is part of a lengthy set of prefatory matter concerned primarily with re-creating Chaucer as a physical, historical figure. Speght devotes much effort to this re-creation. He includes for his reader's perusal "So much as we can find by Herauldes, Chronicles, and Records of his [Chaucer's] Countrey, Parentage, Education, Mariage, Children, Revenues, Service, Rewards, Friends, Bookes, [and] Death."<sup>70</sup> Although his information "has been almost entirely

<sup>68</sup>See Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 50–51, for a discussion of Chaucer's marriage and the evidence for the Payne Roet connection between the two men.

<sup>69</sup>The reproduction of this genealogy could not capture the shading of Chaucer's coat of arms, but the appropriate shading is clear in the original.

<sup>70</sup>Chaucer, 1602. Because this prefatory matter is not paginated, I indicate the location of quotations by reference to the title of the section in which they appear. This set of words, however, is the title of the section detailing Chaucer's personal history, and therefore I cannot cite its section.

FIG. 6. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

superseded by later scholarship,”<sup>71</sup> it should be noted that Speght, helped in his researches by Stowe and others, did reveal for the first time intriguing information about Chaucer’s life, such as the fact that “Master Buckley did see a Record . . . where Geffrey Chaucer was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscane frier in Fleetstreet.”<sup>72</sup> As in “The Progenie,” however, Speght’s discussion of Chaucer emphasizes Chaucer’s nobility. Speght, for example, avows that “the Role of Battle Abbey affirmeth Chaucer to have come in with the Conqueror” and addresses the troubling fact of Chaucer’s immediately mercantile parentage thus:

Now whether they were Merchants as some will have it . . . or whether they were of other calling, it is not much necessary to search but wealthy no doubt they were, and of good account in the Commonwealth, who brought up their Sonne in such sort, that both he was thought fitte for the Court at home, and to be employed for matters of state in forraigne countreies.<sup>73</sup>

As far as Speght is concerned, Chaucer is a member of the court, and that in itself shows his inherent nobility, however mercantile his origins might have been. Evidently, Speght is heavily invested in the notion of Chaucer’s historical existence, aristocratic connections, and physical body. Speght does not, however, definitively separate this interest from an investment in Chaucer’s texts as defined in the sixteenth century. For example, Speght refutes certain scholars’ ascriptions of Chaucer’s birthplace to regions outside of London by pointing out that Chaucer’s “own” work, the *Testament of Love*, identifies his birthplace as London. This text, however, is not by Chaucer, but by Thomas Usk (see Skeat xxxviii–xl as well as the text’s own words);<sup>74</sup> and so Speght’s faith in the text is misplaced, a succinct illustration of the problems involved in switching from a canon defined by textual content to one defined by authorial identification and an abiding interest in the author’s historical situation.

As Chaucer’s body intrudes more and more into the presentation of his texts, a need arises to address the texts’ concomitant historical specificity and defend their continued value. This defense takes two forms: scholarly exposition and evaluation of the texts, and the representation of reading such matter as an intensive and learned exercise. The prefa-

<sup>71</sup>Pearsall, “Thomas Speght,” 78.

<sup>72</sup>Chaucer, 1602, “Education” section of prefatory matter.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., “His Parentage” section of prefatory matter.

<sup>74</sup>The text refers to the author of “the book of Troylus” as a different person from the narrator of *The Testament*, and claims “his noble sayings can I not amend” (Chaucer, 1602, fol. 301r).

tory matter exemplifies these two methods of defense. First, Speght includes Francis Beaumont's letter "To His Very Loving and Assured Good Friend Mr. Thomas Speght" (henceforth identified as "To His Very . . .") in the prefatory matter.<sup>75</sup> Beaumont presents a venerable evaluation of Chaucer, and addresses two concerns: Chaucer's language and his "incivilitie." Beaumont defends Chaucer's language by quoting Horace's discussion of the fact that "no man can so write, as that all his words may remaine currant many yeeres."<sup>76</sup> Beaumont thus uses Chaucer's historical specificity to defend the language of his texts. Beaumont also, however, points out that such value lies in Chaucer's language that great contemporary poets like Spenser are working to bring it back into usage. Beaumont thus establishes Chaucer's defense on grounds both of historical specificity and present-day veneration by other poets. In both cases, the body of an author lies at the root of the defense. The same is true of Beaumont's defense of Chaucer's "incivilitie." First, he notes that "incivilitie" characterizes the writing of other esteemed ancient authors such as Plautus and Terence. These poets thus authorize Chaucer's use of the same rhetorical figure. Beaumont then attributes Chaucer's incivility to a "due observation of *Decorum*," necessary to the faithful reproduction of "all Englishmens humors living in those daies."<sup>77</sup> He defends Chaucer's texts by reference to the historical situation of their author. Truly, the figure of the author is key here. Finally, Beaumont concludes by weighing Chaucer against the venerated classical writers, noting that Chaucer is more original in that the "devise of his Canterbury pilgrimages is merely his owne," and not a reformulation of specific generic characteristics.<sup>78</sup> Beaumont thus defends Chaucer primarily by foregrounding his existence as a historically specific man and by asserting his worth as an original writer.

The other defense of Chaucer's texts offered by Speght involves foregrounding the individual enterprise involved in getting this long-dead poet to speak to one as a reader. The implication is that denigrating Chaucer is the resort of the inept reader, that an acquirable expertise will solve anyone's problems. This attitude can be seen in Speght's note "To the Readers" in which he announces the need "of some things [to] . . . advertise the Readers." Among these Speght includes the need to be aware that Chaucer uses double negation: "It is his manner likewise,

<sup>75</sup>According to Derek Pearsall, "This is not Francis Beaumont the dramatist or his father of the same name but the unrelated Francis Beaumont who was at Peterhouse from 1565 to 1573, and who later became master of Charterhouse (d. 1624)." See Pearsall, "Thomas Speght," 266 n. 6.

<sup>76</sup>Chaucer, 1602, "To His Very . . ." section of prefatory matter.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

imitating the Greeks, by two negatives to cause greater negation: as I ne said none ill.”<sup>79</sup> Speght thus implies that the intelligent reader will recognize these variations as ancient and learned practices. Speght makes his appeal to the reader’s involvement and ability explicit, however, when he address the issue of “unequall measures” by pointing out that “yet a skillful Reader, that can scan them in their nature, shall find it otherwise.”<sup>80</sup> In a similar vein, the effort of recovering Chaucer and learning to read him accurately is presented as a noble task involving the interaction and gratitude of the poet. For example, the prefatory poem, *The Reader to Geffrey Chaucer*, quotes Chaucer describing the one who rescued him from obscurity as “The selfe same man, who hath no labor spar’d / To helpe what time, and writers had defaced.” The editorial efforts of Speght, who re-creates Chaucer and learns to read him most accurately, are thus held up as a model approach to be imitated. The audience’s role in creating a text is emphasized, and reading Chaucer becomes an intellectually challenging and praiseworthy feat in itself. The textual difficulty created by time becomes a sign of honor and skill and the ability to interact personally with the poet. Chaucer’s texts are defended by valorizing the demands they make on the body of the reader.

The print components of the edition reflect this notion too. The title page and prefatory material all appear in a clear and easy-to-read roman font. The black-letter, however, still appears when the body of the edition is reached. While folios are headed in clear roman fonts, their contents remain in the more difficult-to-read black-letter. Editorial and authorial voices are clearly differentiated as titles and editorial arguments written in English appear in roman font, while the older works remain in black-letter (see fig. 7).<sup>81</sup> Thus, recovering Chaucer’s texts and voice is again presented as a challenge to the reader. The black-letter also, however, emphasizes the editorial inheritance underlying Speght. While the focus announced in the opening matter has clearly shifted since Thynne’s time, the texts’ font links them to previous editions and to the long history of the texts’ existence. Their material history is once again an object of perusal. Admittedly, this does reinscribe some valorization of the text in itself; but, given the prefatory material, the black-letter font seems more to contribute to an increased awareness of historical difference, an awareness emphasized, if not created, by Speght’s focus on his author.

The main body of Speght’s edition includes some significant additions to preceding editions. The most noticeable change is that texts are

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., “To the Readers” section of prefatory matter.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., fol. 347r.

FIG. 7. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Special Collections, University Libraries of Notre Dame.

no longer allowed to speak for themselves, to enter into an unmediated dialogue with each other. Instead, most texts are introduced by an editorial argument designed to present readers with a summary of the contents, sources, and significance of the various pieces. For example, Speght's argument to the *General Prologue* of the *Canterbury Tales* states that here Chaucer depicts "all the people of the land" and "shew[s] the state of the Church, the Court, and Countrey."<sup>82</sup> Speght thus indicates the contents of the text and their historical context. He also explains why Chaucer describes the tellers of the various tales. He notes one reason is so "that the Reader seeing the qualitie of the person, may judge of his speech accordingly: wherein Chaucer most excellently kept that *decorum*, which Horace requireth in that behalfe."<sup>83</sup> Speght then proceeds to claim that Chaucer also includes the *Prologue* "to show how, that even in our language, that may be performed for description, whiche the Greeke and Latine Poets in their tongues have done at large."<sup>84</sup> Speght's argument thus summarizes the contents of the *Prologue* and argues its significance in terms of its author's relationship to social and literary history. Chaucer now has an interpreter to assist in his recovery for readers. In addition, Chaucer himself becomes as much an object of explication as his tales. Speght notes that the poet is "of greater learning than the most" and that "he was a man of rare conceit and of great reading."<sup>85</sup> Once more, Chaucer the author is the center of attention. Speght's additions thus contribute to a construction of reading as an enterprise whose end reward will be not moral understanding, or an appreciation of love, but an understanding of the author and his merits. The text and its contents have been subsumed into an effort of editorial recovery rooted in making a poet come to life.

While the arguments are certainly the most innovative and noticeable interpolations into the body of the *Workes*, it should be noted that Speght does not completely break with his predecessors and their presentations of Chaucer. To begin with, he retains all the texts included by them so that the reader still encounters the same poems, even those explicitly identified as written by Gower and Lydgate. Speght does, however, extend Stowe's identifications of non-Chaucerian works so that, for example, Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* is identified with its rightful author. This emphasis on rightful attribution reflects Speght's increased investment in issues of authorial production. Speght also, however, incorporates his predecessors' texts into his own, using Stowe's title page to introduce the body of his edition and Thynne's

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., fol. 1v.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.

preface as the first matter contained in the body. Speght thus retains the *Workes*' textual history and offers to his readers a vision of the text-centered notion of Chaucer. Nevertheless, whether this is done in affirmation of this text-centered view or as further evidence of historical specificity to be overcome is unclear.

Speght does, however, unequivocally adopt previous editors' commitment to textual expansion of the *Workes*. His two editions add four texts to the Chaucer canon, three of which additions can be seen to stem from a notion of Chaucer's texts as embodiments of certain thematic concerns. For example, one of the additions, the *Floure and the Leafe*, reflects an engagement both with the "moral" Chaucer, the notion of Chaucer as a source of wisdom about how to live one's life, and with the notion of Chaucer as a poet of love. This poem recounts a vision of two courtly groups, one of which reveres the flower of a daisy and the other of which reveres its leaf. The argument, and a character in the poem, point to the greater worth of those who worship the leaf since "They which honour the Floure, a thing fading with every blast, are such as looke after beautie and worldly pleasure. But they that honour the Leafe, which abideth with the root, notwithstanding the frosts and winter stormes, are they which follow vertue and during qualities, without regard of worldly respects."<sup>86</sup> This poem evidently fits the thematic Chaucerian model established by Thynne. Two other additions, *A. B. C.*, or *La Prière de nostre Dame* and *Iack Upland*, reflect Speght's adherence to notions of Chaucer as the author of religious texts venerating the holy family (note the inclusion of *A Balade of our Lady* in Thynne's and Stowe's editions) or condemning institutional clerical abuses. *A. B. C.*, with lines such as "But mercy Lady at the great assise, / When we shall come before the high Justise,"<sup>87</sup> fits the first model. *Iack Upland*, with lines such as "Why have ye exempt you from our kings lawes"<sup>88</sup> purportedly addressed to "anti-christ and his disciples,"<sup>89</sup> certainly fits the second model of Chaucer as "an early English herald of the Reformation."<sup>90</sup> Speght's additions thus continue to be shaped by a thematic definition of "Chaucer" based on the content of "his" texts.

This is not to say, however, that Speght's investment in Chaucer as author did not also dictate his choice of additions. His argument introducing *A. B. C.* identifies it as "made, as some say, at the request of Blanch, duchesse of Lancaster, as a praier for her privat use, being a

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., fol. 344r.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., fol. 347r.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., fol. 349r.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., fol. 348r.

<sup>90</sup>Heffernan, "Aspects of the Chaucerian Apocrypha," 165.

woman in her religion very devout.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Speght presents his fourth addition, *Chaucers Dreame* (now known as *The Isle of Ladies*), as

a covert report of the mariage of Iohn of Gaunt the kinges sonne, with Blanch the daughter of Henry Duke of Lancaster, who after long love . . . were in the end by consent of friends happily married . . . Here also is showed Chaucers match with a certain Gentlewoman, who although she was a stranger, was notwithstanding so well liked of the Lady Blanch, and her Lord, as Chaucer himselfe also was, that gladly they concluded a marriage betweene them.<sup>92</sup>

The focus on Chaucer as historical person certainly manifests itself clearly here, in a manner foreign to Thynne or Stowe.

Speght’s ordering, too, reflects a growing concern with the notion of Chaucer as author and historical person. As mentioned before, most texts are introduced with clear assertions about their contents, sources and significance as texts by a historically located author. Similarly, Stephan Surigonus’s Latin epitaph to Chaucer, used to close all editions of Chaucer (or at least their Chaucer sections) from Caxton to Stowe, is now moved to Speght’s introductory matter as a piece of information about Chaucer’s life, the story of which introduces Speght’s reader to Chaucer’s texts. Speght’s presentation of elements thus reflects an increased prioritization of the authorial persona.

Speght’s concluding matter also reflects this prioritization. He includes in his appendices elements which demonstrate the veracity of his title page presentation of Chaucer as an “Ancient and learned English Poet.” For example, as Speght’s etymological glossary assists readers in their navigation of Chaucer’s texts, it also reminds them of the distant origins of these texts during the lifetime of their author. Speght also includes lists of “The French and Latine in Chaucer, translated” and of “The Authors cited by G. Chaucer in his works, by name declared.” These items clearly serve to demonstrate (and emphasize) Chaucer’s learnedness to Speght’s readers. Speght’s investment in the figure of the author is still, however, not monolithic; he also includes in his appendices a list of works by John Lydgate. Speght thus manifests his refusal to abandon the editions of his predecessors despite their inclusion of non-Chaucerian texts. Indeed, he too prints the *Siege and Destruction of Thebes* as Stowe did; and this surely testifies to an abiding, albeit diminished, investment in the inclusion of texts for their Chaucerian content.

All told, Speght’s method of recovering Chaucer and re-creating him

<sup>91</sup>Chaucer, 1602, fol. 347r.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., fol. 334r.

for his readers is the most author-focused of those studied here. In both his prefatory and poetic matter Speght devotes great effort to expounding the nobility of Chaucer as a person, the historical rootedness of the man, and the value of the poet to English culture. Speght also emphasizes the process of reading as a method of re-creating for oneself an interaction with Chaucer as historical person. For example, his argument to *Chaucer's Dreame*, and his inclusion of the poem *The Reader to Geffrey Chaucer* both emphasize the presence of the man in the texts being perused. Less attention is lavished on the textual definition of Chaucer, although this still manifests at various moments, while more is lavished on the biological and historical definition (note "The Progenie"). Reading Chaucer thus becomes, in Speght, a challenge to recognize and appreciate the historical roots of the texts in their author.

Editions of Chaucer's *Works* during the sixteenth century reflect a gradual transition from text-based definitions of what constitutes Chaucer to author-focused ones. Chaucer is re-created first by Thynne as a political, social and religious commentator on the issues of Thynne's day, whose commentary originates from his texts. As a result, Thynne pays careful attention to details of textual arrangement while unabashedly including works by authors other than Chaucer when these can be defined through their content as "Chaucer." John Stowe, editing Chaucer in 1561, can be seen to develop this text-centered definition of Chaucer as content matter rather than biological matter. He explicitly advertises his non-Chaucerian inclusions as selling points in the *Woorkes of Geffray Chaucer* and arranges these in a significant manner for his readers' perusal. Stowe also, on the other hand, manifests a growing interest in Chaucer's own history, including the poet's coat of arms in the book and titling some poems with a genealogy that links Chaucer's patron to the 1532 edition of Chaucer. This growing interest in Chaucer as a historically-located poet reaches full articulation in Thomas Speght's 1602 edition of the *Workes*, where the texts are introduced by an extensively researched biography of Chaucer. Speght, as he focuses on the historical body of Chaucer, seems to have felt that with the passing of time the keys to understanding Chaucer must be sought in his personal history rather than in his texts' connections to present-day politics or to other medieval texts. The sixteenth century as a whole thus edits Chaucer in a manner that incarnates Seth Lerer's definitions of medieval (content-focused) and Renaissance (author-focused) methods of textual compilation. Indeed, Thynne, Stowe, and Speght chart the sixteenth century's shift from one method to another. Thynne's anonymity-creating emphasis on textual content, which locates a reader's recovery of Chaucer in his texts' relevance to her or his situation, is ultimately replaced by Speght's emphasis on the author as

the central component of his texts and the key to a reader's understanding of them.

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