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# Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print

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Even in the fifteenth century, Chaucer was seen by his countrymen as the preeminent English poet, the father, as Dryden was to call him in 1700, of English poetry.<sup>1</sup> Despite general agreement in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries about Chaucer's poetic preeminence, however, Thomas Speght's edition of Chaucer's *Works* (1598, STC 5077, 5078, 5079; 1602, STC 5080, 5081)<sup>2</sup> adds elaborate textual apparatus—illustrated frontispieces, life

1. Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Penn State Univ. Press, 2001), points out that "in the early fifteenth century" the father metaphor "was actually used by only one poet, Thomas Hoccleve" (p. 108): it is not used by Lydgate. In print the metaphor appears early with William Caxton in 1477, so that A. C. Spearing's claim that "the fatherhood of Chaucer was in effect the constitutive idea of the English poetic tradition" still has purchase (*Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985], p. 92, quoted in Knapp, p. 108, n. 5). In his influential book, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), especially Chapter 5, "At Chaucer's Tomb: Laureation and Paternity in Caxton's Criticism," pp. 147–75, Seth Lerer argues that print and editors efface Chaucer's fatherhood in favor of laureation to emphasize the role of an editor, rather than the (dead) poet, in the production of books by humanist editors. This essay qualifies that claim for the sixteenth century, arguing that the trope of living father Chaucer continues to appear in print to counteract print's commodified lifelessness and, especially in the last folio editions of his *Works*, to realign Chaucer's forced alliance with Tudor politics.

2. Alice Miskimin, "The 1598 Folio of Speght," in *The Renaissance Chaucer* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 250–55, and Derek Pearsall, "Thomas Speght, c. 1550–?" in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984), pp. 71–92. See also *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400–1602*, ed. Thomas Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1999); Kathleen Forni, *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Counterfeit Canon* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 2001); and Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial Souls: Reading Chaucer from Medieval to Postmodern* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Univ. Press, 2002).

For the purposes of this essay, I have consulted two early editions of Chaucer, both owned by the special collections department of the Knight Library, University of Oregon: PR 1850 1561, a second impression of the John Stow edition of 1561 of Chaucer's *Works*, STC 5076; and PR 1850 1687, a 1687 edition of John Speght's 1602 edition of Chaucer's *Works*, C3736. In his 1602 edition (STC 5080, 5081), Speght added some material to his 1598 edition (STC 5077, 5078, 5079): see Pearsall, "Thomas Speght," pp. 83–90, and also Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual* (New York: Macmillan, 1908), pp. 125–27. The 1687 edition reprints Speght's 1602 edition with some twenty-two lines added to the ends of *The Cook's Tale* and *The Squire's Tale* along with an "Advertisement" by "J. H." asserting the volume's quality, according to Pearsall, "Thomas Speght, c. 1550–?" p. 91, and Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual*, pp. 127–29. I thank special collections for their courtesy.

histories and genealogies, epistles and dedicatory poems—that insist on Chaucer’s literary value in a particular way: they use the tropes of Chaucer as father and as living presence to affirm Chaucer’s literary worth. These apparatus—or peritexts, to borrow Gerard Genette’s term<sup>3</sup>—invoke Chaucer’s living voice through dialogues and letters; their images picture him as if alive and situate his fatherhood, as well as his poetry, in the midst of Tudor politics. Many peritexts are new to Speght’s editions; others carry over from his editorial predecessors William Thynne (1532, STC 5068) and John Stow (1561, STC 5075, 5076). What prompts this expression of Chaucer as father and as living presence?

Seth Lerer has argued that a Chaucer made into (dead) artifact characterizes print editions of the poet’s works, such as Caxton’s from the fifteenth century; James Simpson uses Lerer’s argument to propose two tropes, “remembered presence” and “philological absence,” that control Chaucer’s reception between 1400 and 1550.<sup>4</sup> I counter that Chaucer’s editors and literary progeny throughout the sixteenth century make father Chaucer live to answer printed books’ loss of “aura,” as Walter Benjamin would term it.<sup>5</sup> Benjamin’s word “aura” treats film art and its attempts to recreate stage presence, but books and reading also involve presence and absence. A living father Chaucer participates in the “identifiable systemic links between texts, printed books, reading, mentalities, and wider consequences” that William St. Clair notes in his recent analysis of print

3. Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997). As Richard Macksey explains in the foreword, paratexts “compris[e] those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*), that mediate the book to the reader: titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, afterwords . . . the elements in the public and private history of the book” (p. xviii). Peritext includes “such elements as the title or the preface and sometimes elements inserted into the interstices of the text, such as chapter titles or certain notes” (p. 5). My argument about folio editions of Chaucer concerns dedications, a title page, an illustration, and poetry addressed to readers, hence “peritexts.” Paratexts as advertisements for authors and booksellers and their effects on the idea of an author have been treated for fifteenth- and sixteenth-century French texts by Cynthia Brown, *Poets, Patrons, and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1995).

4. James Simpson, “Chaucer’s Presence and Absence 1400–1550,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003), pp. 251–69. Relying on Lerer, Simpson delineates changes in the “literary system” (p. 261) that made Chaucer’s texts into “archeological remains” (p. 251): “By the 1520s Chaucer has, then, definitely gone, leaving only textual remains” (p. 267). As I hope to show, the trope of living father Chaucer modifies Simpson’s claims.

5. Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968), pp. 219–53: “aura is tied to presence” and “The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth, cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor” (p. 231). I thank my colleague Kathleen Karlyn for pointing me to Benjamin’s essay.

culture.<sup>6</sup> Books are, by the sixteenth century, part of “a new scheme of values concerning inanimate objects”:

by the end of the 16th century, an opposition between the material world and the realm of language and ideas that had been an extreme and radical position . . . two hundred years earlier had moved to the very heart of English cultural life.<sup>7</sup>

Images of and words about a living poet return materiality to language to reinvest lifeless print with material being’s “aura.” The trope of Chaucer’s living fatherhood apparent in both word and image in sixteenth-century printed books animates Chaucer’s presence. Benjamin’s concept of “aura” lets us understand the efforts printed books, especially print editions of Chaucer, make to revive him and animate his living presence.

Living father Chaucer, revived in books as a national figure to serve the dynastic needs of Henry VIII and “staged” in a bookish fashion during Elizabeth’s reign, answers the isolation, foreignness, and alienation that mechanical reproduction cannot avoid. A close look at the efforts of Chaucer’s various editors and sixteenth-century authors to present Chaucer as living and as father shows the ways these two tropes attempt to invest print with “presence” in time and space in order to counter its depreciation as commodity. Moreover, near the end of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, in an edition overloaded with multiple peritexts, John Speed’s pictorial figuration of Chaucer as father and living presence published in Speght’s edition of “The workes of our antient and learned English poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed” (1598) not only counters print’s dead, commodified nature but lets us read one of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* as an especially poignant antiauthoritarian plea. Through a long-standing identity of the poet with The Tale of Melibee, a living father Chaucer confronts autocratic rulership in anticipation of successive change—of rulers, readers, and books.

To support these claims I will first note the tropes of Chaucer’s father-

6. William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004): printed books fit “governing economic and intellectual property structures, financing, manufacturing, prices, access, and actual reading” (p. 439) which differ from those of manuscript culture. Other works on the idea of print include Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Print Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983); David Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1983); and Kevin Dunn, *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994). On medieval ideas of authorship, see *The Idea of the Vernacular*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park: Penn State Univ. Press, 1999), pp. 3–19, esp. “The Idea of an Author” (pp. 4–8) and “Textual Instability, Memory, and Vernacular Variance” (pp. 10–12).

7. John Hines, *Voices in the Past: English Literature and Archaeology* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 138. Both Hines and St. Clair note that, while relations between print and manuscript remain fluid at the beginning of the sixteenth century, lines harden during the sixteenth century.

hood and living presence in manuscripts and printed books, especially in two engravings included in editions of Chaucer's *Works* from the second half of the sixteenth century. After elaborating on the implications of the father/living presence trope for Chaucer's readers, I conclude with an against-the-grain reading of Chaucer's Tale of Melibee. This prose text, far from being a "retreat from poetry into staid secure prose,"<sup>8</sup> exploits the tropes of living father Chaucer, along with a nascent link between rhetoric and drama,<sup>9</sup> to body forth a critique of authoritarianism, even though literary redemption remains only a fond hope as the Tudor lineage, but not authoritarian regulation, meets its extinction.

## I

Fifteenth-century manuscripts attest that Chaucer's earliest acolytes used a number of expressions to denote Chaucer's preeminence as English poet, with "master" the special favorite.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hoccleve is the first to use the epithet "father" for Chaucer. In *The Regement of Princes* (1412), Hoccleve not only laments Chaucer's death, but imagines Chaucer speaking to him:

"Hoccleue, sone?" "I-wis, fadir, þat same."  
"Sone, I haue herd, or this, men speke of þe" . . .  
"O maister deere, and fadir reuerent!  
Mi maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence,  
Mirour of fructuous entendement,  
O, vniuersel fadir in science! . . .  
  
Mi dere maistir—god his soule quyte!—  
And fadir, Chaucer, fayne wolde han me taght;  
But I was dul, and lerned lite of naght."

8. Seth Lerer, *Courtly Letters in the Age of Henry VIII: Literary Culture and the Arts of Deceit* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), p. 196. Lerer details the Henrician court's manuscript culture, primarily coterie works that, in the case of Henry's love letters to Anne Boleyn, achieve an unlooked-for currency.

9. Hines, *Voices in the Past*, explains that "drama as a means of training and education . . . was a practical complement to the rhetorical training in dialectics through which medieval students had to develop their argumentative and analytical skills . . . the history of dramatic production in England for the most of the 16th century is consequently strongly marked by records of theatrical performances in schools . . . and at colleges" (p. 144).

10. Lydgate begins his ca. 1409 "Commendacioun of Chaucer" with "And eke my master Chauceris nowe is graue / The noble rethor Poete of breteine"; he repeats the epithet "master" for Chaucer in virtually every other English poem he wrote. In 1448 John Metham calls Chaucer "My mastyr Chauncerys"; George Ashby (ca. 1470) calls Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate "masters"; Henry Scogan begins a ca. 1407 poem with "My maister Chaucier." See Caroline Spurgeon, *500 Years of Chaucer Criticism*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1925), followed by Jackson Campbell Boswell and Sylvia Wallace Holton, *Chaucer's Fame in*

Hoccleve blends “master” with “father,” then repeats “master” twice more in the poem, while also at one point calling Chaucer “firste fyndere of our faire langage.” Indeed, *The Regement of Princes* uses an array of tropes—master, father, originator—to certify Chaucer’s preeminence, while the text’s dialogue form—Chaucer speaks to Hoccleve—revivifies the dead poet.

Three manuscripts of Hoccleve’s *Regement* add Chaucer’s image to Chaucer’s voice.<sup>11</sup> In London, British Library MS Harley 4866, a picture of the poet appears next to the following verses:

Alpogh his lyfe be queynt, þe resemblaunce  
Of him hap in me so fressh lyflynesse  
þat, to putte othir men in remembraunce  
Of his persone, I haue heere his lyknesse  
Do make, to þis ende in sothfastnesse,  
þat þei þat haue of him lest þought & mynde,  
By þis peynture may ageyn him fynde.<sup>12</sup>

The manuscript’s drawing of Chaucer points its finger at the word “likeness” while the lines credit Hoccleve’s living memory for the image’s lineaments. Chaucer’s pointing finger gently testifies to the image’s verisimilitude.

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*England: STC Chauceriana, 1475–1640* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2004). Boswell and Holton treat printed materials only, not manuscripts, but they have “checked every edition of every book to see if a reference to Chaucer is present and, if it is present, whether it has changed in any way” (p. xii). For the purposes of this paper, all references to manuscript material (pre-1475) come from Spurgeon. References to printed materials come from Boswell and Holton. On occasion, I have used the database *Early English Books Online*, <http://o-eebo.chadwyck.com.janus>, for references: footnotes indicate these citations. Both Spurgeon and Boswell and Holton arrange their entries chronologically. The reader may thus refer to either edition as appropriate by means of the year cited. Additional references to print sources other than Boswell and Holton, or manuscript sources not listed in Spurgeon, are cited in footnotes.

11. London, British Library MS Harley 4866; Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum and Library MS 1083/10; and BL MS Royal 17 D.vi; see Derek Pearsall, “The Chaucer Portraits,” Appendix 1 in *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 285–305. See also Michael Seymour, “Manuscript Portraits of Chaucer and Hoccleve,” *Burlington Magazine*, 124, no. 955 (October 1982), 618–23. Pearsall considers the Rosenbach portrait an eighteenth-century addition to the manuscript (p. 291). Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, pp. 21–28, evaluates the power of voice for the “imagined community” of Chaucer’s readers and scholars from the Renaissance to the late 1990s. While I differ from Trigg’s assessment of Chaucer’s living voice, her book has influenced my thinking about Chaucer’s “lively” appearance and his voice.

12. The image is reproduced in Seymour, “Manuscript Portraits,” p. 619; Pearsall, *Life*, p. 286; M. H. Spielmann, *The Portraits of Geoffrey Chaucer* (London: Kegan Paul, 1900), p. 7; and as a line drawing in Spurgeon, *Chaucer Criticism*, I, 22. Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, treats the image of Chaucer in tandem with the “famous picture of Chaucer” pointing to his name in the rubric of the Ellesmere *Tale of Melibee* and calls it a “narrating presence” (p. 50). See also Knapp, *Bureaucratic Muse*, pp. 104–22, and Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer’s English* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), p. 12, on the word “finder” that exercises an “Hocclevean arc toward the infinite” to escape the confines of language.

militude, but it also, in indicating the word “likeness,” recalls the image’s representational nature. Pictures may gesture at life, but at the same time they remain pictures. Still, so self-conscious an image as Hoccleve’s of Chaucer, joining picture and text, indicates the protean relationship between “figured objects and people” that Hoccleve uses: he expects his readers’ thoughts and minds will, through this “peynture,” “ageyn . . . fynde” Chaucer, “fyndere” of the English language.<sup>13</sup>

While Hoccleve’s image situates the reader as Hoccleve’s companion, hoping that those who have forgotten Chaucer’s appearance will now remember him, most readers have to do so without the aid of a “likeness”: just three of the forty or so manuscripts of *The Regement* include a Chaucer image, and the image in one of those—Philadelphia, Rosenbach MS 1083—was drawn in the eighteenth century. Still, “likeness” of an author is an idea new to this time<sup>14</sup> and Chaucer was not alone in having his image painted in manuscripts. Two full-length portraits, in Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 307 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 290, portray the *senex amans* of the *Confessio Amantis*—John Gower—without the kind of name attribution or pun on “likeness” found in the Hoccleve manuscript’s illustration of Chaucer.<sup>15</sup> But Gower’s likeness, as well as Chaucer’s and his “child” Hoccleve’s, appears in several initials in the deluxe Bedford Psalter (ca. 1410), and in one, “an explicit label on the background of the portrait . . . identifies the elderly, balding and bearded” Gower.<sup>16</sup> Of the Psalter’s three images of Hoccleve and three of Chaucer, none has any identification like Gower’s. However, the drawings of Chaucer are thought to come from the same hand that drew his portrait in Harley 4866, the *Regement of Princes* manuscript already discussed. Portraiture begins to denote authors for readers in the context of late medieval manuscripts.

13. For an analysis central to my thinking about the living resonance of images, see David Freedberg, *The Power of Images* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1999): “image [is] more than it seems” (p. xxiv) and “figured objects and people” are always “disrupting natural law” (p. 43). See also Maidie Hilmo, *Medieval Images, Icons, and Illustrated English Literary Texts* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004): the medieval audience regards “visual details as a signifying system for both literal truth (‘what each looks like’) and symbolic truth (‘what each stands for’ or ‘figures’)” (p. 18), distinct from the Renaissance’s “primary referent,” which is “terrestrial reality” (p. 10).

14. Sylvia Wright, “The Author Portraits in the Bedford Psalter-Hours: Gower, Chaucer and Hoccleve,” *British Library Journal*, 18, no. 2 (Autumn 1992), 190–201, sees the first commemorations of Dante and Petrarch ca. 1375 as the genesis of author portraits (p. 190).

15. Derek Pearsall, “The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower’s Works,” in *The Companion to Gower*, ed. Siân Echard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), points out that the “unusual and seemingly rather inappropriate choice” of an old man with forked beard shows that “The artist, or the supervisor who gave him his instructions, has chosen the literal truth rather than the literary subterfuge” (p. 89).

16. See images in Wright, “Author-Portraits”; for the explicit label, p. 192.

Admittedly, manuscript images are limited in their cultural purchase to a rather minimal, though influential, audience. But manuscripts are not the exclusive purveyors of Chaucer's and Gower's images. Gower's chantry and tomb in the chapel of John the Baptist in St. Mary Overie, Southwark, may have been designed as early as the last years of Gower's life; he died in 1408.<sup>17</sup> Gower's chantry survived the religious tumult of the sixteenth century, so that antiquarian John Stow, who edited a 1561 folio edition of Chaucer, was able to describe the effigy and chantry in his 1598 *Survey of London*:

John Gower Esquier, a famous Poet, was then an especial benefactor to that worke, and was there buried on the North side of the said church, in the chapple of S. Iohn, where he founded a chauntrie, he lieth vnder a tombe of stone, with his image also of stone ouer him: the haire of his head aburne, long to his sholders, but curling vp, and a small forked beard, on his head a chaplet, like a coronet of foure Roses, an habite of purple, demasked downe to his feet, a collar of Esses, gold about his necke, vnder his head the likenes of three bookes, which he compiled. The first named *Speculum Meditantis*, written in French: The second *Vox clamantis* penned in Latine: the third *Confessio amantis* written in English, and this last is printed, vox clamantis with his Cronica tripartita, and other both in latine and French neuer printed, I haue and doe possesse, but *speculum meditantis* I neuer saw, though heard thereof to be in Kent: beside on the wall where he lyeth, there was painted three virgins crowned, one of which was named Charity, holding this deuise.<sup>18</sup>

Chaucer too had a public tomb, and ca. 1556, following Nicholas Brigham's enhancement, worshippers in Westminster Abbey could have seen a portrait of Chaucer between the sepulchre's arches.<sup>19</sup> Speght's 1598 edition (STC 5077) provides the earliest written record of it, and Elias Ashmole's *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* (1652) provides the earliest image.<sup>20</sup> The figure holds a rosary in his left hand, a mark perhaps of an attempt to reclaim Chaucer for Roman Catholicism during the reign of Queen Mary. While Westminster worshippers could see Chaucer's image in the second half of the sixteenth century, the upper crust could see portraits of the author in fine houses. Some six portrait panels survive from the sixteenth century, but no such tradition immortalizes Gower. Chaucer's image had special currency in sixteenth-century England.

17. John Hines, Nathalie Cohen, and Simon Roffey, "Iohannes Gower, Armiger, Poeta: Records and Memorials of His Life and Death," in *A Companion to Gower*, pp. 23–41, with photograph of the tomb (p. 37).

18. *A Survey of London by John Stow Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, ed. Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), I, 57.

19. Joseph A. Dane, *Who is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?* (East Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 10–32.

20. See Dane, *Who is Buried*, p. 13, for Speght's description, with an image from the 1602 edition (STC 5080), and Pearsall, *Life*, p. 296, for an image of Ashmole's engraving.



Chaucer and Gower both see print in deluxe folio editions in 1532.<sup>21</sup> Unlike the tradition of Chaucer folios, the 1532 edition of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (STC 12143)—a single work, unlike a “complete works” edition like Chaucer's, and printed by Thomas Berthelet, business partner with Chaucer's printer Thomas Godfray—is reprinted once, in 1554 (STC 12144), before it vanishes from continued impression. The *Confessio Amantis* sees deluxe folio again only in the nineteenth century. Chaucer's complete works, however, see continual folio printing throughout the sixteenth century, but his readers have to wait until 1598 for his “likeness,” as in the Hoccleve manuscript, the Bedford Psalter, or his tomb, to emerge in print.

Printed portrait or no, the “father” epithet applied to Chaucer, first used in manuscript, follows Chaucer into print. In his 1477 *Book of Curtesye* (STC 3303) William Caxton addresses Chaucer “O fader and founder of ornate eloquence” and repeats himself in a 1478 epilogue to the *Consolation of Philosophy*, calling Chaucer “the worshipful fader & first foundeur & embelisser of ornate eloquence in our englissh.” The epithet endures another century: in 1575, George Gascoigne uses it in his “Certayne Notes of Instruction concerning the making of verse or ryme in English,” part of *The posies of George Gascoigne esquire* (STC 11637): “also our father *Chaucer* hath used the same libertie in feete and measures that the Latinists do use.” In the same text Gascoigne, like Hoccleve, combines “master” and “father” in one phrase to describe Chaucer's particular verse form, “riding rhyme”: “that is suche as our Mayster and Father *Chaucer* vsed in his Canterburie tales, and in diuers other delectable and light enterprises.” In contrast, the somewhat later *Cobler of Caunterburie* (1590, STC 4579), a collection of stories told by a Thames boating party to imitate Chaucer's pilgrimage narrative, adds “old” to the father epithet, with no reference to “master,” making the work's most frequent epithet “old Father Chaucer.”<sup>22</sup> This ostensibly endearing phrase simultaneously compliments the poet and relegates him to the past. The author's admission that “Syr Jeffrey *Chaucer* is so hie aboue my reach, that I take *Noli altum sapere*, for a warning, and onely looke at him with honour and reuerence” follows Hoccleve's desire to put his father Chaucer's “likeness” on the page to jog his reader's

21. James E. Blodgett, “William Thynne,” in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books), pp. 35–52; Echard, *Companion to Gower*, pp. 115–35, esp. pp. 116–17. See also Forni, *Counterfeit Canon*, pp. 45–54.

22. *The Cobler of Caunterburie and Tarltons Newes out of Purgatorie*, ed. Geoffrey Creigh and Jane Belfield (Leiden: Brill, 1987); John Pitcher, “Literature, the Playhouse and the Public,” in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4: 1557–1695, ed. John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with the assistance of Maureen Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), p. 367. Creigh and Belfield mention the possibility that the text is the work of Robert Greene (pp. 9–10).

memory and encourage his friendship: after hearing Chaucer's voice, Hoccleve provides his reader Chaucer's likeness. The *Cobler's* narrator also uses voice to match his reverential gaze at Father Chaucer: he asks the reader, "What say you to old father Chaucer?" The father trope in manuscript and print makes Chaucer genial and approachable, his reader's eyes reaching him, his fatherhood folded into his voice and his reader's. William Thynne's 1532 folio edition of Chaucer's collected *Workes* is not the first folio of Chaucer printed: in 1526 Richard Pynson prints a folio *Canterbury Tales* (STC 5086). But Thynne's edition, a complete *Works*, creates Chaucer as "champion of the King [Henry VIII] against the conflicting claims of Church and nobility."<sup>23</sup> Chaucer's earliest printer, William Caxton, veteran of the War of the Roses, had already planted Chaucer into the "Tudor Myth" for Henry VIII's father, Henry VII, who was "conspicuously weak in his ancestral connections."<sup>24</sup> Without mentioning Henry VII by name, Caxton includes Chaucer among the "clerkes, poetes, and historiographes" whose "many noble bookes of wysedome of the lyues, passions, & myracles of holy sayntes of historyes, of noble and famous Actes and faittes, And of the cronycles sith the begynning of the creacion of the world" have contributed to "thys Royame."<sup>25</sup> By 1532, "the royal patronage of [Thynne's edition of Chaucer] was one of the many autocratic, centralizing gestures of Henry's regime, and was intended to augment Henry's own glory and strength."<sup>26</sup> Even the gesture of a Chaucer edition, centralizing all of Chaucer in one book—a fate Gower escapes—imitates the authoritarianism of Tudor hegemony, providing "textual correlatives of bureaucratic centralization."<sup>27</sup>

Chaucer may seem a natural for immersion in "The Tudor Myth," be-

23. John Watkins, "'Wrastling for This World': Wyatt and the Tudor Canonization of Chaucer," in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Theresa M. Krier (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1998), p. 23.

24. E. M. W. Tillyard, *Some Mythical Elements in English Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), p. 47. Tillyard includes among the myth's popularizers Edmund Spenser, William Warner, Michael Drayton, John Dee, and Edward Hall (p. 53). To Tillyard's list of Tudor apologists, add John Stow, editor of the 1561 Chaucer edition, whose *Chronicles of England* (1580) "present in chronicle form the legend of England as a people chosen by God for His own purposes"; Rosemary O'Day, *The Longman Companion to The Tudor Age* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 79. Tillyard's handy title cannot comprise all the subtleties of Tudor rule: see David Loades, *Power in Tudor England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), for the shape of the Tudors' "personal monarchy," and on print his *Politics, Censorship and the English Reformation* (London: Pinter, 1991); also King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in the Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989).

25. W. J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton*, EETS o.s. 176 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1928), pp. 90–91.

26. Theresa M. Krier, "Introduction," in *Refiguring Chaucer in the Renaissance*, ed. Krier, p. 10.

27. Watkins, "'Wrastling for This World,'" p. 24.

cause he lived during its inception. Chaucer's king was Richard II, whose deposition fomented the York-Lancaster fracas now known as the War of the Roses that eventually led to Henry Tudor's power grab in 1485. The Tudor era, begun with Henry Tudor's ascension as Henry VII, officially concludes with Elizabeth's death in 1603. But Chaucer's biography did not automatically identify him with the Tudors nor match his attitudes with their policies. "Antiquarian enterprises like Thynne's often had a distinctly counter-monarchical implication, the establishment of an English national identity apart from the Crown": Chaucer was alternately viewed as a "right Wicleuian" and abettor of Protestant polemics or as sympathetic with Henry VIII's disaffected nobility.<sup>28</sup> Chaucer's editors work hard to identify him with the Tudor cause. Folio editions of Chaucer, dedicated repeatedly to Henry VIII even after his demise, imbricate the poet with the Tudors and their spin on England's national narrative:<sup>29</sup> Thynne's dedication to Henry VIII, in which he asserts that Chaucer's *Workes* will add to the "laude and honour of this your noble realme," continues to be printed as peritext in every sixteenth-century folio edition, both the reprints of Thynne and the new editions of John Stow (1561) and Thomas Speght (1598 and 1602).<sup>30</sup> Thynne's edition, produced during a year of parliamentary, royal, and clerical maneuvering that included a prorogued parliament and Thomas More's resignation as chancellor, presages Henry's Act of Supremacy (1534) and exemplifies the complicated and unsteady alliances publishers and printers make with (dead) poets, living monarchs, and authoritarian national politics.<sup>31</sup> "Father" Chaucer in folio editions affects "father Chaucer" for Gascoigne and the Cobler author: the poet is both remote *and* reachable, visible and audible in a readerly fashion begun with Hoccleve, now touched with Chaucer's immersion in Tudor authoritarianism. Tudor politics and Chaucer's fatherhood work

28. Watkins, "'Wrestling for This World,'" pp. 23–25.

29. "Thynne's [1532] editions perhaps served Henrician dynastic and nationalistic imperatives by establishing an English literary heritage . . . Chaucer's eloquence was valued for its symbolic capital": Forni, "Thynne and Henrician Nationalism," *Counterfeit Canon*, p. 50.

30. On Thynne's 1542 and 1550 editions, see Martha W. Driver, "A False Imprint in Chaucer's Works: Protestant Printers in London (and Zurich?)," *Trivium*, 31 (1999), 131–54, who argues that the Thynne reprints were the work of Protestant, even offshore printers; Derek Brewer, *Geoffrey Chaucer, Volume 1, 1385–1837, The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, repr. 1995), prints much of the Thynne's preface dedicating his edition to Henry VIII, pp. 87–90. He also mentions the contention that the preface was written by Brian Tuke. On the Tuke question, see Forni, *Chaucerian Apocrypha*, p. 30, and Trigg, *Congenial Souls*, pp. 128 and 258, n. 41.

31. See Simpson, "Chaucer's Presence," and for a succinct chronology see Sharon L. Jansen, *Political Protest and Prophecy Under Henry VIII* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell, 1991), pp. 21–24.

in tandem with the identity of family as nation to make Chaucer's readers into Tudor subjects.

The trope of Chaucer as father meshes with Tudor concerns about political legitimacy as it limns their worries about succession and progeny: Henry VIII's desire for a male heir and his daughter Elizabeth's virgin queenship are among the family factors that animate Tudor policy, piety, and poetry.<sup>32</sup> Although the Tudors are not unique in joining fatherhood with nation, their success establishing "The Tudor Myth" in print and on stage derived in part from their concerted efforts to regulate print. Henry VIII's treason legislation of the 1530s required all licensed books to print "cum privilegio regali ad imprimendum solum" on the title page; legislation in 1543 that specified penalties and in 1546 that required identity, although aimed primarily at "theological matter," illustrates the climate in which Chaucer's publishers worked.<sup>33</sup> Tudor legislation of print matches their innovative and absolutely authoritarian law of attainder, an act of parliament pushed by Tudor interests that allows execution without trial. The "steadily increasing efficiency and stringency of censorship" by 1590—the print year of Cobler—gave "the English government a stronger grip on the domestic printing industry than any other European monarch."<sup>34</sup>

In 1575 and 1590, Gascoigne and the Cobler author may have heard their father Chaucer's voice in William Thynne's 1532 edition. Thynne himself, he tells us, had enjoyed hearing Chaucer: in his dedication to Henry VIII, he writes of having "taken great delectacyon / as the tymes and layzers might suffre / to rede and here the bokes of that noble & famous clerke Geffray Chaucer."<sup>35</sup> Or perhaps they heard their father Chaucer in a different folio edition: John Stow's 1561 Chaucer's *Works* is produced in the early years of Elizabeth's reign (1558–1603). Stow's book includes a suggestive image that joins father Chaucer to Tudor genealogy (fig. 1). Like Thynne's dedication to Henry VIII printed in later sixteenth-century folio editions, Stow's peritext also appears in a later edition, Speght's of 1598.<sup>36</sup> This engraving depicts the lineage of Elizabeth's father Henry VIII: it begins with the family antagonists, Yorks and Lancasters, of the

32. "It can be difficult, if not impossible, however, to draw sharp distinctions among political, pietistic, and aesthetic endeavors during this age [the Tudor age]": John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, p. 3.

33. See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, vol. 2: 1350–1547, *The Oxford English Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), p. 338, n. 48, and "Chaucer's Presence and Absence," pp. 265–66, for Henry's 1542 legislation that allows "Canterbury tales" and "Chaucers bokes" to continue in print.

34. Loades, *Power*, p. 122.

35. Francis Thynne's *Animadversions upon Speght's first (1598 A.D.) Edition of Chaucers Workes*, ed. G. H. Kingsley, revised F. Y. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 9 (London: Trübner, 1865), p. xxiv.

36. Anne Hudson, "John Stow, 1525?–1605," in *Editing Chaucer*, ed. Ruggiers, pp. 57–58.

War of the Roses. The illustration mimics a Jesse tree (*radix Jesse*), a pictorial representation of the Virgin Mary's parentage familiar to medieval audiences.<sup>37</sup> In a typical version of the Christian icon, Jesse, father of King David, lies at the illustration's bottom. A vine springs from his midsection to initiate the Virgin's genealogy, and this "tree" ascends through King David to Jesus. In Stow's peritext, monarchs replace saints:<sup>38</sup> a recognizable Henry VIII supplants—deposes?—the Jesus who traditionally tops the image. Splitting the traditionally recumbent "Jesse" into two figures—John of Gaunt and Edmund, Duke of York—makes visible the two "houses" of White and Red Rose central to the Tudor narrative. The ascent of rose vines on either side of the illustration marks the division between the two royal houses, their battles the subject of Shakespeare's history plays. The vines culminate in a rose-enthroned King Henry VIII depicted, unlike the other royals in the illustration, with all three accouterments of royal office—crown, scepter, sword—as father triumphant.<sup>39</sup> In this fashion the engraving replaces Jesus's family with England's royal lineage, equipped with the implements of authority—and punishment. Its allusion to the Jesse tree suggests the redemptive quality of the patriarchal Tudor myth and Tudor authoritarianism, but its triumphalism mocks the mercy of Mary's son.

This peritext functions in Stow's 1561 and Speght's 1598 editions as title page for *The Canterbury Tales*: it layers Chaucer with Tudor genealogy. The title "The Caunterburie tales" appears in the center of the woodcut, surrounded by almost exclusively male Yorks and Lancasters. Besides suggestively linking royal and divine history, the peritext, with its title "The Caunterburie tales" weaves Chaucer together with English history in a matrix of royal "fatherhood." The image uses print and family to mix royal, religious, national, and literary meanings together. Henry VIII's family tree places Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* squarely in the center of royal genealogy and its concerns about legitimate progeny, patriarchal authority, and political succession. Stow's image encapsulates Queen Elizabeth's bloodline, advertising her merits to potential suitors while conveniently eliding, three years into her reign, her dead and barren siblings. When reprinted in Speght's 1598 edition after hope for Tudor progeny has failed, Stow's woodcut, as "mediating literary artifact . . .

37. See Arthur Watson, *The Early Iconography of the Tree of Jesse* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1934).

38. The Tudor wont to replace saintly images with their own is almost a critical commonplace. See King, *Tudor Royal Iconography*, pp. 57–59, and Martha W. Driver, "Mapping Chaucer: John Speed and the Later Portraits," *Chaucer Review*, 36 (2002), 229–49.

39. The genealogy is, of course, fashioned to support Tudor ideology. Richard II is absent from the page, and Henry VII looks to be inevitable as monarch.



question encouraged the 1602 printers of Speght's edition to introduce *The Canterbury Tales* without this peritext.

## II

Besides the trope of "father Chaucer" traceable in both manuscript and print, another trope—Chaucer as living author—appears in the sixteenth century. Thomas Proctor, in *A Gorgious gallery of gallant inventions* (1578, STC 20402), can only wish "If Chawser yet did live" in order to assure his audience that, like Proctor, Chaucer too would write verses in praise of "Mistress D." Samuel Daniel puts the wish for a living Chaucer even more forcefully. In his *Poeticall essayes* (1599, STC 6261), he laments the "low disgrace" of "hy races" that have occurred "Since *Chaucer* liu'd." While this one part of Daniel's poem recognizes Chaucer's death, the rest of it brings Chaucer back to life: "who yet liues and yet shall, / Though (which I grieue to say) but in his last."<sup>41</sup> What sort of hope are they expressing?

Marxist theory provides one way to understand this trope of a living Chaucer. In order to become objects of capital exchange, books as commodities need to be drained of life, turned into "products that count for more in social life than the real relations of persons."<sup>42</sup> A printed book does not entirely fit a Marxist idea of commodity: a book is not "a primary good, such as coal or sugar, whose characteristics remain much the same however much of it is produced," and booksellers have an interest in "the fate of their product."<sup>43</sup> But printed editions of Chaucer nevertheless exemplify commodified lifelessness. Print's "deadness" contrasts with the living nature of manuscripts: practices associated with manuscripts—scraping, pointing, incising—emphasize their fleshly nature in contrast to print.<sup>44</sup> With word and image produced by hand on the skins of animals, manuscripts embody the metaphor of "living words." Hoccleve's image of Chaucer, meant to jog memory, fits the production of manuscripts, rather than the reproduction of printed books. Mechanical reproduction changes books from heirloom to commodity.

Print's early years did not inspire censorship: until the 1520s, its mechanical nature occluded its political potency. Those efforts arise in the

41. Pitcher, "Literature, Playhouse," pp. 361–64, discusses Daniel's work.

42. Terrell Carver, *A Marx Dictionary* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), pp. 81–87, explains fetishism of commodities (quotation at p. 83); Brown, *Poets, Patrons, and Printers*, explores the way the printing press in France "led to the objectification, commercialization, and commodification of the book" (p. 5); see St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, for modifications.

43. St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, p. 31.

44. See the editors' "Introduction," in *The Book and the Body*, ed. Dolores Warwick Frese and Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. ix–xviii, for a meditation on manuscripts' lividity.

1530s and grow in the 1540s. Nor does Elizabeth's official government censorship begun in 1559 eliminate the seditious print of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Latin historian William Camden (1551–1623) and poet Michael Drayton (1563–1631).<sup>45</sup> Her 1586 Star Chamber decree "confirmed the powers of the Stationers Company and the privileges of patentees. Powers of censorship, previously mainly a matter of self-censorship within the industry, are given to the ecclesiastical authorities": as William St. Clair also notes, "From 1595. [*sic*] Ecclesiastical censorship tightened."<sup>46</sup> Tudor authoritarianism tracks, but cannot contain, the figure of living father Chaucer: his liveliness answers commodification; his fatherhood puts in perspective the Tudor hegemony's tragic family prospects, barren like Macbeth's, unable to "stand in posterity"; and his image can challenge reigning pieties as did his poetry in the hands of some of Henry VIII's courtiers in the 1530s and 1540s.<sup>47</sup>

Father Chaucer's voice also sounds in three "protodramatic" dialogue texts that stage Chaucer in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century print. This small genre of living, speaking Chaucers resembles the dialogue Hoccleve works into his *Regement of Princes* and suggests intersections between literature and the stage before Richard Burbage's 1576 purpose-built theater makes a theatrical idiom concrete.<sup>48</sup> William Bullein publishes a tract against the plague, "A Dialogue both pleasaunte and pietifull" (1564), in which he describes Chaucer preparing to speak of poetry:

Wittie Chaucer satte in a chaire of gold couered with roses, writing prose & Rime, accompanied with the spirites of many kynges, knightes and faire ladies. Whom he pleasauntly besprinkled with the sweete water of the well, consecrated unto the Muses, ecleped Aganippe.

After this introduction and description, Chaucer speaks in iambic hexameter, asserting in his own voice "no buriall hurteth holie men, though beastes them deuour, / Nor riche graue preuaileth the wicked for all yearthly power." A living Chaucer here answers any wish to put him in his grave in a fashion more powerful than a monologue. Such dialogues presage Elizabethan theatrical energy.

A later sixteenth-century tract also includes this sort of speaking Chaucer: *Greenes Vision: written at the instant of his death* (1592, STC 12261).<sup>49</sup> A

45. Watkins, "'Wrastling for This World,'" p. 23.

46. St. Clair, *Reading Nation*, Appendix 2, p. 481.

47. Watkins, "'Wrastling for This World,'" p. 25.

48. Pitcher, "Literature, Playhouse," esp. p. 351, and Hines, *Voices in the Past*, esp. pp. 143–44.

49. See Helen Cooper, "'This Worthy Olde Writer': *Pericles* and Other Gowers, 1592–1640," in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. Siân Echard, pp. 110–13, esp. 100–4. On *Greenes Vision* and



dream vision in prose and poetry, it treats a colloquy on literary judgment ostensibly dreamed by Robert Greene, prolific Elizabethan dramatist and writer. The vision recounts Chaucer, Gower, and Greene arguing about the morality of their several works as well as the meaning of literature more generally. While scholarly opinion divides on whether Greene himself wrote the work, his dramatic ambiance pervades it. After Greene states his case regarding the fitness of his own poetry (or whether he wrote *The Cobler of Caunterburie*), “Chawcer sat downe and laught, and then rising vp and leaning his back against a Tree, he made this merry aunswer.”<sup>50</sup> The colloquy goes on for some forty-one pages, and includes Chaucer again being called, as in *The Cobler of Caunterburie*, “old.” Although Chaucer loses the argument, his liveliness in *Greenes Vision* makes “old” seem an affectionate epithet. When Greene accedes to Gower’s injunction to leave off writing of love, “Chawcer shakt his head and fumed.”<sup>51</sup> Then Solomon, like a *deus ex machina*, appears and has the last word, enjoining Greene to “leave all other vaine studies, and applye thy selfe to feede upon that heauenly manna,” to which the waking Greene accedes, concluding with “as you had the blossomes of my wanton fancies, so you shall haue the fruites of my better laboures.”<sup>52</sup> While Gower’s morality “wins,” Chaucer’s voice argues for tolerance. He tells Greene not to concern himself with the ascription of the Cobler, and his tale, while lacking a moral issue at its heart, teases authority through the comeuppance of a jealous husband. Helen Cooper reads *Greenes Vision* on the worth and morality of literature this way: “Literature may indeed be wanton; but although its attractiveness may make it suspect, that does not in every case necessitate a denial of its worth, its power of persuading to virtue. The responsibility may, however, fall as much on the reader as on the writer.”<sup>53</sup> A living father Chaucer, ostensibly bested by John Gower, makes the more important case for readerly judgment, itself possibly a matter of life and death under the Tudors.

In a final instance of a dramatically speaking Chaucer—Richard Brathwait’s “Chaucer’s Incensed Ghost” (1617, STC 3585), a post-Tudor poem attached to *The Smoking Ages, or, The man in the mist: with the life and death of Tobacco*—Chaucer voices his unhappiness and disgust, not only to have

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“self-authorization,” see Lori Humphrey Newcomb, *Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2002), pp. 47, 52.

50. Brewer, *The Critical Heritage*, pp. 130–35, prints a fair amount of *Greenes Vision*, as do Boswell and Holton.

51. Accessed through the *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) database (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998– ), February 13, 2005.

52. EEBO, accessed February 13, 2005.

53. Cooper, “‘This Worthy Olde Writer,’” p. 104.

been brought “o’ th’ stage,” but at the damage “Pipe-Pageants” are having on his reputation:

Las; Is it fit the stories of that book,  
Couche’d and compil’d in such a various forme,  
Which art and nature joyntly did adorne,  
On whose quaint Tales succeeding ages look,  
Should now lie stifled in the steems of smoak,  
As if no poet’s genius could be ripe  
Without the influence of Pot and Pipe?<sup>54</sup>

Father Chaucer speaks to reputation, not regulation; genius, not morals, in defending his tales now “subjects both for Presse and Stage.”<sup>55</sup> Not only a living visitor, Chaucer is father, except to “a brat hee never got,” and requires that his audience “conceive this well.” For this living father Chaucer, stage and press equally bring his generative figure back to life.

The desire for a living Chaucer to meet the restrictions of print produces a small genre of “performing” Chaucers. The trope of a living Chaucer uses the stage’s idiom of presence<sup>56</sup> to counteract the commodified lifelessness of print’s mechanical reproduction.

The last sixteenth-century folio edition of Chaucer’s *Works*, Speght’s in 1598, provides the most powerful representations of living father Chaucer to answer “dead” print. Speght’s edition includes many more peritexts than had its predecessors. One is a long biography, “Chaucers Life,” divided into “His Marriage,” “His Education,” “His Revenues,” “His Rewards,” “His Children, with their advancement” (a long section), and “His Countrey.” Speght’s other peritexts include a glossary of hard words, a drawing of Chaucer’s arms like that found in sixteenth-century wealthy houses’ panel portraits, and a schematic of his family tree, in Latin. Speght’s printed words, like those of Bullein, Greene, and Brathwait, animate father Chaucer.

A poetic peritextual dialogue, reminiscent of Hoccleve’s, has two speakers, “The Reader” and “Geffrey Chaucer.” Not only Chaucer but his—and Speght’s—reader speaks: a revoiced Chaucer joins a uniquely voiced reader.<sup>57</sup> The poem’s content specifically adumbrates an editor’s concern about

54. Included in Caroline Spurgeon, *Richard Brathwait’s Comment, in 1665, upon Chaucer’s Tales of the Miller and the Wife of Bath* (London: Kegan Paul, 1901), pp. viii–xi.

55. Spurgeon, *Richard Brathwait’s Comment*, p. x.

56. “Aura is tied to [an actor’s] living presence; there can be no replica of it. The aura which, on the stage, emanates from Macbeth cannot be separated for the spectators from that of the actor . . . Any thorough study proves that there is indeed no greater contrast than that of the stage play to a work of art that is completely subject to it or, like the film, founded in, mechanical reproduction”; Benjamin, “The Work of Art,” pp. 231–32.

57. Peter Stallybrass and Margreta de Grazia, “Love Among the Ruins: Response to Pechter,” *Textual Practice*, 119 (1997), 69, suggest that modernity predicates “certainty on the existence of consciousness” (p. 69). The appeal to the reader’s voice as well as a revoiced Chaucer signals this shift towards consciousness as a literary issue.

book as commodity. Both Chaucer and Reader use the language of print to praise Speght for his tireless work.

Reader

*Where hast thou dwelt, good Geffrey, all this while,  
Unknown to us, save only by thy Books?*

Chaucer

*In Haulks and Herns, God wot, and in Exile,  
Where none vouchsaft to yield me Words or Looks;  
Till one which saw me there, and knew my Friends,  
Did bring me forth: such Grace sometime God sends.*

Reader

*But who is he that hath thy Books repair'd,  
And added more, whereby thou are more graced?*

Chaucer

*The self-same Man who hath no Labour spar'd  
To help what Time and Writers had defaced:  
And made old Words, which were unknown of many,  
So plain, that now they may be known of any.*

Reader

*Well fare his heart; I love him for thy sake,  
Who for thy sake hath taken all this Pains.*

Chaucer

*Would God I knew some means amends to make,  
That for his Toil he might receive some Gains.  
But wot ye what? I know his Kindness such,  
That for my good he thinks no Pains too much.<sup>58</sup>*

Chaucer's liveliness here, like his liveliness in the protodramas, comes from his voice rather than, in Hoccleve's case, his likeness. In the high-value folio edition, however, self-conscious printers' metaphors layer the work of editors, parents, and readers to let Chaucer's liveliness answer print's status as commodity.

Speght's 1602 edition includes two more poems that animate Chaucer. Written by Francis Thynne, son of the editor William, the first poem closes with lines attuned to the trope of a living Chaucer: "Then *Chaucer* live, for still thy Verse shall live / T' unborn Poets which Life and Light will give."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Transcribed from the University of Oregon's copy of Speght's edition (see n. 2). Trigg, *Congential Souls*, prints a final couplet: "And more than that; if he had knowne in time, / He would have left no fault in prose nor rime" (p. 133).

<sup>59</sup>

*Upon the Picture of Chaucer.*

What Pallas City owes the heavenly mind  
Of prudent *Socrates*, wise *Greece's* Glory;  
What Fame *Arpinas* spreadingly doth find  
What lasting Praise sharp witted *Italy*  
By *Tasso's* and by *Petrark's* Pen obtained;  
What Fame *Bartas* unto proud *France* hath gained;  
By seven days World Poetically strained:

Even more insistently, Thynne's second poem, "Of the Animadversions upon Chaucer," uses, like the dialogue poem from the earlier Speght edition, the trope of Chaucer's living fatherhood while gesturing toward print and editorship:

In reading of the learn'd praise-worthy Pain,  
 The helpful Notes explaining *Chaucer's* Mind,  
 The abstruse Skill, and artificial Vein;  
 By true Annalogy I rightly find  
*Speght* is the Child of *Chaucer's* fruitful Brain;  
 Vernishing his Works with Life and Grace,  
 Which envious Age would otherwise deface.  
 Then be he lov'd and thanked for the same,  
 Since in his Love he hath reviv'd his Name.<sup>60</sup>

In this poem, Speght becomes the "vernisher" of Chaucer's works, coating and rubbing to warm and enliven. Both the Reader and Francis Thynne aver that Chaucer, the living father-artist, "really" comes to life in the edition of his child, Thomas Speght. Speght includes these poems of Francis Thynne, son of William, Chaucer's first folio editor, with a conscious nod to filial pieties, his to Chaucer and Francis's to his father. The elder Thynne's and Chaucer's entanglements with the Tudor family seem background here: Speght prints Francis's "Animadversions" as peritexts in which Francis details his father's contretemps with Cardinal Wolsey.<sup>61</sup> Yet Speght brings his own Tudor entanglements to bear, printing his dedicatory epistle to Elizabeth's secretary, "Sir Robert Cecil, one of hir highnes most honvrable privie covnсел," as first peritext in the edition. The edition's numerous peritexts surround Chaucer with the earliest and latest Tudor history.

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What high Renown is purchas'd unto *Spain*,  
 Which fresh *Dianaes* Verses do distill;  
 What Praise our Neighbour *Scotland* doth retain  
 By *Gawine Douglas*, in his *Virgil* Quill;  
 Or other Motions by sweet Poets Skill;  
 The same, and more, fair *England* challenge may,  
 By that rare Wit and Art thou do'st display  
 In Verse, which doth *Apollo's* Muse bewray.  
 Then *Chaucer* live, for still thy Verse shall live  
 T'unborn Poets which Life and Light will give.  
*Fran. Thynn.*

See *Francis Thynne's Animadversions*, pp. cvi–cvii. The poem appears in the University of Oregon's edition of Speght (see n. 2 above), on a 1 verso.

60. *Francis Thynne's Animadversions*, p. cvii.

61. Despite Henry VIII's assurances, "my father was called in questione by the Bysshoppes, and heaved at by cardinall Wolseye, his olde enmye, for manye causes, but mostly for that my father had furthered Skelton to publishe his 'Collen Cloute' againste the Cardinall"; *Francis Thynne's Animadversions*, p. 10.

The most striking of Speght's new peritexts is, as in Thynne's 1532 Jesse tree illustration, a visual one. New to Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer's *Works*, it pictures Chaucer full length, standing in a position similar to that of both the portrait painted in 1556 over Chaucer's Westminster tomb and the illumination in the Hoccleve manuscript (fig. 2).<sup>62</sup> By including both Chaucer's image and his genealogy, the image goes one step further than Stow's *Canterbury Tales* title page—which Speght uses in 1598 and rejects in 1602—to fold Chaucer into Tudor hegemony. Not only regularly reprinted but actually pasted into copies of Stow's edition, this woodcut, or "momentous talisman," is entitled "The Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer."<sup>63</sup> Like the engraving of Henry VIII's lineage used to title *The Canterbury Tales*, this peritext layers Chaucer with Tudors. Drawn by John Speed, it portrays two families, royal and Chaucerian: Chaucer's daughter ends up, by dint of marriage, ennobled. In contrast to the earlier woodcut, generations run down, rather than up, this illustration's sides so that John of Gaunt's name parallels Chaucer's in a roundel atop the illustration, rather than at its bottom.

Since the image details the entry of Chaucer's children into the nobility, it includes, on its left-hand side, a version of the royal genealogy depicted in the earlier woodcut. In Speed's version, however, the genealogy of Henry VII, the first Tudor king, contains five female forbears, including Henry's mother Margaret Beaufort, and nearly doubles the number of female forbears shown in the earlier woodcut. Not only that, but Chaucer's own family tree, on the image's right-hand side, includes four women, including the poet's wife, making for a total of nine women, rather than the three appearing in the earlier woodcut and, interestingly, in traditional images of a Jesse tree.<sup>64</sup> In these two ways Speed's illustration provides more space for generative women than does the earlier woodcut—and does so in the waning years of Elizabeth's reign. The choice to include more women may allude to an opinion, current in the sixteenth century, that Chaucer was particularly sympathetic to women.<sup>65</sup>

62. Driver, "Mapping Chaucer," p. 241, infers a different portrait as Speed's source: a late sixteenth-century portrait found in British Library, MS Additional 5141; for the image, p. 242.

63. The phrase "momentous talisman" is John R. Hetherington's, *Chaucer 1532–1602, Notes and Facsimile Texts Designed to Facilitate the Identification of Defective Copies of the Black-Letter Folio Editions of 1532, 1542 c. 1550, 1561, 1598 and 1602* (Birmingham, England: John R. Hetherington [privately published], 1964), p. 7. The engraving is treated in Arthur M. Hind, *Engraving in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Descriptive Catalogue with Introductions*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), pp. 286–89.

64. I thank James W. Earl for this insight into the Tudor tree's imitation of religious iconography.

65. "Excuse Chaucer . . . for he was euer god wate, all womannis freynd," from Gavin Douglas's translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* (Spurgeon dates the manuscript version 1513, Boswell



Figure 2. *The works of our ancient, learned, & excellent English poet, Jeffrey Chaucer : as they have lately been compar'd with the best manuscripts, and several things added, never before in print : to which is adjoyn'd, The story of the siege of Thebes, by John Lydgate, monk of Bury : together with the life of Chaucer, shewing his countrey, parentage, education, marriage, children, revenues, service, reward, friends, books, death : also a table, wherein the old and obscure words in Chaucer are explained, and such words (which are many) that either are, by nature or derivation, Arabick, Greek, Latine, Italian, French, Dutch, or Saxon, mark'd with particular notes for the better understanding their original.* London: n. p., 1687. Folio 2, verso. By kind permission of James Fox, head, special collections, Knight Library, University of Oregon.

Or it may, through a subtle analogy with Elizabeth's own strategies, make Chaucer the paternal vernacular poet of the mother tongue, metaphorically both father and mother,<sup>66</sup> even as it represents Chaucer's fecundity and progeny. The "Progenie" illustration puts "father Chaucer" squarely into English history, mapping the familial affiliations of Chaucer, from wife to great-great-grandson, onto royal lineage.

But this image does more. The bottom of the image shows the tomb of the poet's son, Thomas, and his wife, Maud. Yet Chaucer stands upright in the illustration's center atop his son and daughter-in-law's tomb, his posture genially defying death. Making Chaucer's image central in a full-length, authoritative portrait subtly suggests, on the model of Henry VIII—a monarch famously obsessed with progeny—Chaucer as father. But the roundels on the image's right side—Chaucer's line—end with great-great-grandson Edmund De la Pole, whom Henry VIII had beheaded in 1513.<sup>67</sup> Living father Chaucer atop his children's tomb flanked by his extinguished line cannot help but remark on a childless queen Elizabeth—increasingly controlling press and pamphlet—and the "living" nature of print, overcoming both commodification and censorship. Speed says his image of Chaucer comes not from the image on Chaucer's tomb but from Hoccleve, Chaucer's scholar.<sup>68</sup> Speed invokes manuscript to gesture towards those once-living books, the "haulks and hernaes" of the forest primeval in which manuscript Chaucer formerly resided. But the gesture also brings to light what's lost between manuscript and print. Speed's image, based on Hoccleve, brings manuscript life to the printed book and living Chaucer to many readers, undoubtedly more readers than Hoccleve's manuscripts had: it can even affect "readers"

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and Holton date the printed version 1553); "Chaucer, how miscaried thy golden pen?" with a side note "Chaucer. lib. faeminarum encomion. I. & alterum, de laudib. bonarum. faeminar," William Heale, from *An Apologie for Women* (1609). Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 282, n. 14, states that "Chaucer himself stages a critique of patriarchal (and, for that matter, heterosexualist) authority in his fictions." But see also Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1992), for important qualifications of this view.

66. Roy Strong, *The Cult of Elizabeth* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977), esp. pp. 16, 69.

67. Pearsall, *Life*, p. 284.

68. See above, note 62. Speght contends that the portrait on Chaucer's tomb also comes from the image in the Hoccleve manuscript; see Dane, *Who Is Buried*, p. 13: "M. Nicholas Brigham did at his owne cost and charges erect a faire marble monument for him, with his picture, resembling that done by Occleve." Ashmole, whose *Theatrum* first published an image of the tomb, credits Hoccleve's image as guide for the tomb painting's restoration, which leads Pearsall to consider Speght's peritext the restorer's real inspiration (Pearsall, *Life*, p. 296). But, as Pearsall also points out, "Speght's picture [i.e., Speed's engraving] itself of course derived from the tradition of which the original tomb portrait may have been an important early ancestor" (p. 296).

of Chaucer's Westminster tomb. Chaucer's generative power is simultaneously historical, literary, royal, legitimate, doubly gendered, artistic, and *living*. It subtly challenges both live queen and dead print. Life and art atop the obverse face of generation—death—answers print's dead letter. The peritext puts on one page, with image instead of the words Bullein and Greene put in living Chaucer's mouth, a challenge to the Tudor regime of letters.

This image well deserves its epithet "a momentous talisman": although new to Speght's 1598 edition, the image was pasted into copies of Stow's 1561 edition, including one now in the Huntington library. Unlike the previously discussed peritext of Henry's lineage, which, perhaps because of its troublesome content, was excised from reprints of Speght's edition beginning in 1602, this second peritext continues to be printed in both the 1602 and 1687 folio Chaucers. These two reprints of Speght, nearly a century apart, are, however, the only editions of Chaucer published in the seventeenth century: John Urry's 1721 folio Chaucer edition replaces Speed's engraving with "a bust in oval" to depict the poet—and a portrait of Urry himself, sign of modern criticism's advent, precedes both it and the book's title page.<sup>69</sup>

Read together, Speght's three peritextual poems—the dialogue poem and the two by Francis Thynne—and Speed's engraving animate Chaucer and laud his editors, whose efforts come, not from the desire to profit from their commodified books, but from kindness and love and family devotion.<sup>70</sup> But in Speght's editions, peritexts voice Chaucer and Reader, warm Chaucer to life, and show him atop a tomb to give life to the Chaucer who appears in other printed matter. The concert of these peritexts, late in Elizabeth's reign, enlivens and revoices father Chaucer. Tracing Chaucer's fatherly liveliness through the sixteenth century tracks Tudor politics' interpenetration with print. Speght's edition makes Chaucer's fatherly liveliness not only an answer to print's commodification but a comment—or warning—upon print's conjugation with authority. Editors, engravers, and dialogists—Speght, Speed, Bullein, Greene, Brathwait—meet multiple needs in making Gascoigne's and the Cocker's father Chaucer live.

69. Hind, *Engraving in England*, I, 287, notes the "bust in oval"; the University of Oregon's copy of Urry's Chaucer, Special Collections Rare Books PR 1850.1721, has a full-page engraving of Urry facing the edition's title page, the bottom of which shows Chaucer's tomb. Driver, "Mapping Chaucer," p. 239, and Dane, *Who Is Buried*, p. 24, both provide images of Urry's title page. On Urry's edition, see William Alderson, *Editing Chaucer*, ed. Ruggiers, pp. 93–115.

70. See Trigg, *Congenial Souls*.



Images situate Chaucer as father, showing him with his progeny. Such repetitions of Chaucer's living fatherhood reverse the "childhood" trope Lerer outlines for early print culture,<sup>71</sup> and make Chaucer the father rather than a child. Read in tandem with the woodcut of Henry VIII's forebears, Speght's image hopes to evoke Chaucer's presence, his "aura," on the page. Such images, despite Lerer's denials, can "conjure [Chaucer's] discerning visage" not only over the "impersonator's shoulder," but over the reader's.<sup>72</sup> An aura of masculine generative power defines print culture's Chaucer and parallels Chaucer's generative success with the ruling families of York, Lancaster, and Tudor. Repetition of Chaucer's living fatherhood also makes visible print's new mode of "genetic relations among texts and of textual history itself as a form of familial relations."<sup>73</sup> Aura-making woodcuts in sixteenth-century editions of Chaucer picture his fatherhood allied with royal authority: Chaucer's fecundity extends from progeny to printed text. Chaucer editions' images, powered by royal concerns, make Chaucer not the "dead *auctor*" Lerer describes,<sup>74</sup> but a living poet. The motif recurs in sixteenth-century prose and poetry, along with Chaucer editions' images, to satisfy both national and patriarchal desires, all framed by Chaucer's living fatherhood.

### III

Late sixteenth-century print and theater complement each other in their concern with legitimacy and authority, paternity, and nation.<sup>75</sup> Theater can take the idiom of "living" beyond that which print can accomplish through inert picture and word.<sup>76</sup> As far as the plays of Shakespeare are concerned, a living, breathing Chaucer—desired by Bullein, Greene, and Brathwait, and invoked in early Chaucer editions' peritexts—does not appear. We get close: Chaucer's contemporary Gower acts as chorus in Shakespeare's late romance *Pericles*, and the "Prologue" figure opening *The Two Noble Kinsmen* repeats Chaucer's underground cry,

71. Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 18.

72. Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 151.

73. Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 167.

74. Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 19.

75. Valerie Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992); Gordon Williams, *Shakespeare, Sex, and the Print Revolution* (London: Athlone, 1996).

76. Cf. Benjamin, "The Work of Art," pp. 231–32: "Aura is tied to presence . . . there is indeed no greater contrast than that of the stage play to a work of art that is . . . founded in mechanical reproduction."

“ . . . O, fan  
 From me the witless chaff of such a writer  
 That blasts my bays and my fam’d works makes lighter  
 Than Robin Hood!”<sup>77</sup>

But even here Shakespeare is absent: critics attribute this prologue to Shakespeare’s collaborator, John Fletcher.

Without a literal stage, Speght’s living father Chaucer still adds a new interpretive dimension to Chaucer’s text through another feature of early print *Canterbury Tales*. From Caxton through Speght, the conventional printing of The Tale of Melibee makes that tale most fully Chaucer’s own. The pilgrim Chaucer tells two tales on the road to Canterbury, according to the *Tales*’ frame narrative: one of Sir Thopas, and one of Melibee and his wife Prudence. Early and modern editions treat the two tales quite differently. Chaucer’s name graces neither author-told tale in modern editions: the *Riverside Chaucer*, like its twentieth-century predecessors edited by F. N. Robinson and E. T. Donaldson, calls the two tales told by Chaucer the poet on the pilgrimage road The Tale of Sir Thopas and The Tale of Melibee. Early editions, on the other hand, invariably identify Chaucer with The Tale of Melibee by calling it “The Tale of Chaucer” (they call the preceding tale “The Rime of Sir Thopas”). The title “Tale of Chaucer” appears in tables of contents, at the beginning of the tale, and as a running header throughout, page by page.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the prose tale’s difference is further accentuated by the form of its title. The other tales’ titles take their teller as a possessive, such as The Wife of Bath’s Tale. In The Tale of Chaucer, the order is reversed.<sup>79</sup> Early print’s efforts to identify tale with

77. William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, in *The Riverside Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), Prologue, ll. 18–21.

78. Wynken de Worde’s edition (STC 5085) calls the tale “The Tale of Chaucer” above the introductory woodcut, and “Chaucers Tale of Melibeus” beneath it. Running headers on every page call it “The Tale of Chaucer.” Pynson’s edition (STC 5086) calls it simply “The Tale of Chaucer.” Thynne’s text printed by Richard Grafton for William Bonham (STC 5069) titles the tale “Chaucers Tale of Melibeus,” again with the running title “The Tale of Chaucer.” These editions were consulted on *EEBO*. The University of Oregon copy of Stow includes this list of tales on Ɔ<sup>o</sup> 3 r and v; the University of Oregon copy of Speght, at c 3 r. At the head of the text itself, however, the tale is titled “Chaucers Tale of Melibeus” (Stow, folio lxxi recto; Speght, folio 125 recto). Speght continues: “Prudence, the discreet wife of Melibeus, persuadeth her husband to patience, and to receive his Enemies to mercy and grace. A Tale full of Morality, wherein both high and low may learn to govern their affections.” While the header in both editions changes the title from the simple “Tale of Chaucer,” the tale’s running title does not change, remaining at the top of every page “The Tale of Chaucer” and retaining the eponym, unique among the other *Canterbury Tales* for carrying Chaucer’s name.

79. The tale Chaucer tells of Melibee and Prudence is called, not “Chaucers Tale” (until Urry’s 1721 edition, which uses “Chaucers Tale” as its running heading), but “The Tale of Chaucer” (Tyrwhitt’s 1775 quarto edition first uses “The Tale of Melibee” as consistent title). Wynkyn de Worde (1498, STC 5085) calls Thopas, along with Melibee, a “Tale of

poet read in relation to the figure of living father Chaucer, especially in Speed's "momentous talisman," make The Tale of Melibee into Chaucer's authentic voice.<sup>80</sup> The eponymous Tale of Chaucer carries the weight of English literary history with which the sixteenth-century folio tradition had invested the poet.<sup>81</sup> Read in concert with living father Chaucer, the tale so titled makes his voice speak most dramatically from the book. Such a reading makes The Tale of Melibee, with its drama of urgent counsel, a "spokestale" for living father Chaucer.

The Tale of Melibee has inspired critical discussion that reads its ethical import, portrayed as feminine eloquence meeting dangerous patriarchal wrath, alternately as brilliant and sententious.<sup>82</sup> Prudence laboriously guides her husband, Melibee, to use peaceful negotiation rather than armed conflict to settle the fracas perpetrated by "thre of his olde foes."<sup>83</sup> In her "warrishing" (l. 1277) of Melibee's "talent" (l. 1251; desire) for

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Chaucer," thus making doubly apparent the *Canterbury Tales* frame narrative as well as a "living" Chaucer. De Worde's edition also prints identical woodcut illustrations for both "tales of Chaucer" (consulted online through *EEBO*; Urry's and Tyrwhitt's editions through the courtesy of the University of Oregon Special Collections [SCA Rare Books PR 1850.1721 and PR 1866.T8 vols. 1-4]).

80. The links between these two *Tales* has prompted a fair amount of analysis; see especially Seth Lerer, "'Now holde youre mouth': The Romance of Orality in the *Thopas-Melibee* Section of the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry*, ed. Mark C. Amodio (New York: Garland, 1994), pp. 181-205, the thesis of which—the prose nature of The Tale of Melibee signals a complexity and ethic absent from the romance poetry of The Tale of Sir Thopas—has an effect on the current essay's reading of Melibee's import.

81. Spurgeon, *500 Years*, I, 114-59; Holinshed lauds Chaucer who, through his (and Gower's) "diligent industry" has made "riche and plentiful" the "barreyne, rude, and unperfect" language of English so that it can "expresse that which the minde conceived" (p. 114); Thomas Nashe comments, "Art, like yong grasse in the spring of Chaucer's flourishing, was glade to peepe vp through any slime of corruption" (p. 136). The garden metaphor, assuredly proverbial, gestures towards foison and generation.

82. See Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: Penn Univ. Press, 1996), pp. 91-107, noting the tale's strong connection to Chaucer himself because his character tells the tale (p. 92); John Burrow, "The Third Eye of Prudence," in *Medieval Futures: Attitudes to the Future in the Middle Ages*, ed. John Burrow and Ian P. Wei (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000), pp. 37-48, on the tale's popularity in the late Middle Ages (p. 45); Carolyn P. Collette, "Chaucer and the French Tradition Revisited: Philippe de Mézières and the Good Wife," in *Medieval Women: Text and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchison, Carol Meale, and Lesley Johnson (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 151-68, giving a new source for the tale; Daniel Kempton, "Chaucer's Tale of Melibee: 'A Litel Thyng in Prose,'" *Genre*, 21 (1988), 263-78, looking at the sententious and "domestic comedy" (p. 272); and Elizabeth Lunz, "Chaucer's Prudence as the Ideal of the Virtuous Woman," *Essays in Literature*, 4 (1977), 3-10, making Prudence into a figure of advice like Lady Philosophy in Boethius's *Consolation*.

83. *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3d ed., gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 217-39, VII, l. 970. All subsequent references to the tale will be taken from this edition and cited by line numbers.

vengeance, Prudence must first dispose of her husband's objections to changing his opinion; more importantly, she must justify her opinion that he particularly needs to listen to women's counsel (ll. 1064–1111). Once her "sweete wordes" (l. 1114) have convinced him to listen to her advice, Prudence anatomizes bad decisions made through anger, covetousness, or haste (ll. 1122–36), continuing to quote innumerable authorities, including Cassiodorus (l. 1194), Peter Alphonsus (l. 1218), and St. Paul (l. 1291). Her advice to choose few but wise counselors (ll. 1069, 1162) boils down to becoming Melibee's sole advisor (ll. 1724–25). Prudence effects Melibee's reconciliation with his enemies (ll. 1815–25, 1875–88) after talking him out of a final vengeful ploy: to exile and disinherit them (l. 1825). Prudence convinces her husband, Melibee, to value his family's continuity over all else: to reconcile with his enemies, to make peace: "Wherefore I pray you, lat mercy been in youre herte, / to th'effect and entente that God Almighty have mercy on yow in his laste juggement" (ll. 1867–68). Melibee accedes to Prudence's plea against vengeance and, by preventing war, insures his family's continuity.

Chaucer's authenticity and voice, joined in *The Tale of Chaucer*, thus identify Chaucer with a female rhetor, Melibee's wife, Prudence.<sup>84</sup> More importantly, Chaucer's voice in his tale identifies his attitude with the tale's pacifist theme. The tale's animated, authentic rhetoric rings with truth aimed at monarchs. Moreover, to identify Chaucer with the female Prudence—to complicate gender—more fully condemns patriarchal wrath and laments its negative effect on the entire polity. An animated Chaucer telling this tale, in the context of peritexts and protodramas that bring artistic and literal generation alive, bespeaks authenticity joined to a pacifist ethic. To identify Chaucer with Prudence, who speaks truth to power in service to her daughter, ambivalently genders Chaucer's fatherly living voice to contest authoritarian rulership and its increased censorship of print and art.

Yet, once he accepts Prudence's counsel, Melibee's closing words argue for mercy and forgiveness:

Wherefore I receyve yow to my grace / and foryeve yow outrely alle the offenses, injuries, and wronges that ye have doon agayn me and myne, / to this effect and to this ende, that God of his endeletes mercy / wole at the tyme of oure diynge foryeven us oure glites that we han trespassed to hym

84. David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1997), pp. 212–46, draws a parallel between the literary Prudence and the historical Anne of Bohemia, wife to Richard II. In Wallace's account, Prudence's reconciliatory strategies match Anne's in their desire to advise vengeful husbands. Thus a fictional character adumbrates a historical one, noting both desire, and failure, to mollify masculine wrath.

in this wrecched world. / For doutelees, if we be sory and repentant of the synnes and giltes which we had trespassed in the sighte of oure Lord God, / he is so free and so merciable / that he wole foyeven us oure giltes / and bryngen us to the blisse that nevere hath ende. (ll. 1882–88)

Melibee accedes to Prudence's—Chaucer's—counsel. Speght's edition of Chaucer, especially the Speed woodcut, constructs Chaucer's voice to sound this urgent plea. The message of reconciliation works as far as the Tudor/Stuart antipathy is concerned, but it does little to shift the regime of censorship and authoritarianism to which Chaucer's readers have become inured in the course of the sixteenth century. Indeed, the second run of Speght's edition in 1602, while it retains the "momentous talisman," drops the engraving that pictures the Tudor dynasty's family pedigree. Even Chaucer himself retires: only twice, in 1602 and 1687, is Speght's folio edition, or any complete Chaucer, printed in the seventeenth century. The folio canon continues in 1721, its purpose much changed to celebrate a dead poet whose tomb the title page pictures.

As John Hines has noted, modernity trades on opposition between the material world and the realm of language and ideas.<sup>85</sup> Sixteenth-century folio editions of Chaucer, fully immersed in Tudor politics, help to create this antipathy, but even in their culminating moment—Speght's edition of 1598, with Speed's momentous talisman—Speght invests his author with fatherhood and life to combat not only the commodification of print but the creeping seduction of authoritarianism, enemy of art. Living Chaucer loses the fight, his pacifist tale renamed, his tomb the frontispiece for Urry's eighteenth-century folio edition of his works—modernity's answer to Speed's living father Chaucer.<sup>86</sup>

85. Hines, *Voices in the Past*, p. 138.

86. I am pleased to acknowledge the great help I have received in revising this essay from Martha Driver, Lisa Freinkel, and Kathryn Lynch; and from Lori Newcomb, one of the readers for *JEGP*.