READING NOBILITY: AUTHORITY AND EARLY ENGLISH PRINT

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ABSTRACT

Vaughn Stewart: Reading Nobility: Authority and Early English Print
(Under the direction of Jessica Wolfe)

Reading Nobility examines the paratextual, literary, historical, and physical ways print

books serve as brokers of authority. Over the course of four chapters, I analyze how English

printers—with a primary focus on the incunabular period from 1476–1500—invoke concepts of

nobility, negotiating authority newly accessible to emerging readerships. The first chapter focuses

on Caxton's paratexts and expands upon an already interesting lexical insight: "noble" is

Caxton's most used adjective. Through word frequency analysis, I find that "noble" occurs much

more frequently in prefatory paratextual material than elsewhere in Caxton's works. To answer

why such a pattern exists, I examine the paratexts to the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* and the

Eneydos. I argue that the frequency of "noble" does not display Caxton's careful word choice but,

instead, manifests larger social anxieties of Caxton's milieu that linguistically rise to the surface

in his paratexts. The next chapter explores how Caxton's editions of Chaucer inaugurate the

printer as a necessary intermediary between the reader and a spiritually authentic Chaucer.

Caxton serves as a conduit through which authoritative versions of Chaucer's works flow, a

model that has a lasting impact on the poet's subsequent presentation in printings from Copland,

Rastell, De Worde, and Pynson. Caxton thus instantiates printers as necessary mediators who

provide readers an authentic, vivid, and accessible Chaucer. In the third chapter, I show how early

print chronicles—specifically those by Caxton and the St. Albans Printer—legitimize the new

technology of textual production by linking it to royal and religious authority. The final chapter

examines Caxton's 1483 edition of the *Confessio Amantis*, oddly printed with gaps left for

illustrations. An analysis of multiple copies held in the United States and England reveals that

owners occasionally exploited these spaces to add optional embellishment. Considering the

Confessio Amantis's manuscript history of "standardized" deluxe volumes, I argue that Caxton

made his edition socially nimble through its optional embellishment as purchasers could elect to

elevate the status of their texts and, in turn, themselves.

To my wife.

Hullo.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EEBO   *Early English Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/

ESTC   *English Short Title Catalogue*. http://estc.bl.uk/

ISTC   *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue*. http://istc.bl.uk/

OED   *Oxford English Dictionary* Online. http://www.oed.com/

STC   *Short Title Catalogue*. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, eds., *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland and Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475-1640*, second edition

USTC   *Universal Short Title Catalogue*. http://ustc.ac.uk/

Introduction

When Wynkyn de Worde reprinted the *Book of St. Albans* (*STC* 3308, 1486) on hawking, hunting, and heraldry in 1496 (*STC* 3309), he inserted a treatise on fishing between two texts on coats of arms. Immediately before the angling tract begins, he writes that such a work "is right necessary to be had in this present volume: by cause it shewyth afore the manere of hawkynge & huntynge wyth other dyuers maters right necessary to be knowen of noble men" (fol. 37r). At the end of the new inclusion, however, De Worde states that his desire for publishing the text in this volume was not merely motivated by giving noble book buyers what they wanted. He added, "And for by cause that this present treatyse sholde not come to the hondys of eche ydle persone whyche wolde desire it yf it were enpryntyd allone by itself & put in a lytyll plaunflet therfore I haue compylyd it in a greter volume of dyuerse bokys concernynge to gentyll & noble men" (fol. 48v). The admission reveals the complexity of De Worde's conception of his audience. The format of the text—whether pamphlet or folio, as this edition was—immediately invokes a certain type of reader. When we compare the introductory note that this work should be known by "noble men" and the final definition that this book concerns "gentyll & noble men," we can see how De Worde casts his appropriate readership for this text as, seemingly, members of the nobility or gentry. Yet the opposition to this audience is not commoners or members of London's merchant populace but an "ydle persone." The concept of nobility thus becomes capacious: it is not merely a category defined by bloodline and inheritance; it is also a category of defined by virtuous

character. Such a concept of nobility has deep roots—especially in discussions of the non-heritable character traits like gentilesse—but De Worde's added notes exploit these two definitions to fashion the book for a varied audience inclusive of non-noble persons. Indeed, it even invites readers to view themselves, by virtue of reading a book with material explicitly the concern of gentle and noble persons and not being an idle person, as being part of that elevated group.

De Worde was not alone in exploiting the concept of nobility. His former employer and the first printer in England, William Caxton, did so frequently in added material, as did his erstwhile co-worker Robert Copland. References to actual noble persons or general comments that the book's audience is "noble" are peppered into paratexts—the prologues, epilogues, summaries, and notes that printers inserted into their productions. Often, as with De Worde's example above, they are explicit in terms of whom they would not want as readers. Through such explanations, the printers establish the category of noble readers as an exclusive group. Yet they simultaneously explain how reading their works will better the manners and social standing of their readers; they open for their readers avenues of ingress into a noble category. They argue that their books will ennoble their readers. This paradoxical claim—that their books are only for noble persons and that you can become noble by reading their books—permeates many paratexts. It is a strategy that makes the products of a new technology particularly appealing to new types of readers who could now possess books made "grete chepe and in grete nombre."[1]

Reading Nobility explores that nexus of class-based discourse and printers' self-reflexive

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[1] This is Caxton's description of the printing press's effect in his 1480 *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9991). See Chapter 3.

conceptualization of their own enterprise. I argue that printers invoke nobility to make their

editions "intellectually marketable"—desirable not because one can afford them but because the

benefits extend far beyond mere ownership—to emerging audiences for print books.[2] The

primary mode of ennobling comes through the act of reading, not just possessing, hence my title

Reading Nobility. As one finds in *The Book of Courtesy* (*STC* 3303) printed by Caxton in 1477,

one must read the likes of Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate—conveniently printed for them by

Caxton's own press—in order to possess "Of siluer langage / the grete riches" (fol. 10r). Other

paratexts directly from the printers themselves echo the benefits of reading and predicate one's

social enhancement upon the very act. Once engaged in reading, the reader's "ennobling" entails

gaining access to literary or political authority previously unattainable. It is here that printers

insert themselves between patrons, royalty, past authors, and the reader. They function as brokers,

their books as the means to transfer to the reader the authority they in their capacity as printers

either claim or claim to access.

     The focus for this study is the few decades immediately after the introduction of printing

into England by Caxton in 1476, but this is only a focus and not a set of exclusive boundaries.

The printers and editions examined are primarily incunabula—books printed during the fifteenth

century—and English in a broad sense of either being printed in England or being written in

English. The range of examples used has resulted in the more vague yet more accurate "early

English print" to be its stated purview.

     Although a number of printshops opened in England during this period, Caxton

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[2]The phrase "intellectually marketable" has been borrowed from William Kuskin, "Reading Caxton: Transformations in Capital, Authority, Print, and Persona in the Late Fifteenth Century," *New Medieval Literatures* 3 (1999): 149–183.

predominates my examination for several reasons. He was the first printer in England, and he exerted noticeable influence upon his contemporaries and successors. After he set up shop at Westminster in 1476, he was prolific. Of the 412 books listed in the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* as being printed in England, 97 were printed by Caxton.[3] Many of his editions provide a unique perspective on the importance of printing due to the inclusion of his prologues, epilogues, and other paratexts that explain the circumstances of printing. These pieces provide insights into the theorization of print at the moment of its birth. Furthermore, the reprintings of these paratexts by later printers reveal their continued usefulness during the incunabular period to explain the novelty and import of the new technology to readers.

Caxton was not only connected to other printers due to their reprinting his works but also by a network of human and material associations. His former foreman, the aforementioned Wynkyn de Worde, became a prolific printer in his own right. De Worde actively fostered a sense of connection between himself and Caxton in his printings. He adapted Caxton's printer's device, usually leaving Caxton's initials in place.[4] De Worde even refers to his printshop in Westminster as "Castons hous" as late as 1498.[5] Robert Copland, one of De Worde's former employees, also set up his own printing house.[6] The most prolific printer of incunabula in England, Richard

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[3] Available from the *Incunabula Short Title Catalogue* (http://istc.bl.uk). Caxton's count includes one book potentially printed by Colard Mansion for him in Bruges in either 1475 or 1476, the *Horae ad usum sarum* (*STC* 15867). Other catalogues give slightly different numbers. The *Universal Short Title Catalogue* (http://ustc.ac.uk) has 457 items, 115 of which are under Caxton's imprint. The *English Short Title Catalogue* (http://estc.bl.uk) lists Caxton as printer for 102 of the 439 publications.

[4] His own name was usually printed below the device.

[5] *The Doctrinal of Death* (*STC* 6931, 1498); also in the colophons of *Parvula* (*STC* 23163.7, 1497); *The Miracles of Our Blessed Lady* (*STC* 17539, 1496); and *Accedence* (*STC* 23153.3, 1495).

[6] Mary C. Erler, "Copland, Robert (*fl.* 1505–1547)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Pynson, even writes that his reprinting of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5084, 1492) was "diligently

ouirsen & duely examined by the pollitike reason and ouirsight. of my worshipful master William

Caxton accordinge to the entent and effecte of the seid Geffrey Chaucer" (fol. 1v).[7] Caxton's

connections to smaller printers also demonstrate the pervasiveness of his influences. Both the St.

Albans (or "Schoolmaster") Printer and the London printers John Lettou and William de

Machlinia used Caxton's type 3.[8] Caxton was not just a founder of print in England but rather its

epicenter.

Caxton's dominance of early printing is further underscored by his survival. Of the many

printers who set up shop in England before 1490, Caxton is the only one to last. Theodoric Rood

in Oxford, the St. Albans Printer, John Lettou, and William de Machlinia all closed shop by 1488.

Two years later, Richard Pynson started the first post-Caxton press that became an enduring

enterprise.[9]

Caxton has also dominated scholarship on the English incunabular period, with critical

focus on him as establishing not only a successful business model but also literary tastes for

English print buyers. Much of this work began in the mid-nineteenth century with the influential

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[7]No one knows where Pynson learned printing. He began residing in London in 1482 and became a bookseller in 1490. Though possible, no evidence exists to suggest he apprenticed with Caxton. Pynson's use of "master," I believe, recognizes Caxton's position as the pre-eminent printer and founder of the printing industry in England. Pamela Neville-Sington, "Pynson, Richard (c. 1449–1529/30)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[8]The St. Albans Printer used it for the headings in that press's reprint of Caxton's *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9995; 1486). See Lotte Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England* (London: British Library, 2010), 95–99. For Lettou and de Machlinia, see W. J. Partridge, "The Use of William Caxton's Type 3 by John Lettou and William de Machlinia in the Printing of Their *Yearbook 35 Henry VI*, c.1481-1482," *British Library Journal* 9, no. 1 (1983): 56–65.

[9]According to data in the *USTC*. Pynson's 1490 productions were small, three titles, the longest of which was 116 folios.

biographical and bibliographical work of William Blades.[10] Blades established many of the basic

bibliographic facts of Caxton's printing, including delimiting the multiple types that he used at his

press. In creating his biography of the man, he also read the productions of his press in economic

terms of trade that would seemingly have been close to Caxton the merchant's heart. Norman

Francis Blake's scholarship on the printer in many respects furthered this assessment of Caxton

(see chapter 1).[11] Although Blake recognized the important role Caxton played in bringing

fashionable Burgundian texts to an English audience, he often subsumed Caxton's work under

narratives of economic expediency and profitability.

The totalizing explanation that Caxton's work simply reflects profitable choices has been

challenged by many modern critics who often excavate the ways that his paratexts engage

traditional discourses of literary production, particularly patronage, innovatively.[12] This approach

shifted the understanding of Caxton toward the symbolic nature of Caxton's own work, often

seeking to find how the printer is engaged in the production of authority and cultural capital.[13]

William Kuskin has helped shape this more recent understanding of Caxton's engagement in

literature as a means of negotiated and exchanged cultural capital through several influential

articles, an edited collection, and a monograph entitled *Symbolic Caxton*.[14]

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[10] See, for example, William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, vol. 1 (London: Joesph Lilly, 1861); William Blades, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer* (London: Trübner, 1877).

[11] See N. F. Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991).

[12] See Russell Rutter, "William Caxton and Literary Patronage," *Studies in Philology* 84, no. 4 (1987): 440–470.

[13] Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, and John Guillory are frequently invoked.

[14] See Kuskin, "Reading Caxton: Transformations in Capital, Authority, Print, and Persona in the Late Fifteenth Century"; William Kuskin, "Caxton's Worthies Series: The Production of Literary Culture," *ELH* 66, no. 3 (1999): 511–551; William Kuskin, ed., *Caxton's Trace: Studies in the History of English Printing* (University of Notre Dame

Caxton's social contexts also became foregrounded in the study of literary aspects of early English print. Particularly, his work as a merchant, his life abroad, his importation of print technology, and his introduction of certain Continental literature into England has led to an emphasis on the cosmopolitan workings of Caxton, his press, and the literature that came out of it.[15] The long history of texts like Christine de Pizan's *Moral Proverbs* (*STC* 7273, 1478) and Abu al-Wafa Mubashshir ibn Fatik's *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* (*STC* 6826, 1477) have been central to the work of Anne E. B. Coldiron.[16] She provides an excellent correction, along with Kuskin and many others, to approaches that focus on the machinations of a single entrepreneur, a view that fails to understand literary functioning in the late fifteenth century. The very act of translation—an enterprise absolutely central to Caxton's press and, as a scholar of translation, central to Coldiron's criticism—becomes a transformational site that exists as a nexus for multiple influences, effectively revising the standard source-influence model that prioritized the revisions of the translator above all other influences.[17]

This study intervenes in the criticism on Caxton and early English print in several key

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Press, 2006); William Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton: Literary Culture and Print Capitalism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

[15] See Anne F. Sutton, "Caxton Was a Mercer: His Social Milieu and Friends," in *England in the Fifteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1992 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1994); Jennifer R. Goodman, "Caxton's Continent," in *Caxton's Trace: Studies in the History of English Printing*, ed. William Kuskin (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 101–123.

[16] Anne E. B. Coldiron, "Taking Advice from a Frenchwoman: Caxton, Pynson, and Christine de Pizan's *Moral Proverbs*," in *Caxton's Trace: Studies in the History of English Printing*, ed. William Kuskin (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 127–166; Anne E. B. Coldiron, *English Printing, Verse Translation, and the Battle of the Sexes, 1476–1557* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); Anne E. B. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders: Translation and Textuality in the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[17] Also see Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), especially 116-127.

ways. First, its primary focus on class builds upon and focuses Kuskin's symbolic readings of Caxton; it creates a larger narrative of engagement in social definition across early English print, including some discussion of the impact that this engagement had on subsequent printers. This study also turns some of the insights gained by Coldiron's readings—specifically the interruption of source-influence models toward an understanding of printers' transformational powers in socio-linguistic terms—toward insular literary production. I take what she has done in describing how translations "negotiate the delicate problem of a misalignment of (old) social and (new) literary hierarchies" and turn them toward a broader selection of works, including non-translated English matter as well.[18]

Some Foundational Definitions

Much of my evidence comes from paratextual materials. The term "paratext," however, requires a bit of specification. My use of the term throughout this study is primarily limited to material written from the printer's point of view, often prefatory or concluding statements inserted into a production as part of the book itself. This is notably a narrower definition than may be generally assigned to paratexts. Gérard Genette's foundational book *Seuils* considers *mise en page*, running titles, and tables of contents as paratextual materials as well.[19] Such items may be called "paratexts" or "paratextual" in the chapters that follow, but the inclusion of such items

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[18] Coldiron, "Taking Advice from a Frenchwoman: Caxton, Pynson, and Christine de Pizan's *Moral Proverbs*," 140.

[19] Gérard Genette, *Seuils* (Paris: Seuil, 1987); Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Literature, Culture, and Theory 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

under this umbrella term will be specifically noted.

The conception of "class" also requires some prefatory definition. In this study, my understanding comes from both modern historical analysis (see under "Assumptions" below) and from the printers' own demarcations of social status. These two sources provide evidence that merchants and urban professionals belonging to guilds effectively separated themselves as a group that had an identity different from a conception of "common" people. Caxton, a mercer himself, would make such divisions in his paratextual materials. In his prologue for *Godfrey of Boloyne* (*STC* 13175, 1481), for example, Caxton writes that he has published this text for "thexhortacion of alle Cristen prynces / Lordes / Barons / Knyghtes / Gentilmen / Marchanntes / and all the comyn peple of this noble Royamme" (fol. 2v; sig. a3 v). The merchants are the first group in the list not to be, by definition, claimants to land or title by inheritance, though the capitalization visually cues some affinity between "Marchanntes" and the preceding noble groups. The group of merchants, however, exists as a step on the social ladder before descending to the undifferentiated mass of commoners.

The idea of this as a "middle class," however, does not align with our current usage.[20] Instead, they are often referred to as "middling" in this study. The group comprised a mixture of many professions, including merchants, lawyers, skilled tradesmen, administrators, and household servants. In her foundational work on the class, Sylvia Thrupp sought to define merchants as having a unique identity from other professions that also saw their practitioners gain considerable

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[20] Others do not share a hesitation for the term "middle class." See Malcolm Richardson, *Middle-Class Writing in Late Medieval London* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011).

wealth and status.[21] That distinction, however, is often not held by modern critics, who group the multiple occupations that hovered just below the rank of gentlemen as "urban elite."[22]

Assumptions

The arguments that are made in the subsequent chapters would hold no water without some basic claims about English society and book production during the incunabular period: (1) merchants and the middling classes valued social elevation and sought to better their stations; (2) middling sorts actually read the books produced in England during the incunabular period; (3) traditional manuscript practices often signified wealth and books that pertain to a higher social class; (4) print production was speculative. Each of these assumptions flows beneath the surface of each chapter, yet rehearsing the documentary evidence for them when trying to make a largely independent argument would be cumbersome. I call these my "assumptions" not because I have taken them on faith but because I do not seek to turn my research toward modifying these basic claims. Instead, I assume the opinions of other scholars and take their claims with me into each chapter to serve as a background for other arguments. The basic facts and critical opinions that underpin these assumptions, however, follow.

The best evidence for the first claim comes not only from books themselves, but also from

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[21] Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962). The first edition was printed in 1948, and a final one was released in 1989.

[22] For an edited collection on the range of professions in this group, see Cecil H. Clough, ed., *Profession, Vocation, and Culture in Later medieval England: Essays Dedicated to the Memory of A.R. Myers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1982). Also see Jenny Kermode, *Medieval Merchants: York, Beverley and Hull in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

economic trends and visual evidence. Mark Addison Amos eloquently states the generalized

historical narrative:

> [...] as London Companies replaced England's barons as the Crown's major source of finances, formal political power soon followed. A number of titles and terms of address link the members of the urban elite and the nobility, averring a growing recognition that those commoners ennobled by education or profession were coming to join those noble by birth, occupying similarly dominant positions in relation to the rest of society.[23]

Amos concerns himself mostly with ways that conduct literature served merchant's need to

symbolically conceive of themselves as ennobled, yet other means for such social elevation

existed as well. Coats of arms could be granted to wealthy individuals, effectively moving that

individual into the category of "gentleman."[24] Wealthy individuals could also appropriate the

dress of nobler persons, resulting in England's sumptuary laws that sought to enforce a sartorial

demarcation of social class. Claire Sponsler has called the attempts to make sure that persons only

wear clothes pertaining to their degree—including acts in 1463 and 1483—"resoundingly

ineffectual," with subsequent sumptuary laws often directly citing the utter lack of enforcement of

the previous statutes.[25] The fluidity of class boundaries at this time enabled social advancement

through appropriation: "Wealthy merchants, then, were free to enhance their social status by

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[23] Mark Addison Amos, "'For Manners Make Man': Bourdieu, de Certeau, and the Common Appropriation of Noble Manners in the *Book of Courtesy*," in *Medieval Conduct*, ed. Kathleen M. Ashley and Robert L. A. Clark (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 23.

[24] See Maurice Hugh Keen, *Origins of the English Gentleman: Heraldry, Chivalry, and Gentility in Medieval England, c.1300-c.1500* (Stroud: Tempus, 2002). As Keen's title illustrates, the idea of becoming a gentleman has a longer history than my timeframe here.

[25] Claire Sponsler, "Narrating the Social Order: Medieval Clothing Laws," *Clio* 21, no. 3 (1992): 267. Also see Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

adopting the trappings of the lower nobility."[26] The reasons for why merchants and other urban

elite wanted to advance their positions are simple enough: increased political power, further

opportunities to amass wealth, and legitimizing one's own profession in pursuit of the previously

mentioned motives. Yet the reasons why they did this are not as important to this study as the fact

that they did.

None of the social aspiration and ennobling effect of print editions would be appealing,

however, if people from these middling classes did not actually buy and read such books. There

are two sources of evidence for readership of English incunabula: the printers' own words and

ownership inscriptions. The former can be unreliable, and the latter can be difficult to find.

Nevertheless, both suggest appeal to a wide swath of society for early print books.

The earliest advertisement for a print edition illustrates the broad readership printers

sought. Caxton's 1477 advertisement for his *Ordinale ad usum Sarum* (*STC* 4890)—the only

surviving advertisement for his shop—begins with an incredibly broad appeal:

> If it plese ony man spirituel or temporel to bye ony pyes of two and thre
> comemoraciõs of salisburi use [...], late hym come to westmonester in to the
> almonesrye at the reed pale and he shal haue them good chepe.

Although this advertisement does not include women, it otherwise casts a very broad net. It seeks

purchasers both lay and religious with no reference to the appropriate audience for this text.

Interest—"If it plese"—should lead the reader to purchasing instead of an occupational

obligation. The final statement that the potential buyer will obtain them "good chepe" reinforces

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[26] Tracy Adams, "'Noble, wyse and grete lordes, gentilmen and marchauntes': Caxton's Prologues as Conduct Books for Merchants," *Parergon* 22, no. 2 (2005): 58.

the appeal to persons for whom purchasing a book would have otherwise been a prohibitively costly undertaking. The affordability of Caxton's texts enables the reader's desire to move him to an actual purchase.

Caxton often creates a narrower audience in his paratextual materials, usually through negative statements. In the prologue to his edition of Cicero's *De senectute* (*STC* 5293, 1481), he writes that the present text is "not requysyte ne eke conuenyent for euery rude and symple man" but instead is for "noble / wyse / & grete lordes gentilmen & marchaũtes" (fol. 2r; sig. 13). Margaret Lane Ford examined the accuracy of this oft-used class-defined grouping of readers in her chapter in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*. In a study "based on a sample of over 4,300 printed books which bear clear evidence of having been in private ownership in Britain before 1557," Ford found that Caxton's claims for his readership are essentially true[27]:

> If it is apparent that Caxton the translator, Caxton the author of these prologues, intended merchants, the gentry and nobility to be his readers, then the books themselves prove that Caxton the printer and businessman was a keen judge of his market, for it is precisely among these classes where one finds the majority of the owners of his books. Fully two-thirds of the Caxton books in the sample have that kind of owner. The remainder have not yet been identified. Thus they are as likely to be among this class as not.[28]

Although many texts' ownership will never be known, merchants and the other professional urban elite who operated in the class directly below gentlemen did, indeed, own copies of Caxton's books. Yet ownership was not the only way to access texts either. A study by Yu-Chiao Wang reveals that copies of Caxton's romances—including *Le Morte Darthur*, the *Recuyell of the*

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[27] Margaret Lane Ford, "Private Ownership of Printed Books," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 205.

[28] ibid., 214.

Histories of Troye, and the *Eneydos*—owned by the Tudor court bear annotations of the servants instead of actual nobility.[29]

The preceding claims about English society during the last half of the fifteenth century are necessary for the foundational idea of this study; the assumptions that follow about book production and status are more often necessary for particular arguments that come momentarily in the following chapters. The first of these assumptions about the status of books is that manuscripts were valued more highly than print counterparts. By this, I mean that manuscripts generally cost more; with this comes the conception of manuscripts being more related to and appropriate for the upper classes. Like any generalization, instances to the contrary can readily be found. Plain manuscripts in limp vellum bindings and lavish print books, such as the ones produced by Colard Mansion, demonstrate that the status of manuscripts as luxury items fit only for those of noble birth was not always the case. Yet the higher value of manuscripts—being both more costly and more highly esteemed—compared to print is supported by a range of books from the late fifteenth century. When a copy of Anthony Woodville's translation of the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* (*STC* 6826; 1477) was prepared for presentation to Edward IV, a manuscript was made: Lambeth Palace Library MS 265. This presentation copy includes a miniature of Woodville giving the book to Edward IV. In the foreground and slightly behind the earl kneels a man in black, often assumed to be Caxton, though others hold it is the scribe.[30] If the man is the scribe, Caxton is not banished from the book: the scribe inserts later into the text that

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[29] Yu-Chiao Wang, "Caxton's Romances and Their Early Tudor Readers," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (June 2004): 173–188.

[30] Janet Backhouse, "The Royal Library from Edward IV to Henry VII," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 270.

Caxton had printed many copies of the present translation.[31] This manuscript attests to the value

of the printer's work even as it denies the appropriateness of the product for presentation to a king.

Outside of presentation copies, decoration in fifteenth-century print books shows that

some readers desired to make the texts look like manuscripts. Rubrication was common and

provided an aid to the reader's ability to navigate the text, yet readers also added seemingly

useless changes. A copy of Caxton's first edition of *Reynard the Fox* (*STC* 20919; 1481) in the

Rylands Library has lines ruled under each print line to make it seem more like a scribal

production.[32] Curt Bühler notes several interesting attempts across Europe to erase a book's

status as printed, including the erasure of "impressum" from a colophon to substitute "scriptum"

in a German incunabulum.[33] The Parisian printer Antoine Vérard would paint woodcuts in his

vellum copies of books to make them seem like deluxe editions.[34] These Continental examples,

however, did not always remain to the east of the English Channel; nor do they represent only

non-English tastes. Henry VII purchased many editions from Vérard in which some effort was

used to modify the book's status as a printed object. Some of Henry's library had woodcuts not

merely colored but completely painted over by a new miniature.[35] Dates in several colophons

were erased, perhaps to conceal the historicity of their production since such a date would reveal

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[31] N. F. Blake, "Caxton at Work: A Reconsideration," in *The Malory Debate: Essays on the Texts of* Le Morte Darthur, ed. Bonnie Wheeler, Robert L. Kindrick, and Michael N. Salda (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 244-245.

[32] A. S. G. Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons," in *Incunabula: Studies in Fifteenth-Century Printed Books presented to Lotte Hellinga* (London: The British Library, 1999), 494.

[33] Curt F. Bühler, *The Fifteenth-Century Book* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), 64.

[34] ibid., 70.

[35] Mary Beth Winn, *Anthoine Vérard: Parisian Publisher, 1485–1512* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1997), 149.

that the text was not produced specifically for Henry.[36] One copy owned by Henry VII of *La destruction de Troye* (*USTC* 71385; 1498) came from Vérard's publishing house, but Jean Driart printed the text. Driart's colophon has been erased from the vellum presentation copy, and Vérard's device inserted.[37]

As for cost, little evidence exists for consumer prices of English incunabula. Yet Caxton's own words illuminate the relative status of print editions as economical alternatives to manuscripts. As mentioned above, Caxton writes in his *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9991; 1480) that the invention of printing made texts "grete chepe"—a thrifty alternative to manuscript. In the only surviving advertisement for any of Caxton's productions (discussed below), he tells potential purchasers where to find his printshop and that pyes (compilations) of liturgical texts can be obtained "good chepe" (*STC* 4890; 1477). The phrase signals advantageous terms for the buyer, that a good bargain can be had.[38]

Finally, there is the common-sense argument that making a print book look more manuscript-like was optional and added cost. The existence of many undecorated copies reveals this to be true. The added embellishment would add cost and mark a book's buyer as wealthier or at least pretending to be so. With the potential exception of printers applying decoration to all

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[36] Winn, *Anthoine Vérard*, 148. The texts are *Le grant Boece de consolacion* (*USTC* 65040; 1494), *L'ordinaire des crestiens* (*USTC* 70550; 1494), and *Le jouvencel* (*USTC* 70951; 1493).

[37] ibid.

[38] Though incomplete, the customs rolls provide some interesting information. Caxton both imported and exported books, the latter being very unusual for this time. The exportation of 140 books in 1487 was valued at £6 (roughly 10d per book). When he imported 1,049 books in April 1488, the valuation equated to about 4d per book, which is probably an error. See Paul Needham, "The Customs Rolls as Documents for the Printed-Book Trade in England," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 148–163.

books in a given run, as Caxton seems to have done with the manifold copies of his 1483 *Golden Legend* (*STC* 24873, 24874) that contain rubrication from the same rubrisher, other texts enabled rubrication by leaving guide letters and space without requiring it.[39]

Manuscripts being more highly valued than print books does not, however, mean that print texts were seen as poor approximations or copies of "real" conveyors of literature. The fact that Henry VII purchased so many print books—though history has seen him as a stingy king—demonstrates that print is not inherently inferior. Making a print book more manuscript-like, however, invokes a sense of elevation of the physical object, even if that object is already venerable in its own way.

Another basic assumption that pervades this study is that print production was speculative. Printers created hundreds of copies of texts without obtaining guarantees from purchasers before a production run began. This statement crucially requires the printer to fabricate a readership for his wares—a readership that cannot be fully known by the printer. Often, this statement is seen in opposition to bespoke manuscript production, meaning that manuscripts were created at the particular behest of a buyer, entering into existence subsequent to consumer desire. The latter statement fails to capture accurately the breadth of manuscript production during the late fifteenth century. Manuscript books of hours, for example, were produced speculatively and imported into England.[40] Three *Confessio Amantis* manuscripts contain blanks for the insertion of a purchaser's coat of arms, suggesting speculative production as well.[41] Indeed, print's speculative nature can

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[39] Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons," 493-494 n. 4.

[40] J. J. G. Alexander, "Foreign Illuminators and Illuminated Manuscripts," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 53.

[41] Oxford Corpus Christi Coll. MS 67, Bodley MSS Rawlinson C.446, and Digby 230, briefly discussed in Chapter 4.

be seen as an extension of the economics of manuscript production in the late fifteenth century. Arguments regarding the genesis of speculative production, however, are outside the scope of this investigation. Printers' engagements with manuscript production as a technology often focus on technological problems of reproduction instead of the economic underpinnings of the book trade before print (see chapter 2). Regardless of the standing of manuscripts, print was speculative. It had to be to make viable the economies of scale gained from making hundreds of copies.

Print's speculative nature makes one issue extremely difficult to resolve: Did printers' approaches to making their texts "intellectually marketable" produce audiences who would want to buy them? Or were printers supplying audience demands that already existed? The answer, which is no answer at all, is that they emerged simultaneously with each prodding the other forward. The information given above gives some sense of the preparedness of a group of middling urban professionals to begin owning texts as markers of both their education and wealth. Yet the survival of Caxton while other printers went out of business suggests that his approach may have been particularly well-received. One unique characteristic of his print production was the high percentage of English, as opposed to Latin or French, texts. The descriptions he gives in his paratexts of various unnamed gentlemen and nobles coming to him and demanding a certain work be printed in English—as can be found in both *Le Morte Darthur* (*STC* 801; 1485) and *Charles the Great* (*STC* 5013; 1485)—overtly claim to be responding to explicit demands from his audience. The origin of other books, however, lies in Caxton's estimation of what is going to be morally instructive to an audience, such as in his prologue to *Godfrey of Boloyne* (*STC* 13175; 1481) and the *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796; 1490). Yet one can conclude that, over the course of the first fifteen years of print production in England, Caxton's editions helped solidify an insular desire for English print texts.

This Present Study

The foregoing assumptions are primarily necessary to make the task of fashioning a coherent argument manageable; however, they also necessarily exist as generalized claims because specificity is not always possible given the physical records from the period. There is so much that can never be known due to the gaps in the extant physical records from this period. Lost editions, mutilated copies, and lack of documentation require the scholar of this period to proceed tentatively on shaky ground composed of untrustworthy artifacts. This situation has caused historians of the book to be wide-ranging in their approaches. Methodologically, this field has always been marked by interdisciplinarity and the creative overlap of multiple approaches brought into conversation with one another.[42] Some may see this multiplicity as chaotic. When one considers that subjects appropriate to study under the mantle of "the history of the book" can be any aspect of the creation, production, or reception of any type of communication, one can easily understand how little the field excludes from its purview and its approaches.[43] Here, I embrace methodological variety. The transitions in this study between word frequency analysis, close reading, and material culture studies—each employed to answer question left unanswered by other approaches—provide a much richer understanding of books that were themselves in a state of flux between manuscript practices and the more standardized forms of print books that would slowly emerge over the next century. I believe this methodological breadth in itself makes

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[42] See Michael Felix Suarez, "Historiographical Problems and Possibilities in Book History and the National Histories of the Book," *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003-2004): 140–170.

[43] David L. Vander Meulen, "How to Read Book History," *Studies in Bibliography* 56 (2003-2004): 171–193.

an argument for the necessity to analyze texts using multiple approaches. Even if the results of different analyses are the same, the harmony from them makes a stronger argument.

In no chapter is this combination more obvious than my first. There, I combine both word frequency analysis and close reading to deepen an understanding of Caxton's use of the word "noble"—one of his most used terms in paratextual material. I begin by examining the functioning of "noble" in the prologue to *Le Morte Darthur* (*STC* 801, 1485) to illustrate the printer's engagement with the concept. Caxton employs "noble" in a paradoxical way—as a means to describe exclusive social categories and as a means to describe generalized behavior that anyone can model. The oscillation between these two uses provides a conception of "noble" that simultaneously excludes middling readers while inviting them into that rarified category through the act of reading. With this example in the background, I engage a critical problem with attempts to claim such a pattern reflect Caxton's careful rhetorical maneuverings: the printer's reputation as a terrible writer. This conception of Caxton would seemingly undermine attempts to gain insight from the printer's word choice as such a search for meaning would potentially only find inanity. I pair this with analysis of eleven translations that demonstrate the frequency of "noble" occurring several times more in prefatory paratextual materials than in the bodies of translations themselves. The word, I argue, can therefore be seen not as a lexical convenience for Caxton but as particularly pertinent to initial paratexts. I then turn to Caxton's first and last translations and conduct a close reading as a tool to understand how this discourse functions not as an original invention of Caxton, but as a reflection of Caxton's entanglement in a socio-linguistic discourse that he cannot entirely control. I argue that Caxton is suspended in these cultural discourses of class and exploits them to establish himself as one who has access to the political, economic, and moral authority of the nobility.

In my second chapter, I take up one specific aspect of ennobling reading: that to become more noble one has to read works by the masters. This idea is clearly expressed in *The Book of Courtesy* (*STC* 3303, 1477), which provides the theoretical framework for social advancement through reading Hoccleve, Gower, Lydgate, and, especially, Chaucer. It also uses an intermediary—an unnamed father figure instructing Little John—as a conduit through which Little John's appropriation of noble manners and reading practices occur. I argue that Caxton creates a similar persona for himself in relation to Chaucer: he establishes the printer as someone who has access to Chaucer's literary authority and can best convey that authority to readers through print. The texts examined are the *Boece* (*STC* 3199; 1478), the second edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083, 1483), and *The House of Fame* (*STC* 5087, 1483). The last work demonstrates how Caxton intervenes in unfinished works, claiming authority over completing a text. The final section in this chapter looks forward to editions of *The Parliament of Fowls*, specifically Rastell's (*STC* 5091.5; 1525?) and De Worde's (*STC* 5092; 1530). These texts provide a forward-looking testing ground for the preceding arguments about the creation of the printer's persona; I find that their paratexts share in many of the hallmarks of Caxton's own creations, even though Caxton did not himself print paratextual material for that work. Thus, the conception of the printer as a conduit between the reader and literary authority persisted, even without an exact, work-specific precedent from Caxton.

I then turn in my third chapter to ways that print as a technology was legitimized by its inclusion in historical narratives. The two texts that form the evidence for this chapter are Caxton's *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9991, 1480) and the St. Alban's Printer's reprint in 1486 (*STC* 9995). Both texts include material that Caxton penned: a continuation that brought the information in the chronicles up to the date of 1460, the first year of Edward IV's reign. The two

texts, however, lie on either side of Edward IV's death in 1483. In Caxton's edition, the printer includes the birth of printing and locates it close to Edward IV's royal authority, which I argue legitimizes its creation, existence, and the social value of its productions. In 1486, the St. Albans Printer moves the invention of printing to a section on matters pertaining to the Church. The move, I argue, reveals the need in both texts to authorize print technology by linking it to existing political authorities, whether king or church.

My final chapter examines the materiality of one of Caxton's productions, the 1483 *Confessio Amantis* (*STC* 12142). This text was unlike any other Caxton edition in one obvious way: it left gaps not just for rubrication but for illustration as well. I examine multiple copies of this text held at libraries in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Those gaps are often left blank, but amateurs occasionally filled them in, participating in the book's own embellishment. I argue that the existence of those gaps signals that the book itself—as a material object—is socially nimble. I believe this view of the text can be applied to other productions as well, but Caxton's *Confessio* is special. It facilitated, whether intentionally or not, readers' desires to participate in their own elevation of objects they own. The case of the Caxton *Confessio* underscores print objects as means through which readers could potentially ennoble themselves.

I believe one final note about the basic argument of this project is necessary. This ennobling that takes place through owning and reading early English print is entirely fictional. No marginal note (that I have encountered) exists that attests to a middling reader's desire to obtain a coat of arms or dress more nobly because of what they read in a text. The ennobling negotiations that occur within the texts analyzed here are intellectual—even in their material expression via amateur embellishment. But it is an appreciation of the fictive nature of nobility itself that engaged printers in such appeals in the first place.

Books and Their References

Throughout this study, the *Short Title Catalogue* (*STC*) numbers have been used to provide consistent references for texts. The choice to use the *STC* was made given its persistent use in modern scholarship. References to books give a normalized or uniform title followed by the *STC* reference number, a comma, and the date of publication in parentheses. This system effaces any scholarly debates regarding dating of publication as I simply give the date I believe to be accurate. However, arguments over precise dating do not usually undermine my claims. When such arguments would, I address them in the text or in footnotes (such as the dating of the St. Albans Printer's *Chronicles of England*).

Folio numbers are given along with an "r" or "v" to denote recto and verso. Since print books may have foliation that starts after introductory material, lowercase Roman numerals have been used for such unfoliated prefatory material. Where the print book contains no foliation, continuous numbers from the first page with print on it has been used. When signatures are present, these are given after the folio number I have assigned.

One consistently employed shortcut has been leaving out footnote citations for primary source materials. Since the year of publication, the *STC* number, and, usually, printer are given in the text, a bibliographic entry has been omitted. Each early English print book has been accessed using EEBO, and transcriptions come directly from those copies.

Chapter 1

The "Noble" Appeal in Caxton's Paratexts

"Noble" is William Caxton's favorite word. I can make such a claim based upon Kiyokazu Mizobata's concordance to N. F. Blake's edition of *Caxton's Own Prose*. In the concordance, an interesting word choice pattern emerges. Across all of Caxton's added material, "noble" was the most commonly used word of semantic substance (see table 1.1). The only words occurring more frequently in the 34,215 words that comprise the corpus of his writings are conjunctions, articles, prepositions, pronouns, and forms of "to be" and "to have." A conclusion can be made that Caxton's use of the term underscores the printer's preoccupation with ideas of nobility or with actual noble persons themselves. Indeed, the fact that "noble" edges out "book" in Mizobata's list (212 occurrences, ranking twenty-first, coming immediately after "noble"[1]) can lead us to see class, social standing, or virtuous character (described as being noble) as a primary preoccupation of Caxton's.

When we closely examine Caxton's use of "noble" in relation to particular works, we find an interesting engagement with the word. Taking *Le Morte Darthur* (*STC* 801, 1485) as a representative example, we can see Caxton engaging multiple definitions of the concept that do

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[1]Mizobata did not lemmatize his concordance. The variant forms of book ("booke," "bok," "boke") and its plurals, for example, total 389 uses.

Word	No. of Occurrences
and	2424
the	1791
of	1781
to	903
in	872
that	650
I	439
as	392
for	355
is	325
this	309
it	283
his	277
he	272
whiche	263
a	256
have	255
by	243
be	242
noble	235

Table 1.1: Caxton's 20 most frequently used words in his paratexts. The entirety of his paratexts comprises 34,215 words (Kiyokazu Mizobata, ed., *A Concordance to Caxton's Own Prose* [Tokyo: Shohakusha Publishing Co., 1990], 599, 620).

not neatly align. At the outset of the *Le Morte Darthur*, he writes that the book came into

existence because "Many noble and dyuers gentylmen of thys royame of Englond camen and

demaunded me many and oftymes / wherfore that I haue not do made & enprynte the noble

hystorye of the saynt greal / and [...] kyng Arthur" (sig. 2r; fol. 1r). As demand defines potential

readership here, the audience for Malory's work is instantly identified as noble gentlemen.[2]

Caxton is explicit about this noble readership when he asks that audience to receive and correct

the book: "vnder the fauour and correctyon of al noble lordes and gentylmen enprysed to

enprynte a book of the noble hystoryes of the sayd kynge Arthur" (fol. 2r; sig. 3r). Both origin

and reception, therefore, are located as existing at least among the lower nobility of England. The

reference to the text containing the "noble hystoryes" of Arthur and his knights equates the

content itself with this a noble audience. Indeed, Caxton's stated intention—being printed with

"the entente that noble men may see and lerne the noble actes of chyualrye" (fol. 2r; sig.

3r)—strengthens the noble link between the content and the readers. Through the content, origin,

and eventual reception, Caxton's prologue seems to draw a boundary around *Le Morte Darthur*

that would exclude merchants and other urban elite.[3]

Caxton, however, undermines such exclusivity. A few lines after stating his intention to

inspire "noble" men, he further elevates the audience to the upper levels of aristocracy; then, he

invites all persons to engage in the ennobling behavior of reading: "humbly bysechyng al noble

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[2]S. Carole Weinberg, "Caxton, Anthony Woodville, and the Prologue to the *Morte Darthur*," *Studies in Philology* 102, no. 1 (2005): 45–65; Weinberg attempts to identify Anthony Woodville as one of the noble gentlemen, perhaps even supplying Caxton with the Winchester MS of *Le Morte Darthur* (54). I believe the vague description here, however, ultimately makes the potential for ennobling reading a much more attainable.

[3]Yu-Chiao Wang identifies this as a trend in Caxton's paratexts to his prose romance editions. See Wang, "Caxton's Romances and Their Early Tudor Readers."

lordes and ladyes wyth al other estates of what estate or degree they been of / that shal see and rede in this sayd book and werke / that they take the good and honest actes in their remembraunce / and to folowe the same" (fol. 2r; sig. 3r). Crucially, Caxton not only redefines the audience to include all estates and degrees, but he engages them in the same type of reading-inspired ennoblement from following the "noble actes of chyualry"—though now given as "honest actes"—that can be found within the following pages.[4] Caxton thus upholds the authority of nobility, bolstered by a sense of exclusivity, while simultaneously inviting readers who are not part of that category to see themselves as becoming noble.

Similar paratextual maneuverings occur in many of Caxton's additions.[5] In this chapter, I argue that this promotion of nobility as an exclusive category while providing readers avenues of ingress into that domain situates Caxton's editions as particularly appealing to middling class book buyers. But the reason for further pursuing this discussion is that the foundation upon which that argument is currently built is rather shaky. The fundamental approach to Caxton's paratexts that sees Caxton's careful construction of this paradoxical nobility relies on deeply problematic intentionist readings. Indeed, the sentence that begins this chapter problematically presupposes that frequent use of a word reveals that it was meaningful. Alternatively, over-use of a word could mean utter inanity—that it is not his favorite word but a lexical twitch. The lack of significance of Caxton's word choice can be further supported by his reputation as a terrible writer.

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[4]I follow Raluca Radulescu here, who also sees this as opening the audience to merchants and non-noble readers. Raluca Radulescu, *The Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 45.

[5]For example, *Godfrey of Boloyne* (*STC* 13175, 1481), the *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796, 1490), and the *Order of Chivalry* (*STC* 3326, 1484), among many others. The multiple definitions of the term are such that similar arguments can be readily made.

In this chapter, therefore, I have two goals. The first is to understand how to read Caxton's paratextual information given his reception as a writer. The second is to show how "noble" functions in his paratexts. I thus begin with historical approaches to Caxton's writing that would overtly contradict the attempted goal of reading meaning from Caxton's words. Yet, running counter to these oddly intentionist readings that deny Caxton meaning over his own words, I find data that shows not just that "noble" was one of his most-used words, but that it was particularly useful in prefatory paratexts. This distant reading of word frequency analysis provides a factual basis for the conclusion that there is something special about using the word "noble" in prefatory paratexts. I end, therefore, by turning to two of those paratexts—those of the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (*STC* 15375, 1473) and the *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796, 1490)—to show how Caxton foregrounds his use of "noble" as a negotiation of authority that rends away the very power over his language. Ultimately, I find that "noble" has appeal in Caxton's paratexts not because of Caxton's genius but because he is suspended within discourses of nobility that he can partially exploit.

Caxton's Reputation

One potential response to the above example of *Le Morte Darthur* is that it shows Caxton to be an inept writer whose lexical imprecision illustrates a deficient vocabulary. Such readings would actually participate in a tradition of Caxton scholarship that has derided the printer's literary style and tastes.[6] Even as early as the middle of the sixteenth century, Caxton may have

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[6]Many modern critics, including Anne E. B. Coldiron, William Kuskin, and Anne Sutton do close read Caxton's prose and dig from it new and powerful insights into the printer's workings and the position of his texts in relation to

been viewed as stupid. One of the first biographical descriptions of the man—an entry in John

Bale's *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptorum* (*STC* 1295, 1548) begins with an odd litotes:

"Gvilhelmus Caxton, Anglus, uir non omnino stupidus" [William Caxton, an Englishman, a man

not at all stupid] (fol. 208r). In the context of the entire entry (see below), Bale's praise of

Caxton's work as a printer suggests the translation of "non omnino" as an emphatic negative is

more likely than a rendering expressing reservation, like "a man not completely stupid."

Nevertheless, the description conveys Bale's recognition that some of his readers may perceive

Caxton as lacking intellectual acumen. The need to negate immediately an assessment of

Caxton's mental faculties reveals that such a belief may have already been prevalent.

Caxton would not be able to fault others for having this perception since his own words

are one likely origin. In his appropriations of the humility topos to describe his own translations,

he grovels before his nobler patrons, dedicatees, or readers. He dedicates his translation of

Blanchardine and Eglantyne (*STC* 3124, 1490) to Lady Margaret, Duchess of Somerset, and asks

her to, "to pardoune me of the rude and comyn englyshe. where as shall be found faulte For I

confesse me not lerned ne knowynge the arte of rethoryk" (fol. 1r).[7] The *Recuyell of the Histories

of Troye* (*STC* 15375, 1473) contains similar frequent mentions of his "symplenes and

vnperfightnes" in both English and French or that his Kentish English was "brode and rude" (fol.

1v). He beseeches his dedicatee, Lady Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy and sister to Edward IV,

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his society. I give this section detailing Caxton's reputation as a poor writer here because such critics do not engage in large-scale word-frequency analysis. Larger datasets that seek to find patterns of import lean more closely toward intentionist readings—that statistical analysis uncovers hidden patterns of thought that lay in an author's mind.

[7]Blades, *Life and Typography of William Caxton*, 188. This edition exists in one imperfect copy, though leaves are held at a few other institutions, and is not available in EEBO. Therefore, William Blades's older transcription of the material has been used.

to overlook any errors and to "arette hyt to þe symplenes of my connyng whiche is ful small in this behalue" (fol. 2v). Over the course of his paratexts, the claim that his command of the English language is unlearned and simple gains strength by the consistent repetition of such terms as "rude" and "simple." The relative paucity of terms used to describe his linguistic infelicities provides, in itself, an argument in support of that assessment. Unlike creative descriptions of stupidity that belie their overt claims through creative language, Caxton's use can seem straightforward, proving that these formulaic expressions of the humility topos are likely accurate assessments.

Descriptions of Caxton as a man lacking in literary talents extended beyond his style and to his actual literary tastes. In 1553, the Scottish poet Gavin Douglas justifies the need for a new translation of the *Aeneid*, *Eneados* (*STC* 24797), by citing the blunders that went into the only other extant English translation: Caxton's *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796, 1490). Crucially, Douglas does not merely fault Caxton's ability as a translator. Caxton's prose, no doubt, was deemed sub-par, but the true affront to Virgil's masterpiece came in his choosing of the wrong text to translate:

> Thoch wylliame Caxtoun, had no compatioun
> Of Virgill in that buk, he preyt in prois
> Clepand it Virgill, in Eneados
> Quhilk that he sayis, of Frensche he did translait
> It has na thing ado, therwith God wate
> Nor na mare like than the Deuil, and sanct Austin
> Haue he na thank tharfore, bot lois his pyne
> So schamefully, the storie did peruerte
> I reid his werk, with harmes at my hert
> That sic ane buk, but sentence or ingyne
> Suld be intitulit, eftir the poete diuine
> His ornate goldin versis, mare than gylt
> I spitte for disspite, to se thame spylt
> With sic ane wicht, quhilk treuly be myne entent
> Knew neuir thre wordis at all, quhat virgill ment

Douglas continues, pointing out what he considers particularly egregious blunders, but he could

go on *ad infinitum* considering Caxton never knew three words of Virgil's meaning. In Douglas's

eyes, Caxton's bad translation, using an improper source text, renders his work an affront to

Virgil's reputation. His translation is not merely poor, but shameful and perverse—proffering gilt

for Virgil's gold. The original sin, using a bad French prose translation for his own, does not

necessarily mean Caxton is utterly incompetent with the English language, but it still speaks to his

infelicitous handling of literature—especially literature as obviously noteworthy as the *Aeneid*.

The language in this passage, however, highlights a visceral, physical response to Caxton's work.

The heart-pains and spitting as a result of reading Caxton contrast sharply with the mental

"entent" and meaning of Virgil. The hope that Caxton "lois his pyne"—his toil—underscores the

physical as opposed to intellectual work being done. Caxton may have made "sic ane buk," but he

did not create literature.

Modern assessments of Caxton lack the fire of Douglas's critique, but they often smolder

with faint praise. Many focus especially on his style and writing habits. For instance, he chains

together synonyms for a single concept. The inclusion of needless words led Douglas Gray to

admit that "we find it hard to admire the sonorous 'doublets' he uses."[8] Unable to admire the

Caxton's stylings, prominent Caxton scholars have come to praise his labor and the productive

capacity of his press. William Blades's influential 1877 biography finds virtue in Caxton's

simple, honest work as printer:

But although we cannot attribute to him those rare mental powers which can grasp the

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[8]Douglas Gray, ed., *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 224.

hidden laws of nature, nor the still more rare creative genius which endures throughout all time, we can claim for him a character which attracted the love and respect of his associates—a character on which history has chronicled no stain—a character which, although surrounded, through a long period of civil war, by the worst forms of cruelty, hypocrisy, and injustice in Church and State, retained to the last its innate simpleness and truthfulness.[9]

Using Caxton's own "simple" adjective betrays the effectiveness of Caxton's ability to make the language of the humility topos ring true. Indeed, Blades's assessment strongly echoes the language found in the prologue to the *Recuyell*. Caxton is no genius, but he is honest and hardworking in the face of the adversity that beset his time.[10] The last claim that Caxton's character had "innate truthfulness" suggests that Blades read Caxton's own assessments as essentially truthful and honest.[11]

This conception of Caxton as honest and industrious often operates in tandem with assessments of his literary abilities. As the value of his labor increases, the value of his literary talent decreases. Once again, Caxton created this persona in his paratexts. His descriptions of his lack of genius in the paratexts to the *Recuyell* are initially contextualized by the virtue of labor. He begins his Prologue with—

Whan I remember that every man is bounden by the comandement and counceyll of wyse man to eschewe slouth and ydlenes, whyche is moder and nourysshar of vyces, and ought to put myself unto vertuous ocupacion and besynesse than I, havynge no

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[9]Blades, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, 93.

[10]Of course, the conception that the dynastic conflicts of the later fifteenth century caused civilization to quake with paranoia are, on close inspection, generally untenable. See, for example, Colin Richmond, *John Hopton: A Fifteenth Century Suffolk Gentleman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[11]This is not to say that Blades thought the employment of the humility topos was merely a brutal assessment of Caxton's own incompetence. Rather, I believe that the honest, simple, plain-spoken Caxton found in his paratexts equates to Blades conception of the actual man.

> grete charge of ocupacion, folowynge the sayd counceyll toke a Frenche booke […]. I thought in myself hit shold be a good besynes to translate hyt into oure Englissh to th'ende that hyt myght be had as well in the royame of Englond as in other landes, and also for to passe therwyth the tyme

Caxton subjugates his reading and writing to the idea that busy-ness is virtuous. Reading occupies him and keeps him from idleness, but it inspires more "good besynes" in translating the text. In turn, this work will allow readers in England and other places to "passe therwyth the tyme," multiplying the virtuous occupation. Caxton does briefly assess the literary content of the book, claiming that it contained "many strange and mervayllous historyes wherein I had grete pleasyr and delyte as well for the novelte of the same as for the fayr langage of Frenshe," yet it is the ability for a text to productively occupy time that grounds Caxton's actions. Even in his Epilogue to the text, he highlights the labor involved in translating the text: "And for as moche as in the wrytyng of the same my penne is worn, myn hande wery and not stedfast, myn eyen dimmed with overmoche lokyng on the whit paper." The labor involved in making the manuscript version of the text is explicitly alleviated by printing the text—a technological solution to the physical problem of laborious textual production. Because his labor has enfeebled him, he has "ordeyned this said book in prynte." Recalling the positive occupation of the Prologue, Caxton thus recontextualizes virtuous occupation by showing that it also efficiently multiplies itself. In these ways, the *Recuyell* presents itself as noteworthy for its engagement with labor and overcoming the physical limitations imposed by production.

The virtue of Caxton's busy-ness became a hallmark of his persona. Bale makes this explicit as he continues in his description of Caxton from 1548, which reads—

> "Gvilhelmus Caxton, Anglus, uir non omnino stupidus aut ignauia torpens, sed propagandæ suæ gentis memoriæ admodum studiosus, quamplura ad id peragendum non paruo labore quæsiuit." (f. 208 r)

[William Caxton, an Englishman, a man not at all stupid or idling in laziness, but rather quite eager to spread the history of his people, sought with no small effort the works of many others to achieve this.]

The spread of the texts, the expenditure of labor, the eschewal of idling in laziness aligns this assessment with much that Caxton wrote. Bale goes one step further in segregating Caxton from the literary works by claiming that he achieved his labor-intensive goal through the works of others. His true impact lies in the expenditure of his labor, not his literary genius.

Traces of this belief have affected more modern critics than William Blades. Most notably, N. F. Blake, one of the most influential scholars of Caxton during the twentieth century, ardently argued for a conception of Caxton as anything but a "man of letters"—a conception that had arisen during the nineteenth-century and was encapsulated in book-form by N. S. Aurner.[12] Aurner's book, *Caxton, Mirrour of Fifteenth Century Letters*, was first published in 1926 and subsequently republished in 1965, a decade before the quincentenary celebrations of Caxton bringing print to England. The aim of the book was to rehabilitate Caxton's reputation and establish him as a man of exceeding literary taste and styles, one whose Burgundian fashion sense made him an excellent judge of good literature. Using Caxton's translation as his source, Blake fervently argues against such an interpretation:

"We may say then of Caxton that when he used a source he tended to follow this closely taking over many of the foreign words directly into his translation. When he composed on his own, not only was his sentence structure muddled, as others have shown, but also his vocabulary was limited. There is no evidence to show that he was consciously trying to enlarge his vocabulary through his translations, though naturally some words did go over into his ordinary stock of words. Admittedly the samples used

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[12] Nellie Slayton Aurner, *Caxton, Mirrour of Fifteenth Century Letters: A Study of the Literature of the First English Press* (New York: Russell / Russell, 1965).

in this investigation are small, but the general results seem to be borne out by other investigators. The conclusion is also interesting in furthering our knowledge of Caxton himself. Some scholars have claimed that Caxton was something of a scholar and man-of-letters. If so, one might have expected him to polish and refine his style. There is no evidence that he did so. In his translations it has been pointed out by many that though Caxton had a good knowledge of both French and Dutch he often makes mistakes in translation or fails to find an English word for the foreign one. This has generally been interpreted to mean that Caxton worked in great haste. His interest lay not so much in the text and its quality, but in getting it translated and into print. This is an attitude not so much of a scholar as of a man of business. His own writing adds confirmation to this view. His vocabulary is straightforward and simple with few adornments or rhetorical flourishes. The way in which he approaches things is practical and prosaic. He was not worried by any philosophical or abstract questions; for him problems were practical matters to be solved, not to be mulled over as general principles."[13]

Blake's lengthy conclusion to his essay entitled "Caxton's Language" stands as a synthesis of centuries of scholarly assessment of Caxton's talents as a writer.[14] It also shows the ways in which Caxton's lack of ability is inextricably tied to his economic success. The productive expenditure of labor eclipses literary concerns and creates a paradigm of thinking that can explain all of Caxton's choices as economic expediencies.[15] The totalizing view of Caxton's language here is surprisingly hard to argue against not because it is correct but because it cannot be wrong. Caxton did have a successful printing business. At a time when other printers like William de Machlinia, the St. Albans Printer, John Lettou, and Theodoric Rood set up shop only to close

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[13] Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 146-147.

[14] Richard Garrett, "Modern Translator or Medieval Moralist?: William Caxton and Aesop," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 37 (2012): 47–70 argues against Caxton's gallicisms as being a sign of Caxton's deficiency as a translator by invoking Walter Benjamin (50). It can also be seen a linguistically enriching activity, as in Miguel Fuster Márquez, "Aspects of Vocabulary Building in Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troy*," *English Studies* 72, no. 4 (1991): 328–349.

[15] Douglas Gray echoes this type of conclusion by describing Caxton's prose as "more often than not it is clear, steady, and workman-like" (Gray, *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval Verse and Prose*, 223-224).

several years later, Caxton's press thrived. Blake's narrative explanation for Caxton's literary and linguistic choices has the weight of a seemingly common-sense argument, yet it oddly entangles authorial intent with economic reality. Indeed, the last few sentences in which Blake is able to assess the worries of Caxton's mind reveals their interconnectedness: Since Caxton's language wasn't refined, he must have been concerned only with business matters. Though these two explanations for Caxton's style have their roots in disparate parts Caxton's own paratexts, they have merged together in Blake's argument.

The totalizing force of such an assessment explains away all the significance of Caxton's language before it is even analyzed. To return to Caxton's word frequency, the (over)use of the term "noble" ceases to become a critical keyword for Caxton's appeal to his audience because it either lacks the careful employment of a good writer and/or it was something his readers wanted. Yet further data reveals patterns that cause us to question the entanglement of Caxton's successful appeal to his audience and his authorial intention.

Caxton's Word Frequency in Translations

Blake's work specifically analyzed Caxton's translations as a testament to his unrefined style, believing Caxton's subjugation of aesthetic improvement to practical concerns reveals itself clearly in such texts. Considering that "noble" is itself a broad term, one that can be applied to matters of character and of lineage, it stands to reason that an overuse in the paratextual material may mirror usage patterns within translations. To provide more fine-grained analysis of Caxton's patterns of vocabulary, I analyzed a group of eleven of Caxton's own translations that include paratextual materials: the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* (*STC* 15375, 1473), the *Game and*

Play of Chess (*STC* 4920, 1474), the *History of Jason* (*STC* 15383, 1477), *Godfrey of Boloyne* (*STC* 13175, 1481), *Reynard the Fox* (*STC* 20919, 1482), the *History of Charles the Great* (*STC* 5013, 1485), *Paris and Vienne* (*STC* 19206, 1485), the *Royal Book* (*STC* 21429, 1485–86), *Fayts of Arms* (*STC* 7269, 1489), *Mirror of the World* (*STC* 24763, 1489), and *Eneydos STC* 24796, 1490). Translations are specifically used because within them lay the potential for Caxton to alter the original language to suit his lexical quirks or what he believed his readers would want. Thus, one can compare the paratextual use of "noble" with its use in the bodies of works. This grouping of texts also provides a diversity of genres and covers the span of Caxton's career. To contextualize these results, data from Caxton's edition of the *Polychronicon* (*STC* 13438, 1482) and *Le Morte Darthur* (*STC* 801, 1485) are also be given. The encodings used for each of these texts have been prepared by the Text Creation Partnership and been placed in the public domain. The number of occurrences of "noble" is divided by the total number of words in the selection, then normalized according to the number of times it would occur per 10,000 words.[16]

There are issues with the analytical method used. Considering the variability of Caxton's spellings, some instances of "nobel" may not be accounted for.[17] It should be noted, however, that Caxton nearly always uses the spelling "noble." This also means that more unique words are returned for the corpus as spelling has not been regularized. Nor has any regularization or lemmatization been done; all variants are counted as a unique word. Furthermore, the files created by the Text Creation Partnership have not been edited to fill in obliterated or illegible

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[16] Voyant Tools has been used to conduct the textual analysis. The normalization is done to facilitate reading as it eliminates having infinitesimal percentages.

[17] Variant spellings were checked, and represented only a very small number of instances of "noble." They have not been tallied with these counts since I was not able to examine the corpus in a regularized or lemmatized format.

Work	Words	Unique
Recuyell	208,131	13,251
Game and Play of Chess	44,987	5,171
History of Jason	88,031	7,812
Godfrey of Boloyne	120,959	8,628
Reynard the Fox	49,084	5,117
Charles the Great	78,490	7,016
Paris and Vienne	30,650	2,812
Royal Book	111,364	7,599
Fayts of Arms	90,874	8,485
Mirror of the World	53,332	5,388
Eneydos	51,931	7,433
Total	927,833	40,145
Average	84,349	7,156

Table 1.2: The number of total words and number of unique words for eleven Caxton translations that include paratextual material. The total number of unique words is not a sum of the values in the table but a calculation of uniqueness across the entire corpus.

places in the text, resulting in many bracketed ellipses in the files used for analysis, which may result in fewer instances of "noble" being counted, inflating the number of unique words returned, or lowering counts of other words that would occur in the obliterated text. The breadth of data will, hopefully, render these issues negligible; the texts contain over 900,000 words which are analyzed (see table 1.2).

By separating the narrative paratexts and tables of contents from the body of the text, we can see that, in general, paratexts contain a much higher rate of use of "noble." The first text, the *Recuyell*, presents an interesting case (see table 1.3). It has prefatory material, a prologue by Caxton, a translation of Lefèvre's prologue, the work itself, and an epilogue. The paratextual materials taken by themselves are each relatively short and contain a maximum of two instances of noble. Caxton's own prologue contains no instances of it. And these findings demonstrate one underlying problem for this type of textual analysis. The vast differences in size of paratext versus the body of the work lead to calculations of rates of occurrence that some may see as

Part of *Recuyell*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Preface	201	1	49.75
Prologue	693	0	0
Lefèvre's Prologue	479	2	41.75
Body	206,179	214	10.38
Epilogue	579	2	34.54

Table 1.3: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye* according to the separate pieces of the text. The total number of words in each text is given, followed by the raw number of occurrences of "noble" as well as the rate of occurrence per 10,000 words.

greatly skewed. After all, it is difficult to ignore the fact that "noble" occurs over 200 times in the body of the *Recuyell* in favor of claiming a much higher rate for one occurrence in Caxton's preface. Yet the presence of any instances of "noble" in such short paratexts reinforces the idea that, for Caxton's productions, the term had a natural home in the paratextual material.

The few raw occurrences of "noble" in the paratexts also reinforces the need for comparing the translation with the original. The original French prologue of Lefèvre does indeed include both instances of "noble" translated by Caxton. Caxton's translation of Lefèvre's prologue reads, "the ryght noble and right vertuous prynce. Philippe," closely following Lefèvre's original, "tres noble et tres uertueux prince Philippe." Similarly, Caxton's description of "the deth of the noble kyng agamenon" is given by Lefèvre as "la mort du noble roy Agamenon."[18] Caxton therefore only inserts three instances of the word "noble" into paratextual material out of the 1473 words that were his invention. The relative rate of occurrence for those 1473 words is 20.37 times per 10,000 words. This is about twice the rate that occurs in the body of the work itself (10.38).

Caxton's second translation—the *Game and Play of Chess*—shows another case of

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[18] The French is taken from Antoine Verard's 1494 edition of the text (fol. a ii r), available via the *Bibliotheque Nationale*'s Gallica website (http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b7300035t/f9.image).

Part of *Chess*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	418	4	95.69
Table	311	0	0.00
Tract 1	1,670	1	5.99
Tract 2	14,435	14	9.70
Tract 3	21,129	30	14.20
Tract 4	7,024	15	21.36
All Tracts	44,258	60	13.56

Table 1.4: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Game and Play of Chess*. The tracts comprise the body of the work, and data for all four tracts together as one unit comprises the last row of the table.

Part of *Jason*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	751	5	66.58
Author's Prologue	466	1	21.46
Body	86,307	327	37.89
Epilogue	507	1	19.72

Table 1.5: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *History of Jason*.

increased use of "noble" in Caxton's paratexts (see table 1.4). Again, the prologue is relatively

short at 418 words. Yet the use of "noble" four times in such a small space makes that word

characterize the entire paratext. This is compared to the overall rate of occurrence in the body of

the work at 13.56. Throughout many translations, we see similar patterns. The *History of Jason*

exhibits a "noble" use rate much greater than its use in the body of the text (see table 1.5). This is

striking because of the texts analyzed, the *History of Jason* has the highest rate of using "noble" in

the body of text for all the translations analyzed here. *Godfrey of Boloyne*'s rates display an even

greater gap, with "noble" being used 31 times in the space of just 1,864 words in the prologue

(see table 1.6). Furthermore, *Godfrey of Boloyne* (see table 1.6), the *History of Charles the Great*

(see table 1.7), *Paris and Vienne* (see table 1.8), the *Royal Book* (see table 1.9, *Fayts of Arms* (see

table 1.10), *Mirror of the World* (see table 1.11), and *Eneydos* (see table 1.12) all follow this

general pattern of having increased rates of usage of "noble" in paratextual materials.

Part of *Godfrey*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	1,864	31	166.31
Table	4,732	2	4.23
Body	114,051	130	11.40
Epilogue	312	0	0.00

Table 1.6: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Godfrey of Boloyne*.

Part of *Charles*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	807	7	86.74
Table	2,272	0	0.00
Book 1	8,147	11	13.50
Book 2	51,539	50	9.70
Book 3	14,821	9	6.07
Epilogue	904	3	33.19
All Books	74,507	70	9.40

Table 1.7: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *History of Charles the Great*.

Part of *Paris*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Body	30,582	46	15.04
Epilogue	68	1	147.06

Table 1.8: The occurrences of the word "noble" in *Paris and Vienne*.

Part of *Royal Book*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	716	1	13.97
Table	1,487	0	0.00
Body	108,894	21	1.93
Epilogue	267	2	74.91

Table 1.9: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Royal Book*.

Part of *Fayts*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Table 1	818	1	12.22
Book 1	24,967	22	8.81
Table 2	631	0	0.00
Book 2	23,194	6	2.59
Table 3	1054	0	0.00
Book 3	20,133	9	4.47
Table 4	647	1	15.46
Book 4	18,851	15	7.96
Epilogue	579	1	17.27
All Books	87,145	52	5.97

Table 1.10: The occurrences of the word "noble" in *Fayts of Arms*.

Part of *Mirror*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Table	943	0	0.00
Prologue	849	3	35.34
Body	51,087	29	5.68
Epilogue	453	2	44.15

Table 1.11: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Mirror of the World*.

Part of *Eneydos*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
First Prologue	1,233	9	72.99
Table	1,145	0	0
Second Prologue	148	1	67.57
Body	49,352	27	5.47
Epilogue	53	0	0

Table 1.12: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Eneydos*.

The outlier is the translation of *Reynard the Fox* (see table 1.13). This edition has no instances of "noble" in the paratextual material and only 18 in the body of the text itself. The subject matter may make the use less common; within the text, the word is most frequently used to refer to the lion as king or to his queen. Although the prologue does trade in the language of personal betterment, the parable format teaches in a way that levels social stations:

> In this historye ben wreton the parables / goode lerynge / and dyuerse poyntes to be merkyd / by whiche poyntes men maye lerne to come to the subtyl knoweleche of suche thynges as dayly ben vsed & had in the counseyllys of lordes and prelates gostly and worldly / and / also emonge marchantes and other comone peple / And this booke is maad for nede and prouffyte of alle god folke. (fol. 2v)

The merchants and common people being able to come to the same "subtyl knoweleche" as "lordes and prelates gostly and worldly" makes this text one of potential social elevation. In this way, it functions similarly to many instances of using "noble" as an aspirational word in a paratextual setting. The lack of "noble" in the paratexts here may, however, be a reflection of the fact that Caxton did not separate his paratexts from the body of the text. The prologue occurs after the heading "Hyer begynneth thystorye of reynard the foxe" (fol. 2v), and is placed on the same

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Part of *Reynard*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Table	613	0	0
Prologue	219	0	0
Body	47,942	18	3.76
Epilogue	336	0	0

Table 1.13: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Reynard the Fox*.

page as the heading for the first chapter.[19] The epilogue actually runs together with the text of the last paragraph. Caxton may not have viewed this as a standard prologue and epilogue, even though the fact that they are in the printer's voice would have one place them in such a category.

Despite the interesting case of *Reynard the Fox*, the translations taken as a whole exhibit a propensity to include the word "noble" at a higher rate than exists in the texts themselves (see table 1.14). Excepting tables of contents, which are usually just reprintings of his various chapter titles, the category of paratextual material (prefaces, prologues, epilogues, and colophons) shows a rate of occurrence of "noble" of 61.89. The actual texts themselves (including author's prologues that have been translated) have a rate of just 11.06. In light of these findings, one can see that the term was especially appropriate for paratextual material.

Yet another interesting finding is that the word occurs at a much higher rate in prologues as opposed to epilogues. If, as I have argued, the concept of nobility and the book's relationship to enabling one to ennoble himself or herself was appealing to Caxton's new audience, then this relationship is easy to explain. From the outset of each text, Caxton wished to highlight the potential latent within each book to make its reader better. It is also possible that prefatory material would have been read prior to purchasing a book—essentially making the use of "noble"

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[19] In Caxton's second edition, printed in 1489, the prologue material still occurs under the same heading but has been placed on the same page as the end of the table, making it clearly separate from the actual body of the work.

All Translations	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologues	7,899	62	78.50
Epilogues	4,058	12	29.57
All Paratexts	11,957	74	61.89
Body	901,223	997	11.06

Table 1.14: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the 11 translations analyzed here. The paratexts category does not include tables of contents. Separate prefaces have been grouped together with prologues; colophons have been grouped with epilogues.

a particularly marketable term—yet the details of book purchasing from Caxton's printshop are unknowable given current evidence.

The use of "noble" in just the paratexts of these translations follows the general trend of all Caxton's paratexts as calculated by Mizobata in his concordance to *Caxton's Prologues and Epilogues*. For these 11 translations, "noble" ranks as the twentieth most common word, after prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and a couple common verbs (see table 1.15). Other terms that may be considered synonymous occur much more rarely. In the 100 most common words, "grete" is the most frequent possible synonym, occurring 32 times (rate of 26.76). "Gentyles" and "gentylnes" occur twice (rate 1.67) and once (0.87), respectively.

Comparisons with non-translated works reveal similar usage patterns. The *Polychronicon* offers an interesting case where Caxton reprinted John of Trevisa's translation of Higden's Latin original yet added his own continuation up to the events of 1460.[20] The "Liber Ultimus" is Caxton's original work, yet its rate of occurrence of "noble" (7.15) is in line with all the other books of the *Polychronicon* (see table 1.16). His prologue, however, has a rate of occurrence of more than ten times as high as the all the books of the *Polychronicon* taken together. In

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[20] This continuation originally appeared in his 1480 *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9991). That edition includes a table but lacks other paratexts, so the later *Polychronicon* was chosen for analysis.

Term	Occurrences	Rate
of	644	538.60
the	638	533.58
and	595	497.62
to	383	320.31
in	358	299.41
that	201	168.10
I	163	136.32
for	137	114.58
as	136	113.74
his	107	89.49
this	103	86.14
it	100	83.63
by	96	80.29
is	93	77.78
be	85	71.09
haue	85	71.09
he	80	66.91
sayd	79	66.07
whiche	79	66.07
noble	**74**	**61.89**
a	71	59.38
me	71	59.38
my	65	54.36
may	59	49.34
book	58	48.51

Table 1.15: The 25 most common words from the paratexts of the analyzed translations.

Part of *Polychronicon*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	1,547	13	84.03
Table	11,377	0	0.00
Book 1	57,302	44	7.68
Book 2	37,756	19	5.03
Book 3	54,295	46	8.47
Book 4	41,029	33	8.04
Book 5	47,047	26	5.53
Book 6	36,870	23	6.24
Book 7	57,894	47	8.12
Liber Ultimus	32,177	23	7.15
Epilogue	161	0	0.00
All Books	364,370	261	7.16

Table 1.16: The occurrences of the word "noble" in the *Polychronicon*. The last row contains data just for Books 1–7 and the Liber Ultimus.

comparison, Caxton's edition of *Le Morte Darthur* shows a rate of occurrence of "noble" (179.64) far greater in the paratextual material than in the books itself (12.58), with several smaller spikes in rates in some individual books (see table 1.17).

Taken as a whole, this data reveals that "noble" seemed particularly apropos for prefatory material inserted by the printer. As Caxton's original prose addition to the body of his text (specifically, the Liber Ultimus of the *Polychronicon*) and his word-choice in his translations show, "noble" functioned not merely as a lexical panacea for ideas of greatness, virtue, or high social rank. Instead, its prominence as a contextualizing word—one whose place in introductory prepared the reader for ways to read and interpret the work that followed.

These patterns would seem to support the reading that Caxton exploited the concept of nobility. Yet I believe such exploitations cannot be reduced to Caxton's business acumen. Believing, with Clifford Geertz, "that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun," I see this pattern of using "noble" as a reflection of the ways in which Caxton

Part of *Morte*	Total Words	"Noble"	Rate
Prologue	1,733	31	178.88
Table	10,276	2	1.95
Book 1	17,273	7	4.05
Book 2	9,486	1	1.05
Book 3	7,959	2	2.51
Book 4	17,222	6	3.48
Book 5	8,983	23	25.60
Book 6	12,297	4	3.25
Book 7	24,595	52	21.14
Book 8	26,344	38	14.42
Book 9	29,850	45	15.08
Book 10	63,670	80	12.56
Book 11	9,003	8	8.89
Book 12	7,628	7	9.18
Book 13	12,083	3	2.48
Book 14	5,472	1	1.83
Book 15	3,365	0	0.00
Book 16	9,716	1	1.03
Book 17	15,009	1	0.67
Book 18	19,332	30	15.52
Book 19	9,789	24	24.52
Book 20	17,175	59	34.35
Book 21	9,225	30	32.52
Colophon	104	2	192.31
All Books	335,476	422	12.58
All Paratexts	1837	33	179.64

Table 1.17: The occurrences of the word "noble" in *Le Morte Darthur*.

is suspended in discourses surrounding nobility while producing these texts.[21] As a literary

producer, Caxton needs to ensure that such literature maintains its value and authenticity—a

position that engenders interactions with the traditional centers of that authority. Accessing such

authority necessitates Caxton's engagement in a socio-linguistic discourse of nobility—one that

explicitly expresses the inextricable connection between language and class.

Caxton's Discourses of Nobility

In a sense, "noble" can never be Caxton's. Words at the time of utterance or

inscription—by their very intelligibility—cease to give the speaker or writer sole authority over

the determination of meaning. Furthermore, the polysemous nature of the term, functioning as

both a descriptor of inherited social status and a definition of virtuous character that is central to

Caxton's employment of the term in his paratexts, has a long history in English. It is by no means

unique. The *OED* attests to "noble" as a descriptor for praiseworthy acts or traits (or cities)

hundreds of years prior to the late fifteenth century.[22] Most famously, Chaucer's Wife of Bath's

Tale contains as a central aspect of its plot the careful definition of a term closely allied with

Caxton's "noble": "gentilesse." The old hag in the story convinces her young and reluctant

groom that the term applies to one's character instead of birth (*virtus, non sanguis*). Yet Caxton's

decreased autonomy over his own language becomes a central characteristic of two key paratexts

and creates the type of ennobling opportunities that exist in many places across his prologues and

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[21] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 5.

[22] "noble, adj.", def. A.6.a. *OED*.

epilogues.

In his first book, the *Recuyell of the Histories of Troye*, these types of negotiated language embed into the text noble authority that is explicitly referenced elsewhere. In that edition, Caxton begins with a description of its genesis. On the first page in a paragraph that precedes even the prologue, he writes that the current work was "translated and drawen out of frenshe in to englisshe by Willyam Caxton mercer of þe cyte of London / at the comañdemẽt of the right hye myghty and vertuouse Pryncesse hys redoubtyd lady. Margarete" (fol. 1r). The commandment of such a noble person as Lady Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV, legitimizes and the text, providing as a stand-in for Caxton's own yet unproved reputation as a translator; it is a "celebrity endorsement."[23] She stands in for his authority, providing her own as a way to authorize the text that follows. But the prologue proper, starting on the next page, gives a slightly different picture. There, Caxton writes that the translation was undertaken because he thought people might enjoy it in English:

> And for so moche as this booke was newe and late maad and drawen in to frenshe /
> and neuer had seen hit in oure englissh tonge / I thought in my self hit shold be a good
> besynes to translate hyt in to oure englissh / to thende that hyt myght be had as well in
> the royame of Englond as in other landes / and also for to passe therwyth the tyme.
> (fol. 1v)

His final claim that he began his translation to pass the time pushes the *Recuyell* further from the commands of Margaret. The duchess does insist on completing the work, but this is only after initial composition began:

> aftyr that y had made and wretyn a fyve or six quayers y fyll in dispayr of thys werke

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[23] Wang, "Caxton's Romances and Their Early Tudor Readers," 173.

> and purposid no more to haue contynuyd therin […] tyll on a tyme hit fortuned that the
> ryght hyghe excellent and right vertuous prynces my ryght redoughted lady mylady
> Margarete by the grace of god suster vnto þe kynge of englond and of frãce. my
> souerayn lord Duchesse of Bourgoine of lotryk. of brabant. of lymburgh. and of
> luxemburgh Countes of fflãdres of artoys & of bourgoine Palatynee of heynawd of
> holand of zelãd and of namur Marquesse of þe holy empire. lady of ffryse of salius and
> of mechlyn sente for me to speke wyth her good grace of dyuerce maters among þe
> whyche y lete her hyenes haue knowleche of þe forsayd begynnyng of thys werke
> whiche anone comanded me to shewe the sayd .v. or .vi. quayers to her sayd grace and
> whan she had seen hem. anone she fonde a defaute in myn englissh whiche sche
> comãded me to amende ãd more ouer comanded me straytli to contynue and make an
> ende of the resydue than not translated. (fol. 2r)

Caxton is explicit about the necessity of Margaret's intervention. The translation would have

merely languished, neglected as a result of Caxton's own despair. Her intervention, however, is a

also stylistic one, correcting a defect in Caxton's English.[24] The result is the casting of Margaret

and Caxton in "complementary roles" where "both are necessary to complete the translation."[25] In

this way, Margaret's authority stands in for Caxton's own much more fully than in the brief

mention of her in the prefatory paragraph to the prologue. Though the prologue oozes the

language of patronage, Margaret is more than a financial supporter.[26] Her correction of his

defective English makes her present on each page of the text that follows. The weaving of her

noble authority into the fabric of the translation may provide reason for the lengthy listing of

Margaret's titles. The enumeration provides additive force to her political power while giving a

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[24] This intervention may also have been rather unique. Although Margaret became increasingly invested in the production of books around this time, they were all devotional with the exception of the *Recuyell*. See Lotte Hellinga, "Printing," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 67.

[25] Kuskin, "Reading Caxton: Transformations in Capital, Authority, Print, and Persona in the Late Fifteenth Century," 161.

[26] See ibid.

sense of the cosmopolitan connections she has in the Low Countries, England, and France. The effect is to combine the queen's political and cultural caché into a single concept as the domains she governs give her a multi-lingual background that would enable her to diagnose with precision a widespread defect in Caxton's own language.

In the prologue to the *Recuyell*, language and social status are clearly intertwined: Margaret's nobility authorizes the text because it changes Caxton's writing.[27] Towards the end of the prologue, Caxton reinforces her place as the judge of the translation's literary value, writing "yf ther be ony thyng wreton or sayd to her playsir. y shall thynke my labour well enployed" (fol. 2v). Although this final statement once again ties her approval to the very words on the page, it more interestingly modifies Caxton's original goal for the entire undertaking. Instead of making it generally available in the realm of England, the text's purpose resides with Margaret in Burgundy. The change temporarily encloses the appropriate audience for the text, making it more rarefied than the general populace of Caxton's birth country. Yet this change also sets up an invitation at the end of the prologue for other readers to participate in the same act: "praye alle them that shall rede this sayd werke to correcte hyt & to hold me excusid of the rude & symple translacion And thus y ende my prologe" (fol. 2v). The correction that readers should engage as well as the repetition of the humble "rude & symple"—words used to describe his prose to Margaret—make synonymous the work of the reader and the duchess. The *Recuyell*, therefore, affords readers the opportunity to take on the actions of a noble person as eminent as Margaret. The resulting ennobling becomes a shared linguistic act.[28]

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[27] Also intertwined are multiple conventional languages. See Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 90-91.

[28] Anne E. B. Coldiron highlights the foreignness of Caxton's prologue, yet I believe the shared opportunity to

In Caxton's last translation that has a lengthy paratext preceding it—the 1490 *Eneydos* that made Douglas spit it was so bad—he begins with a somewhat similar structure to the prologue of the *Recuyell*. Indeed, he proclaims that the origin of this book was boredom: "After dyuerse werkes made / translated and achieued / hauyng noo werke in hande. I sittyng in my studye where as laye many dyuerse paunflettis and bookys. happened that to my hande cam a lytyl booke in frenshe. whiche late was translated oute of latyn by some noble clerke of fraũce whiche booke is named Eneydos" (fol. 1r). Instead of finding a contemporary popular book, like the *Recuyell*, a chance happening brought this little French book into his hand. It is still worthy material, as Caxton calls its author a "noble clerke" and then defines its audience as of an elevated social class by claiming that the book "sholde be moche requysyte to noble men" (fol. 1r). Unlike the prologue to the *Recuyell*, however, this narrative remains unmodified; no noble patron figure steps in to spur on the text's development. Although he does ultimately address the text to Henry VII's son, Prince Arthur, the translation remains more closely tied to Caxton.

The translation that should flow forth, however, is famously hobbled by Caxton's inability to decide what style to use. Although Caxton begins with a vague, de-individualized idea of "noble men," two particular instantiations of that group appear. On the one hand are the "gentylmen whiche late blamed me sayeng yt in my translacyons I had ouer curyous termes whiche coude not be vnderstande of comyn peple / and desired mete vse olde and homely termes in my translacyons" (fol. 1r). On the other hand are "honest and grete clerkes [that] haue ben wyth me and desired me to wryte the moste curyous termes that I coude fynde" (fol. 1v-2r).

"English" the resulting translation foregrounds such foreignness as easily amended. Coldiron, *Printers without Borders*, 60.

Momentarily, Caxton dangles between these two options: "And thus bytwene playn rude / & curyous I stande abasshed" (fol. 2r). The "disorienting linguistic landscape" presents a challenge to Caxton as he seeks to "impose order upon chaos."[29]

Caxton does not stand abashed for long, however, because he takes a moment to define his audience as excluding the plain rude people. Within a few lines, he twice reaffirms that rude and uncunning persons should not read this book:

> And for as moche as this present booke is not for a rude vplondyssh man to laboure therin / ne rede it / but onely for a clerke & a noble gentylman that feleth and vnderstondeth in faytes of armes in loue & in noble chyualrye / Therfor in a meane bytwene bothe I haue reduced & translated this sayd booke in to our englysshe not ouer rude ne curyous but in suche termes as shall be vnderstanden by goddys grace accordynge to my copye. And yf ony man wyll enter mete in redyng of hit and fyndeth suche termes that he can not vnderstande late hym goo rede and lerne vyrgyll / or the pystles of ouyde / and ther he shall see and vnderstonde lyghtly all / Yf he haue a good redar & enformer / For this booke is not for euery rude dna [sic] vnconnynge man to see / but to clerkys and very gentylmen that vnderstande gentylnes and scyence. (fol. 2r)

The middle way selected here should satisfy both the clerks who asked for more curious terms and the gentlemen who wanted them to be less so. Yet the middle way foregrounds the reader's understanding of the text as defining its pertinence to them. The entanglement of the text's very language with two potentially exclusive categories of readers foregrounds the ability of any middling reader to view themselves as either gentle or clerkish by merely understanding the words before them. The potentially flippant suggestion that those who do not understand Caxton's terms should go read Virgil and Ovid in Latin reinforces the inclusivity of understanding since such people need no translation at all.

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[29] Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, 125.

The negotiable nature of language, however, gains importance from two other parts of the paratext, ultimately leading to an even stronger claim for a type of ennobling reading similar to that in the *Recuyell*. The first is the short tale Caxton relates about a merchant who wanted to buy eggs. His English interlocutor could not understand the request as her word for eggs was "eyren," and believed the merchant to be speaking French (fol. 1v). The anecdote includes merchants into a paratext otherwise dominated by vague clerks and gentlemen and prefigures the linguistic maneuvering in which Caxton must engage. As a merchant himself, it shows the printer already engaged in the type of negotiation described in the paratext.

The second aspect that exhibits this negotiability is the word "olde." Initially, the word is used to in the phrase "olde and homely termes" that describes the type of language certain gentlemen wish Caxton to use so that his works might be better understood. The word gets used again to describe the style pertaining to the opposite camp: clerks understand and desire "olde and aũcyent englssyhe" (fol. 2r). The oppositional use of the word underscores Jonathan Hsy's assessment that language itself is chaotic in this prologue.[30] The ability for "olde" to describe both rude and curious language denies both groups its final signification and underscores meaning-making as a participatory event.

"Olde" comes up once again toward the close of the prologue when Caxton places his translation under the correction of poet laureate, John Skelton. In a move similar to the one made in the *Recuyell*, he invokes an authority figure—though literary this time—and uses correction as a means to engage the reader in the same corrective work. As a master poet, Skelton's translations

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[30] Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, 124-125.

do not use "rude and olde language" (fol. 2r-2v); indeed, Skelton is presented "as a cultural authority over vernacular writing."[31] The printer therefore hopes that "hym & suche other [...] correcte adde or mynysshe where as he or they shall fynde faulte" (fol. 2v). The ill-defined "suche other"—like "noble" and "olde"—affords the reader the opportunity to share in such an act and become more like the master of the "noble poetes" himself or herself (fol. 2v). Although (as Kuskin has argued) it may be possible to read Caxton's prologue as creating similarities between himself and Skelton, the ability for the reader to participate in poetic correction renders such similarities into pathways to access a more noble authority.[32]

The similarity of linguistic mediation between Caxton's first book and his final translation go against some readings that show a progression from trepidation to self-assuredness, most notably expressed by Lotte Hellinga: "Abashed Caxton may have been many times in the preceding years, but abashed he was no longer. By then [1490] he had found his level and felt at ease with it, a form of English that was suited for communication in the medium of print."[33] Yet language never had one suitable form. Caxton's explicit depictions of linguistic negotiations display his inability to control the discourses of which he was a part. Language's processes reveal Caxton to be already caught up in discourses he cannot control; for that very reason, he is able to show how one might be able to interpret such discourses in a way that allows one ingress into

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[31] William Kuskin, *Recursive Origins: Writing at the Transition to Modernity* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 63.

[32] Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 281. I believe Caxton goes slightly further than Kuskin claims: "Caxton may offer his middle class of readers access to literary authority, but by referencing Skelton's poem, paralleling himself with laureate reading practices and announcing the pleasure of ornate language, he aligns himself with an aristocratic audience of readers [...]" (282). I believe it is that combination that makes his works appealing and affords opportunities for ennobling.

[33] Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 111.

rarefied social categories.

Returning to *Le Morte Darthur*, we can ask whether the insights from the paratexts of the *Recuyell* and the *Eneydos* apply to other editions. The ennobling appeal to middling readers functions across the texts, yet I do believe the *Recuyell* and *Eneydos* are doing something special. They lay bare the linguistic underpinnings of nobility itself, showing how the word can engender a simultaneous multiplicity of definitions that allows the ennobling appeal to function in other paratexts. In that sense, the appeals in these two texts are no different from any other of Caxton's paratexts; they are just more candid about it.

Chapter 2

Perpetual Chaucer and the Printer's Persona

The printer exists between an author and a reader—a waypoint created by the necessity of physical production. Indeed, the physical (re-)producers of texts always have: "Chaucers Wordes unto Adam, His Owen Scriveyn" famously acknowledges the destructive power of a bad scribe. When printers produce the works of England's literary masters—including Gower, Lydgate, and Chaucer—in a vacuum of living-author oversight, anxiety about their potentially deleterious role in that production becomes foregrounded. In this chapter, I focus on early printers' editions of Chaucer and argue that, starting with Caxton, printers created a conspicuously necessary role for themselves in preserving English literary tradition. They simultaneously promote reading works by Chaucer as an ennobling enterprise for their audiences and instantiate themselves as the best way for readers to access an authoritative text.

Although Caxton may have not had a living Chaucer to oversee his productions, other writers before him also lacked such interactions. Indeed, some scholars see an uncomplicated appropriation of conventional literary approaches to Chaucer's influence as characteristic of Caxton's own, and the adoption of others' language in his paratextual discussions of Chaucer has

been a critical commonplace for many years.[1] N.F. Blake particularly sees the language of

Lydgate influencing Caxton—often Lydgate's own words become Caxton's: "It is clear that

Caxton's views of Chaucer are all second-hand. He followed what authorities he could get hold of

and used their words to compose his own appreciations. The principal source Caxton used was

Lydgate, and it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that he saw Chaucer through Lydgate's

eyes."[2] Although Blake does not engage the incongruous pairing of Lydgate's interaction with

Chaucer as an inspiration for his works and Caxton's physical production that perpetuates

Chaucer—one that equates the intellectual and the physical—his assertion is bolstered by the

material fact that the two authors were frequently produced together. Between 1476 and 1478,

Caxton produced a flurry of of both Chaucer's and Lydgate's works, frequently alternating

between the two renowned authors.[3] Blake's argument also extends his fundamental belief that

economic concerns fully explain Caxton's productions by claiming that the appropriation of what

others said is expedient. Blake's understanding of Caxton's approach to Chaucer subsumed

potential problems raised by a new technology of literary production under merely commercial

terms.

More recently, however, readers of Caxton's paratexts find that the new technology of

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[1]Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 149-165. Much of this volume is based on Blake's earlier work, for example: N. F. Blake, "Caxton and Chaucer," *Leeds Studies in English* ns 1 (1967): 19–36; N. F. Blake, "John Lydgate and William Caxton," *Leeds Studies in English* 16 (1985): 272–289. Also see V. J. Scattergood, "A Caxton Prologue and Chaucer," *Chaucer Newsletter* 2, no. 1 (1980): 14–15.

[2]Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 164.

[3]Lydgate: *The Churl and the Bird* (first edition: *STC* 17009, 1476; second edition: *STC* 17008, 1477), *The Horse, the Sheep and the Goose* (first edition: *STC* 17019, 1476; second edition: *STC* 17018, 1477), *Stans puer ad mensam* (*STC* 17030, 1476), *The Temple of Glass* (*STC* 17032, 1477); Chaucer: *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5082, 1477), *The Parliament of Fowls* (*STC* 5091, 1477), *Queen Anelida and the False Arcite* (*STC* 5090, 1477), *Boece* (*STC* 3199, 1478).

print requires subtle retheorizations of England's literary tradition, finding some anxiety on the

part of printers regarding the special replicative power of print.[4] Seth Lerer, in *Chaucer and His*

Readers, outlined a trajectory of Chaucerian reception across the fifteenth century.[5] Lerer's

discussion of Caxton focuses on the added epilogue to his 1478 printing of Chaucer's *Boece* (*STC*

3199) and extends his findings to the prologue of the 1483 *Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083) and

Caxton's 1490 *Eneydos* (*STC* 24796).[6] His argument hinges upon the distancing effect of

Caxton's work, firmly planting a dead Chaucer in the past and making his works subject to textual

recovery and printerly perpetuation. Reflecting upon the description Caxton gives of Chaucer's

tomb at the end of his edition of the *Boece*, Lerer writes, "Caxton presents the buried body of the

poet and the monumentality of his tomb to distance present readers from the past and to maintain

that in the reproduction of his works his fame should live perpetually."[7] The remoteness of the

entombed Chaucer necessitates a new interpretive model for interacting with his literary

authority. Before, writers like Hoccleve and Lydgate used metaphors of paternity—that they were

Chaucer's intellectual offspring. Instead, Lerer argues, Caxton uses a model based upon

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[4]Consumers may not have been as anxious about the transition from manuscript to print—a transition they were happy to bridge by simultaneously using both technologies. The anxiety printers demonstrated about the transition should, however, not be taken as a statement of technological determinism: that print somehow necessarily creates these anxieties. See Thomas A. Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body: From Corpse to Corpus* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 41.

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

[6]See ibid., 147-175. The chapter is also excerpted as Seth Lerer, "At Chaucer's Tomb: Laureation and Paternity in Caxton's Criticism," in *Writing after Chaucer: Essential Readings in Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel J. Pinti, Christian K. Zacher, and Paul E. Szarmach, vol. 1, Basic Readings in Chaucer and His Time (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 243–279.

[7]Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 148.

Continental humanist laureation to redefine not just his own approach to the writer, but to his audience's as well: "this audience for Chaucer changes from the self-imagined childhood of Lydgatean abnegation to the laureate adulthood of humanist scholarship."[8] For Lerer, Caxton fundamentally shifts the conception of Chaucer, bringing it into a modern paradigm.

While Lerer's argument has largely been accepted by the scholars of early English print, it has been subject to some modification. Thomas Prendergast has qualified Lerer's idea of distance: "But this 'distance' also occasioned an anxiety about whether what was being immortalized was actually Chaucer. The return to Chaucer's grave, then, seems an attempt to link printing with what was known to be the authentic remains—a Caxtonian return to the body, as it were."[9] Prendergast's argument is founded on the corporeality of Chaucer—that there existed an actual human named Chaucer and that literary engagement with him sought to recover that "authentic" individual—but also on print's transcendent ability to create a sublime body recoverable through the printer's imagined knowledge of an authentic authorial voice.[10] In a similar move, Louise Bishop finds that Caxton's engagement with Chaucer shows not how the father of English literature is a dead artifact, but how print itself vivifies the poet. Through its reproduction, print reanimates Chaucer.[11] Prendergast and Bishop both argue that, even though subsequent print reproductions of Chaucer's work may invoke Continental humanist traditions to

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[8] Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 148–149.

[9] Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body*, 38.

[10] ibid., 40. Also see Joseph A. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?: Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), for discussion of the importance of Chaucer's physical tomb and body.

[11] Louise M. Bishop, "Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106, no. 3 (2007): 336–363.

understand the place of the dead poet, those editions explicitly work to collapse the perceived distance between the departed author and reader.

Alexandra Gillespie expanded the scope of authorship's connection to print by studying both Chaucer and Lydgate in print from 1473–1557.[12] Gillespie seeks to correct the technological determinism of much scholarship of print history, arguing against simple cause-and-effect readings of new approaches to English authorship where the cause is always the newness of the technology. In her book, she separates the creation of the author from the advent of print: "Printing *accelerated* an existing traffic in texts, and changes we perceive as being in some way related to the newness of print—including the emergence of the author—cannot be detached from old ways of thinking about what it means for a text to be written, copied, or read."[13] She finds Caxton and other early English printers as maintaining the cultural "capital" (appropriating John Guillory's conception) of authors already established in manuscript transmission in the new technological format of print.[14] Like Prendergast and Bishop (though the latter wrote after her book's publication), Gillespie recognizes that printers actively sought to evoke authoritative Chaucer, but she reinserts traditional models of literary production into that discourse, showing how printers manipulated already established conceptions of authorship to legitimize their editions of earlier medieval writers. Her consistent recognition of the importance of manuscript as a technological means of production allows for a more nuanced contextualization of printers'

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[12] Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473–1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[13] ibid., 16.

[14] ibid., 5. John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

approaches to earlier medieval authors. Indeed, most critics discuss print only in terms of difference from manuscript, yet Gillespie finds many ways in which the technologies overlap both physically and conceptually.

William Kuskin's recent work more directly addresses Guillory, shifting the idea of cultural capital to, as expressed in his subtitle, "print capitalism."[15] Like cultural capital, print capital concerns the currency and transferability of political and literary authority, but its focus is the physical processes and products of the press as the means by which such transfers may take place. The press, therefore, becomes not just a locus where a capitalist endeavor may reflect larger issues socio-political power, but an instrument that participates in its own legitimization. Kuskin examines what he calls "Authorship and the Chaucerian Inheritance" by reassessing the impact of print on the appropriation of authority, finding that "print asserted a unifying function over literary and political culture not because it appeared as a force external to that culture, but because it expanded its terms, allowing various communities to appropriate authority and identify their social place in new ways."[16] Kuskin's terms are broad, and the generalization that print actually did have a "unifying function" in both the political and literary realms is, perhaps, overstated. Yet the insight that print enabled readers access to certain authority and self-defining mechanisms not because it was a complete break from previous literary production but because it expanded the terms of manuscript production aligns him with Gillespie. Indeed, both Gillespie and Kuskin emphasize the importance of understanding print's relation to literary authority not in

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[15] Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*.

[16] ibid., 154.

its disruption of but in its continuities with manuscript transmission.

The work of these scholars has primarily focused on the ways in which early English printers' editions change (or reflect or appropriate) the conception of Chaucer or other literary authorities.[17] In this chapter, however, I examine the ways in which printers' paratextual "interactions" with Chaucer shape the conception of the printer and his authority.[18] Taking Caxton's printings of Chaucer as a base, I argue that Caxton emphasizes the printer's negotiation of authority by showing how he shares it with the original author of a given work through appropriation, praise, and imitation. My central argument, therefore, is that Caxton installs the printer as a necessary conduit through which literary authority flows from an authentic author to the reader. Printers perpetuate not only in the sense that their physical reproduction keeps an author's works moving forward through time but also in the etymological prefix of the word: *per*.[19] Caxton's paratexts established printers as an institution *through* which texts gain authority. If reading England's literary masterpieces can make one more noble (as Caxton argues in multiple paratexts), then one might reasonably argue that a reader must read a legitimate, authorized version of the text. And print best provides those versions.

The main focus of this chapter, Caxton and Chaucer, does limit its scope. Others have

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[17] Throughout this chapter, I write about "authority"—which is perhaps even more slippery here than elsewhere in this text. It is useful for its convenient overlap with "author," and this is indeed where the printers derive their authority. I do not mean the legal license or ability or knowledge to print something. Similarly, "authorized" editions are ones that share in the resurrected author-ness of the original poet.

[18] The masculine pronoun is a reflection of the fact that all printers examined in this study are male; I am not arguing that authority relies on gendered constructions of printership. Printers' male construction is likely incredibly important to the construction of authority, but that is currently outside my scope.

[19] Of course, "per" has a range of uses. My use of it here is simply to highlight my main argument; I am not claiming that such a word was selected because Caxton wanted to highlight that texts were created "per" him.

looked at multiple literary authorities together, which provides a more complete account of the multitudinous ways in which literary authority was transmitted during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (like Gillespie). Yet because this chapter is not limited solely to Caxton and Chaucer, an explanation of its structure is in order. It begins with *The Book of Courtesy* (*STC* 3303, 1477), which provides a theoretical framework not only for engagement with past poets but also of mediated access to literary authority: a master serves as an intermediary that teaches Little John how to be more courteous by reading great authors. From there, I examine how the *Boece* (*STC* 3199, 1478) demonstrates Caxton's ability to share in the authority of Chaucer. Then, Caxton's second edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083, 1483) ties Caxton's shared authority particularly to the physical reproductive capacity of the printing press. I next progress to *The House of Fame* (*STC* 5087, 1483), to show how Caxton's intervenes in unfinished works, claiming authority over completing a text. The final section on John Rastell's (*STC* 5091.5, 1525?) and Wynkyn de Worde's (*STC* 5092, 1530) editions of *The Parliament of Fowls* provide a forward-looking testing ground for the preceding arguments about the creation of the printer's persona, for the paratexts included in them share in many of the hallmarks of Caxton's own creations without having a definite Caxton precedent.

The Book of Courtesy

The Book of Courtesy (*STC* 3303, 1477) is not a significant departure from many courtesy manuals that were popular in the later fifteenth century. The anonymously penned book contains 75 rhyme-royal stanzas, covering the standard didactic range of table manners and polite dinner conversation. The narrator of the text is an unnamed paternal figure, instructing his son named

"Little John."[20] Like many other courtesy manuals, *The Book of Courtesy* offered a space in which to read one's social station, be it real or desired.[21] It clearly had appeal to a varied audience as the morals and manners it promotes are not fixed but an adaptation to "the slippery slope of an everchanging world of social behavior."[22] What makes it notable is the amount of instruction Little John receives about reading England's best authors: Gower, Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate.[23] One fifth of the entire work (stanzas 45–60) teaches Little John whom he should read and the intended effects of following the master's advice.

The idea that one may have used *The Book of Courtesy* as a guide for reading English literature is supported by Caxton's choice of previous and subsequent printing: Its printing in 1477 places it in the midst of Caxton's first run of Lydgatean and Chaucerian production. The interplay between *The Book of Courtesy* and Caxton's early Chaucerian printings is supported by its position in the Bishop Moore *Sammelband*. This volume bound together Caxton's early printings (1476–78) of Lydgate, Chaucer, Cato's *Disticha* (*STC* 4850, 1477), and *The Book of Courtesy*. Lerer describes the tome as "a volume that contains not only the key texts by canonical

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[20] Considering the fictive nature of the father, I most frequently refer to him as "the master" or "the narrator." The ideas of fatherhood and mastership become conflated in the person of Chaucer (see below).

[21] Amos, "'For Manners Make Man'." Amos calls noble readings "conservative" or "strategic" while common readings are "'tactical,' seeking to colonize meaning in such a way as to enable the commoners to negotiate between their own experiences and an aristocratic text that seeks to exclude them" (31-32). Also see Adams, "'Noble, wyse and grete lordes, gentilmen and marchauntes'"; Seth Lerer, "William Caxton," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 720–738.

[22] Theresa Coletti, "'Curtesy Doth It Yow Lere': The Sociology of Transgression in the Digby Mary Magdalene," *ELH* 71, no. 1 (2004): 1–28, 15. For a more direct account, see Michael Foster, "From Courtesy to Urbanity in Late Medieval England," *Parergon* 29, no. 1 (2012): 27–46.

[23] Amos, "'For Manners Make Man'" notes that this selection of authors had "immediate appeal to common readers lacking the traditional aristocratic emphasis on French" (41). However, Hoccleve is a departure from the standard triumvirate of the medieval English canon (Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 138).

authors, but the critical instruction for their understanding: *The Book of Curteseye*."[24]

Thus, *The Book of Courtesy* has largely become equated with Caxton's own approach to England's literary authorities. For example, Lerer writes that "The assessments of the *Book of Curtesye* provided Caxton with the aesthetic criteria and social functions of vernacular authorial writing, and his editions were calibrated to conform to its precepts."[25] Kuskin follows a similar approach, seeing *The Book of Courtesy* as a representation of the anxieties of Caxton's new middle-class audience.[26] He therefore uses the text to understand how Caxton participated in the construction of English literary authority more broadly. Although no critics have stated that Caxton actually authored *The Book of Courtesy*, they frequently collapse the distance between the printer and the author of this courtesy manual, reading it more like another one of Caxton's paratexts—something that provides a makeshift theoretical framework within which one can interpret Caxton's other printings of Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate.

The usual assessment of *The Book of Courtesy*'s theoretical approach is that it is conservative, operating primarily in the standard idiom of literary paternity that had dominated approaches to English literature during the first half of the fifteenth century. Many fifteenth century texts do this by "appropriating [Chaucer's] language in order to appropriate his authority, but not occupying his place. The *Book of Courtesy* contains an exceptionally clear discussion of

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[24] Lerer, "William Caxton," 727. Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 137–138, notes that many of the early printings are types of conduct literature. This perhaps serves as a better unifying characteristic instead of seeing *The Book of Courtesy* as an interpretive key.

[25] Lerer, "William Caxton," 726. Also see Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 44–46.

[26] Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 147.

just such a pattern of appropriation."[27] Kuskin has argued that its conservatism in presenting a paternalistic view of literature is needed given amorphous social standing of the merchant class—a class that could not easily rely on inheritance to perpetuate its identity and fortunes.[28] Throughout the section on reading, however, one does not find a simple transference of authority from the master to Little John. The narrator as a mediator must instead actively participate in the sharing and negotiation of literary authority that occurs.

The description of its conservative approach to past literature, however, is understandable considering how the section starts. While the author praises past poets, interlacing laud with admonitions to read, he does so by appropriating previous assessments of these authors, beginning with Gower and Chaucer.

> Redeth gower in his wrytyng morall
> That anucyent fader of memorye
> Redeth his bookes / called confessionall
> With many another vertuous trayttye
> Ful of sentence / set ful fructuosly
> That hym to rede / shal gyue you corage
> He is so ful of fruyt. sentẽce and langage
>
> O fader and founder of ornate eloquence
> That enlumened hast alle our bretayne
> To soone we loste / thy laureate scyence
> O lusty lyquour / of that fulsom fontayne
> O cursid deth / why hast thou yt poete slayne
> I mene fader chaucer / maister galfryde
> Alas the whyle / that euer he from vs dyde (fol. 8v)

The first line is instantly recognizable as indebted to Chaucer's own assessment of Gower in both

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[27] Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 143.

[28] It was difficult for merchants to get their sons to become successful merchants. ibid., 146–147.

The Canterbury Tales and *Troilus and Criseyde*. But the more likely source of these stanzas is

Hoccleve. The appellation that Chaucer is the "founder" of ornate English clearly echoes

Hoccleve's own *Regiment of Princes*—a work which the narrator explicitly instructs little John to

read in coming stanzas.[29] Yet the author's debt to Hoccleve goes far beyond a few words.[30] The

structure of the stanza introducing Chaucer—calling him a founder, bemoaning his death,

introducing his name with "I mene"—directly parallels Hoccleve's stanzaic structure.[31] Even the

author's description of Gower's writings as being "set ful fructuosly" may be influenced by the

description of Chaucer in the *Regiment* as "Mirour of fructuous entendement."[32] The adoption of

Hoccleve's language underscores the fluidity of literary authority—that Hoccleve shares in

Chaucer's authority and *The Book of Courtesy* shares in Hoccleve's sharing of Chaucer's

authority—and enacts the type of learning Little John should undertake. The master's words,

simultaneously his and not his, demonstrate how reading of an "approved" author like Hoccleve

or Chaucer trickles down into one's own speech, embellishing it. The lines of transmission have

been elided; no specific mention of Hoccleve's influence is made. This practice itself is in many

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[29] There may be a subtle difference between Hoccleve's "finder" and Caxton's "founder." In the sense that both mean the that Chaucer was an originator ("finder" *MED* def. 2a and *OED* def. 1a; "foundour" *MED* def. 4a, "founder (n. 1)" *OED* def. 2a), I take them to be synonymous. Though the first vowel has changed, I believe the inspiration for this line is clearly Hoccleve, as I think the subsequent similarities show.

[30] See Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 144, for other instances of borrowings from Hoccleve.

[31] The stanza beginning l. 4978 reads: "The firste fyndere of our fair langage / […] / Allas, my fadir fro the world is go, / My worthy maistir Chaucer - him I meene" (Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

[32] L. 1963. ibid. Other authors, including Lydgate, also use "fructuous," yet the proximity of it occurring close to Chaucer's praise here leads me to see the influence of Hoccleve. Interestingly, Caxton does not use the word in any of his own writings (Kiyokazu Mizobata, ed., *A Concordance to Caxton's Own Prose* (Tokyo: Shohakusha Publishing Co., 1990)).

ways deeply Hocclevian as *The Regiment of Princes* frequently frustrates simple conceptions of

filial literary inheritance.[33] Yet should Little John follow the advice in subsequent stanzas to read

the *Regiment of Princes*, he will trace the words back to their source.

Through recursive appropriation (of the master of Hoccleve of Chaucer), these stanzas

demonstrate the ways that readers can share in the literary authority of past writers. Though this

received, shared literary authority enables the book to better the manners of Little John, it is

crucially not just a "spiritual" inheritance. The book's manner-altering power is described in

physical terms. On the first page, the author employs "printing" as a metaphor to describe the

child's ability to remember the lessons given: "But as waxe resseyueth prynte or fygure / So

children ben disposid of nature" (fol. 1r). Although the "printing" could apply to the technology

of the printing press, it need not. The specific metaphor of imprinting wax with a seal or signet

accurately represents the passing of authority from one to another.[34] The wax seal, serving as a

representation of the authority of the sealer, shows a means by which authority from one entity

can become transferred to another through an act of physical reproduction. From the beginning,

the conveyance of authority and its reproducibility is a central concern of the book, even if not

expressed in bookish ways.

The author, however, explicitly ties Little John's development to the literary expertise and

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[33] See Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), esp. 107–128, discussing problems with the circuitous authority of Chaucer and Hoccleve. Also see John M. Bowers, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition," *Chaucer Review* 36 (2002): 352–369, for ways in which Hoccleve is not Chaucerian.

[34] Of course, wax tablets would also link this more closely with writing, and therefore authorship. In Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, Kuskin takes this and other references to impressions to be more directly indicative of printing, arguing that "the reproduction of books stands for the successful transformation of authority" (147).

the authority of the printed book at the end of the text.

> Go lytyl John / and who doth you appose
> Sayng your quayer / kepe non accordance
> Telle hym as yet / neyther in ryme ne prose
> Ye ben expert / praye hym of suffrañce
> Chyldren muste be / of chyldly gouernañce
> And also they muste entretyd be
> With esy thing / and not with subtylte
> Go lytil quayer / submytte you euery where
> Vnder correctõn of benyuolence
> And where enuye is / loke ye come not there
> For ony thing / kepe your tretye thens
> Enuye is ful of froward reprehens
> And how to hurte / lyeth euer in a wayte
> Kepe your quayer / that it be not ther bayte (fol. 13r)[35]

Little John has been created in the same way that the book has; the parallel structure of "Go lytyl John" and "Go lytil quayer" makes this clear. Both of them are also subject to further development, and the reader should be conscious to make concessions to each: Little John should ask for "suffrance," and the book is subject to correction of "benyuolence." The quire is even subject to the same type of advice as Little John, being admonished to seek correction and flee from envy.[36] Furthermore, the development of Little John, expressed in literary terms—not yet being expert in "ryme ne prose"—further equates the success of the book with the success of Little John.

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[35] Because of an *explicit*, these two stanzas are not separated by a blank line in the text.

[36] The "ye" of the final lines of the last stanza is ambiguous. It seems that "you" of "Go lytil quayer / submytte you euery where" directly refers to the book. However, the last second person pronoun found in the possessive "your quayer" can only refer to Little John. The middle pronouns—"loke ye come not there" and "kepe your tretye thens"—are much more ambiguous, although it seems likely that the "your tretye" has Little John as its antecedent. However, the potential confusion about antecedents further underscores the overlap between Little John and the book itself.

To make Little John accustomed to the manners of socially elevated persons is the simple

and straightforward goal of *The Book of Courtesy*. To do so, Little John must read the works of

Chaucer. Yet this engagement with literature in which Little John may share in some authority by

appropriating language gets turned back to the legitimization of the book itself.[37] While the

primary importance of *The Book of Courtesy* for this chapter resides in its clear depiction of

reading Chaucer as necessary for one's self-improvement, it also shows that questions of literary

reproduction itself require the printer to argue for the authority of the very objects that come off

their presses.

Boece

Caxton's 1478 printing of Chaucer's *Boece* (*STC* 3199, 1478) is not known for its quality

of editing or production.[38] Though it is an *editio princeps*, the generally sloppy text of the *Boece*

has been described as a "positive disrespect to Chaucer."[39] It is, however, notable for the final

pages containing an epilogue that describes Caxton's own perceived relation to Chaucer. There,

he summarizes the biography of Boethius, praises Chaucer, explains reasons for printing, and

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[37] The envoy echoes Chaucer's own in *Troilus and Criseyde*. See William H. Sherman, "The Beginning of 'The End': Terminal Paratext and the Birth of Print Culture," in *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65–88, 75, for a brief account of the printer's place in the envoy.

[38] Caxton used the title "Consolacion of philosophie." Paul Needham, William Kuskin, and others follow Caxton's lead and title the book that. I have chosen to use *Boece* when referring to *STC* 3199 since occasional distinctions between Boethius's original work and Chaucer's translation will be necessary.

[39] Brian Donaghey, "Caxton's Printing of Chaucer's *Boece*," in *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Lester (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 73–99, 91.

includes an epitaph penned by Milanese poet laureate Stephen Surigonus.[40] Caxton states that his

edition reprints the actual epitaph that hangs on a tablet by Chaucer's tomb. Initial critical

attention about the epitaph's printing focused on the relation between Caxton and Surigonus,

believing that Caxton did not merely relay what was already inscribed by Chaucer but probably

commissioned the epitaph itself.[41] Lerer, however, uses the text as a means to understand the

trajectory of Chaucerian reception.[42] He argues that Chaucer's death removes him from the

imaginary metaphors of paternity and creates an image of him as part of a past waiting to be

recovered.

> Caxton's *Boece* presents for the first time a Chaucer not of the remembered legacy of
> English coterie making but of the dead *auctores* of the Continental humanist tradition.
> He is the subject of a learned elegy, the object of historical recovery, a figure in the
> origins of literary history from ancient times to the present. The first critical
> discussion of Chaucer in a printed book focuses on an author who survives not in the
> memories of medieval readers but in the performances of humanist laureates.[43]

Yet the argument put forth by Lerer neglects the ways that Caxton fashions himself in relation to

Chaucer, Boethius, and Surigonus. By examining the triangulation of Caxton's authority in

relation to all these authors, one can see the importance of negotiating the authority of print in

these texts. Ultimately, Caxton may inaugurate a view of Chaucer in the Continental humanist

tradition, but he also inaugurates the conception of a printer as one who is able to perpetuate—and

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[40] The name as it appears in the epilogue is "Stephanŭ surigonŭ." Lerer refers to him as "Surigonus" though others use "Surigo" or "Surigone."

[41] See Derek Pearsall, "Chaucer's Tomb: The Politics of Reburial," *Medium Aevum* 64, no. 1 (1995): 51–73 for an overview of the critical history. Also see, Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?: Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book*, esp. 14–17.

[42] Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*.

[43] Lerer, "At Chaucer's Tomb," 244.

is therefore integral to—literary authority.

Although most critical attention has been focused on Caxton's inclusion of Surigonus's epitaph, the English epilogue to the text provides a wealth of detail showing how the printer conceives of his relation to Chaucer. The parallels between Chaucer's reasons for translating the text and Caxton's reasons for publishing it are striking:

> and for as moche as the stile of it / is harde & difficile to be vnderstonde of simple p*er*sones Therfore the worshipful fader & first foũdeur & enbelissher of ornate eloquence in our englissh. I mene / Maister Geffrey Chaucer hath translated this sayd werke oute of latyn in to oure vsual and moder tonge. Folowyng the latyn as neygh as is possible to be vnderstande. wherein in myne oppynyon he hath deseruid a perpetuell lawde and thanke of al this noble royame of Englond / And in especiall of them that shall rede & vnderstande it. […] Thenne for as moche as this sayd boke so translated is rare & not spred ne knowen as it is digne and worthy. For the erudicion and lernyng of suche as ben Ignorañt & not knowyng of it / Acte requeste of a singuler frende & gossib of myne . I william Caxton haue done my debuoir & payne tenprynte it in fourme as is here afore made / In hopyng that it shal prouffite moche peple to the wele & helth of theire soules / & for to lerne to haue and kepe the better pacience in aduersitees And furthermore I desire & require you that of your charite ye wold praye for the soule of the sayd worshipful mañ Geffrey Chaucer / first translatour of this sayde boke into englissh & enbelissher in making the sayd langage ornate & fayr. whiche shal endure perpetuelly . and therfore he ought eternelly to be remẽbrid. (fol. 92r-v)

The similarity between their actions is initially set up with a repeated phrase "for as moche." This phrase describes the action of Chaucer and Caxton in relation to a deficiency of the text. For Chaucer, it was the fact that "simple p*er*sones" could not understand the Latin; for Caxton, it is the lack of access to Chaucer's translation, that it is "rare & not spred ne knowen." In this way, both men work with the same goal—to bring the text of the *Consolation of Philosophy* to a wider audience. Caxton also shares Chaucer's didactic goals: he writes that Chaucer hoped to instruct "simple" readers, and his own publication is "For the erudicion" of "Ignorañt" readers.

Caxton not only makes his labor like Chaucer's in this paratext, but he also makes it

necessary for Chaucer's works to continue in existence. In Caxton's opinion, Chaucer's translation should earn him "perpetuell lawde and thanke of al this noble royame of Englond." This praise due from all England occasions Caxton's own efforts to publish the text; what Chaucer rightfully deserves from every English citizen is impossible without the wider dissemination of the *Boece*. Caxton's discussion of the rarity of the text and the general ignorance of many of its soul-benefiting words makes this desire contingent upon the intervention of print. Caxton underscores this contingency by repeating the word "perpetual." Initially, Chaucer's "perpetuell lawde" is only a potentiality: "in myne oppynyon he hath deseruid a perpetuell lawde." What Chaucer deserves is not secured until Caxton intervenes. After his printing of the text, Caxton describes the endurance of Chaucer's contributions to English with absolute certainty: "which shal endure perpetuelly."[44]

The link between the author and the printer, however, extends in both directions; Caxton's English epilogue creates a chain of complementarity, successively linking author (Boethius) to translator (Chaucer) to printer (Caxton) to memorializer (Surigonus). The repute of Boethius's work was lacking in England because it was written in Latin—an issue addressed by Chaucer. Chaucer's translation, however, was not readily available—a problem solved by Caxton. Caxton produces this work not only so that people can read the *Boece* but also so that Chaucer's influence and import will be remembered. Thus, the memorialization of Chaucer by Surigonus completes

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[44] Caxton's syntax creates some ambiguity about what is modified by the relative clause "whiche shal endure perpetuelly." It could modify "the sayd langage" instead of "this sayd boke." It could be argued that Caxton believes Chaucer's influence on the English language is what shall endure perpetually. Therefore, the perpetual endurance discussed here would not be contingent upon Caxton's printing of the text. Nevertheless, the necessity of reading to actually improve the language of the readers, as discussed in regards to *The Book of Courtesy*, would shorten the gap between these two interpretive possibilities.

what Caxton wishes to be accomplished. Surigonus enacts the perpetual remembrance that Caxton asks of his book buyer, conveniently echoing Caxton's own sentiments that Chaucer's fame shall never perish as his writing lives ("viuẽt dum scripta poete" [fol. 93r]). The interdependence of the four men is also exemplified geographically. Arising from Italy, the *Consolation of Philosophy* is Englished by Chaucer and published by Caxton. Surigonus then returns Chaucer's praise to Italy, both ancient and modern as the Latin epitaph closes the circuit of perpetuation.[45]

The final movement in the circuit—from printed book to memorialization—is also contingent upon the physical production of Caxton's press. Surigonus's epitaph does not move the reader away from this edition of the *Boece*; instead, it refocuses the reader on the importance of that very physical book as a perpetuation of the stone monument to Chaucer. Caxton actually represents that monumentality by setting the epitaph in a different font (type 3) than the rest of the epilogue (type 2).[46] In the final lines of the epilogue, Caxton himself shifts to Latin and gives himself the final word on Surigonus's epitaph:

> Post obitum Caxton voluit te viuere cura
> Willelmi. Chaucer clare poeta tuj
> Nam tua non solum compressit opuscula formis
> Has quoq*ue* s*ed* laudes. iussit hic esse tuas (fol. 93v)
> [It was the eager wish of your admirer William Caxton that you should live, illustrious poet Chaucer. For not only has he printed your works but he has also ordered this eulogy of you to be here.][47]

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[45] In Lerer, "At Chaucer's Tomb," 253, Lerer argues for Caxton as the end of a chain of textual recovery. My point here is that the chain extends one step beyond Caxton to Surigonus, establishing Caxton as a perpetuator of Chaucer's work and fame.

[46] See ibid., 254–256. Considering type 3's use elsewhere, Lerer's argument may be overstated. Type 3, a Gothic bookhand or textura font, is used for the Latin headings in the *Boece* and other Latin printings. Type 2 is modeled after Continental *bâtarde* hands and is used for vernacular printing.

[47] This translation by R. G. G. Coleman appeared in Jackson Campbell Boswell and Sylvia Wallace Holton, eds., *Chaucer's Fame in England: STC Chauceriana 1475-1640* (New York: Modern Language Assocation of America,

Indeed, the final epitaph is "firmly rooted in the material world."[48] The reader is directed to the "here" of the book as evidence of Caxton's sincere desire to keep Chaucer alive and proof that he has power over that perpetuation. The paratextual foregrounding of Caxton's necessary role in transmitting Chaucer's work—one which he has made similar to Chaucer's own goals in producing this translation— becomes inextricably tied to its physical representation.

The Canterbury Tales

Caxton initially printed *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5082) in 1477. It was the first folio printed at Westminster, and it was Caxton's largest book to date. Comprising 372 leaves, the single-column work was printed in Caxton's *bâtarde* type 2, used for vernacular English printing. It presents the work plainly with few extratextual elements other than single lines noting that prologues are ending and tales are beginning. In 1483, Caxton printed a revised edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083), adding woodcuts and a new prologue introducing the updated text.[49] In that prologue, he briefly discusses the many deficiencies of the first edition as a way to promote the corrected version now for sale.

…whyche book I haue dylygently ouersen and duly examyned to thende that it be

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2004), 3-4.

[48] Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body*, 18.

[49] See Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 150–165 for differences between the texts, which Blake considers minimal. The actual changes between the editions are not of primary importance here as I focus on Caxton's conception of the second edition, not the actual second edition itself. Yet the analysis of Caxton's editions, since no manuscript is known to be the immediate copytext, have a long history in Chaucer studies. See Beverly Boyd, "William Caxton," in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G. Ruggiers (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984), 13–34.

made acordyng vnto his owen makynge / For I fynde many of the sayd bookes / whyche wryters haue abrydgyd it and many thynges left out / And in so͠me place haue sette certeyn versys / that he neuer made ne sette in hys booke / of whyche bookes so incorrecte was one brought to me vi yere passyd / whyche I supposed had ben veray true & correcte / And accordyng to the same I dyde do emprynte a certayn nombre of them / whyche anon were sold to many and dyverse gentyl men / of whome one gentylman cam to me / and said that his book was not accordyng in many places vnto the book that Gefferey chaucer had made / To whom I answerd that I had made it accordyng to my copye / and by me was nothyng added ne mynusshyd / Thenne he sayd he knewe a book whych hys fader had and moche louyd / that was very trewe / and accordynge vnto hys owen first book by hym made / and sayd more yf I wold enprynte it agayn he wold gete me the same book for a copye / how be it he wyst wel / that hys fader wold not gladly departe fro it / To whom I said / in caas that he coude gete me such a book trewe and correcte / yet I wold ones endevoyre me to enprynte it agayn / for to satysfye thauctour / where as to fore by ygnoura͠uce I erryd in hurtyng and dyffamynge his book in dyuerce places in settyng in so͠me thynges that he neuer sayd ne made / and leuyng out many thynge that he made whyche ben requysite to be sette in it / And thus we fyll at accord / And he ful gentylly gate of hys fader the said book / and delyuerd it to me / by whiche I haue corrected my book (fol. 1r-v; sig. a ii r-v)

The problems of printing a bad edition are manifold as it compromises the authority of the printer to print a good one. If he failed once, he may fail again. Thus, this description of the genesis of the second edition is particularly rich with Caxton's editorial explanations, attempting to answer preemptively possible questions that may arise. Robert Costomiris has described Caxton's role here as one of second authorship, noting that Caxton describes Chaucer as the book's "first auctor" when entreating the readers to pray for his soul (fol. 1v; sig. a ii v).[50] Second authorship, however, does not mitigate the compromising effect of printing a bad text. Although authority over the text does not come in the way Costomiris suggests, Caxton still seeks to establish his text as authoritative. Lerer argues that the prologue's primary importance lies in the act of textual

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[50] Robert Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 5 (2002): 1–13, 3.

recovery—that Caxton has been supplied with a better copytext.[51] This, however, neglects the

ways that Caxton bridges the distance between the deceased poet and the reader.[52] Instead, I

argue that Caxton's primary purpose here is establishing his authority as a printer by making

access to Chaucer flow through physical manifestations of textual production. Caxton carefully

positions himself as a new expert in "authorized" Chaucer—a Chaucer whose authorial intentions

are still alive, detectable, and worth finding.[53] His new copytext enables him to discern the

corrupted versions of Chaucer from those that are genuine, using his diligence and oversight to

ensure that the book before the reader is "acordyng vnto [Chaucer's] owen makynge." He is able

to do this because Chaucer's intent is not merely a mental construct lost with the author's death;

rather, his intent is transmitted physically in "his owen first book"—an object that existed at the

beginning of a chain of reproductions. Indeed, Caxton's focus on the physical text as embodying

Chaucer's intent allows him to serve, potentially, as a conduit for providing an authorized version

of Chaucer's works. Caxton must work, however, to make print the best avenue for production.

     Caxton positions himself as a gatekeeper to a correct version of Chaucer by making

manuscript transmission conspicuously problematic. Although he praises the authors (clerks,

poets, historiographs) of the past, the means of transmission can besmirch their good works.

Caxton finds abridged and expanded versions an affront to the artistry of the original. Unlike

other intermediaries, Caxton adds nothing nor takes away anything from his copy. He is careful to

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[51] Lerer, "At Chaucer's Tomb," 38–43.

[52] Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body*, 38–43.

[53] See Bishop, "Father Chaucer and the Vivification of Print" for further discussion of the ways that print vivifies Chaucer.

distance himself from such problematic transmission by framing his previous, imperfect text as the consequence of imperfect manuscript transmission: "of whyche bookes so incorrecte was one brought to me vi yere passyd." The phrase "of whyche bookes" distances Caxton's printing from the books that damage Chaucer's work by conceiving of them as a separate, pre-existing group. His subsequent exchange with the displeased gentleman also places more blame on the copytext than the printer. And his phrasing of his part in the printing—"dyde do emprynte"—casts him as the cause of the printing but not the actual press-puller. As Caxton details that he did not interfere with the text, the problems then rest solely with the copytext and the "wryters" who produced it.

Toward the end of the passage, though, Caxton appropriates some of the language used to condemn previous manuscript transmission. Initially, he states that the elision or addition of verses marks certain texts as corrupt. After describing this as the primary problem, he claims that "by me was nothyng added ne mynusshyd" in his first edition, explicitly claiming that he has no share in the scribal sins previously noted. Yet his final statement owns his error, placing the burden for erring and damaging Chaucer's fame on himself by using the same verb ("sette") that he uses to describe the detrimental acts of previous copiers of the text: "I erryd […] in settyng in some thynges that he neuer sayd ne made / and leuyng out many thynge that he made whyche ben requysite to be sette in it." Yet Caxton confesses this only after the actions to correct his previous edition are undertaken, maintaining some separation between the previous production's problems and his current print edition.

The corrected edition, then, seems problematic, for Caxton is producing a volume in the same way that he produced the poor 1477 one: A gentleman comes to him with the desire to have a volume printed, and he complies. The crucial difference between the two printings, however, is that the first issue made the text available where it was previously difficult to obtain. The inability

of the gentleman to have his own copy even though his father owned one signals the fact that

Caxton's print meets a demand for text that is unable to be satisfied by the traditional model of

manuscript production and transmission. In this way, Caxton may argue for a benefit of printing

over coterie manuscript transmission, claiming that print production ultimately disseminates

enough copies of a text to have the work scrutinized by a wide array of knowledgeable readers.

The ability of the one gentleman to find a correct version of the text is subsequent to Caxton's

ability to print a "certayn nombre" for "many and dyverse gentyl men."

Yet these potential benefits of print do not mean that Caxton finds all aspects of

manuscripts unsatisfactory. Recent assessments focus on the importance of the authorizing force

of the gentleman's father, the owner of the true-to-Chaucer manuscript.[54] Indeed, Caxton relies

on the particular provenance of the text to provide a sense of authority to the work that he then

prints; the fact that Caxton's new copytext has a gentle lineage—that the text comes from a

gentleman and is being passed from father to son—makes his new edition share in the elevated

social standing of the lower nobility. Prendergast similarly argues for the importance of creating a

"paternal text" writing, "[Caxton] uses his links to a previous technology in order to lay claim to a

genealogical restoration of the authentic voice of Chaucer."[55] In this prologue, Caxton separates

the problems introduced by the "wryters"—reducing scribes to the reproductive technology of

manuscript transmission—from the ability of owners to serve as an authenticating source for

literary transmission via manuscript. For it is the father who is able to corroborate the fact that the

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[54] Kuskin, *Symbolic Caxton*, 151–153; Lerer, "At Chaucer's Tomb," 262–263.

[55] Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body*, 42.

book he owns is "accordynge vnto hys owen first book by hym made." Caxton's simultaneous decrying of the imperfections introduced by manuscript production and approval of the coterie transmission of texts focuses his critique on the productive technology of manuscript but not the authorizing forces of the nobility or gentry that surround manuscript production.

Just as Caxton is careful to maintain the gentle lineage for his text but qualify manuscript production, he makes Chaucer's authority contingent upon physical reproduction while never doubting the literary value of his works, maintaining a separation between production and cultural value. This begins in the first laudatory pronouncement of the prologue, which entreats the reader to praise generally all authors "by whyche we ben dayly enformed and haue knowleche of many thynges of whom we shold not haue knowen yf they had not left to vs theyr monumentis wreton" (fol. 1r; sig. a ii r). This statement presents a positive argument for the reading of texts, but it does so against a backdrop of potential loss—that readers would remain doomed to ignorance without the historical literary "monumentis" to preserve the author's brilliance and to inform later generations. The prologue then singles out Chaucer as deserving of special praise, doing so in standard fifteenth-century idiom of describing his English embellishment: "For to fore that he by hys labour enbelysshyd ornated and made faire our englisshe in thys Royame was had rude speche & Incongrue as yet it appiereth by olde bokes whyche at thys day ought not to haue place ne be compared emōg ne to hys beauteuous volumes" (fol. 1r; sig. a ii r). The embellishment of language and the elevation of English from its rude origins into something ornate and fair presents the reader with a narrative of the historical contingency of literary value. The best writing of the old days ought not even be compared to Chaucer now. Caxton's physical description of this contingency—"olde bokes" losing place to Chaucer's "beauteuous volumes"—emphasizes his important role in physically replacing extant English literature with new, authoritative editions of

Chaucer.

The prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, then, does indeed present the work as subject to the actions of textual recovery, as Lerer has argued. Yet it simultaneously implicates recovery in textual loss as it requires old books to be replaced by new ones. The reproductive power of the printing press fulfills this need. The description of the old books ceding place to new Chaucer supports a sense of a revivified Chaucer. Just as Caxton is able to claim some animate spiritual authenticity to his current edition—a book that is after Chaucer's own making and descends from his own first book—that allows the reader to commune with Chaucer's genuine intellect, the very newness of his edition and its perpetuating force awaken make Chaucer's genius accessible. Caxton thus creates Chaucer as a present author—one whose intentions live "here" in the pages of his print editions. Chaucer's revivification is not merely proclaimed but also enacted by the printer in physical ways. Thus, Caxton's creation of an authentic and authoritative Chaucer prescribes access through his print edition, installing the printer as a broker of Chaucer's literary authority.

This development has lasting effects both on the creation of the printer's persona as one able to find and publish editions upheld by an imagined history of descent from author to the present text. The subsequent printings of *The Canterbury Tales* corroborate the importance of Caxton's intermediary function and the creation of the printer as the primary nexus of the printed edition's authority.[56] Pynson's 1492 edition—the third print edition of *The Canterbury Tales*—is

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[56] I examine only the next two printings here. For a larger examination that extends to Thynne's 1532 edition, see Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne."

entirely based on Caxton's 1483 edition.[57] Interestingly, Pynson keeps Caxton's prologue but

makes two crucial changes: he replaces the final "By Wylliam Caxton" with "By Richard

Pynson," and he completely deletes the story of Caxton receiving the new copytext.[58] In place of

the edition's history, Pynson adds a recognition of Caxton's authority as an overseer and judge of

Chaucer's original intent:

> And also of vertue and holynes whiche boke diligently ouirsen & duely examined by
> the pollitike reason and ouirsight. of my worshipful master William Caxton
> accordinge to the entent and effecte of the seid Geffrey Chaucer and by a copy of the
> seid master Caxton purpose to imprent. (fol. 1v; sig. a i v)

Chaucer, whom many refer to as "master," is temporarily supplanted by Caxton's mastership as

printer. Although Pynson was not his apprentice, Caxton's mastership comes from his ability to

create an "authorized" edition of Chaucer that accurately represents Chaucer's original work.[59]

One may speculate as to why Pynson did not simply supplant Caxton as printer and inaugurate

himself as the new gatekeeper to an authoritative version of Chaucer's *Tales*. This could be due to

Pynson's own honesty or to the fact that Caxton may still have been alive when this edition came

off the presses. Pynson may not have wanted to overstep. Yet the deletion of the reception story

crucially erases the closure that narrative provided in finding a better copy-text and then

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[57] Stephen Bradford Partridge, "Wynkyn de Worde's Manuscript Source for the *Canterbury Tales*: Evidence from the Glosses," *Chaucer Review* 41, no. 4 (2007): 325–359, contains the most recent statement of Pynson's reliance on Caxton: "My trial collations of Pynson's 1492 printing […] against Cx^2 [Caxton's 1483 edition] confirm earlier findings that Pynson was relying entirely on Cx^2 without reference to any other exemplar" (353, n. 26).

[58] See Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne," 4. Kathleen Forni, "Richard Pynson and the Stigma of the Chaucerian Apocrypha," *Chaucer Review* 34, no. 4 (2000): 428–436, 431, notes the omission but does not speculate as to the reason.

[59] Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne," 4.

publishing it. By acknowledging Caxton's authority as a judge of Chaucer's original intent, Pynson is able to write his own work into an authorized chain of textual reception that need extend no further than Caxton. This suggests that Caxton indeed was a figure of editorial authority, recognized as one who shared in the literary authority of the authors he printed. Yet it also complicates the idea of a printer as a sole gatekeeper to literary authority, as Pynson's paratext shows that each subsequent reprinting can install the new printer in that role.

The next edition of *The Canterbury Tales*—Wynkyn de Worde's 1498 edition (*STC* 5085)—memorializes the recently deceased Caxton. Unlike Pynson, De Worde reprints the entirety of Caxton's original prologue, including the final line that gives Caxton as author of the paratext, with only minor spelling and phrasing changes. But De Worde does add "His soule in heuen won" immediately after "By William Caxton" (fol. 1v; sig. a ii v). The added note seems a fitting recognition, considering De Worde worked as Caxton's apprentice. The final line also fits Caxton's accomplishment into the mold set by the 1483 edition for an approach to Chaucer. Caxton's original becomes expressed in the 1498 edition as: "that all ye that shall in this boke rede or here wyll of your charyte among your dedes of mercy remembre the soule of the sayde Gefferey Chaucer fyrste auctour & maker of this boke" (fol. 1v; sig. a ii v).[60] The remembrance of Chaucer, made possible by Caxton's edition, now serves as a template for the remembrance of Caxton himself—a fitting conclusion to Caxton's attempt to share in Chaucer's literary authority.

But there may be an additional reason why, unlike Pynson, De Worde did not write himself into the prologue. Although De Worde used Caxton's second edition as a base text for his

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[60] Slashes from the middle of lines have been deleted.

own printing, he revised several tales, collating Caxton's edition with an unknown manuscript.[61]

De Worde essentially undertakes the exact task that Caxton undertook in 1483, yet he maintains

utter silence on the matter. This protects the authority of the now dead Caxton whose edition, like

Chaucer's works, should have nothing added or omitted from it.[62] Indeed, De Worde's respect for

Caxton throughout his printings is clear; he would even put in colophons as late as 1498 that his

printshop in Westminster was "Castons hous."[63] But it also protects Caxton's theorization of the

printer as one who can create an authorized text true to an author's own intent. Introducing his

own acts of correction to Caxton's printed book would destabilize the possibility of a correct text

in print, especially since De Worde cannot blame manuscript transmission or production like

Caxton did in 1483.

The development and use of Caxton's prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* demonstrates

how the printer's ability to share in Chaucer's literary authority was successful (at least for

subsequent printers). His prologue makes him an integral part of a chain of literary authority that

authorizes the later printed editions of Pynson and De Worde. Caxton's ability to make

manuscript production problematic, proffering the technology of print as a way to solve many of

its problems, dissociates textual production from the contextualizing power structures that

provide manuscript production its authority.[64]

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[61] See Partridge, "Wynkyn de Worde's Manuscript Source for the *Canterbury Tales*."

[62] Costomiris, "Sharing Chaucer's Authority in Prefaces to Chaucer's Works from William Caxton to William Thynne," 5.

[63] Examples include *The Doctrinal of Death* (*STC* 6931, 1498), *Parvula* (*STC* 23163.7, 1497), *The Miracles of Our Blessed Lady* (*STC* 17539, 1496), and *Accedence* (*STC* 23153.3, 1495).

[64] As De Worde's edition shows, print production was also problematic. And Caxton's own edition was often seen by critics as a particularly poor one. See Blake, "Caxton and Chaucer." Also, see below. Recently, Barbara Bordalejo has shown that Caxton did actually take some care to create his second edition. See Barbara Bordalejo, "Caxton's

Finishing Unfinished Works

When discussing *The Canterbury Tales*, Caxton specifically mentions that leaving things

out of Chaucer's works effectively defames the most illustrious English poet. This creates a

difficult task for the printer working with Chaucer's corpus as many works are fragmentary or

simply unfinished. If not contextualized correctly, the lack of a conclusion to some of Chaucer's

works may leave the readers of print editions assuming the fault rests with the printer. Some have

argued that the relatively poor editorial quality of Caxton's editions demonstrates his disregard

for correctness and completeness: "Finally, it is impossible to accept the view that Caxton took

care to publish as accurate a text as possible of Chaucer's works. He printed the manuscript he

had available without worrying about its accuracy or completeness."[65] Although modern

standards of editorial care and caution cannot be anachronistically applied to the last quarter of

the fifteenth century, Caxton nevertheless relies on promoting his books as correct and complete

through various paratextual apparatuses.

It is then understandable that Caxton adds a comment to the end of the unfinished *Squire's*

Tale in the second edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. In his first edition, the text simply simply

reads "Here endith the squyeris tale. / And begynneth the Marchañtis prolog" (fol. 108v). In his

second edition, he revises this to a note of editorial certainty: "Ther is nomore of the squyers

tale." The importance of this recognition of incompleteness—that it is the consequence of the

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Edition of the *Canterbury Tales*," *Publication of the Bibliographical Society of America* 108, no. 1 (2004): 41–60.
For my argument, the quality of the edition does not matter as much as the surrounding fictions and fabulations of its
quality.

[65] Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 165.

source material and not the printer—is attested to by similar statements included in both Pynson's (*STC* 5084, 1492) and De Worde's (*STC* 5085, 1498) editions. De Worde expands Caxton's initial claim, lessening the certainty but highlighting the printer's role in making sure his edition is as complete as can be: "There can be founde no more of this forsayd tale. Whych I have ryght dilygently serchyd in many dyuers scopyes" (fol. 74r). The responsibility of the printer to make a correct version, one after Chaucer's own making, creates an expectation for completeness.

Caxton more fully expresses the problem of incompleteness in his edition of *The House of Fame* (*STC* 5087, 1483). Instead of merely leaving the text unfinished, he adds 12 lines of couplets to complete what Chaucer has left undone. He prints "Caxton" in the margin so that the reader can tell where Chaucer's words end and the printer's begin. The lines add a hasty conclusion where the narrator awakes "and began to wryte / Lyke as ye haue herd me endyte / Wherfor to studye and rede alway."[66] The concluding dramatization of the book's creation provides a dream-vision ending in line with those of *The Parliament of Fowls* and *The Book of the Duchess*.[67] Yet it also compromises what could be the reader's job: to supply a sense of completion through interpretation. Indeed, Caxton recognizes this responsibility of the reader to perceive Chaucer's meaning, stating so in the paragraph that follows his addition:

> I fynde nomore of this werke to fore sayd / For as fer as I can understōde / This noble man Gefferey Chaucer fynysshyd at the sayd conclusion of the metyng of lesyng and

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[66] No sig. [d iii r].

[67] Its similarity to other Chaucerian texts is perhaps why it was taken to be authentic by printers for long after. Pynson's 1526 edition (*STC* 5088) displays an extremely close relationship to Caxton's edition, yet he deleted the marginal "Caxton" marking the printer's added lines (A. S. G. Edwards, "Pynson's and Thynne's Editions of Chaucer's 'House of Fame,'" *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 185–186). In Sherman, "The Beginning of 'The End'," Sherman argues that the acceptance of this ending as authentic shows the broader need of printers to have finality (79).

sothsawe / Where as yet they ben chekked and maye not departe / Whyche werke as me semeth is craftyly made / and dygne to be wreton & knowen (fol. 26r)

The explicit mention of the text's incompleteness assures the reader that Caxton has done due diligence in preserving the best available text. And the inclusion of his name next to the added verses insulates him from the valid criticism that he can damage Chaucer's reputation by adding verses that Chaucer never wrote.[68] But Caxton interestingly makes the argument for incompleteness not from the standpoint of diligent oversight of "true" copies as he does in the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. Instead, the incompleteness of the text is countered by his understanding of Chaucer's intent. The assessment that this work has been "craftyly made" conveys the idea that its lack of conclusion is intentional, once again affirming the printer's ability to appreciate the author's intent and define it for readers.[69]

The Parliament of Fowls

The first printing of *The Parliament of Fowls* was done by Caxton in 1477 under the title *The Temple of Brass*.[70] It is a composite volume, including many smaller Chaucerian works and Chaucerian apocrypha at the end. Caxton merely printed the text of the work; he included no paratexts other than brief statements introducing the various poems and passages that appear later

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[68] This is a particularly applicable criticism since Caxton himself mentioned it in the prologue to the 1483 *Canterbury Tales* (see above).

[69] See Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 63–64, for ways in which Caxton may display an understanding of *The House of Fame*'s questioning of authorial reputation.

[70] Likely, this volume was titled such for symmetry with Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*. See Lerer, "William Caxton," 728.

in the book. Subsequent printings of *The Parliament of Fowls*, however, provide fully articulated

printer's paratexts concerning Chaucer's authority and its relation to the present book at hand.

Following from Caxton, they offer a look ahead into the effects of Caxton's editorial decisions

and the construction of his printerly persona. And unlike subsequent printings of *The Canterbury*

Tales, their paratextual elements arise solely from the printers themselves and have no direct

precedent in Caxton.

The first surviving subsequent editions of *The Parliament of Fowls* come nearly 50 years

after Caxton's, from the mid-1520s. Pynson included an edition with limited paratextual material

in his publication of short Chauceriana (*STC* 5088, 1526). In many ways, it is a spiritual

successor to Caxton's edition as it contains a wealth of shorter Chaucerian verse.[71]

Yet it is John Rastell's edition (*STC* 5091.5, 1525?) that provides the first paratextual

element for *The Parliament*. Only four leaves remain from what is clearly a much larger work;

however, the introductory woodcut survives along with five rhyme royal stanzas of Rastell's own

making. In a few simple ways, Rastell displays the same sharing of authority with Chaucer and

the need to promote the text as authoritative that one sees in Caxton's writings. The stanzas

lauding Chaucer come after the heading that *The Parliament of Fowls* has begun and are directly

underneath a woodcut of birds. Although he then puts a subheading of "Johãnes Rastell in laudem

magistri galfridi chaucer," he effectively makes the laudatory verses part of the overall

presentation of the text. The participation of Rastell in the poetic enterprise of *The Parliament* is

suggested not only by the position and verse form but also by using a similar approach to *The*

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[71] See Forni, "Richard Pynson and the Stigma of the Chaucerian Apocrypha."

Book of Courtesy.

> That famous poete of late memory
> with his fayre eloquence and elygancy
> Shall see our tonge enlumyned so with his speech
> That to the ere it is an heuynly lech (fol. 1r; sig. a i r)

Here, the standard praise, that Chaucer has made the English language better, can apply to the

reader as well. Chaucer's words make "our tonge" better; reading or hearing the text actually

improves the speech of the audience. The construction of this sentence in the future tense—"Shall

see"—renders the completion of Chaucer's work in the after effects of reading. Similarly, the

initial Latin description stating that Rastell praises "master" Chaucer casts the author as a

potential teacher.[72] As in *The Book of Courtesy*, the narrator shows the way: though modern

critics may see the stanza as doggerel, the printer participates in his own literary illumining by

appropriating a particularly Chaucerian verse form: rhyme royal stanzas.

But a deeper resonance with Caxton comes later when Rastell addresses the veracity of his

text:

> And by cause I am assuryd of this thyng
> That this lytyl treatese whiche is callyd
> The parlyament of fowles was of his doyng
> with oft inquisicyon I haue hyt achyuyd
> And hyt publisshide & made to be prentyd
> which wark not only but all other that he made
> For nobyl quik sentence ben worthy to be radde (fol. 1v; sig. a i v)

The assurance that *The Parliament of Fowls* is actually Chaucer's own work provides enough

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[72] Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 120.

impetus to print the work.[73] It also recognizes the duty of the printer to verify that the copytext is

not spurious. Thus, the printer stands directly between the author and the reader as an

authoritative intermediary.

A far more interesting edition was printed by De Worde in 1530 (*STC* 5092). This small,

28-page edition includes both a prologue of four ballade stanzas and an "envoy" of three rhyme

royal stanzas written by De Worde's former employee, Robert Copland. By 1530, Copland had

already established himself as a printer in his own right.[74] The stanzas detail Copland's professed

anxiety about printing for an audience who wants newfangled things, but new trifles are rarely as

good as old poetry. His lament of Chaucer's death lacks the gravity of previous writers, merely

noting "Chaucer is deed the whiche this pamphlete wrate" before discussing the demise of

Lydgate and Hawes as well. Copland links their posterity and lasting fame explicitly to his ability

to preserve them in publication:

> Theyr bokes ye lay vp / tyll that the lether moules
> But yet for your myndes this boke I wyll impresse
> That is in tytule the parlyament of foules (fol. 1v)

By stating that this printing is for the readers' minds, Copland specifically links the act of

remembering past poets—an explicit goal in Caxton's paratexts—with his actual printing of it.

But the importance of print in this system becomes even more explicit in the envoy:

> LAyde vpon shelfe / in leues all to torne

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[73] Although only a fragment of this print edition exists, it is interesting to note that that fragment is of poor quality. In
Mary C. Erler, "Printers' Copy: MS Bodley 638 and the *Parliament of Fowls*," *Chaucer Review* 33, no. 3 (1999):
221–229, she describes it as "extremely corrupt, inferior to almost all the manuscripts" (223). Also see
E. J. Devereux, "John Rastell's Text of *The Parliament of Fowls*," *Moreana* 27/28 (1970): 115–120.

[74] Erler, "Copland, Robert (*fl.* 1505–1547)."

With letters dymme / almost defaced clene
Thy hyllynge rotte / with wormes all to worne
Thou lay / that pyte it was to sene
Bounde with olde quayres / for aege all hoore & grene
Thy mater endormed / for lacke of thy presence
But nowe thou arte losed / go shewe forth thy sentẽce.

And where thou become so ordre thy language
That in excuse thy prynter loke thou haue
Whiche hathe the kepte frome ruynous domage
In snowe swyte paper / thy mater for to saue
With thylke same langage that Chaucer to the gaue
In termes olde / of sentence clered newe
Thã methe moche sweter / who cã his mỹde auewe.

And yf a louer happen on the to rede
Let be the goos with his lewde sentence
Vnto the turtle and not to her to take hede
For who so chaungeth / true loue dothe offence
Loue as I rede is floure of excellence
And loue also is rote of wretchednesse
Thus be two loues / scryture bereth wytnesse. (fol. 14v)

The description of a rotting old book may seem hyperbolic, but an examination of the manuscript

source for this edition of *The Parliament of Fowls* confirms that such decay was actually

present.[75] Caxton's subtler connections between the preservation of literary authority and print

production have been replaced by a fully articulated view of Copland's physical production as

essential to Chaucer's fame.[76] Caxton argued that Chaucer's place in English literary heritage

relied on readers' ability to remember his works (which he conveniently printed), yet Copland

more deeply subsumes the memorialization of Chaucer in the process of physically reproducing

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[75] Erler, "Printers' Copy," 221–222. The manuscript source is MS Bodley 638. It should be noted that having the manuscript copytext for a printed edition is extremely rare.

[76] ibid., 226.

his works. The dim letters found in old books—not the dim memories of English readers—are the more immediate enemy of Chaucer's work, saved by the "snow swyte paper" of De Worde's new edition.[77] Copland's assumed power over the literary legacy of Chaucer provokes an interpretive note from the printer in the final stanza of the envoy. By guiding the reader's interpretation of the goose and the turtledove, Copland intervenes in the process of construing Chaucer's meaning. Although such a printerly intrusion into the reader's hermeneutic process is not unparalleled, the placement of it after Copland's praise of his own printing enforces the idea that the printer as a gatekeeper to Chaucer, but one willing to open that gate to the reader. He is someone who has a more intimate association with the literature that he prints and can thus knowledgeably direct interpretation.[78]

Copland's self-praise of his printing, however, becomes problematic when one reaches the colophon. The last words on the page are "Imprynted in london in flete strete at the sygne of the Sonne agaynste the condyte by me Wynkyn De Worde. The. xxiiij. day of Ianuary in the yere of our lorde. M.CCCCC. & .xxx" (fol. 14v). Copland's envoy begins with the line "Lenuoy of R. Coplande boke prynter," and his prologue has a title reading "Roberte Coplande boke prynter to new fanglers." His paratexts claim that he is the one printing the book: "For lacke of wrytynge

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[77] Erler emends "swyte" to "wyte" (Mary C. Erler, ed., *Robert Copland: Poems* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 138). Despite the accuracy of the degraded manuscript's description, Copland's overall point overstates his (or De Worde's) role. The Pynson edition of 1526 used the same manuscript (MS Bodley 638) to correct Caxton's edition of the poem. Essentially, Pynson had already done what Copland says he does here (Erler, "Printers' Copy"). Nevertheless, the importance of preserving England's literary heritage from the ravages of time was perceived to be an important task, gaining prominence in the wake of the dissolution of the monasteries. See Jennifer Summit, *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England*, in *Memory's Library: Medieval Books in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) for an excellent overview and Vaughn Stewart, "Friends, Rivals, and Revisions: Chaucer's *Squire's Tale* and *Amis and Amiloun* in *The Faerie Queene*, Book IV," *Spenser Studies* 26 (2011): 75–109, for a specific discussion of Spenser.

[78] See Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author*, 125–126.

conteynynge morall sperkes / I must impryut the parlament of foules."[79] While De Worde may

not have been confident enough in his versifying to actually compose the paratextual poems, it

seems odd that so much focus would be given to Copland's book printing. Yet such focus may be

necessary as his profession is precisely what makes Copland an authority on Chaucer. Copland's

imagined production of the text, and double assertion in the titles that he is a book printer,

reaffirms the status that printers sought to promote among their readers: that they as printers

authorize Chaucer's literature—even when they do not actually print the book in front of the

reader.

Since Caxton was the first printer in England, it is unsurprising that his paratexts contain

no trace of positioning himself amongst a group printers. But, as Copland demonstrates,

subsequent printers tie their authority not only to a literary forefather but also to the community of

printers surrounding the production of literature (as Pynson does in his 1492 *Canterbury Tales*).

Recognizing other printers can seem to be merely good business, but it also shows a responsibility

to carry on the authority inherited from other printers.[80] Crucially, however, Copland's paratexts

to De Worde's *The Parliament of Fowls* demonstrate that this need not be an inheritance from

master to apprentice, even if De Worde and Copland still rely on printerly authority "in the

family," so to speak.

Indeed, the upending of paternal transmission of authority occurs not in relation to

England's authors but in relation to other printers. The lineal descent from Caxton to De Worde

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[79] No sig. Fol. 1v. Slashes from the middle of lines have been deleted.

[80] Erler, "Printers' Copy," 227.

and Copland conveniently operates according to a model for authorizing textual transmission that Caxton found for his second edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. But once print as a medium is established, the lines of transmission become more flexible and need not entail an age hierarchy or master–apprentice relationship. Outside of Caxton's print family the negotiation of an authoritative printerly persona still occurs.[81] What Caxton had created was the idea of a printer who had authority over literary history because he could perpetuate it. The participation in this idea varied from printer to printer, yet the model had been established and was clearly useful to many early English printers.

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[81] For example, Thomas Berthelette's edition of the *Confessio Amantis* (*STC* 12143, 1532) contains a preface that resembles both Caxton's epilogue to the *Consolation of Philosophy* and his 1483 *Canterbury Tales* prologue. Berthelette's preface begins with praises for Gower, a discussion of the previous inadequate printing of the text, the acquisition of manuscript copies to correct it, and the reproduction of the corrected prologue. He then describes the tomb of Gower and reprints the French phrases written on it.

Chapter 3

Legitimizing Print in Chronicles

Chronicles proved a popular genre for early English printers. Beginning in 1480, Caxton

printed several chronicle editions, starting with the *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9991), "fynysshid

and accomplisshid" on June 10, 1480, according to the colophon. The word "accomplisshid" here

may signify more than just completing a print run; Caxton used the Middle English *Brut* as the

basis for his edition of the *Chronicles of England*, but he added his own continuation for the years

1419–1460.[1] He immediately followed this publication with the printing of *The Description of*

Britain (*STC* 13440a), with a date of August 18, 1480 given in the colophon.[2] This "description"

actually comprises an adaptation from Book I of John Trevisa's translation of Ranulph Higden's

Polychronicon, with selections compiled by Caxton into a slim 30-leaf volume. Two years later,

he prints the entirety of Higden's *Polychronicon* (*STC* 13438, 1482)—the longest text issued

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[1]The fact that a continuation was added to a chronicle is not particularly noteworthy as that was standard practice. See, for example, J. A. F. Thomson, "The Development of the *Polychronicon* Continuation," *English Historical Review* 76, no. 298 (1961): 20–36. Whether or not that continuation was Caxton's, however, is arguable. I follow Lister M. Matheson, "Printer and Scribe: Caxton, the *Polychronicon*, and the *Brut*," *Speculum* 60, no. 3 (1985): 593–614, who argues that Caxton did write the continuation, although he may have compiled it from an assortment of sources instead of creating an original production. Lotte Hellinga much later writes, "In 1480 Caxton probably added a substantial section to the *Chronicles of England*, and the 'Liber Ultimus' of the *Polychronicon* of 1482 is certainly from his hand" (Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 109).

[2]See Paul Needham, *The Printer and the Pardoner* (Washington D.C.: Library of Congress, 1986) who orders these two texts consecutively.

from his printshop.[3] Here again, he inserts his own historical sensibilities into the text by adding

the "Liber Ultimus," a revision of his original addition to the *Chronicles of England*. In 1482,

Caxton also issued a second edition of the *Chronicles of England* (*STC* 9992).[4]

Caxton's chronicle production ceases there, but other printers continued to print the sizable

tomes. The printer with arguably more of an impact than Caxton was the one at St. Albans. In

1486, the press there issued a revised edition of Caxton's *Chronicles of England*, titled *Cronicles*

of Englonde with the Frute of Timis (*STC* 9995, 1486).[5] Although Caxton's edition was reprinted

in London by William de Machlinia in 1485 (*STC* 9993) and by Gerard de Leew in Antwerp to be

imported into England in 1493 (*STC* 9994), it was the St. Albans Printer's edition that became

prolifically reproduced.[6] Wynkyn de Worde, Caxton's own chosen successor, reprints the St.

Albans Printer's version five times between 1497 and 1528, four times in conjunction with a

reprint of Caxton's *Description of Britain*.[7] Julyan Notary reprinted the edition in 1504 and 1515

(*STC* 9998; *STC* 10000, respectively), and Richard Pynson prints one (*STC* 9999) in 1510.

The popularity of these texts shows that they were certainly vendible commodities with

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[3]At 450 leaves, however, it is only one leaf longer than *The Golden Legend*'s A setting (*STC* 24873, 1483).

[4]Good brief synopses of early English printers' chronicles can be found in Matheson, "Printer and Scribe: Caxton, the *Polychronicon*, and the *Brut*"; Kathleen Tonry, "Reading History in Caxton's *Polychronicon*," *JEGP, Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 111, no. 2 (April 2012): 169–198; Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, 106–122.

[5]In his prologue to the text, the St. Albans Printer states that the year is 1483 and that it is the twenty-third year of Edward IV's reign. Kuskin thus dates the text to that year; see ibid., 224, n. 49. Hellinga, however, notes that the paper used is of the same stock as another 1486 edition; see Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 98. The *STC* gives a date of 1485.

[6]Machlinia's edition makes no appearance further in this essay. The reason is that the folios that comprise the last part of the book—the ones pertinent to this discussion—have been lost.

[7]Those editions are *STC* 9996 (1497), *STC* 9997 (1502), *STC* 10000.5 (1515), *STC* 10001 (1520), and *STC* 10002 (1528). Kuskin, *Recursive Origins* remarks that "[t]he 1520 edition appears not to have *The Descrypcyon of Englonde*" (224, n. 46).

readers eager to purchase and consume English history. In this chapter, however, I focus on the additions and changes printers made to the texts. In her work, Kathleen Tonry argues persuasively that Caxton exploited known methods of medieval historiographic reading, using "the material and discursive traditions of the late-medieval chronicle to foreground the unpredictable energies of the history reader."[8] Tonry continues to show that Caxton created his *Polychronicon* in such a way that the reader's ability to interpret was highlighted and given surprisingly free rein. My argument attempts to revise this idea by claiming that Caxton does not merely foreground, but directs the reader's "unpredictable energies" in ways that simultaneously legitimize the reign of Edward IV and the value of print technology.[9] The St. Albans's *Cronicles of Englonde* are used to highlight subtle differences in the ways that printers attempt this readerly control and the goals of that influence.[10] Specifically, I analyze how the portrayals of Edward IV's accession and the invention of printing rely on reader's synchronic reading strategies—that readers link them together in a way that legitimizes the new technology. Doing so requires selective retelling of Edward IV's reign to maintain royal authority during a politically turbulent time. Chronicles, drawing on medieval historiographical reading traditions, are well-suited for engaging the reader in making such associations and conclusion.

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[8]Tonry, "Reading History in Caxton's *Polychronicon*," 172.

[9]Chronicle legitimations of Yorkist authority were not new. See Raluca Radulescu, "Yorkist Propaganda and 'The Chronicle from Rollo to Edward IV'," *Studies in Philology* 100, no. 4 (2003): 401–424.

[10]To differentiate the two editions of this text, the modernized *Chronicles of England* will always refer to Caxton's editions, with first or second edition noted. The original spelling of the *Cronicles of Englonde* will be used exclusively for the St. Albans Printer's edition.

Caxton's *Chronicles of England* and *Polychronicon* Additions

When Caxton penned his continuation of the *Chronicles of England*, he stopped in the

year 1460, ending with Edward IV's accession.[11]

> he was crouned at westmynstre & enoynted kyng of englond hauyng the hole possession of all the hole reame whom I pray god saue & kepe & sende hym the accomplisshement of the remenaunt of his rightfull enheritaunce beyonde the see / & that he may regne in them to the playsir of almyghty god helthe of his soule honour & wurship in this present lyfe / & well & prouffyt of alle his subgettis / & that ther may be a verray finall pees in all cristen reames that the infidelis & mysscreauntes may be withstãden & destroied & our faith enhannced which in thise dayes is sore mynusshed by the puissaunce of the turkes & hethen men / And that after this present & short lyfe we may come to the euerlastuig lyfe in the blisse of heuen Amen (fol. 181r)

The tone of the passage is hopeful—the expression of a subject believing that English territorial

claims and Christianity can advance under Edward's reign. The repetition of the word "hole"

emphasizes the totality and finality of Edward's control. There is a sense of completion that is not

brushed aside in the next lines but built upon. Given Edward's power in England, he may actually

be able to accomplish reclaiming France and growing Christianity in the face of Ottoman

oppression. The king's power extends in stages across Europe, going from England to France to

Turkey. The reclamation of the Continent intertwines England's dominance with Christianity's

flourishing. Indeed, the "verray finall pees" for all Christendom is predicated upon a healthy,

God-pleasing, subject-profiting king. Edward is posed to interrupt the current state of diminished

Christianity and powerful "turkes & hethen men." The creation of this common enemy at the end

adds a sense of importance and purpose to the king's actions that deepens the hopeful tone; its

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[11] Edward came to the throne in 1461 according to the Gregorian calendar. Caxton's edition, however, uses the old dating system, which has been preserved here.

true contribution to the overall tone, however, comes not by its religious affiliation but by its temporal location. The works of the Ottoman Empire define "thise dayes," contrasting sharply with the works of Edward, who operates here in the future.

Caxton follows this with a brief colophon, the last line reading that the text was printed "in the xx. yere of the regne of kyng Edward the fourth." With no mention of the tumultuous events of the past two decades, the hopefulness of the final lines of the *Chronicles of England* suggest that the intervening years have been conflict-free ones, during which few noteworthy events have happened. This, of course, was not the case. By ending in 1460, Caxton is able to craft a narrative that elides failures of Edward's royal authority and certain treacheries of the peerage, specifically the Readeption of Henry VI, the Treaty of Picquigny, and the execution of Edward's own brother, the Duke of Clarence.

Although much of Edward IV's reign was free of the violent upheavals commonly associated with the Wars of the Roses, he still briefly lost the throne in Readeption of Henry VI on October 3, 1470. After being in exile for several months, Edward was able to reclaim his crown. The events that precipitated this, however, lie in Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville—an event that threatens not only royal authority but also nobles' socially privileged places of influence and power. The subsequent rise of the Woodville family upset many nobles who enjoyed places of privilege around the king. Most notably, Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick (also known as the Kingmaker), had his once great influence increasingly curtailed as the Woodville's rose. Warwick raised an army and actually captured Edward in July 1469 after the Battle at Edgecote Moor. When the nobles would not accept Warwick's attempt to rule through Edward, the Kingmaker released his monarch, eventually raising another rebellion that was quashed by Edward. Warwick sought refuge in France in May 1470 and made an alliance there

between himself, the former queen Margaret of Anjou, and Louis XI, aiming to put Henry VI back on the throne. Warwick raised an army with French help and set sail for England. Edward, knowing he was outmatched, fled to Burgundy. Henry VI was reinstated as king of England. Edward returned to York with a small army, slowly gathered strength while moving south, and eventually entered London unopposed. Henry VI was captured, and Warwick was later killed at the Battle of Barnet. The subsequent Battle of Tewkesbury saw Edward defeat Queen Margaret's forces, resulting in the death Prince Edward, Henry VI's only son. Edward's claim to the throne was thus secured. Caxton would have been intimately familiar with the Readeption since he was governor of the English merchants in Burgundy when Edward had fled there. In his biography of Caxton, George D. Painter suggests that Caxton may have even helped Edward organize the ships that took him back to York and eventually to the throne.[12] Detailing the Readeption in the *Chronicles* would, undoubtedly, undermine Edward IV's authority and perceived ability to establish stability, peace, and prosperity. The very last chapter of the *Chronicles* begins with Warwick playing an instrumental part in Edward IV's accession and ends with Edward giving Warwick governance in northern England. The Readeption saw Warwick become a traitor; indeed, the events of 1469–1471 prominently display the dependence of royal authority on the whims and support of the peerage.

By skipping the span of 1460–1480, Caxton also precludes any mention of Edward IV's unsuccessful campaign to bring French lands under the English crown. In 1475, Edward officially declared war on France with support of Charles of Burgundy. After landing at Calais, Charles's

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[12] George D. Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography of England's First Printer* (London: Chatto / Windus, 1976), 42.

boldness was tempered when he saw that Edward's forces were sufficient for the task, and he

reneged on his agreed troop support. As Edward's armies approached enemy territory, an offer of

peace was made by Louis XI, formalized as the Treaty of Picquigny. The treaty saw payment to

the English by the French, but the monetary victory was not what many had hoped for. The

Crowland Chronicle continuation captures the feeling of failure effectively[13]:

> quod [bellum] incredibili sumptu ac inauditis a seculo diligentiis atque industriis
> praeparatum nunquam ad initium poterat pervenire
>
> [After unbelievable expense and care and energy in preparations unheard-of in this
> age, it [the war] had never managed to get started.][14]

Edward, here, becomes an impotent monarch, one unable to follow through with conquest even

with incredible preparation and expenditure. France's failure, despite Caxton's prayer that God

"sende hym the accomplisshement of the remenaunt of his rightfull enheritaunce beyonde the

see," skips over the fact that this had already been attempted.[15] The *Crownland Chronicle* shortly

follows this with the effect of Edward's failure to win a military victory:

> Non est dubitandum perplexitatem hujus casus altissime in corde regis resedisse
> seseque non ignorare conditiones populi sui quamque leviter trahi possent, si
> capitaneum invenerint ad insurrectiones et novitates inducendas.
>
> [There is no doubt that there was deep anxiety in the king's heart over this state of
> affairs and that he was not unaware of the condition of his people and how easily they
> might be drawn into rebellions and strange schemes, if they were to find a leader.][16]

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[13] The *Crowland Chronicle* illustrates one possible reaction to the events that unfolded at this time. It is, by no means, the reaction of most people. My argument is not that all people reacted this way but that the events of 1460–1480 are troubling because they could be interpreted this way.

[14] Nicholas Pronay and John Cox, eds., *The Crowland Chronicle Continuations: 1459–1486* (London: Richard III / Yorkist History Trust, 1986), 136, 137.

[15] George D. Painter notes that there was renewed interest in the summer of 1480 in another invasion of France. See Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography of England's First Printer*, 106.

[16] Pronay and Cox, *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 136, 137.

Once again, the contingency of royal authority is laid bare. Rebellion lurks close by. The chronicler deftly captures the severity of this historical moment as the only certain thing was that everyone doubted the king, even Edward himself.[17] The Latin "leviter," translated here by John Cox as "easily," carries with it a meaning of lightness, that even an insignificant event could ruin Edward's reign. The contrast between the severity of the possible outcome of rebellion and the light touch needed to set it off deepens the critique of Edward's power, reducing him to being ineffectual even in small matters. Caxton's text omits all of this by stopping the *Chronicles of England* in 1460 with a rosy description of Edward's accession. The phrasing in the final lines that the printer wishes God to send Edward the "accomplisshement" of his French conquest undoes the intervening narrative—implying that there are still battles to fight, that the war is not over, that conquest is attainable.

Perhaps the most difficult action to describe would have been Edward IV's prosecution and eventual execution of his brother, George, Duke of Clarence. Clarence's allegiance was perhaps always in question after he had sided with Warwick and took part in Edward's capture in 1469. In 1478, Clarence, who had withdrawn from the king, was tried and condemned for treason. Edward prosecuted his brother, who was not present during the trial. Clarence was taken into custody and privately executed. Edward IV could now technically be deemed a fratricide. The *Crowland Chronicle* again captures the an idea of popular sentiment in the wake of Edward IV showing no mercy to his brother: "Ab hoc actu multi Regem Edwardum persuasum relinquebant quod ad libitum dominari posset super totum regnum" ["After this deed many people

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[17] The translation of "perplexitatem" as "anxiety" is certainly legitimate, but other possible meanings such as "confusion" push the word closer in meaning to "dubitandum" immediately preceding it.

deserted King Edward who was persuaded that he could rule as he pleased throughout the whole

kingdom"].[18] Although executing one's brother would clearly cast Edward in a bad light, the

capriciousness of the king truly undermines his authority as he now rules as he pleases, not for the

"well & prouffyt of alle his subgettis."

Of course Caxton would not want to paint the currently reigning monarch in a bad light by

unnecessarily highlighting his failings during the past 20 years of his reign. The thought that a

printer in Westminster would be willing to print something potentially seen as subversive to royal

authority is simply ridiculous. Whether or not fear motivated Caxton's stopping of his

continuation at the year 1460 will never be known. But I argue, rather, that the way Caxton

weaves noble authority and printing together means that the success of the new technology is

predicated upon maintaining the authority of the king and peerage—both potentially greatly

diminished over the intervening decades. As has been argued in this dissertation, Caxton's

paratexts feed on the idea of nobility, offering it as an exclusive category of existence while

simultaneously claiming that his texts will ennoble readers. Caxton builds these connections

subtly in the *Chronicles of England* by inserting a note about the invention of printing, the most

commented upon aspect of Caxton's chronicle additions.

The mention of printing is brief and in passing, buried within retellings of other events of

that year. In his 1480 edition of the *Chronicles*, under a chapter heading reading "How the lord

Egremond was take by therle of salesteries sones And of the robbyng of sandwych," Caxton

begins with a noteworthy but unexpected story: "This yere were taken iiij. grete fisshes bitwene

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[18] Pronay and Cox, *Crowland Chronicle Continuations*, 146, 147.

Eerethe & london / that one was called mors marine / the second a swerd fisshe / aud the othir tweyne were wales." The entry continues with what the chapter heading promised, a brief 75-word description of Egremond's capture and subsequent escape from Newgate. The text then returns to its listing of other events, giving the Earl of Warwick's trip to Calais and the vague mention that about this time monasteries were reformed. Immediately following the reformation, Caxton writes, "Also aboute this tyme the crafte of enprinting was first founde in Magunce in Almayne / whiche craft is mnltiplied [sic] thurgh the world in many places / and bookes bene had grete chepe and in grete nombre by cause of the same craft."[19] After this, Caxton oscillates between giving events happening in Christendom at large and stories of more local interest. Immediately following print's invention comes a description of a miracle that resulted in "an infinite multitude [of Turks] slayne and destroied" in the Siege of Belgrade. Another Newgate prison break comes next.

The variety of events given make the insertion of printing seem like little more than a noteworthy blip in the flow of history. Caxton does, crucially, highlight the productivity of the printing press and its ability to make texts available cheaply.[20] Yet its proximity to the reformation of monasteries and the slaying of the Ottoman forces suggests a greater significance. Compared to the English stories, the continental information is strikingly positive. Monasteries become reformed, a new technology spreads books, and many heathens are slain with direct help from God. This passage occurs just nine pages (the verso side of the folio five previous) before

[19] Kuskin, *Recursive Origins*, 110, notes the delightful mistake of "mnltiplied" being reprinted hundreds of times.

[20] See ibid., 106, regarding the exponential productivity of the press and its representation in this passage.

the concluding text discussing the hopeful outlook for Edward's reign. Caxton's hope for final

defeat of the Ottoman Empire echoes the Hungarian miracle that occurred in such close proximity

to the mention of printing. In broader terms, Caxton places printing in a series of positive

advancements that the final lines of the *Chronicles* are hopeful will occur under Edward's reign.

 Where the *Chronicles of England* hints at this connection, the *Polychronicon* in 1482

makes it clearer:

> whiche werke I haue finysshed vnder the noble protection of my most drad naturel and
> souerayne lord and moost cristen kynge / kyng Edward the fourth / humbly besechyng
> his moost noble grace to pardone me yf ony thynge be sayd therynne of Ignoraũce / or
> other wyse than it ought to be. And also requyryng al other to amende wher as ther is
> defaute / Wherin he or they may deserue thank & meryte / And I shal praye for them
> that soo doo / For I knowleche myn Ignoraunce and also symplenes / And yf ther be
> thyng that may plese or prouffite ony man / I am glad that I haue achieued it (fol. 2v)

For Caxton, the utility of the *Polychronicon* is contingent upon Edward. His claim that the text

was finished under Edward's "noble protection" makes Edward's royal authority an aid to the

actual production of the text. Although Caxton does not use such strong language as "through" or

"by" that would suggest Edward's protection being requisite for the completion of the work, he

nevertheless gives the reader a sense that without Edward, he would have been assailed and

hindered. Then, asking for preemptive pardon, Caxton beseeches Edward to forgive anything

amiss. Edward thus holds final authority over history; he is the true arbiter of how things "ought

to be."[21] Caxton then asks for correction from all readers. The curious phrasing of "Wherin he or

they" should receive his thanks for their attention suggests that Caxton viewed this as an activity

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[21] This phrase occurs five times throughout the *Polychronicon*; the last two describe how King Henry VI ought to be
deposed and how King Edward IV ought to be obeyed.

in which the king himself may have participated; the subsequent request that "al other" correct his text makes such corrections secondary. The king has primary authority to legitimize Caxton's history.

Caxton's proem also contains another reason why royal (and, indeed, noble) authority must be upheld. Indeed, the entire enterprise of writing history is tied to it. At the beginning of his first paragraph, he writes:

> Grete thankynges lawde & honoure we merytoryously ben bounde to yelde and offre vnto wryters of hystoryes / whiche gretely haue prouffyted oure mortal lyf / that shewe vnto the reders and herers by the ensamples of thynges passyd / what thynge is to be desyred / And what is to be eschewed / For those thynges whiche oure progenytours by the taste of bytternes and experyment of grete Ieopardyes haue enseygned / admonested and enformed vs excluded fro suche peryllys / to knowe what is prouffytable to oure lyf / and acceptable / and what is vnprouffytable and to be refused (fol. 1r)

Reading history certainly edifies morals.[22] Couched in the language of profit, history shows its readers ways to avoid past mistakes and the means to live a life both profitable and acceptable. History warns of perils readers may face in the future that have been faced in the past. The realization of this profit, however, comes at the beginning of his second paragraph of the proem:

> Historyes ought not only to be Iuged moost proffytable to yonge men / whiche by the lecture / redyng & vnderstandyng make them semblable & equale to men of greter age / and to old men / to whome longe lyf hath mynystred experymentes of dyuerse thynges / but also thystoryes able & make ryght pryuate men digne & worthy to haue the gouernaũce of Empyres & noble Royammes / historyes moeue and withdrawe Emperours and kynges fro vycious tyrannye / Fro vecordyous slouthe / vnto tryumphe and vyctorye in puyssaunt bataylles / Historyes also haue moeued ryght noble knyghtes to deserue eternal laude whiche foloweth them for their vyctoryous merytes /

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[22] On the potential tensions between exemplarity and historical accuracy, see Jr. Kretzschmar William A., "Caxton's Sense of History," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 91, no. 4 (1992): 510–528.

And cause them more valyantly to entre in Ieopardyes of batayles for the defence and tuicion of their countrey / and publyke wele (fol. 1r-1v)

The appeal to all ages of readers makes sense for Caxton. In other paratexts, he has explicitly limited his audience according to social status, but here his appeal remains the broadest it can be. Both young and old have something to gain through history's metamorphic powers. Although Caxton does not mention exactly what the aged will gain from reading history, the young can be as wise as the old. Private persons can be worthy of governing empires. Tyrannical rulers can become battle-worn champions. History can also make knights hazard greater dangers in their country's defense. Viewed as a list of Caxtonian verbosity, a reader can miss the general logic that chains together the effects of reading history. Beginning this chain with "but also thystoryes," Caxton moves private persons to being like emperors, emperors to battle, and knights who "foloweth them" in these battles to glory in defense of their countries. Crucially, the value gained in each of these transformation is predicated upon noble or royal authority. Even the private persons who only become worthy of governing empires and kingdoms, not actually governors of countries, have the value of their historical study measured by royal standards. Caxton may have not meant that these private persons would govern entire empires or kingdoms—though his syntax makes this likely—the immediately following mention of actual emperors and kings enforces this interpretation. Ultimately, Caxton asserts that reading history has value by claiming its influence in noble spheres.

After these chronicles, Caxton printed no further, despite their popularity. Caxton himself would have a few close brushes with the political vacillations of the Wars of the Roses. His ally, Anthony Woodville—famously depicted in a miniature presenting a copy of his *Dicts and Sayengs of the Philosophres* to Edward IV with Caxton at his side—would be executed by

Richard on June 25, 1483, the same day that Parliament declared Edward IV's children illegitimate. The change would make printing his chronicles with their current mentions of Edward IV difficult, but they could be revised, of course. Yet the execution of Anthony Woodville and the accession of Richard III may have done something far more damaging to Caxton's chronicle enterprise: it undermined the royal authority that legitimized the print edition and print technology's replicative powers.

St. Albans's *Cronicles of Englonde*

When Wynkyn de Worde reprinted the St. Albans Printer's edition in 1497 instead of Caxton's, he noted in the colophon that his edition was "compiled in a booke / & also enprynted by one somtyme scolemayster of saynt Albons."[23] De Worde clearly knew more than we do now, as the details of the St. Albans press—which produced only eight volumes, two in English and six in Latin—are shrouded in "[m]ystery and myth."[24] Lotte Hellinga describes the image evoked by de Worde's description of a schoolmaster writing the *Cronicles*, setting type, and laying out sheets to dry as on that "probably has no relation to what happened."[25] The image, however, has tenacity in early print studies, and many publications refer to the St. Albans's *Cronicles* as being

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[23] Considering de Worde's long work with Caxton, the choice could seem a curious one. See below for connections between Caxton and the press at St. Albans. De Worde also includes the *Description of England* with his 1497 edition of the *Cronicles*. At the end of the *Description*, he retains Caxton's original epilogue that credits England's first printer by name with printing the text. De Worde then awkwardly follows this with his own colophon stating that he has now printed it.

[24] Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 98.

[25] ibid., 96.

the work of the Schoolmaster Printer.

Instead, the press at St. Albans may have involved multiple printers and some help from Caxton himself. In his 1548 edition of *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptorum* (*STC* 1295), John Bale states that a schoolmaster at St. Albans had compiled a history of Britain but died before completing it. Caxton then assembled the loose leaves and finished the text. Bale gives this as happening in 1483, the same date listed in the prologue to the *Cronicles* (discussed below), even though the work was likely not printed at St. Albans until 1486.[26] Whether or not Caxton actually completed the work in the way Bale describes cannot be known, and Bale does not divulge his source for the story. What one can know is that there was some connection between the press at St. Albans and Caxton, for St. Albans uses some of his Type 3 for the headings in the *Cronicles*.[27] Hellinga does, however, believe it possible that Caxton shared an annotated copy of the *Chronicles* with the press prior to their later publication. If Caxton were, essentially, the author of the "Schoolmaster Printer's" *Cronicles*, the changes would provide convincing evidence of the need to maintain royal authority for the enterprise of printing to have value. Nevertheless, the differences between the *Cronicles of Englonde* and Caxton's editions of the *Chronicles of England* show ways in which a text can adapt to maintain such support in the face of England's political climate.

The most obvious change was the inclusion of an English translation of a work titled in the text as *Frutus temporum* and mentioned in the work's complete title: *Cronicles of Englonde*

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[26] Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 98.

[27] ibid., 95.

with the Frute of Timis. The translation is actually of Werner Rolevinck's *Fasciculus temporum*, which was popular in print since its first appearance in 1474.[28] The *Frute of Timis* actually precedes the *Cronicles* and gives an overview of historical events before the birth of Christ. Hellinga posits that this may be the only original work of the "Schoolmaster Printer" if one is to take Bale's story as true.[29] But a few other changes are, for this present argument, more interesting: making a table of contents, inserting a prologue, and adding material to a slightly rearranged final section of the text.

      The table of contents is the first element of the text the reader would see upon opening the volume. A brief paragraph sits atop the first page, instructing readers how to use the signatures for folios in order to locate the desired material. The table contains headings for seven sections with lists of notable persons presented in groups; folio signatures sit below these groups and direct the reader to the range of folios in which they can find the notable person. The vast majority of entries are persons—kings, bishops, popes, emperors. The few entries that give a subject other than someone of authority stick out. For example, the last group of items reads thus:

> Kyng henri the sext
> Calixtus the thrid pope
> Pryntyng of bokes
> Pius the secund pope
> Paulus a venicion pope
> Sixtus the fourth pope.
> H. v.vi.vii.viii. & all I. and K. & so endith this boke.
> Here endith the tabull (fol. 9v; no sig.)

Printing rises to the same level of importance as kings and popes. And this does not merely

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[28] Hellinga, *William Caxton and Early Printing in England*, 96.

[29] ibid., 97.

represent what are the larger sections of the text. On the folios for Henry VI are numerous chapter headings with separate, distinct events. The information on the popes—all added to the St. Albans *Cronicle* and not appearing in Caxton's edition—occurs in just the very last chapter. From folio H. v. to the end of the book, there are a total of 15,986 words; the material on the popes and printing contains 887 words. Although the printer is under no obligation to make a democratic table of contents, the St. Albans *Cronicle*'s table is telling. Considering that whoever penned the *Prologue* does not mention the addition of the pope material as being his original contribution, I find it unlikely that the compiler merely wants to make the contributions seem substantial and important. Truly, the logic behind the table is that notable persons should be named. By inserting printing into this list, the advent of printing gains stature as a truly noteworthy event. In its tabular equivalence to popes and emperors, the entry on printing also implies that this new technology has some impact on those of such political and religious status.

The added prologue rehearses many of the types of arguments Caxton gives in his proem to the *Polychronicon* regarding the benefits of reading. It also gives details of the compilation of the work, mentioning the inclusion of the new *Frute of Timis* and stating that the work was finished in 1483 in the twenty-third year of the reign of King Edward IV. This aligns with Bale's potentially apocryphal story of Caxton completing the work. The prologue also states that the text continues "to owr tym the wich is vndir the regne of kyng Edward the fourth xxiij yer whos nobull croniclis be custũ may not be seen." This recognition that the premature ending of the *Cronicles* are the result of some chroniclers' custom gives reason where none was given in Caxton's text.[30] Certainly, writing about the current political situation could be dangerous or, at

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[30] This was not, of course, law. The *Chronicle of John Warkworth* was completed during Edward IV's reign and

least, socially inexpedient. Caxton himself alludes to more recent events during Edward's reign in

the final lines of his *Chronicles*, including Edward's war against France, but even these references

appear to have gone too far.[31] The St. Albans edition of the *Cronicles* has them deleted, ending all

information about Edward IV with "And about mydsomer af́ thee yere of our lord .M.cccc.lx:

and thee frist yere of his regne he wos crouned at westmynstre & anoynted kyng of Englõd

hauyng possession of all thee reame." Considering the book's production likely occurred in 1486,

the text may have been revised to avoid touching on the recent treacheries of the royal family.

After the final description of Edward, the *Cronicles* adds information on several

successive popes. Unlike the previous chapters detailing the rise of Edward IV, there is no

chapter heading for the section of popes or for any individual pope. Instead, a single line

separates the descriptions of popes from the preceding chapter, and the discussion of Pope

Calixtus III begins with a printed, rubricated initial used at the beginnings of other chapters. The

remaining three popes also receive large initials to mark the beginning of their description. The

invention of printing lies apart from this format. Instead of a rubricated initial, it is printed

directly after the description of Calixtus, merely preceded by "Nota." and some additional white

space. It does begin on its own line, but it receives no other formatting that would suggest it is as

important as the items that surround it. The inclusion, therefore, in the table along with King

Henry VI and the popes shows that the compiler wanted to ensure this moment was specially

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contains the first thirteen years of the monarchs rule. See Keith Dockray, *Three Chronicles of the Reign of Edward IV* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988), viii.

[31] Interestingly, the edition printed in 1493 by Gerard de Leew in Antwerp for importation into England follows Caxton's text closely, including the final prayer for Edward's health and the weal of the kingdom. By 1493, De Leew may have thought the English nostalgic for Edward's reign. The edition by Machlinia in 1485 is damaged and missing the final leaves, preventing us from finding out if the ending were revised given recent events.

noted and deserving of the reader's attention.

The compiler also revises the source text. The first two popes described are actually already mentioned in the text, and the compiler of the *Cronicles* does not delete these references. Instead, the material on Calixtus III and Pius II in the addition concatenates or focuses the material given in Caxton's edition of the *Chronicles*. This makes the placement of the invention of printing in relation to the pope material particularly odd since it is not an expansion of material left in the text. Instead, the compiler of the *Cronicles* removes the mention of printing happening around the time of monastic reform and the miraculous Hungarian victory over the Turkis forces and places it here. The new context for printing, however, is familiar territory. The description of Calixtus's papacy mentions the monastic reform during this time—though the compiler adds that "but almost none [reformed monasteries] abode but they returned ayen as they wer a fore." Most of the Calixtus entry is spent detailing the miraculous victory of the Hungarians. Thus, the new placement for the birth of printing initially looks like the old.

The description of printing itself, however, has subtly changed:

> Nota. Printerys of bokis wer this tyme mightely multeplied in maguncie & thurgh out the world. and thei began frist and ther held the craftis. And this time mony men began for to be more sotell in craftis and suyfter then euer they wer a fore (fol. 289r; sig. k viii r)

Like Caxton's edition, the *Cronicles* claims the multiplicative power of this new technology is evidenced by the replication of printers, not just books. Although the syntax in this version muddies the interpretation of the second sentence, the meaning is clear and aligns with Caxton's original statement. The original ending phrase that printing has caused many books to be available "grete chepe" becomes replaced by a claim that the technology has become refined.

Men are more subtle and swifter with print now.[32] The emphasis on refinement of the craft

dovetails with the description of Pope Pius II.

Indeed, Pius's most notable accomplishment is his eloquent writing:

> PIus the secund wos pope aft́ Calixt vi. yere This Pius wos chosin in the yer of our lord M.iiij. hondrith & lviij & he was called Eneas an eloquent man & a gret oretor a laurittit poet: & a fore he wos the Emprour embassatour. and in the coũsell of Basilien he wrot a nobull tretis for thee auctorite of thee same. This man desirid to haue a passage to thee Turke: And mony of all mań contres com to Rome & he yaf them his blissĩg and sent them hom ayen for thay wer not suffcent for the Turkis host: & anone aft́ he decessid (fol. 289r; sig. k viii r)

Following the invention of printing, this focus on his literary eloquence makes sense. Indeed, his

similarity to a poet laureate and the importance of his treatise make the dissemination of his texts,

facilitated by printing, crucial to his historical glory. As with the Calixtus entry, this passage is

drawn from another part of the text; here, however, it is actually reduced from the previous entry

that occurs just a few folios earlier:

> After Calixt Pius wos pope and was chosin this yere a M.cccc. & lviij. And he wos called be fore Eneas an eloquent man and a poete laureate: He was embassatour of the emprours a fore tyme And he wrote in the coũcell of basilie a nobull traittie for the auctorite of the same. ¶Also he canonised sent Katherine of senys. This pope ordined gret indulgens and pardon to them that wold go and were ayenst the turke. & wrote an epistle to the gret turke. exorting him to becum cristyn. & ĩ the end he ordined a passage ayenst thee Turke at Ankone. to wich moch pepull drew out of all perties of cristyndõ. of wich pepull he sent mony home ayen because thei suffised not. & anone aft́ he died at the said place of Ankone the yere of our lord a .M.cccc.lxiiij. the xiiij. day of august: (fol. 284v; sig. k iii v)

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[32] The interpretation of "craftis" as the plural noun "crafts" could lead one to interpret the final sentence as meaning that printing has made men of all professions better by spreading knowledge. The use of "craftis" in the previous sentence, however, seems limited to print. This may be a reference to the multiple, discrete crafts that make up printing—for example, paper and type makers.

The lengthier description of the attempt to raise forces to challenge the Ottoman Empire steals focus from the important character trait: his eloquence. The compiler actually deletes the epistle Pius writes to the "gret turke." He clearly was not concerned with hiding Pius's failure since he mentions that all who came to Rome were sent home in the additional passage as well. Instead, the shortening of the material and the deletion of the epistle from it may signify an attempt on the part of the compiler to gloss over a moment when the pope's eloquence failed to get the emperor to convert to Christianity. In its close proximity to the advent of printing in the additional material to the final section of the book, the compiler may not have wanted to display the ways in which the dissemination of a text might fail to have the desired effect.

The differences that exist between Caxton's 1480 and 1482 *Chronicles of England* and the 1486 *Cronicles of Englonde and the Frute of Timis* printed at St. Albans show that the latter shared some of the concerns that Caxton had in printing his text. Due to the lighter hand when dealing with Edward and the new context for printing, I believe the St. Albans compiler knew that the emphasis on noble and royal acts and their emulateability required revision. Instead of the royal family lending authority to the enterprise of print, the St. Albans *Cronicles* gain this authority from casting the printing in a context exclusive of English conflicts, only surrounded by popes. Furthermore, the fact that printing is highlighted in the table suggests that the compiler hoped to draw readers' attention to its new location and ensure that its context was clearly ecclesiastical. Both texts show that the aims and effects of history are inextricably tied to the maintenance of traditional forms of authority found within these chronicles.

Chapter 4

The *Confessio Amantis* and Reader Interaction

There were only three editions of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* published before the nineteenth century. The first was by Caxton in 1483 (*STC* 12142), followed by two from Thomas Berthelette in 1532 and 1554 (*STC* 12143 and 12144, respectively). Berthelette's editions present the text with few ornaments. Decorated initials, some historiated, mark the beginnings of new books, and a Roman font is used for the Latin passages that precede every new book; illustrations, however, are lacking. In comparison, Caxton's edition potentially represents something more ambitious. In addition to the multi-line spaces left throughout the text for inserting rubricated initials, Caxton leaves blanks for the insertion of miniatures between the books (see table 4.1). These spaces may have been part of a canceled plan to insert woodcuts into the text—something he completed for his revised edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083) issued in the same year.[1] Why these spaces exist and what leaving such blank spaces may have meant for the purchasers and readers of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis* are the fundamental questions that this chapter seeks to answer.

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[1]Considering the relatively late date of the printing of *Confessio Amantis*, given as September 2 in the colophon, it is likely that Caxton printed *The Canterbury Tales* before the *Confessio* in 1483. Paul Needham orders *The Canterbury Tales* before the *Confessio* in his listing of Caxton's works in Needham, *The Printer and the Pardoner*.

Place	Folio	No. Lines	Position on Page
Prologue	2r	19	Top, both columns, above Latin
Book I	9v	14	Top, left column, above Latin
Book II	31r	21	Top, left column, no Latin
Book III	51v	13	Middle, right column, below Latin
Book IV	68v	13	Middle, right column, below Latin
Book V	90v	13	Top, right column, below Latin
Book VI	136v	13	Top, left column, above Latin
Book VII	150v	6	Middle, right column, above Latin
Book VIII	189v	17	Bottom, right column, below Latin

Table 4.1: Spaces for potential woodcuts, miniatures, or other illustrations before sections of the *Confessio Amantis*.

There may be two possible explanations for these gaps: Caxton was careless or rushed; or Caxton left the blanks for later purchasers to fill with decorations to his or her own tastes. Both possible explanations rely on the unknowable intent of a long dead printer. Yet the documentary evidence left to us by copies of Caxton's *Confessio Amantis* suggest that those places could be exploited by readers in an effort to embellish the print book with manuscript-like ornaments. I further argue that this edition of the *Confessio* is a socio-economically pliable text; even when decoration could not be completed, the gaps still held value in their ability to mark the the text as something someone who could complete the decoration might purchase. In other words, although the print edition has a certain leveling effect on the status of its purchasers, the spaces establish Caxton's *Confessio* as being able to be improved and made more valuable.

These conclusions, however, require examination of the manuscript context into which Caxton's edition emerges as well as analysis of the peculiarities of Caxton's edition in general. Upon backdrops of both the manuscript and print context for Caxton's edition, I pin information of actual surviving copies of the text. Information from these three areas—manuscript, print, and the physical copies of this edition—allows the final arguments to be constructed.

Contexts for Caxton's *Confessio Amantis*

Manuscripts and (Potential) Embellishments

The manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis* show some variety between the three different recensions that exist, but Caxton's edition in comparison is an outlier. Caxton's printing of the *Confessio Amantis* has no known copytext, nor are its characteristics aligned with any particular recension. Indeed, its peculiarities led G.C. Macaulay, editor of *The Complete Works of John Gower* at the turn of the twentieth century, to claim that Caxton's production must have been the result of the printer combining text found in at least three manuscripts.[2] Macaulay cites readings characteristic of each of the work's three recensions appearing in Caxton's edition to support his claim. Such a practice of synthesizing various recensions in one text would have been an odd practice for Caxton. Usually, Caxton included multiple variant readings instead of choosing pieces from multiple manuscripts.[3] N.F. Blake argues that Caxton may have had only one manuscript considering that all the pieces included in the 1483 printing thought to be characteristic of the first and second recensions appear at times in copies of the third recension. Since there is no third recension text that includes all the portions that made it into Caxton's production, Blake posits the potential for a lost, single manuscript that served as Caxton's copytext.[4] One manuscript, Magdalen College, Oxford 213, has been suggested as a copytext due

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[2]G. C. Macaulay, ed., *The English Works of John Gower*, vol. 1 (London: Trübner, 1900), clxviii–clxix.

[3]Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 194: "Normally, when he knew variants of a story, he was unable to choose between them and usually ended up including both."

[4]ibid., 193–194. Blake's chief aim is to demolish the certainty that Caxton used three manuscripts to create his edition, yet the critic's conclusion acknowledges that each piece of his evidence is potentially weak: "It may be

to the inclusion of some marks in the manuscript that correspond to the beginnings of columns in Caxton's edition.[5] Blake dismisses these as insignificant as there is no apparatus given for a compositor to add in the passages included by Caxton that are not found in Magdalen 213.[6]

Caxton's layout and decoration of his edition also differs from extant manuscripts. Of the 49 manuscript copies of the *Confessio*, 28 come from the first quarter of the fifteenth century, most following a nearly standardized format and plan of decoration and illustration.[7] These manuscripts use folio-size parchment and present the text in double columns of 46 lines each.[8] Caxton follows this line layout for his edition, though he uses folio-size paper and some pages contain 44 or 45 lines.[9] Many of these "standard" manuscripts contain vinets and demi-vinets that create elaborate borders that demarcate the *Confessio*'s books; this particular decoration is lacking in Caxton's edition. Illustrations are also standardized for this set of manuscripts as most feature two miniatures: the Nebuchadnezzar's dream of precious metals in the Prologue and a

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admitted that some of the above arguments taken individually are not entirely convincing, though together they make it seem more than likely that Caxton had only one manuscript" (198).

[5] Gavin Bone, "Extant Manuscripts Printed from by W. de Worde with Notes on the Owner, Roger Thorney," *The Library*, 4th ser., 12, no. 3 (1931): 285–286.

[6] Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture*, 190.

[7] Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. Siân Echard (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2004), 80. Pearsall writes that there are 48 manuscript copies, but he lists 49 in his list of manuscripts. He has included British Library Egerton 913, which is on the first quarter of the poem. Since it is a "substantial fragment" and was included by Macaulay in his original census of manuscripts, many include it in lists of complete manuscripts (Siân Echard, "Pre-Texts: Tables of Contents and the Reading of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Medium Aevum* 66, no. 2 (1997): 283 n.1). Alternatively, Pearsall's "48" may have excluded Oxford Bodley MS Hatton 51, which is a manuscript copy of Caxton's 1483 edition.

[8] Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," 80.

[9] Seymour de Ricci, *A Census of Caxtons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1909), 56.

picture of Amans and Genius in Book I.[10] The placement of these miniatures usually occurs within the stories themselves, though several do include them at the heads of the Prologue and Book I.[11] Manuscripts created after the first quarter of the fifteenth century "tend to be plainer" with less decoration and illustration.[12] Only two manuscripts from the "standard" group—Oxford New College MS 266 and Pierpont Morgan Library MS 126—show extensive campaigns of illustration.[13] Notably, the heavily illustrated copies of the *Confessio* place the illustrations within their stories instead of at the heads of books like Caxton did. Compared to extant manuscripts, Caxton's number of gaps and locations for potential embellishment have no precedent.

Although the location of Caxton's gaps for illustration differ from the position of surviving miniatures in extant manuscripts, blanks for possible later inclusion of illustration still do occur in seven manuscripts. They can be found in both the early standard format and the later productions as well, such as Society of Antiquaries MS 134[14]; British Library MS Egerton 1991, Huntington Library MS EL 26.A.17; Nottingham University Library, Middleton Collection, MS

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[10] Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," 86, 88. A total of 19 of the *Confessio Amantis* manuscripts contain at least one of these two miniatures (Jeremy Griffiths, "*Confessio Amantis*: The Poem and its Pictures," in *Gower's* Confessio Amantis*: Responses and Reassessments*, ed. A.J. Minnis (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), 163–178).

[11] Four manuscripts include Nebuchadnezzar's dream at the head of the Prologue: Oxford Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 3, British Library Harley 3869, Huntington Library MS EL 26.A.17, and the manuscript in Princeton's Robert H. Taylor Collection. An additional two have spaces at the head of the Prologue for the possible inclusion of such a miniature there: Geneva Bodmer Library MS 178 and Nottingham University Library MS Mi LM 8. Only MS Fairfax 3 and Harley 3869 contain the "confessor" miniature of Genius and Amans at the head of Book I. Bodmer Library MS 178 does, however, contain a space for it. See ibid.

[12] Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," 90.

[13] ibid., 89.

[14] Derek Pearsall, "Gower MSS - Antiquaries 134," in *Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts of the Works of John Gower*. International John Gower Society.
http://www.wcu.edu/johngower/scholarship/PearsallMS/MSS/Antiquaries134.html

Mi LM 8; Geneva, Fondation Bodmer MS 178; and one held privately (formerly Mount Stuart, Rothesay, Marquess of Bute, MS I.17).[15] These spaces left for illustration are easily explained since the scribe's work in copying the text was completed prior to the decoration of the text. Some clearly bought manuscripts that they intended to have embellished at a later date but never got around to it; or, some desired to save money by leaving the decoration undone.

Another possibility is that manuscripts were produced speculatively, with the assumption that later purchasers would decorate their manuscripts to their taste. M.B. Parkes and A.I. Doyle find some evidence of speculative production in early fifteenth-century copies of the *Confessio Amantis* as Oxford Corpus Christi Coll., MS 67 has "a void left in its first illuminated initial where other manuscripts have shields of arms or decorative filling."[16] Considering the production of the "standard" *Confessio Amantis* is often taken to represent a growth in the desire to purchase vernacular texts in England, the potential for speculative production existed and may explain some of the unfinished texts. Yet, clearly, the possibility of purchasers to decorate their own texts according to either their own tastes or their own budgets has left a number of texts lacking the embellishments that we might view as completing the work.

This potential embellishment of the *Confessio* is also in line with the fact that a high proportion of manuscripts are deluxe relative to other volumes of vernacular writing. Siân Echard

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[15] Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," 88. The London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 45 contains guide letters for the later inclusion of smaller rubricated initials that were never done (Kate D. Harris, "Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*" (PhD diss., University of York, 1993), 203.)

[16] M. B. Parkes and A. I. Doyle, "The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century," in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts*, ed. M. B. Parkes (London: Hambledon, 1991), 247. Parkes and Doyle also note Bodley MSS Rawlinson C.446 and Digby 230 also have blanks in illuminated initials left for later inclusion of arms (248).

notes that this may have made the *Confessio Amantis* more a book to look at than to read or to study: "It may be fairly obvious to conclude that their primary function was to be *objets d'art*, but given the extremely high proportion of Gower manuscripts which are of this deluxe character, the obvious becomes significant."[17] Prizing the *Confessio* as an art object can be corroborated by the fact that they are "relatively unmarked by their *earliest* owners."[18] The division between luxury manuscripts and the minority of modestly produced volumes brings with it the potential for simple correlations to social class. The deluxe manuscripts can be seen as objects for wealthy nobles to look at while the modest manuscripts can be seen as texts for middling sorts actually to read. But this correlation does not hold true across the breadth of *Confessio* manuscripts for which provenance information is available.[19] Kate Harris in her dissertation on the ownership of *Confessio Amantis* manuscripts shows that at least one deluxe manuscript was owned by a London merchant (Oxford Corpus Christi College MS 67) and some of the less decorous manuscripts were owned by gentry (Oxford New College MS 326).[20]

The idea that modest manuscripts were for lower class persons, however, can be supported by some characteristics of the extant manuscripts: "The tendency of the more modest manuscripts to curtail, omit, or translate the Latin programme suggests that for the readers of these less

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[17] Siân Echard, "Designs for Reading: Some Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," in *Sources, Exemplars, and Copy-Texts: Essays from the Lampeter Conference of the Early Book Society 1997*, ed. William Marx, vol. 31, Trivium (1999), 61.

[18] ibid.

[19] ibid., 70.

[20] ibid. Harris, "Ownership and Readership," 201–203, 113–114. Of course, ownership of a deluxe manuscript by merchants can also be interpreted as proof for the social-aspirational value of the *Confessio*—owning it conferred upon the owners a sense that they were part of an elevated social class.

expensive manuscripts, Latin is not at all a helpful element."[21] If lack of education in Latin can be taken as a sign of a lower class purchaser, then this would support the previous generalization. Several aspects of Caxton's production align it with English-centric manuscripts. Unlike the vast majority of extant manuscripts, Caxton includes a table of contents at the beginning of his text.[22] Caxton creates this table of contents from the Latin summarative titles placed within the text itself that he has translated into English and then listed under each book, providing his readers with a useful tool for understanding Latin that may have been unintelligible to them. Caxton's layout for rubrication also gives much larger spaces for the first English stanza than the Latin that actually begins each book of the *Confessio*, which visually creates a sense of the "real" beginning of each section to be the English and not Latin.

The manuscript contexts of embellishment, layout, and textual recension highlight several crucial insights about Caxton's edition. Caxton's production of the *Confessio* stands apart from the extant manuscripts. He may have synthesized multiple copies. He also ignores the illustrations characteristic of the "standard" *Confessio* manuscripts, choosing to leave space for illustration before each book. If a decision was made to leave blanks for decoration, this may have a precedent in the copies of the manuscript, potentially circulating at Caxton's time, with gaps for illustration and rubrication remaining. The type of manuscript production—deluxe or modest—and its treatment of the Latin in the text may also signify a lower-class reader or purchaser.

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[21] Echard, "Designs for Reading," 68–69.

[22] Tables are found in Cambridge Pembroke 307, Oxford Magdalen 213, Princeton Taylor Medieval MS 5, and Oxford New College 326 (hand later than MS). The Pierpont Morgan Library MS 126 has "a full if rather useless alphabetical index of subjects." (Pearsall, "The Manuscripts and Illustrations of Gower's Works," 96.)

One pressing question that remains regards amateur embellishment of manuscripts. The gaps Caxton left for rubrication and illustration make the text exist on a sliding scale of decoration. Because of the differences in the nature of print and manuscript production, it is impossible to say whether manuscripts were produced that invited amateur decoration to complete otherwise lacking ornamentation. Yet one curious manuscript—the mid-fifteenth century copy held at the Folger Shakespeare Library (MS V.b.29 or Smedley 1)—displays the ability for textual embellishment even after production is complete. This copy contains no miniatures and no decorative borders, but it shows evidence of miniatures pasted in from another manuscript (or perhaps several). In the transitions between books, the scribe has occasionally left several lines of blank space around the large *explicit*s. In these spaces, squares of mostly obliterated French, written in reverse, appear (see figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3); these lines are the ink remnants that have leeched onto the page leeched from the back sides of miniatures cut from some other manuscript and pasted into this one. When the text did not have large gaps around the *explicit*, a miniature could be inserted into the bottom margin on the page (see figure 4.2). Additionally, a later annotator has penned marginal comments, corrected some of the text, and placed *incipit*s throughout.[23] The inclusion of this last element is especially illustrative of the owner's desire to embellish the book. By themselves, the *incipit*s add no new information to the text since the large *explicit*s done by the original scribe already signal the end of each book and, therefore, the beginning of new ones. Having seen the practice in other manuscripts the annotator

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[23] Since one cannot date paste the same way one dates handwriting, it is impossible to tell if the addition of miniatures was done by the same person who added the *incipit*s. The *incipit*s were added after the miniatures, however, as evidenced by the fact that they are carefully positioned along the edges of the former places of the miniatures (as in figure 4.1).

replicates it inexpertly in his or her own book. The Folger's manuscript *Confessio* shows the book

in manuscript form as physically malleable, taking on decoration and other marks that "improve"

the book by making it conform to what an annotator conceives to be the norm for manuscripts.

Print Context

Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis* does not conform to his treatment of other

English notable authors like Chaucer and Lydgate. Although elsewhere, like his *The Book of

Courtesy* (*STC* 3303, 1477), he prints recommendations of reading Gower as essential to being an

educated and virtuous person, the *Confessio* would be the only Gower work Caxton ever printed.

The colophon states that Caxton "fynysshed the ii day of Septembre the fyrst yere of the regne of

Kyng Richard the thyrd / the yere of our lord a thousand / CCCC / lxxxxiii/"—a simple

typographical error giving the incorrect date as 1493 instead of 1483. This places the work in the

same year as many other works of English greats to flow from Caxton's press. He printed his

second edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5083, 1483) as well as *Troilus and Criseyde* (*STC*

5094, 1483) and the *The Book of Fame* (*STC* 5087, 1483). He also printed Lydgate's *The Life of

Our Lady* (*STC* 17023, 1483).

Caxton printed all of the 1483 "famous English author series" on folio-size paper, but the

second edition of *The Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* are most directly comparable

because of their status as their authors' masterpieces and their length. The *Confessio* runs 222

leaves; *The Canterbury Tales* fills 312 leaves, but its text is presented in a single-column format

rather than the *Confessio*'s double columns of 44-46 lines each. These two works also provide an

interesting point of comparison in terms of survival rates. Seymour de Ricci lists 39 known copies
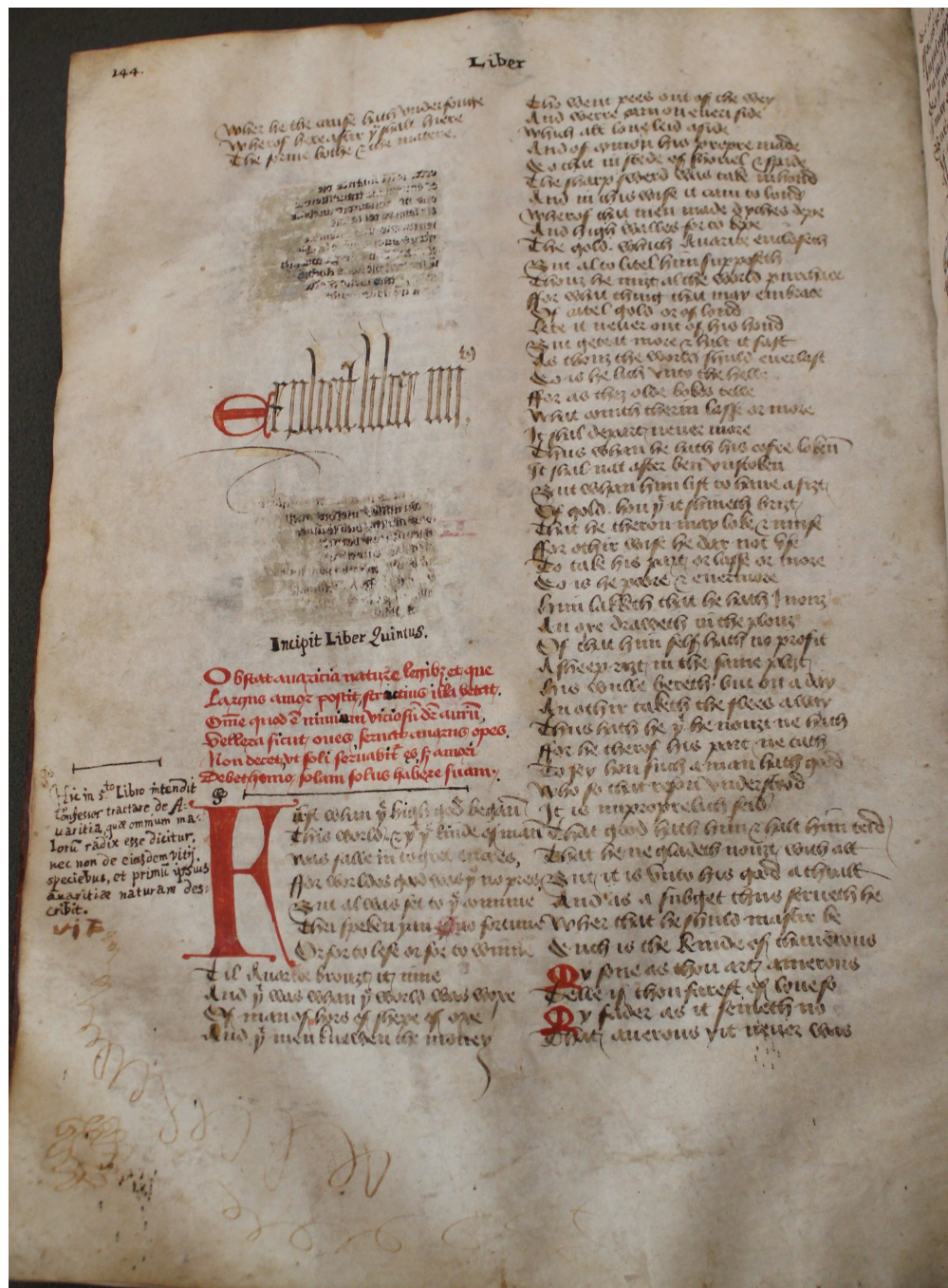
Figure 4.1: The end of Book IV of the *Confessio Amantis* in Folger MS V.b.29. The square blocks of text in reverse above and below the *explicit* show that miniatures had once been pasted in from another manuscript. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
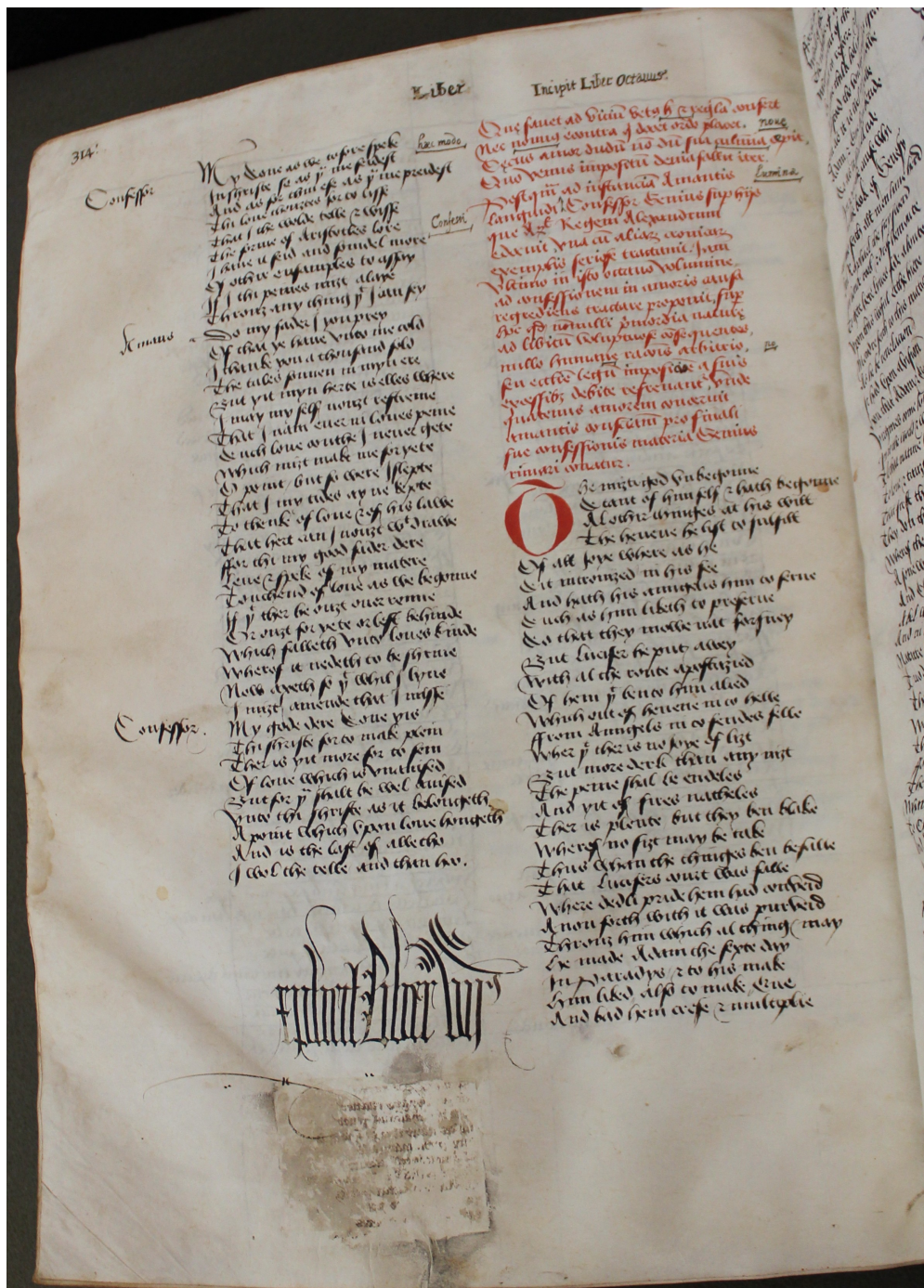
Figure 4.2: The end of Book VII of the *Confessio Amantis* in Folger MS V.b.29. The remnants of the pasted in miniature in the bottom margin. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
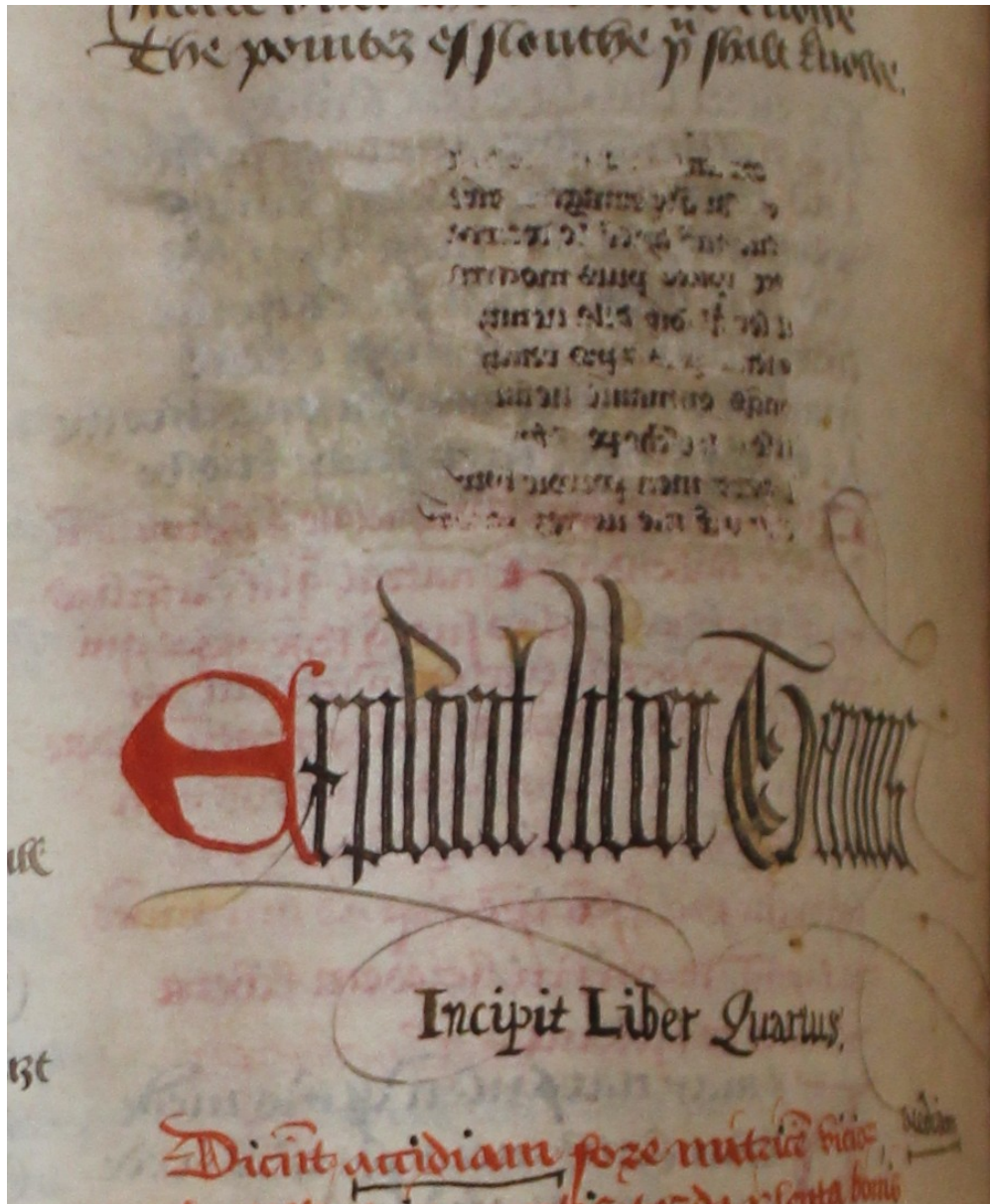
Figure 4.3: The end of Book III of the *Confessio Amantis* in Folger MS V.b.29. The *incipit* has also been added by a later annotator of the text. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

of the *Confessio* (including fragments and one with an unknown owner at the time) in *A Census of Caxtons*[24]; the number of surviving copies is nearly three times as many as Caxton's 1483 *Canterbury Tales*.[25] Perhaps, like its manuscript counterpart, many purchasers of the *Confessio Amantis* owned the item as an *objet d'art* instead of something read for enjoyment—a book that sat upon a reader's shelf instead of being thumbed to pieces by multiple, engaged readers.[26]

One similarity between the 1483 *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis*—and, indeed, many Caxton texts—is the inclusion of guide letters and spaces for rubrication. This practice is standard not only in Caxton's *oeuvre* but in many other print books. It was one of the most common forms of embellishment in print books and provided a visible link between print and manuscript, seen as a "direct continuation of the tradition of manuscript production."[27] Despite having the technological savvy to print in red, early printers often left blank spaces for initial capitals in colored ink to be added by hand later.[28] Because it would need to dry, rubrication was completed before the book was bound.[29] Caxton's volumes before 1485 often feature spaces for

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[24] Ricci, *A Census of Caxtons*, 56-59.

[25] ibid., 27-29.

[26] It is still hard to draw any conclusions based on the relative survival rate since there is much one cannot know, including how many of each edition were produced by Caxton.

[27] Hellinga, "Printing," 97.

[28] Bühler, *The Fifteenth-Century Book*, notes that the printer of the 42-line Bible included headwords printed in red, but he soon stopped doing so, adding, "[o]ne wonders why he did so, unless it was true that the rubricators, getting wind of what was going on, were causing trouble and insisting that this work was their exclusive prerogative" (74). Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons" does see a sharp contrast between the ways artistic resources were used on the continent and in England, with the latter using them much less (506).

[29] Though rubrication could be added at any time, this is the standard process. The Rosenwald Sammelband provides convincing evidence for this happening with the rubrisher and binder associated with Caxton. See Needham, *The Printer and the Pardoner*, 49–51.

rubrication. After he began using woodcut initials in his texts, he abandoned the guide letters and placed his own initials in their stead for all but a couple books.[30] Besides rubrication, however, the *Confessio* is a strikingly odd text.

Unlike his lengthy "Prohemye" that famously begins his 1483 printing of *The Canterbury Tales* and describes the failures of the previous edition and his acquisition of a better manuscript copytext, Caxton's introductory words for the *Confessio Amantis* are few:

> THis book is intituled confessio amantis / that is to saye in englysshe the confessyon of the louer maad and compyled by Iohan Gower squyer borne in walys in the tyme of kyng richard the second which book treteth how he was confessyd to Genyus preest of venus vpon the causes of loue in his fyue wyttes and seuen dedely synues / as in thys sayd book al alonge appyereth / and by cause there been comprysed therin dyuers hystories and fables towchyng euery matere / I haue ordeyned a table here folowyng of al suche hystoryes and fables where and in what book and leef they stande in as here after foloweth

Instead of giving his edition's genesis, Caxton merely refers to some historical background and makes a few summary comments. Nothing is mentioned of the decoration (lacking) in the text. What it does mention is an odd element for one of Caxton's poetic productions: a table. The table, necessitated by the diversity of tales contained within the text according to the preface, subtly indicates that Caxton did not imagine his readers would simply proceed from beginning to end.[31] Instead, readers would access the various stories based on what matter most suits their reading pleasure—an attempt to make the text useful for non-linear reading habits. His phrasing of "dyuers hystories and fables towchyng euery matere" suggests Caxton thought readers would

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[30] Blades, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, 136.

[31] No title is given by Caxton to the table's prefatory statement. Since the *Confessio Amantis* already has a section entitled the "Prologue," I have chosen to call Caxton's words a "preface."

access this text to find stories appropriate to their wide-ranging interests or given situation in life. It also suggests that navigation was an issue necessitating the printer's intervention. Running headings giving the current book exist in manuscript and print alike, but other visual cues that aid a reader's conception of the structure of the book such as vinets, rubricated Latin passages, Latin marginalia, and rubricated initials, are lacking.

The utility of the table for navigation, however, is hindered by its layout. Instead of listing short titles of tales in each book, Caxton has put in his translation of the Latin summary that precedes the text. The result is not an index, but a bookish synopsis. Caxton even includes *explicit*s and *incipit*s in his table. For example, the end of the contents of Book I and the beginning of Book II are given thus:

> How a prudent kyng demaunded thre questyons of one of hys knyghtes vpon hys heed / whiche were assoyled by hys doughter / and for her wysdom the kyng wedded hyr folio xxviij
>
> Here endeth the fyrst book
>
> And here foloweth the second book
>
> Here the confessor precheth of the synne of enuye / and of his spytes of whiche the fyrste is sorowe of another mãnes wele folio xxxj
>
> How polyphemus for enuye that he sawe Acis spekynge wyth galathe / threwe and caste on acis a grete roche and slewe hym / and whan he wold haue rauysshed Galathe Neptunus kepte hyr fro polyphem folio xxxj
>
> Of the second spyce of enuye whyche is ioye of other mennes sorowe / and telleth of the nature of the vice in cause of loue folio xxxij

The resulting appearance and table is completely unlike a modern index, but it was probably a little unruly even for contemporaneous readers. When Berthelette printed his edition in 1532, he kept the overarching idea of short summaries listed under books, but he streamlined the process.

Gone are the English equivalent of *incipit* and *explicit*, replaced with headings reading "The contentes of the fourth boke" (fol. [iii]r).[32] The entries themselves have also been revised and shortened. For example, the tale of Polyphemus and Acis mentioned above in Caxton's table is rendered as "Howe Polyphemus for enuye slewe Acis, & howe he wolde haue rauissed Galathee, whom Neptunus saued from him" (fol. [ii]v). Berthelette's concision undoubtedly makes using the table more efficient, but it also hints that Caxton's intent for the table may have been greater than simply enabling readers to quickly find certain stories. Caxton's fuller, if still sometimes brief, translation of the Latin summaries makes the table an aid to readers who are not able to read in anything other than English, further aligning his text with the English-centric manuscripts that curtail the Latin program of verse, summary, and marginalia.[33]

The table as a whole separates Caxton's *Confessio* from his other productions and could potentially have been done to provide translation aids to readers familiar only with English, but its preface suggest that Caxton may have conceived that his readers would need help understanding the entirety of the text. The brief mention of the work's structure around the seven deadly sins followed by the table effectively gives readers the *Cliff's Notes* for the entire work. Thus, the table may not have merely been for navigation or as a concession to people only familiar with English; it may have been designed to introduce readers who are completely unfamiliar with the text to the overall structure of the text needed to begin interpreting the work.

Like the table, the gaps left for the inclusion of miniatures form another unique feature of

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[32] Folio numbers are given in brackets as Berthelette's edition begins foliation internally with 1, after the table. The numbers given here are purely editorial. One line in the table serves as an *explicit*—"Thus endeth the prologue" (fol. [ii]r)—but this may have been inserted to fill remaining space at the bottom of the column.

[33] See Echard, "Pre-Texts," 272.

this edition. Although blanks for rubrication are common, none of his editions leave blanks for the inclusion of illustrations. One of the updates to the 1483 *Canterbury Tales* was the inclusion of woodcuts of the pilgrims, both in the General Prologue and before the tales themselves. The woodcuts in *The Canterbury Tales* differ, however, in that they are all of the same size and fill the space left in the single-column-formatted text. Yet Caxton also used woodcuts to illustrate other double-column works, even in the same year. Such types of spaces had been filled in the *Legenda Aurea* (*STC* 24873, 1483) by woodcuts, both larger double-column images and smaller single-column ones. Yet Caxton never inserted such illustrations into the *Confessio*.[34] Considering their similarity to other spaces left for woodcuts, it is unlikely that the spaces were intended for anything else. The only other decoration that could fit would be hand-drawn miniatures.

The reasons for not including the woodcuts are unknowable. The resulting "incomplete" text, however, can lead one to conclude that the production was rushed or that those in Caxton's printshop were careless. The brief preface before the table, and its inclusion of an incorrect biographical detail that Gower is from Wales, contribute to this sense of hurried production. Caxton or his compositors also erred in the foliation of the text.

Yet omitting a sufficient space for a miniature before Book VII conveys a sense of forethought on the part of the compositors. Book VII provides advice to rulers in the "regiment of princes" vein. It lies apart from the rest of the text that covers the seven deadly sins.[35] The only

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[34] See Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons," who notes that a nineteenth-century reference to a copy of Caxton's edition of the Confessio Amantis printed on vellum and illuminated, held in the British Museum, cannot be reconciled with any of the holdings at the British Library (496 n. 18).

[35] The *Confessio Amantis* never directly addresses lechery as a whole. Instead, Book VIII contains some information about marital laws and incest. Caxton describes this book in his table as "Here telleth the confessor of them that in

issue is with the double-column space before the Prologue. But as this location is the beginning of the book and is the only double-column space, the campaign of smaller illustrations preceding the books about deadly sins seems likely.[36] Indeed, a plan seems to have been put into place and not brought to completion. This still may mean that the printshop was rushed or careless, but it does not mean that they were simply inserting spaces without any idea of what would fill them.

The various lines left blank support the idea that a plan to include woodcuts was well-developed. Four of the books contain 13-line blanks, which may suggest that Caxton had in mind a general size of woodcut instead of a particular set of woodcuts to be used. Book I's 14-line blank is in line with this, and Book VIII's 17-line gap can be explained by its positioning: it would be awkward to include a miniature at the bottom of the page and then include four lines of the English beginning of Book VIII. Yet Book II's blank suggests that Caxton may have had specific woodcuts in mind, for he left 21 lines of blank space in a column at the top of a page. This suggests that Caxton had a particular illustration or design in mind for that book that differed from the smaller ones before other books.

Considering both the manuscript and print contexts for the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*, neither possible explanation for the gaps in the text—that they were part of a canceled plan or part of an intentional scheme for purchasers' own illustrations—seems more likely than the other. But

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loues cause do on ageynst nature as in theyr kynrede and sybrede." The unnatural loves are carnal, and modern editors like Russell Peck list Book VIII as the book of lechery. See John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 2nd ed., ed. Russell A. Peck, vol. 1 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006).

[36] One theory—if that word can be applied to pure speculation—of mine is that Caxton intended to put a large illustration of Nebuchadnezzar's Dream of Precious Metals at the beginning of the Prologue. But this dream has often been read as a commentary on divisive kingship. In the wake of Richard III taking the throne, Caxton may have canceled the inclusion of this woodcut. In order to make the cancellation of this one inconspicuous, Caxton canceled all the woodcuts.

the actual copies of the texts themselves shed light on how readers viewed their "incomplete" Gower editions.

Reader Embellishment in Caxton's *Confessio*

Considering the range of decoration—borders, historiated initials, vinets—found in medieval manuscripts, the possibility for decorating any print book always remains latent within its pages even if spaces for miniatures are not provided. Even a text like Caxton's first edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (*STC* 5082, 1477), which itself has spaces left only for rubricated initials, could be decorated. This is exactly what a member (or the guild itself) of the Haberdashers' Company of London did: 24 full-page borders were added to the copy of Caxton's first edition of *The Canterbury Tales*.[37] Yet Caxton's edition of the *Confessio* seemingly goes further by providing the blank space on the page, beckoning readers to embellish it either by enlisting a professional or by completing it themselves. The details of the decorations found and not found in copies of the edition can elucidate the potential for these spaces and the possible hand Caxton may have had in embellishing the texts with rubrication.

UNC Rare Book Collection Folio Incunabula 532.5

The copy of Caxton's *Confessio Amantis* held at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill is special for several reasons. It was the one-millionth volume donated to UNC's library, given by Robert March Hanes and Mildred Borden Hanes through the Hanes Foundation

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[37] This book is held at Merton College, Oxford, Sacr. P.2.1. See Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons," 499–501.

in 1960.[38] Yet it is not merely a good copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio*. It is actually one of only eight surviving Caxton editions that has the binding of Caxton's original bookbinders. After coming to England, Caxton worked closely with two bookbinders in succession. The decoration on the binding, along with the fact that a previously unknown copy of a Caxton indulgence was found in the spine (UNC RBC Folio-2 Incunabula 531.7), provide evidence for this connection.[39] The text therefore represents a special case for copies of the *Confessio*. This text was not merely printed by Caxton but "finished" by him as well. In the booklet that details its acquisition, William Wells excitedly writes, "Unrestored and unsophisticated the volume gives us an excellent idea of the original appearance of a Caxton-printed, Caxton-bound folio."[40] Although the volume was disbound, cropped, and rebound in its original binding, it still at least preserves the decoration that happened before binding, and therefore close to the time of the texts actual production.[41]

The gaps in the text are left blank. Apart from an owner's name (John a Kynaston) left in the large space above the prologue, the other blanks before books are left empty. Even the owner's mark is put towards the top of the space, leaving most of the prologue's blank for potential filling (see figure 4.4).

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[38] William Wells, *The One Millionth Volume: The Poet and the Poem, the Printer and the Book* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Library, 1960).

[39] ibid., 16.

[40] ibid., 15.

[41] Although a text can be decorated after it is bound, that is not the norm. Furthermore, it would be particularly difficult in a case like this where the extensive rubrication would require an incredibly time-consuming process of allowing each page to dry before proceeding to the next. Again, this could be possible, but considering that bleeding has not occurred on to opposed pages in UNC's copy of Caxton's *Confessio*, one can undoubtedly conclude that the rubrication was done before binding.
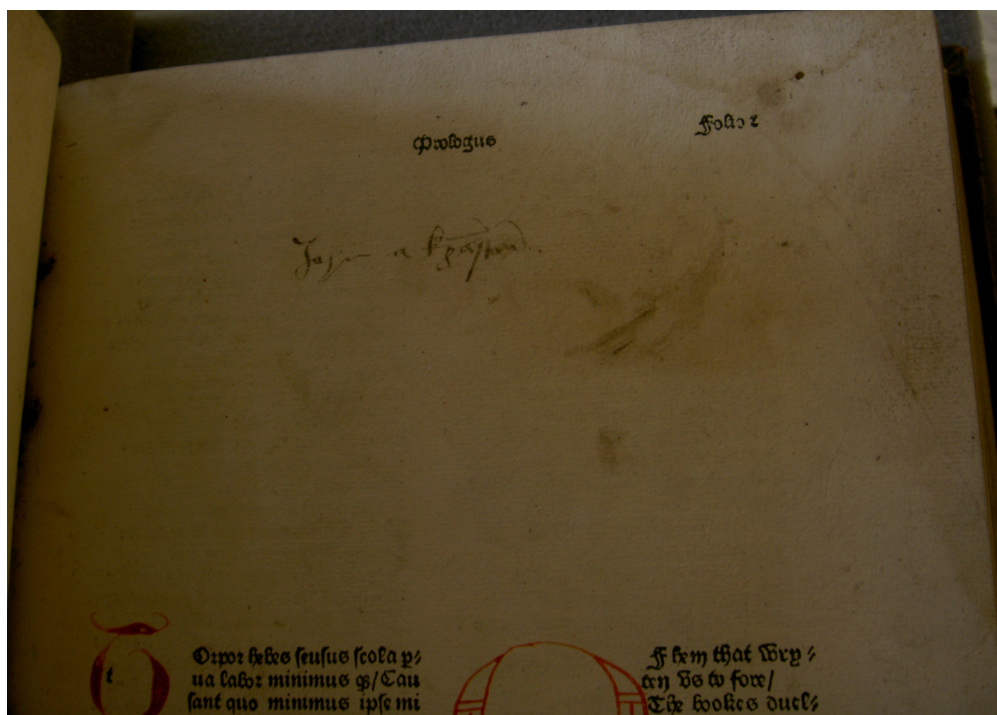
Figure 4.4: Blank space above the prologue with ownership inscription in the UNC *Confessio*. From Rare Book Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

The impressive decoration that does exist in the UNC copy, however, is in the rubrication. Considering that the text was bound by Caxton's binder and that one rubricator's hand is responsible for a sizeable number of Caxton's rubrications, it is likely that this particular plan of rubrication was organized through Caxton as well.[42] The rubrication is generally good, sometimes better than other rubricated copies of Caxton's *Confessio*. Specifically, the rubrisher does not always fill in his initials on the first English passages of each book (see figures 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8). In the space left within the letter, additional designs are added. Paragraph markers are also added throughout the text. For initials not at the beginning of books, however, the hand

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[42] Edwards, "Decorated Caxtons," 494 n. 4.

can seem a little rushed or spindly, lacking the width of rubrication in other Caxton texts.

The rubrication combined with the original binding from one of Caxton's bookbinders suggests that Caxton used his connections to see that the rubrication was done as well. Caxton may have already had this copy bound and rubricated and available in his printshop for a potential purchaser. But this would be a very peculiar action for Caxton, who gathered his printings loose and offered them for sale unbound. The likely explanation for the state of the UNC *Confessio* is that a purchaser came to Caxton to buy a copy of the *Confessio*, and the printer was able to add into the purchase the binding and rubrication. Such a practice may have allowed Caxton to offer these services more cheaply than a purchaser hiring a professional on his or her own, thus providing an incentive to use Caxton's connections. This situation may also mean that a purchaser's desire to have the text rubricated exists separately from their ability to have that decoration added. In other words, the UNC copy shows that the blank spaces left for rubrication were not there solely so later buyers could have the book decorated to their specific, exacting taste since control over rubrication was handed off to Caxton's connection. Whether for economic reasons or because a purchaser lacked any sort of connection with rubricators, the UNC *Confessio* shows that the desire to have a text rubricated like a manuscript was not contingent upon it being an expression of individual artistic tastes and sensibilities. Purchasers did not want to have a text rubricated as an expression of their personal preferences for book decoration; they wanted it rubricated because that signaled that the text was of an elevated stature.

OW after pryde
the second / Ther is
Which many a wo
ful stoud Toward
des other beryth a
loure / Within hym
self & not withoute

For in his thought he brenneth euer
Whan that he wote another leuer
Or more vertuous than he
Which passeth hym in his degre
Wherof he taketh his maladye
That bye is clepyd hote enuye
For thy my sone yf it be so
That y art or hast ben one of tho
As for to speke in loues cas
Yf euer yet thyn herte was
Seke of other mennes hele
So god auanne my quarele
My fader ye a thousand sythe
Whan I haue sene another blythe
Of loue & a goodly chere
Ethna which brenneth yere by yere
Was than not so hote as I
Of thylk for which pryuely

Myn hertes thought within brenneth
The ship which on the wawe renneth
And is forstormed & forblowe
Is not more payned for athrowe
Than I am than whan I se
Another which that passeth me
In that fortune of loues pfte
But fader this I telle in shryfte
That now here but in a place
For who that seche & fynde grace
In other stede it may nought greue
But this ye may ryght wel byleue
Toward my lady that I serue
Though that I wyst for to sterue
Myn hert is ful of suche folye
That I my self may not chastye
Whan I the court see of Cupyde
Approche vnto my lady syde
Of hem that lusty ben & fresshe
Though it auaple hem not a resshe
But only that they ben of speche
My sorow is than not to seche
But whan they rownen in her ere
Than groweth al my moste fere
And namely whan they talen longe
My sorowes ben than so stronge
Of that I se hem wel at ease
I can not telle my dysease
But syr as of my lady selue
Though she haue wowers y or twelue
For no mystrust I haue of hire
Me greueth nonght for erters syre
I trowe in al this world to seche
Nys woman that in dede & speche
Wol better auyse hyr what she doth
Ne better for to sey a soth
Kepe hyr honour at al tyde
And yet gete hyr a thank besyde
But netheles I am be knowe
That whan I see ony thro we
Or elles yf it I may here
That she make ony man good chere
Though I therof haue not to done
My thought wol entermete sone
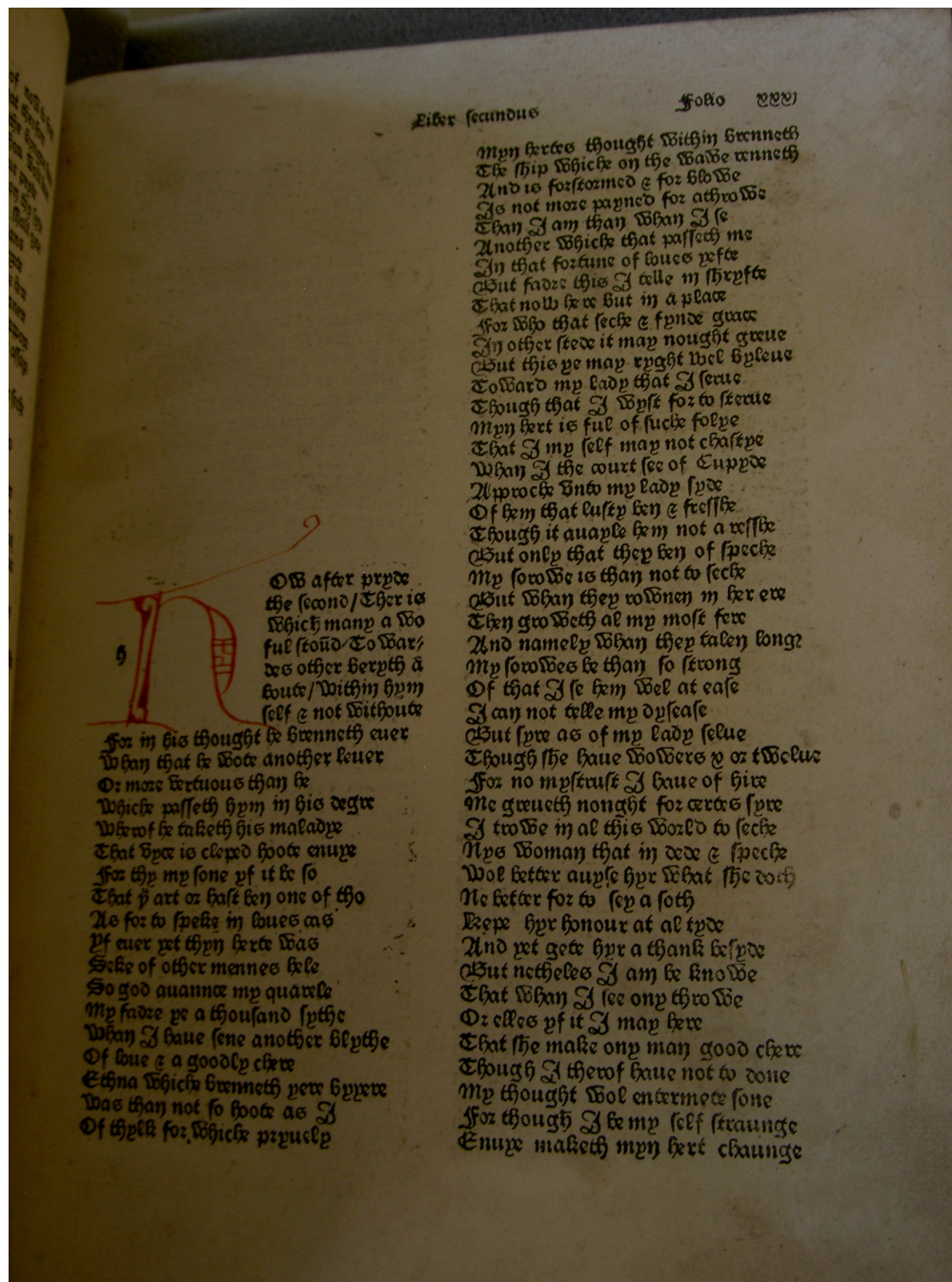For though I be my self straunge
Enuye maketh myn hert chaunge

Figure 4.5: Rubricated initial beginning Book II of the UNC *Confessio*. From Rare Book Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
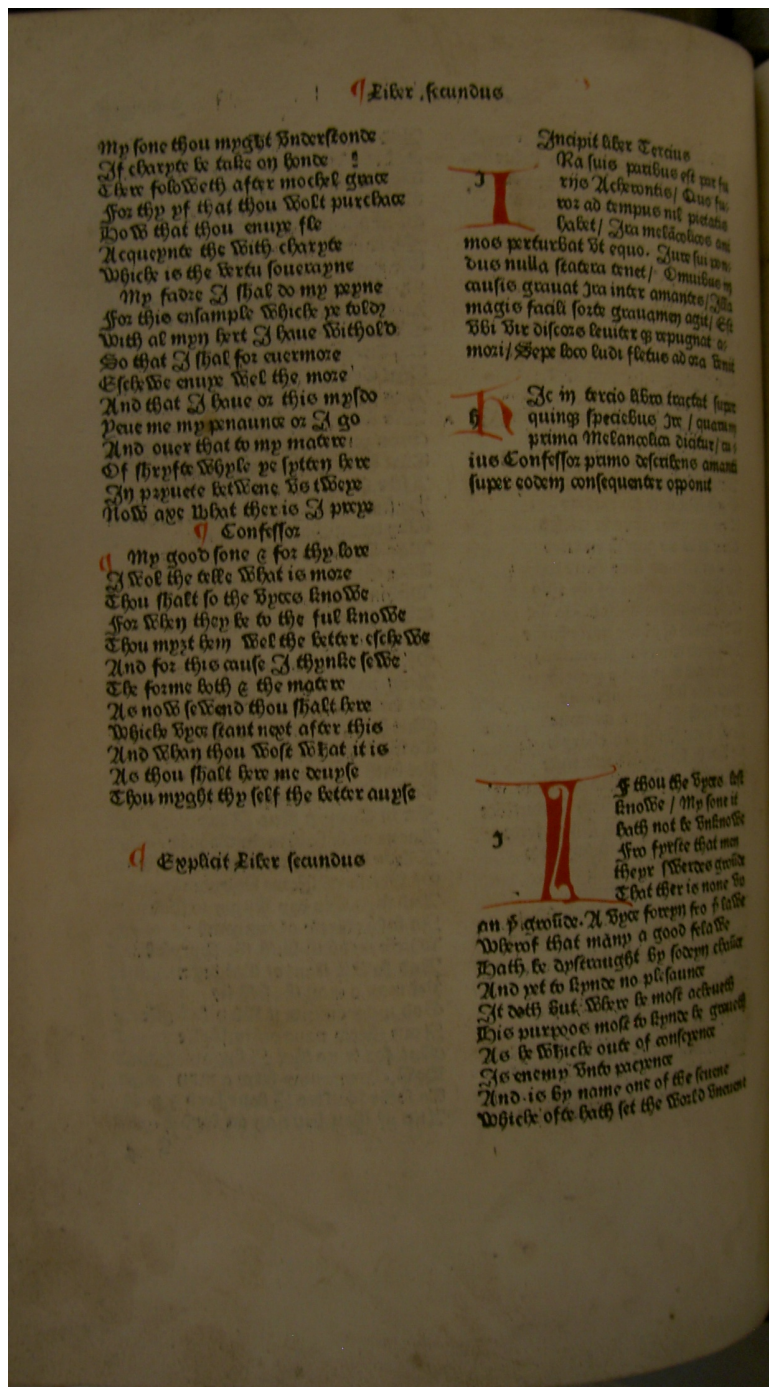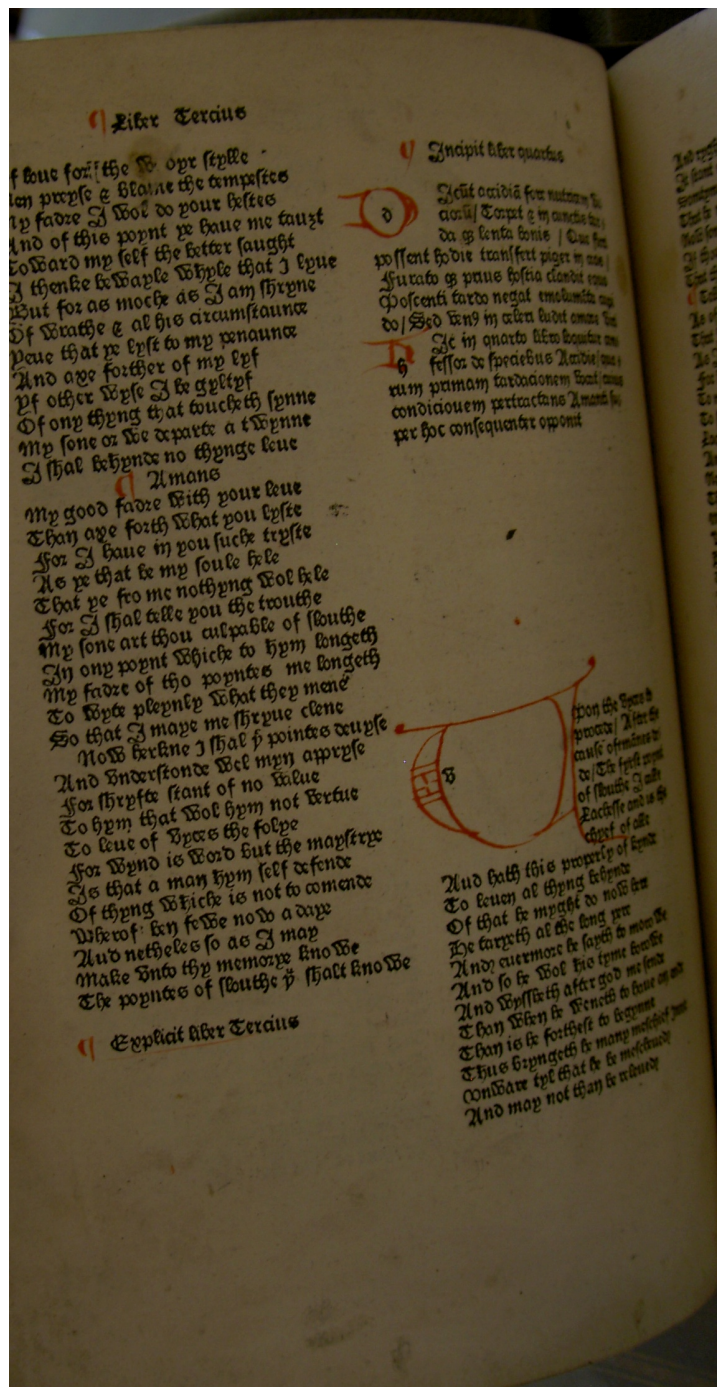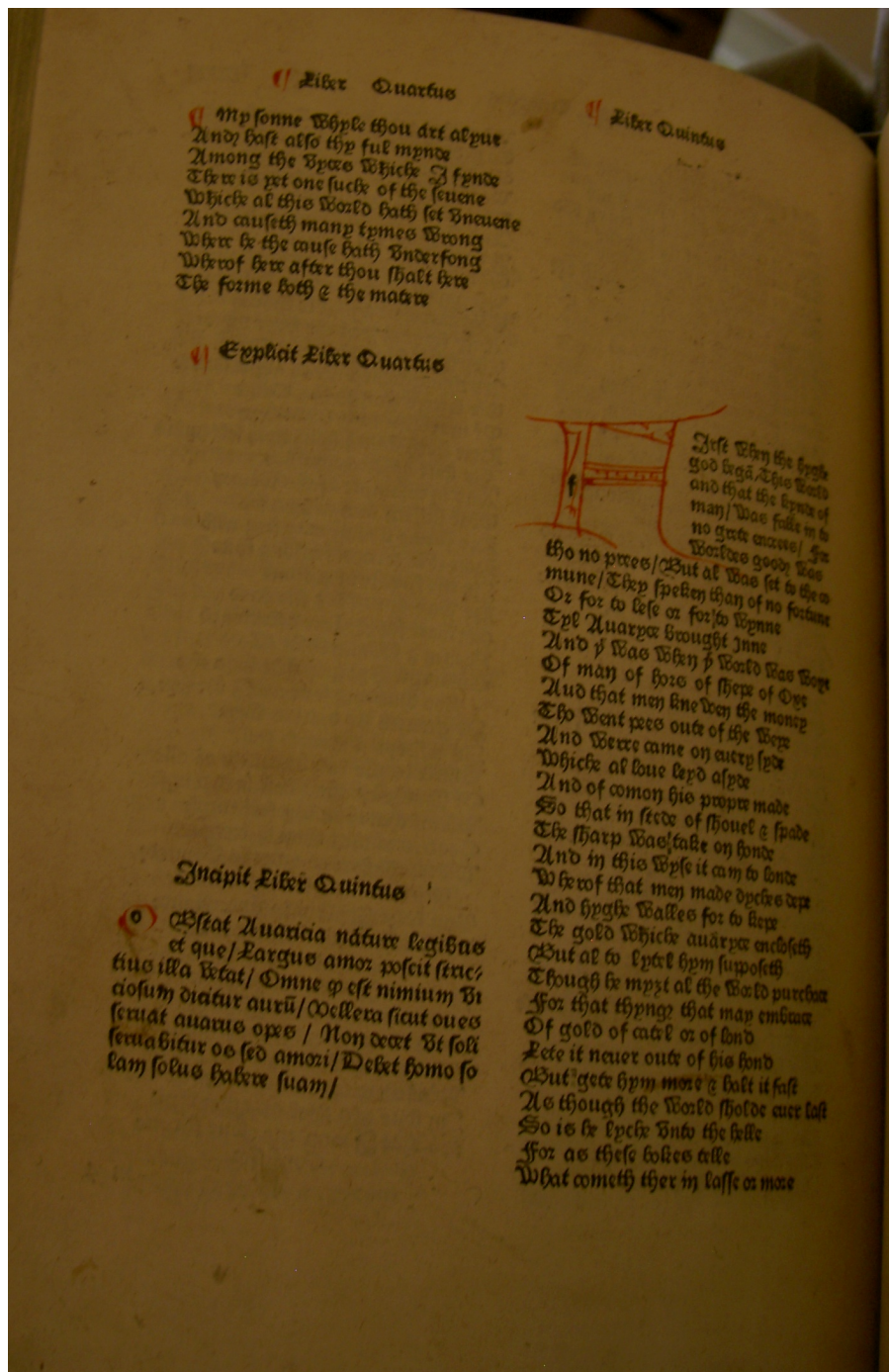
Figure 4.6: Rubricated initial beginning Book III of the UNC *Confessio*. From Rare Book Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.7: Rubricated initial beginning Book IV of the UNC *Confessio*. From Rare Book Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.8: Rubricated initial beginning Book V of the UNC *Confessio*. From Rare Book Collection, Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Folger Shakespeare Library STC 12142

The Folger Shakespeare Library's copy of Caxton's *Confessio Amantis* edition has puzzled its own cataloguer: The descriptions of missing leaves, marginalia, and gatherings are noted in the catalog record and lead to an unresolved question posed to the researcher: "Made-up copy?"[43] The current book includes several facsimile pages of the preface and table, then misses the first leaf of the Prologue before continuing on folio 3. The pages themselves are of varying states of dirtiness suggesting that at least some were disbound and loose for some time (compare figures 4.9 and 4.10).

The blank spaces have no illustration in them. The gaps before Books I-IV are kept free of any markings. Books V-VII have writing in a sixteenth-century hand in the spaces left; Book VIII has been lost. The marginalia that exist in these spaces largely make use of the book as a location for important documentation. Before Book VI are a few brief descriptions of the life of Chrystopher Swallowe, including his marriage in 1553. In that record, he also mentions that the year was the first of the "moste excellent & worthie" Queen Mary I (see figure 4.11). The praise of the Catholic queen seems odd considering that the text also features obliterations of the word "pope," a common practice in post-Reformation England under Henry VIII's reign, in Book II. The juxtaposition of pro- and anti-Catholic readers further supports the idea that this text was composed from at least two copies of the text.

This copy also features rubrication done in red pencil and done poorly. The rubrication

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[43] "Confessio Amantis," Hamnet: Folger Library Catalog. Folger Shakespeare Library. http://hamnet.folger.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=161517.

appears sporadic, beginning in the Prologue on folio v v. The rubrication continues just onto the next folio, filling in the rubrication on both sides of the leaf (verso shown in figure 4.10). The amateur rubrisher—for surely no artist could have made a living with this quality of work—uses a few variant letter forms, extends the initials above the space given, and does not consistently place the initials flush with the bottom of the space. Two additional rubricated initials exist on folios lxv v and lxvi r; then, it abruptly disappears.

The work of the amateur shows a desire on the part of the reader, however momentary, to improve the appearance of the book. The letter forms, however, appear to be much later than ones commonly used during Caxton's time—an effort to make the capital T look antique, notwithstanding. The implications for this rubrication, therefore, are limited as they are the work of an owner outside the scope of this analysis. Nevertheless, the Folger *Confessio* remains a puzzling artifact of the vagaries of book production, destruction, and recomposition. Its use of blank spaces for illustration as locations for recording noteworthy moments and important documentation of its early modern owners reveals that those spaces were not respected as or preserved for later embellishment. It does, however, reveal that the owners viewed the book as a lasting, enduring object.

Lambeth Palace Library ZZ 1483.8

Lambeth Palace Library holds one copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*, a well-preserved copy in a brown leather binding that displays the arms of Archbishop Sheldon (1598–1677) in
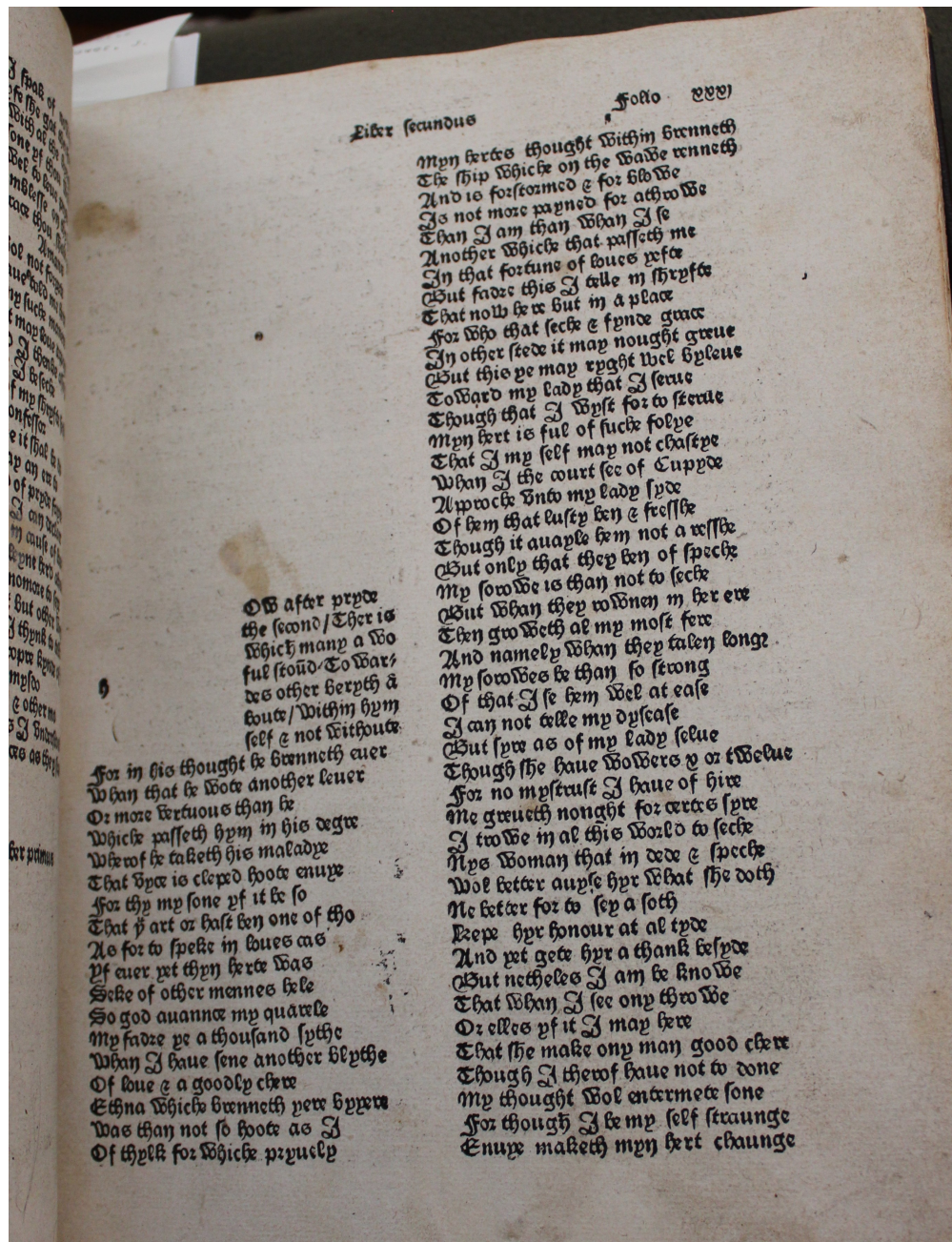
Figure 4.9: Blank space left at the beginning of Book II in the Folger Shakespeare Library's copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
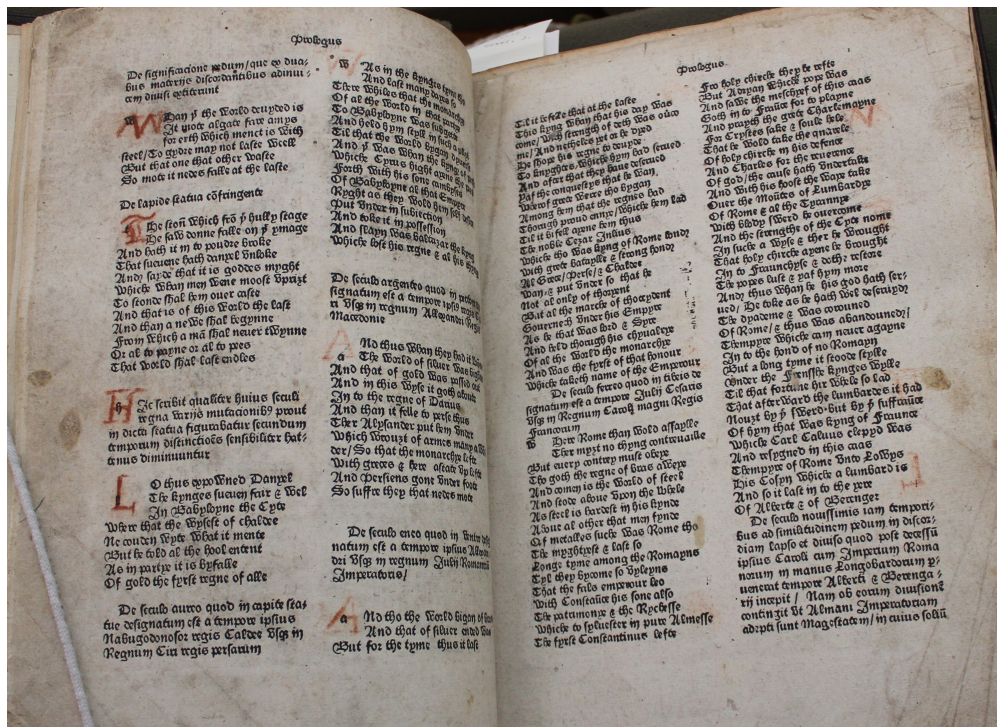
Figure 4.10: Amateur rubrication in the Prologue on folio vi v in the Folger Shakespeare Library's copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
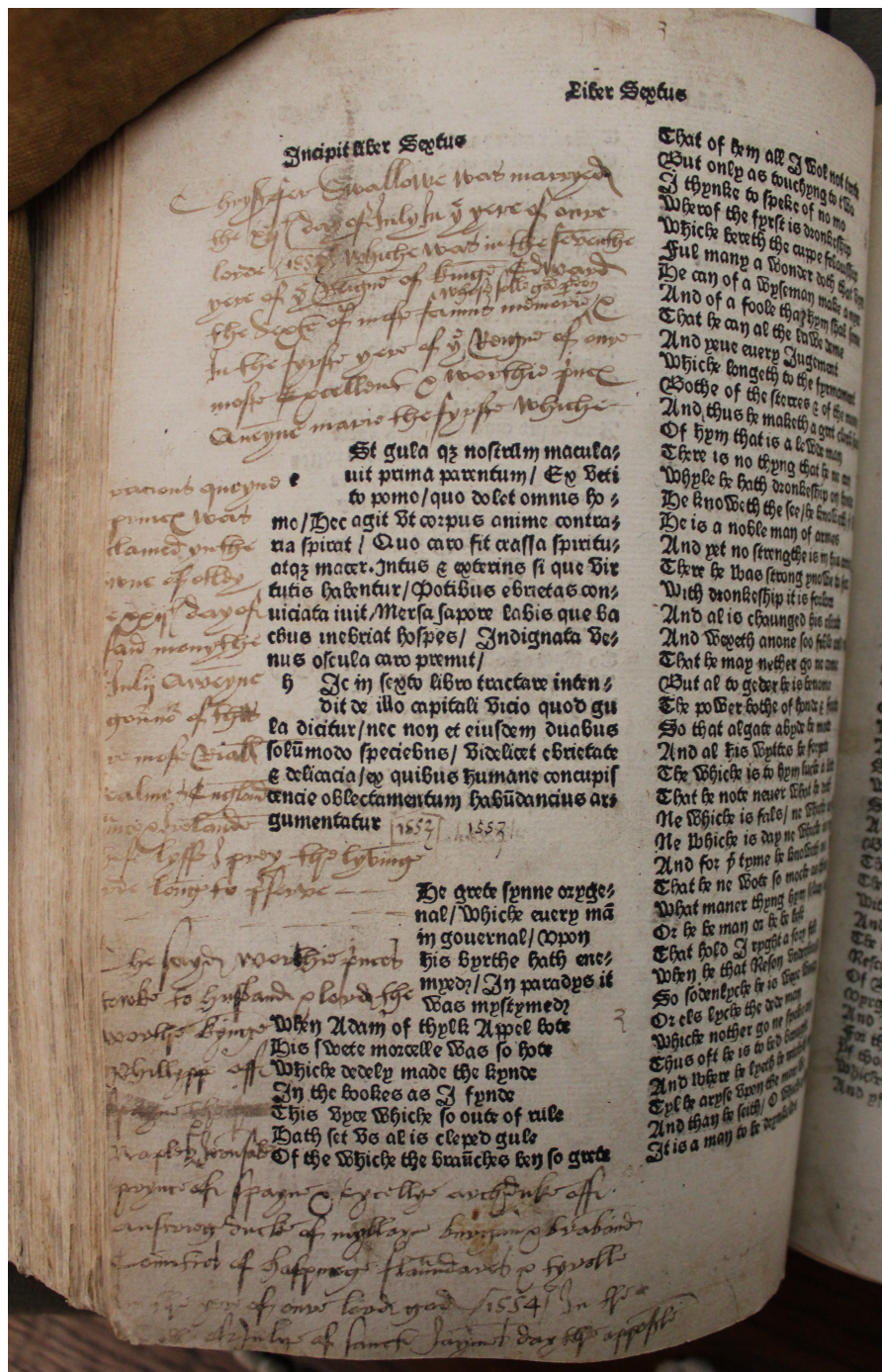
Figure 4.11: A record of Chrystopher Swallowe's marriage and a few events of Queen Mary I's reign in the blank space left for Book VI of the *Confessio Amantis* in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Used by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

gold on its cover.[44] The scant English and Latin marginalia inside, however, is not traceable to the cleric. Other than a few marginal notations and scribbles, the text is free from marks. The pre-book blank spaces are left pristine except for a couple lines of added text at the top of the space before the Prologue, and a few lines in the gap before Book II stating: "he that mayd thys good save hys lyffe and bryng hys solle to the blysse of hevyn ame*n*" (figure 4.12). These words are repeated at the top of the final page, though cropped, along with a host of various annotations (figure 4.13).

The text is thoroughly rubricated by a competent rubrisher, if in a plainer style than the UNC copy. Large initials with some flourishes begin each book (figure 4.14). The initials themselves are solid without internal patterns or decoration (compare the U beginning Book IV in figures 4.7 and 4.14). The lack of paraphs marking various section beginnings adds to the plainness of the text. The rubrication, though done and done well, simply does not have the same level of decorative flourish as other rubricated texts.

Library of Congress Incunabula 1483.G6 Rosenwald Collection

The Library of Congress's copy of the *Confessio* from the Rosenwald Collection comes down to us trimmed and clean of any marginalia. The text is surprisingly bare, even of stray ink marks often the remnants of a session of engaged reading. Nothing fills the gaps left before the *Confessio*'s book divisions.

The Rosenwald *Confessio*, however, is interesting for its rubrication. Throughout the vast

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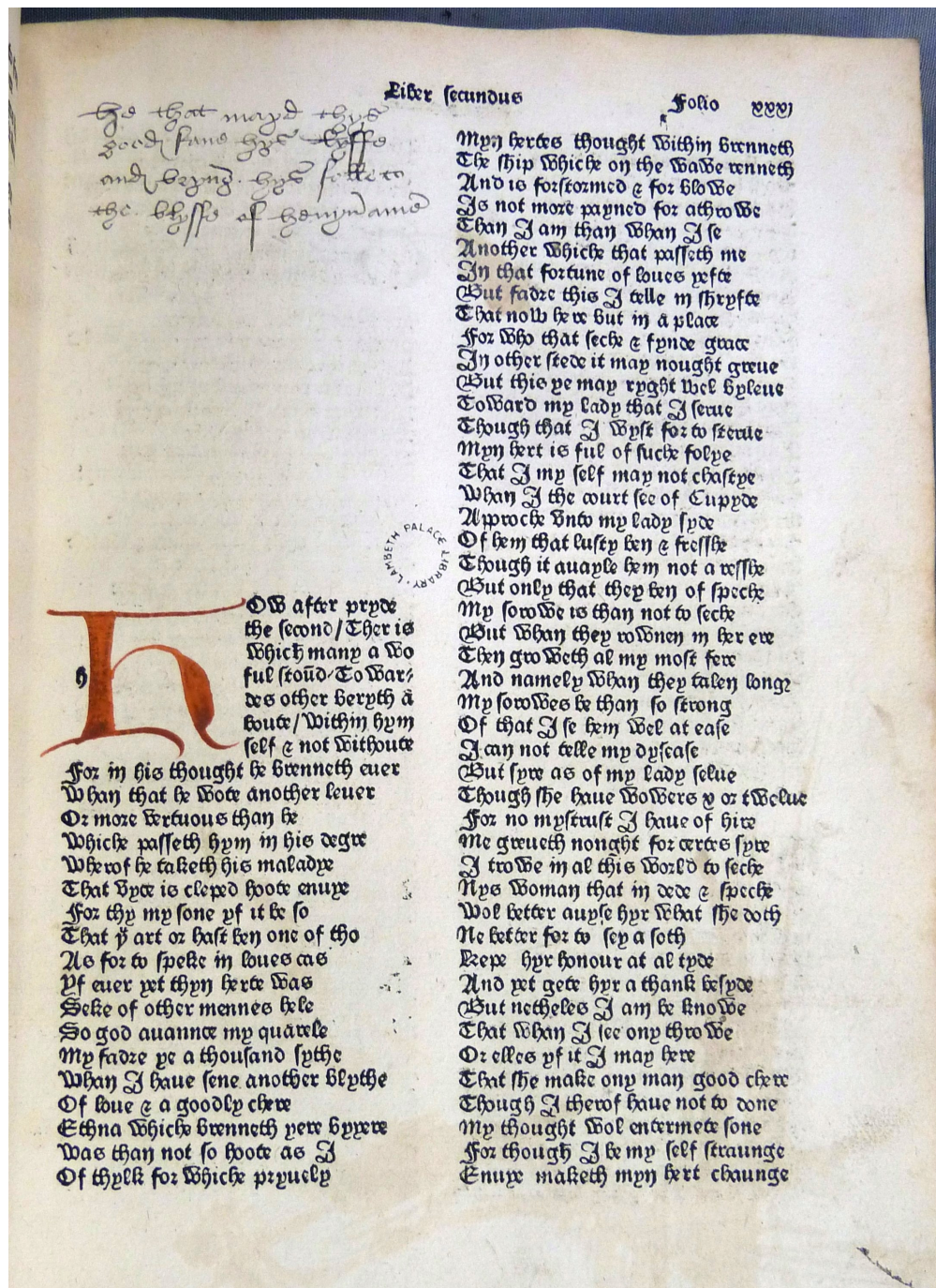[44] "Confessio Amantis," Lambeth Palace Library Catalogue of Printed Books. Lambeth Palace Library. http://bookscat.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/record=b1047485 S0

Be that mayd thys
good fame thys lyffe
and bryng thys folke to
the blysse of heuynmore

HOW after pryde
the second / Ther is
Which many a wo
ful stoud Towar-
des other beryth a
boute / within hym
self e not withoute
For in his thought he brenneth euer
Whan that he woe another leuer
Or more vertuous than he
Which passeth hym in his degre
Wherof he taketh his maladye
That ther is cleped hoote enuye
For thy my sone yf it be so
That ƿ art or hast ben one of tho
As for to speke in loues cas
Yf euer yet thyn herte was
Seke of other mennes hele
So god auaunce my quarele
My fadre ye a thousand sythe
Whan I haue sene another blythe
Of loue e a goodly chere
Ethna which brenneth yere byyere
Was than not so hoote as I
Of thylk for which pryuely

Myn hertes thought within brenneth
The ship which on the wawe renneth
And is forstormed e for blowe
Is not more payned for to rowe
Than I am than whan I se
Another which that passeth me
In that fortune of loues prte
But fadre this I telle in shryfte
That now be it but in a place
For who that seche e fynde grace
In other stede it may nought greue
But this ye may ryght wel byleue
Toward my lady that I serue
Though that I wyst for to sterue
Myn hert is ful of suche folye
That I my self may not chastye
Whan I the court see of Cuppyde
Approche vnto my lady syde
Of hem that lusty ben e fresshe
Though it auayle hem not a resshe
But only that they ben of speche
My sorowe is than not to seche
But whan they rownen in her ere
Then groweth al my most fere
And namely whan they talen longe
My sorowes be than so stronge
Of that I se hem wel at ease
I can not telle my dysease
But syn as of my lady selue
Though she haue wowers p or twelue
For no mystrust I haue of hire
Me greueth nonght for ertes syre
I trowe in al this world to seche
Nys woman that in dede e speche
Wol better auyse hyr what she doth
Ne better for to sey a soth
Kepe hyr honour at al tyde
And yet gete hyr a thank besyde
But netheles I am be knowe
That whan I see ony throwe
Or elles yf it I may here
That she make ony man good chere
Though I therof haue not to done
My thought wol entermete sone
For though I be my self straunge
Enuye maketh myn hert chaunge

Figure 4.12: A few marginal comments written in the blank space before Book II (fol. 31r) in the Lambeth Palace Library's copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis.* Used by permission. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

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Figure 4.13: The colophon (fol. 211v) in the Lambeth Palace Library's copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*. Used by permission. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
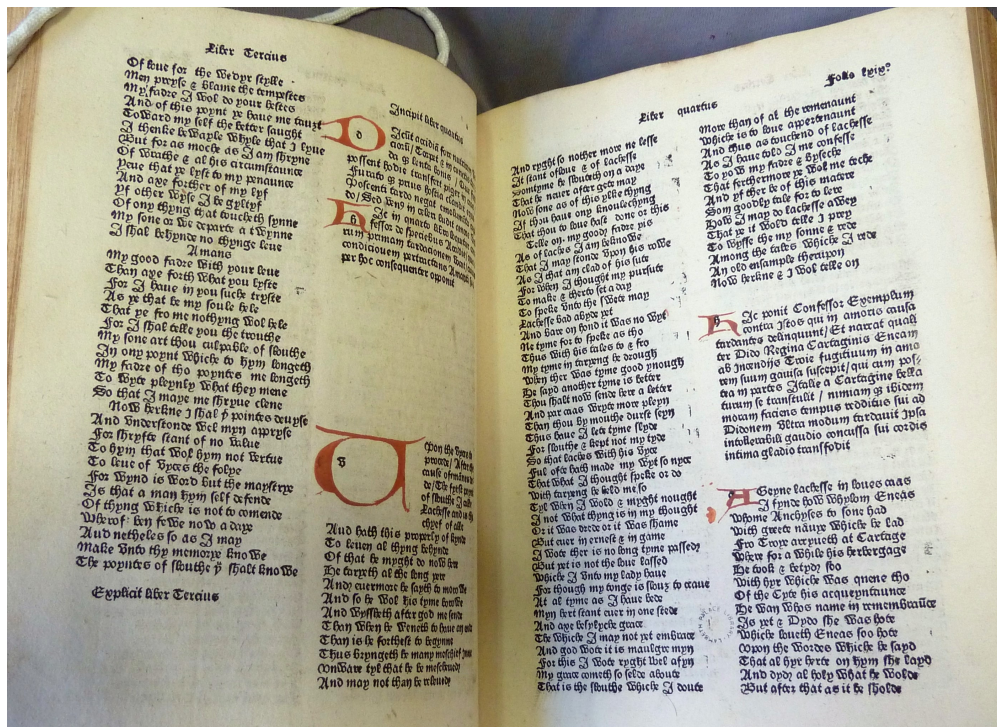
Figure 4.14: An example of rubrication in the Lambeth Palace Library's copy of the 1483 *Confessio Amantis*, taken from the beginning of Book IV (fols. 68v-69r). Used by permission. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

majority of the text, the guide letters sit alone in the space left for rubricated initials. But starting

at the very end of Book VI (fol Cli r), some initials are rubricated.[45] The A is the only rubricated

initial up to that point in the text (see figure 4.15). Just initials are rubricated from that folio

forward until folio Clx r. On that leaf, paragraph markers are placed next to the Latin passages

that have the space left for them. On the verso, more paragraph markers are added, and rubricated

initials are filled in as well. The addition of paragraph markers as well as different letter forms

(note the difference in forms of three-line T between figures 4.16 and 4.17) suggests that the

rubrication starting on Clx r are by the hand of another rubrisher. This rubrisher added decoration

to folio Clxvi v (see figure 4.18 for verso of this leaf)[46], but left the remaining 22 folios in Book

VII unembellished. Less than half of Book VII's 39 folios, therefore, have added rubrication.

The sudden beginning of the rubrication may mean that the text now bound was made of a

composite of several volumes, probably in various damaged states. This may also explain why

more than one rubricator apparently added the red initials to the volume and why peculiar

foliation errors exist. The other possible explanation for the sporadic rubrication is that it was

done by a few amateurs who owned the book. If so, adding rubrication to Book VII may show

that the reader viewed rubrication as elevating the status of the text. After all, Book VII contains

speculum regis literature, which may have been seen as necessitating the inclusion of a

manuscript flourish. This proposition, however, seems unlikely given that rubrication breaks off

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[45] The foliation of the Rosenwald copy is errant. The foliation goes from fol. Clvi to fol. Cl. The British Library General Reference Collection IB.55077, discussed below, has correct foliation here. It does, however, share the incorrect foliation of Clxiii being repeated for three folios before being corrected to Clxvii. This suggests that at least these pages come from earlier in the printing run of the *Confessio*.

[46] Caxton's edition is misfoliated here. This is the third consecutive leaf with Fol. Clxiii incorrectly placed at the top of the page.

less than half-way through that book.

Library of Congress Incunabula 1483.G6 Thacher Collection

The copy of the *Confessio* in the Thacher Collection at the Library of Congress bears the marks of use that have led to the destruction of innumerable incunabula. The first page of the prologue are torn (see figure 4.19). A number of leaves from the Prologue are missing, supplied in manuscript (see figure 4.20). Yet the use of the gaps before and after books in the *Confessio* shows that readers interacted with the text by more than just reading it.

The large, double-column space before the Prologue shows lines of hand-written text that have now become obliterated (see figure 4.19). The presence on that page of a much later hand attests to the continued use of this edition, even if merely to record ownership. On the other hand, the text also seems to have occasionally served as simply the locus upon which a bored reader exercised the nib of a pen, such as the listing of numbers at the end of the Prologue (see figure 4.21). Other blank spaces, however, have been illustrated by an amateur. At the end of Book II, a few obliterated lines have been written beneath the explicit, yet a geometric pattern was inserted into the gap left before the English beginning of Book III (see figure 4.22). The existence of seemingly slapdash markings to the sides of the figure suggest an amateur, though the inks may be different (see figure 4.23). The "artist" has added two illustrations on the page where the text transitions from Book IV to Book V (see figure 4.24). The drawing beneath the *explicit* shows a circular image, mostly washed away; yet still visible are the divisions within the circle and the remainder of a border with writing in it (see figure 4.25). The other illustration is also mostly washed away, yet seems to show a sun, a pentangular star, and one other figure (see figure 4.26).

And asketh yf that he supposeth
What deth he shall hym self deye
He seith or fortune is aweye
And every sterre hath lost his wonne
Or els of myn owne sonne
Or els be slayn I may not fle
I shall be slayn in purpure
Thought Alysandre in purpure
Prof this old dotard spekth
And or that other ought aspyeth
Al sodenlyck his old bones
He shoof over the wal for the nones
And seith hym / lye doune there a part
Werof now serueth al thyn art
Thou knowest al other mennes chaunce
And of thy self hast ygnoraunce
That thou hast said amonges alle
Of thy persone it is not befalle
Nectanabus whiche hath his deth
Yet whyles hym lasteth lyf or brethe
To Alysander he spak and seyd
That was with wrong blame on hym leid
Fro poynt to poynt & al the cas
He told how he his sonne was
Tho he whiche sory was ynough
Out of the dyche his fader drough
And told his moder how it ferde
In counceyl / & when she it herde
And knew the tokenes whiche he told
She nyst what that she sey shold
But stode abasshed as for the whyle
Of his magyke and of his gyle
She thought how she was deceyued
That she hath of a man conceyued
And wend a god it had be
But netheles suche degree
So as she myght hir honoure saue
She shope the body was begraue
And thus Nectanabus abought
The sorcery whiche he wrought
Though upon the creatures
Through his carectis and figures
The maystry and the power had
His creatour to nought hym lad
Agayne whos lawe his crafte he useth
When he for lust his god refuseth
And toke hym to the deuyls craft

To what profyte is hym betaft
That thyng thurgh whiche he were has
ue stode / First hym exiled out of londe
Whiche was his owne / & fro a kynge
Made hym to be an underlynge
And sythen to deceyue a quene
That torneth hym to mochel tene
Through lust of loue he gate hym hate
That ende couthe he not abate
His old sleyghtes whiche he cast
Yonge Alisander hym ouercast
His fader whiche hym misbigat
He slewe / a great myshappe was that
But for one mys another mys
Was yolde / and so ful oft is
Nectanabus his craft miswent
And so it mysfell hym or that he went
I note what helpeth that clergy
Whiche maketh a man to doo foly
And namelyche of Nygromaunce
Whiche stont upon the misceaunce

Nota qualiter rex Zorastes statim
cum ab vtero matris sue nasceretur gau-
dio magno risit, in quo prenosticum do-
loris subsequentis signum figurabatur
Nam et ipse detestabilis artis magice
primus fuit inuentor / quem postea rex
Surrie dira morte trucidauit. & sic o-
pus operarium consumpsit

And for to see more euidence
Zorastes whiche that experience
Of arte Magyke first forth
drough, Anon as he was bore he lough
Whiche token was of woo sewynge
For of his owne contreuynge
He found Magyke / & taught it forth
But al was hym lytyll worth
For of surry a worthy kynge
Hym slewe / and that was his endynge
But yet thurgh hym this craft is used
And he thorough all the world accused
For it shal neuer wel acheue

u   i

Figure 4.15: Rubricated initial on the last folio (fol. Cl r) of the copy of Caxton's *Confessio* in the Library of Congress's Rosenwald Collection. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

And stant Bpon dyuerse appryse
The first of Whiche is ars metryk
And the second is said Musik
And the thyrd is eke gemetrye
The fourth astronomye
Also the matere
Of ars metryk a man may lere
As that of Whiche a man amouteth
That Algarysme in nombre amouteth
Whan that the Wyse man acompteth
That the formuel proppre
Of Algarysmes A/B/C
By Whiche mnltyplycacion
Is made and deuysyon
Of sommes by experyence
Of this arte/& this scyence

Nota de Musica que secunda pars
artis Mathematice dicitur

The second of Mathematyk
Whiche is the scyence of Musik
That techeth Bpon armony
A man to make melody
By Boyce soune and Instrument
Through notes of acordement
The Whiche men pronounce alofte
NoW sharp notes & noW softe
NoW hye notes & noW loWe
As by gammuth a man may knoWe
Whiche techeth the prolacion
Of note and the condycion

Nota de tercia specie artis Mathe
matice quam geometriam Bocant

Mathematik of his scyence
Hath the thyrd ntellygence
Ful of Wysedom and of clergy
And clepyd is Geometrye
Through Whiche a man hath thylk sleizt
Of length of brede of depth & of heyzt
To knoWe the proporcion
Of Bery calculacion
Of this scyence in this Wyse

As these old philosophres deuyse
Of al this Worldes erthe round
HoW large/ hoW thyk Was the ground
Contryued by this experyence
The Cercle and the circumference
Of euery thyng Bnto the heuen
They setten poynte & mesure euen
Mathematik aboue the erthe
Of hye scyence aboue the ferth
Whiche speketh Bpon Astronomye
And techeth of the sterres hyhe
Begynnyng Bpward fro the mone
But first as it Was for to done
This Aristotles in other thynge
Bnto this Worthy yong kyng
The kynde of euery element
Whiche stonden Bnder the firmament
HoW it is made/ and in What Wyse
Fro poynt to poynt he can deuyse

Quatuor omnipotens elementa cre-
auit origo. Quatuor et Benti partibus
ora dabat / Nostra qz quadruplici cō-
plexis sorte creatur/ Corpore sic qz suo
stat Bariatus homo

Hic interim tractat de creacione qua-
tuor elementorum/ scilicet terre/ Aque/
aeris et ignis· Nec non et eorum natu-
ris nam et singulis proprietates singu-
le attribuuntur

Bfore the creacion
Of ony Worldes stacion
Of heue of erth & eke of helles
So as these olde bookes telles
As sone to fore the songe is set
And yet to geder knyt
Ryght so the hyghe purueaunce
Tho had, Bnder his ordynaunce
A grete substaunce a grete matere
Of Whiche he Wold in his manere
This other thyng make and forme
For yet Withouten ony storme

u   iij
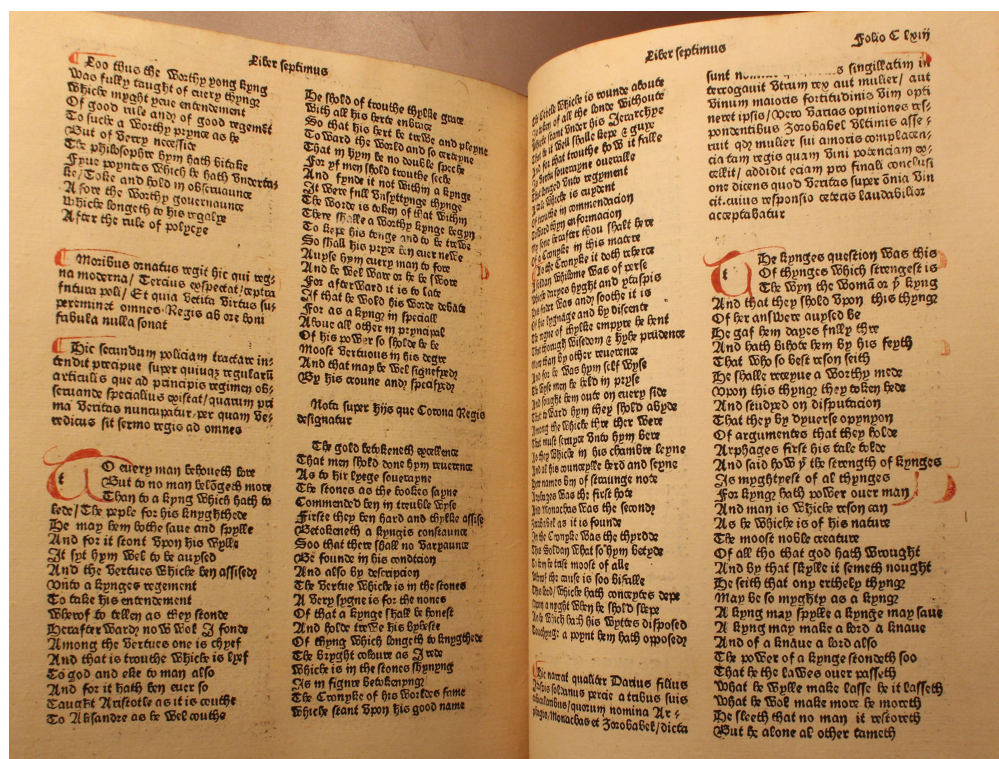
Figure 4.17: Rubricated paragraph markers and initials on folios Clxii v and Clxiii r of the copy of Caxton's *Confessio* in the Library of Congress's Rosenwald Collection. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

The space left between Book VI and Book VII is small: there is actually no separation between the *explicit* and *sequitur*.[47] Yet a decorative marginal flourishing marks the new book (see figure 4.27). The clearest embellishment, however, comes at the beginning of Book VIII, where the illustrator has added a soldier holding a halberd with oddly curving knees and elbows (see figures 4.28 and 4.29).

Although different ink may have been used for the illustration preceding Book III, it seems that the added decoration was likely done by the same person—the geometric patterns between the illustration in Book III and the star and sun imagery at the beginning of Book V echo

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[47] The use of "sequitur" may also explain why Caxton did not add much space before Book VII: he thought it followed from the previous book without starting anew all on its own.
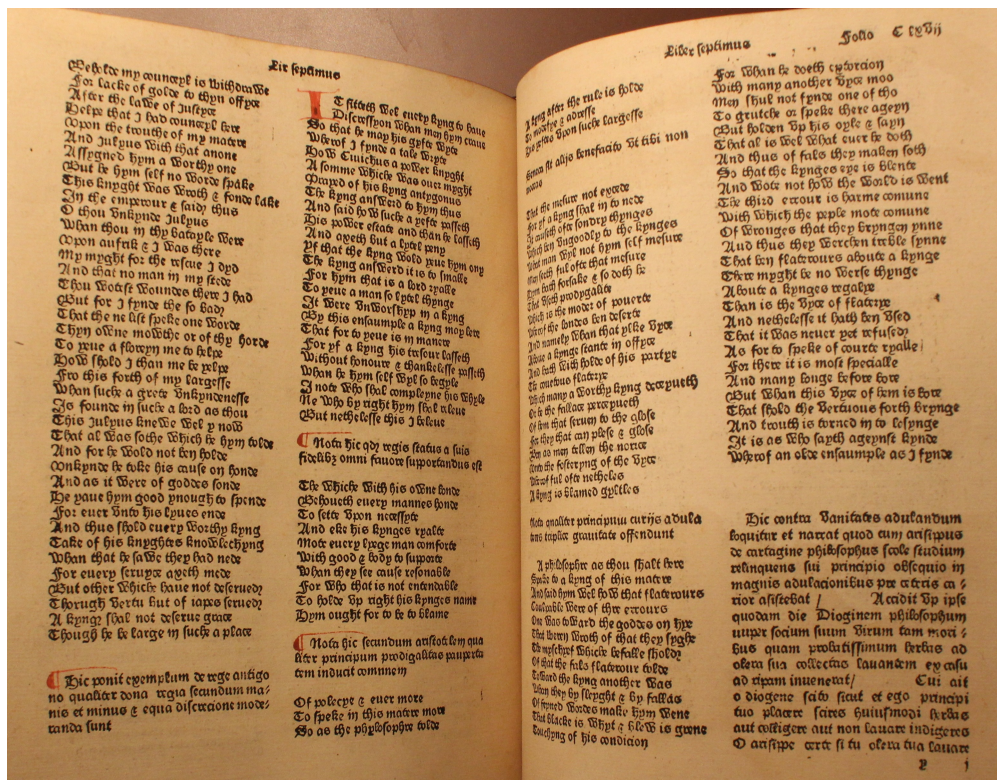
Figure 4.18: End of rubrication in the copy of Caxton's *Confessio* in the Library of Congress's Rosenwald Collection on folio Clxvi v. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

each other. Furthermore, the work clearly comes from one whose livelihood was not made by illustrating books. The campaign of illustration (though a few gaps are left untouched) thus shows amateur participation in embellishing the bare text of the *Confessio*, but in a rather simplistic fashion. What is recoverable from the illustrations does not speak with any immediacy to the text belonging to those gaps. As opposed to the long history of *Confessio* decoration and illustration being understood a tools to help reading or elicit certain interpretations from the text, these illustrations are primarily decorative.

On the whole, the Thacher *Confessio* shows that these gaps were useful, even if only as capturing doodles. Yet the fact that the illustrations find their way into those gaps represents that whoever put penned them there recognized the purpose of the blanks. Despite their inability to fill those spaces with well-executed illustrations, the knowledge that it is appropriate for the *Confessio* to be decorated persists.

British Library General Reference Collection IB.55077

Of the three copies of Caxton's *Confessio Amantis* housed at the British Library, IB.55077 in the General Reference Collection is the most complete and the only one that has been digitized.[48] It serves as the representative example of this text in *Early English Books Online*.[49]

The text of this copy is strikingly bare. No rubricated initials fill the spaces left with *lettres d'attente*. The gaps in the text at the ends and beginnings of the books are pristine and free

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[48] The other copies are also housed in the General Reference Collection and have the shelfmarks C.11.c.7 and G.11627. Both are imperfect and lack leaves, yet both have handwritten facsimiles placed in to amend the text.

[49] This copy has only been examined through EEBO.
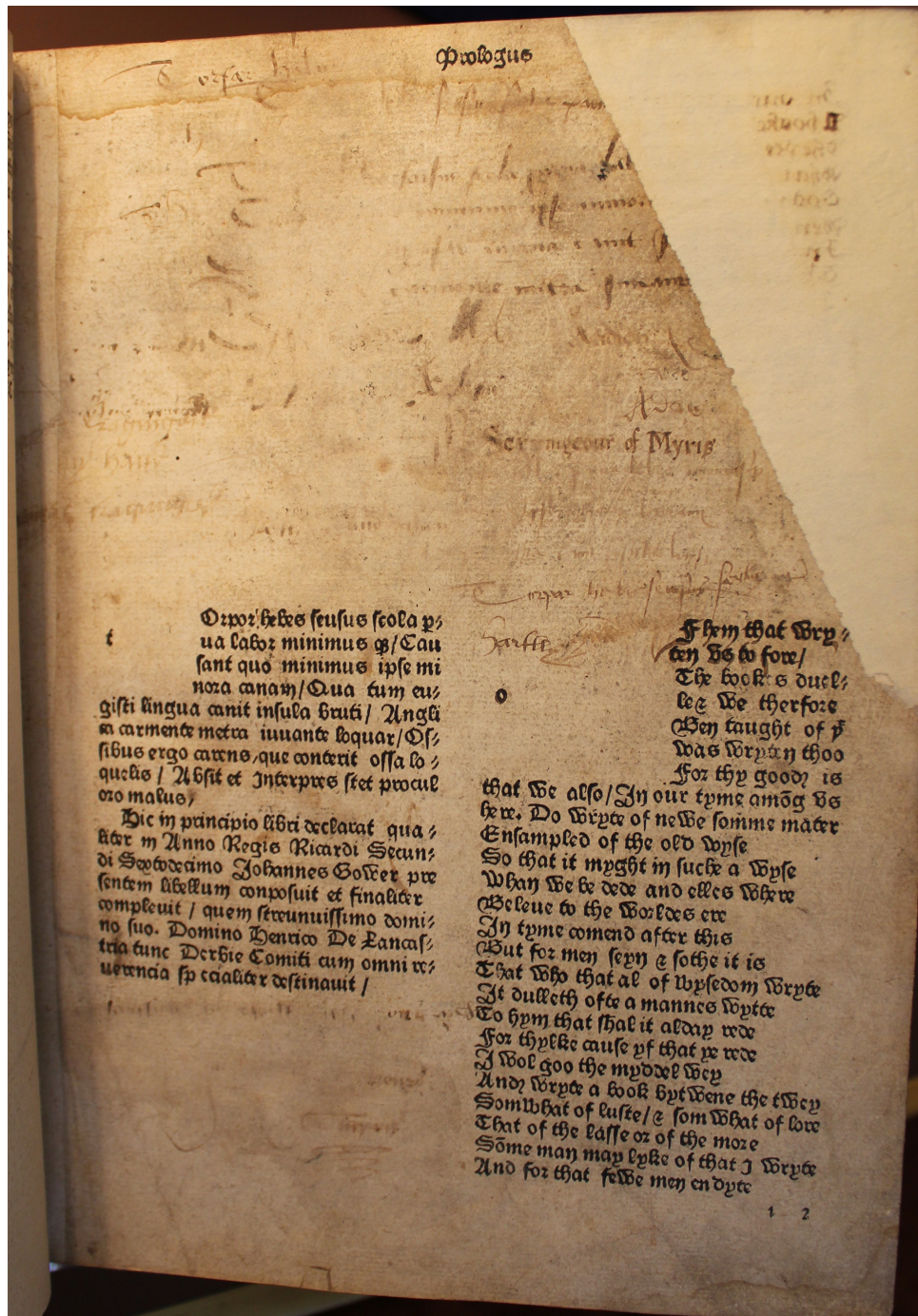
Figure 4.19: Beginning of the Prologue of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
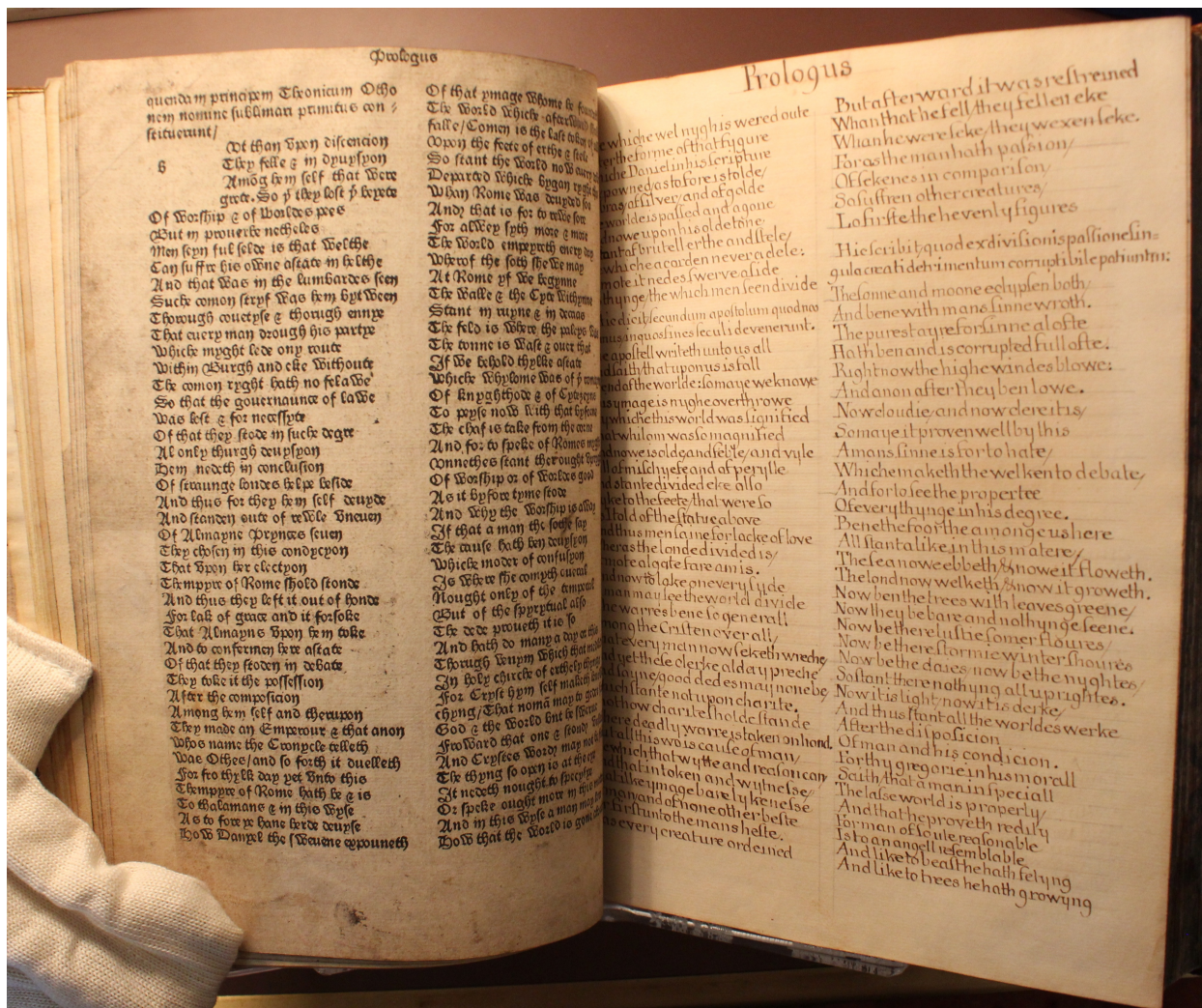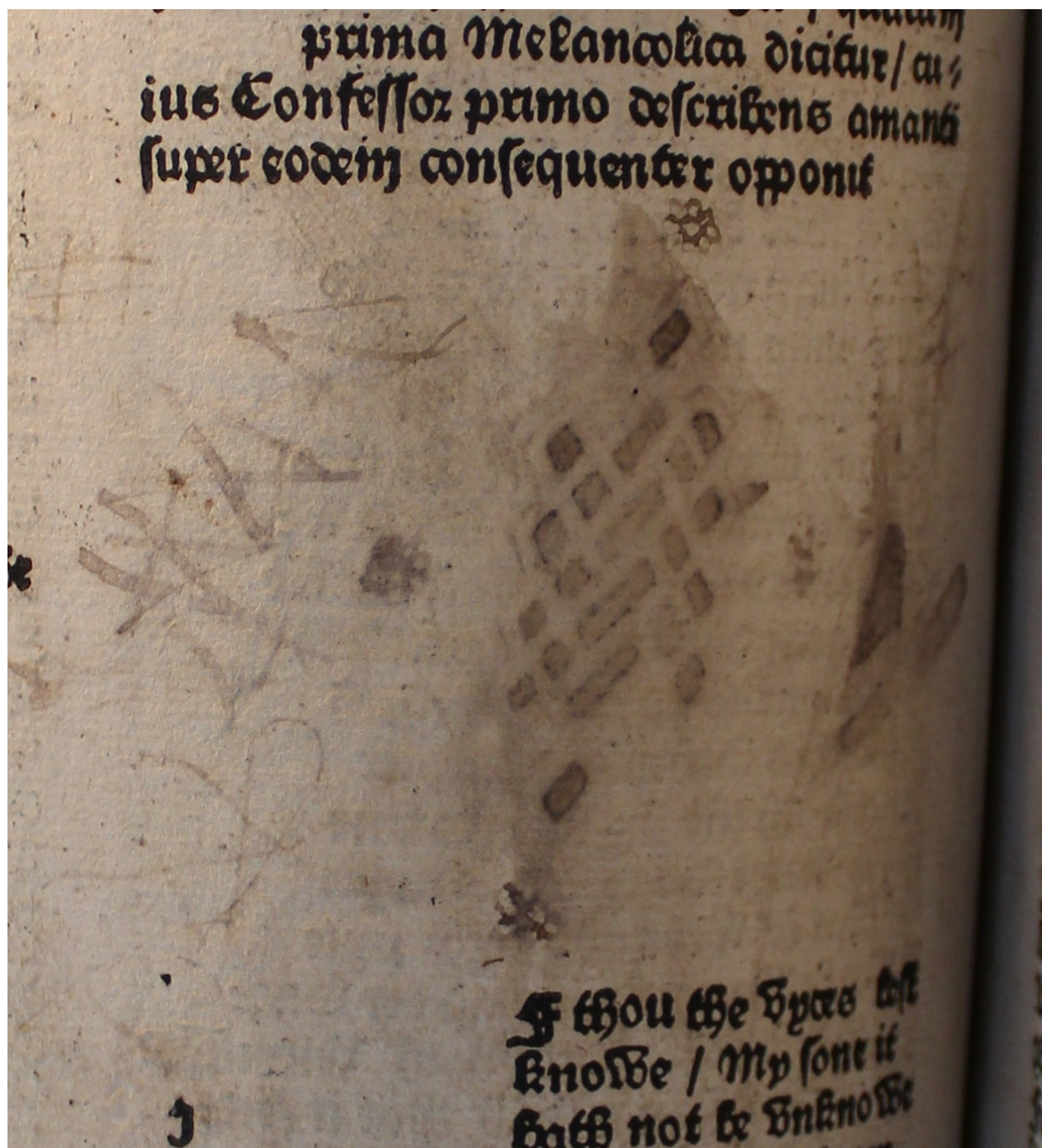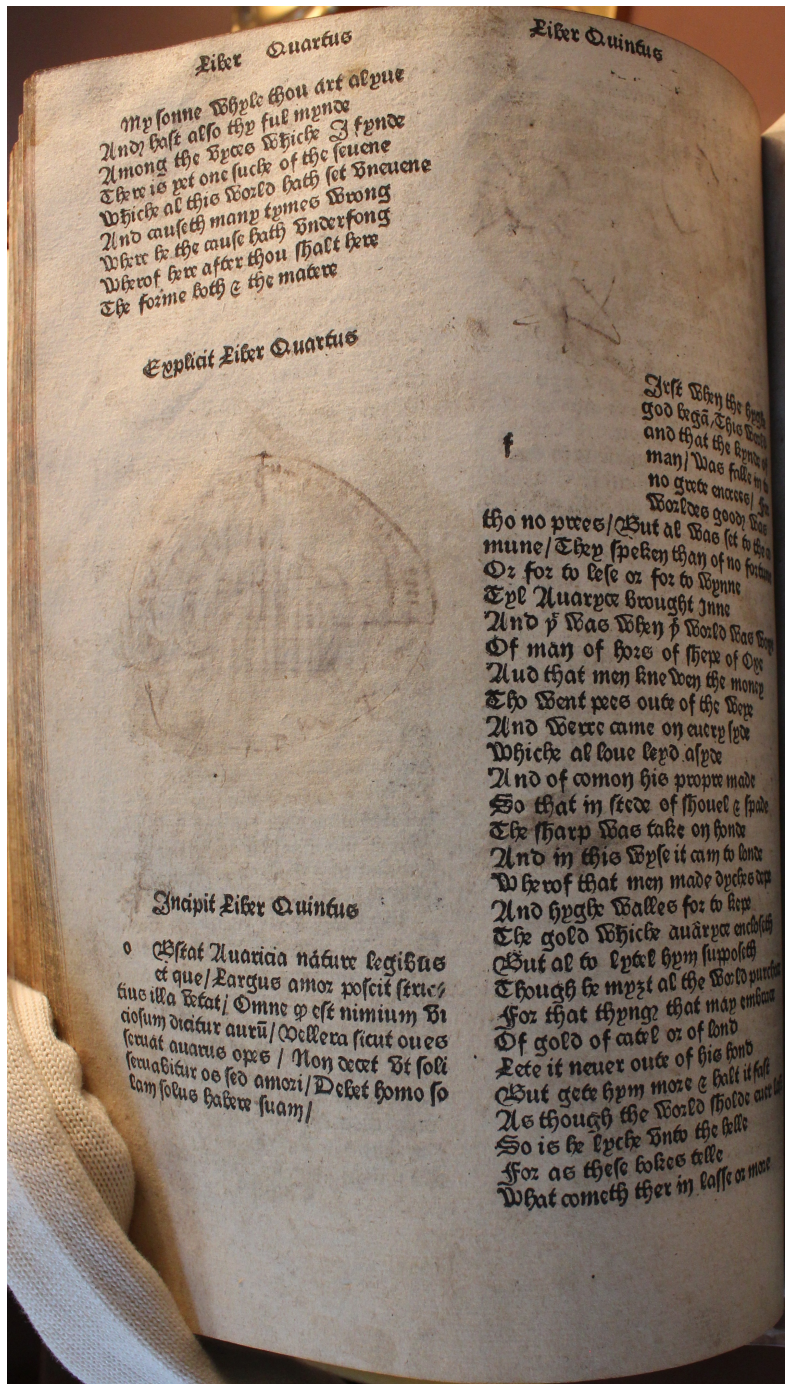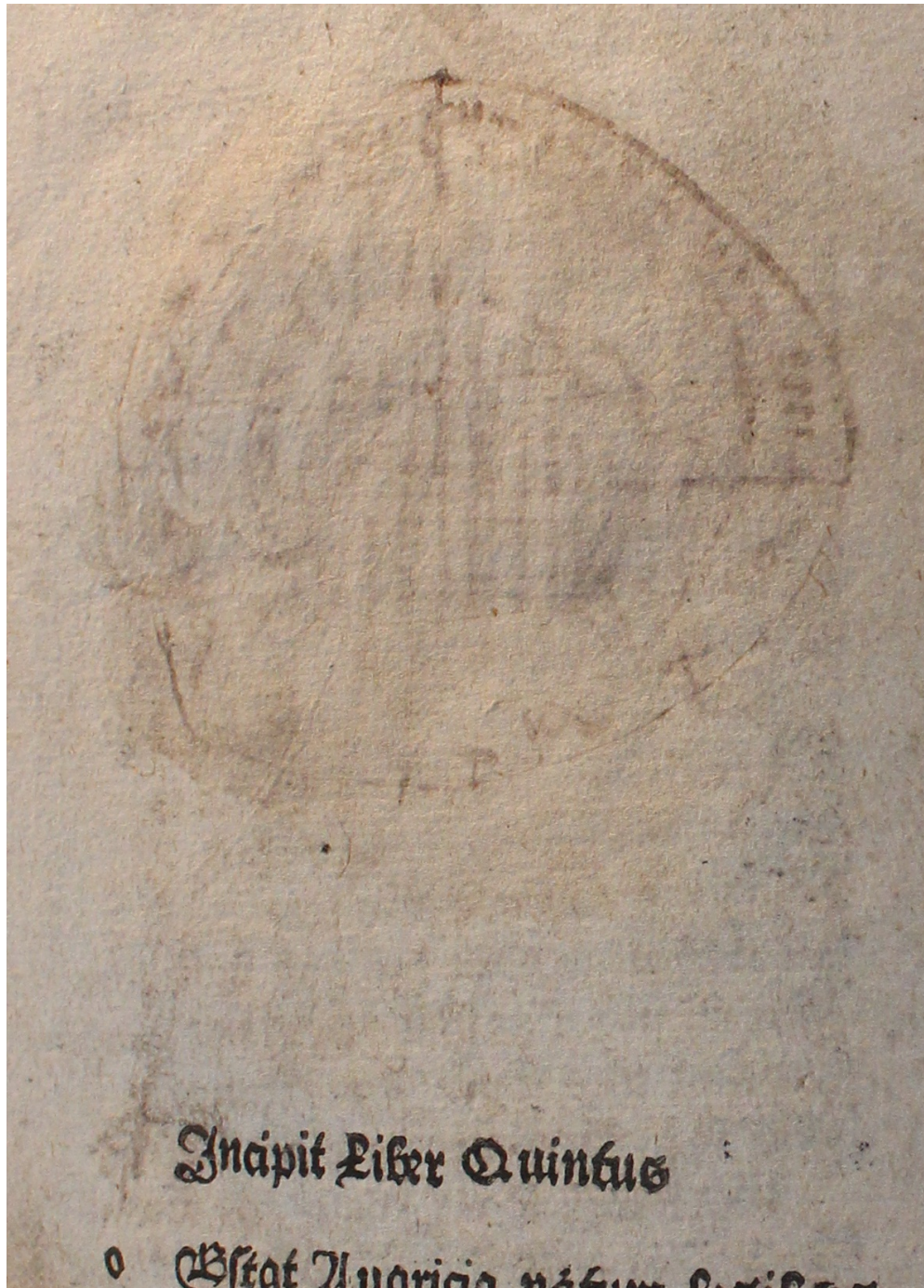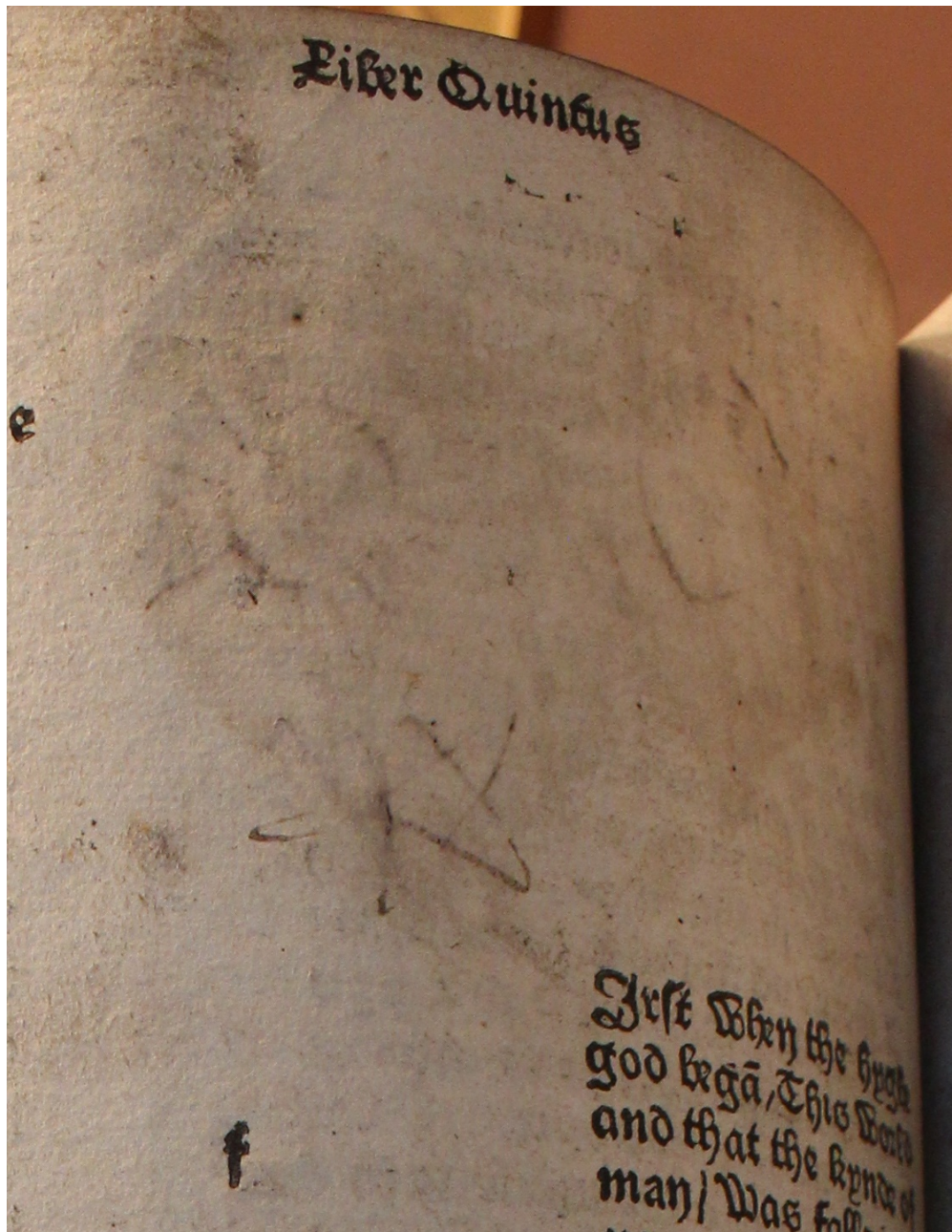
Figure 4.20: Insertion of manuscript facsimile of missing Prologue leaves in the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
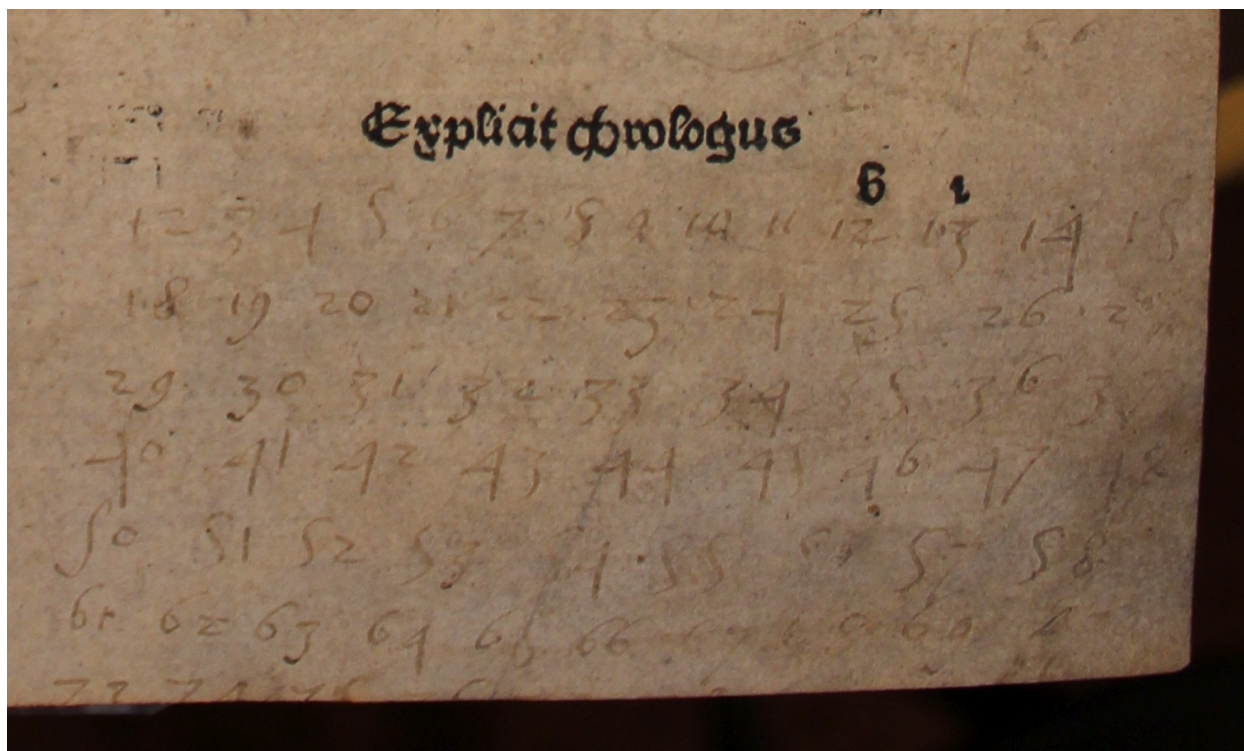
Figure 4.21: Marginal list of numbers at the end of the Prologue in the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

of all marks. The only readerly interactions with the text are several bits of marginalia, many of them pen trials or too obliterated to read, that fill the margins around the text (fol. xxv r, xlix r, lxxxxiii v, cxi r, cxviii r, cxxxiii r, ccvi r).[50]

The only decorations are the inclusion of later engravings. The catalog record lists two depictions of Gower and one of his tomb. The reproduction, however, only shows one image of Gower: that of him shooting the sphere of the earth in the front flyleaf. The small image of his tomb occurs on the end papers. Similarly, G.11627 has an engraving of Gower's tomb inserted in the book as well.

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[50] Considering the errors in foliation of Caxton's *Confessio* edition, I have chosen to just reprint the folio numbers listed in this copy itself instead of corrected numbers.
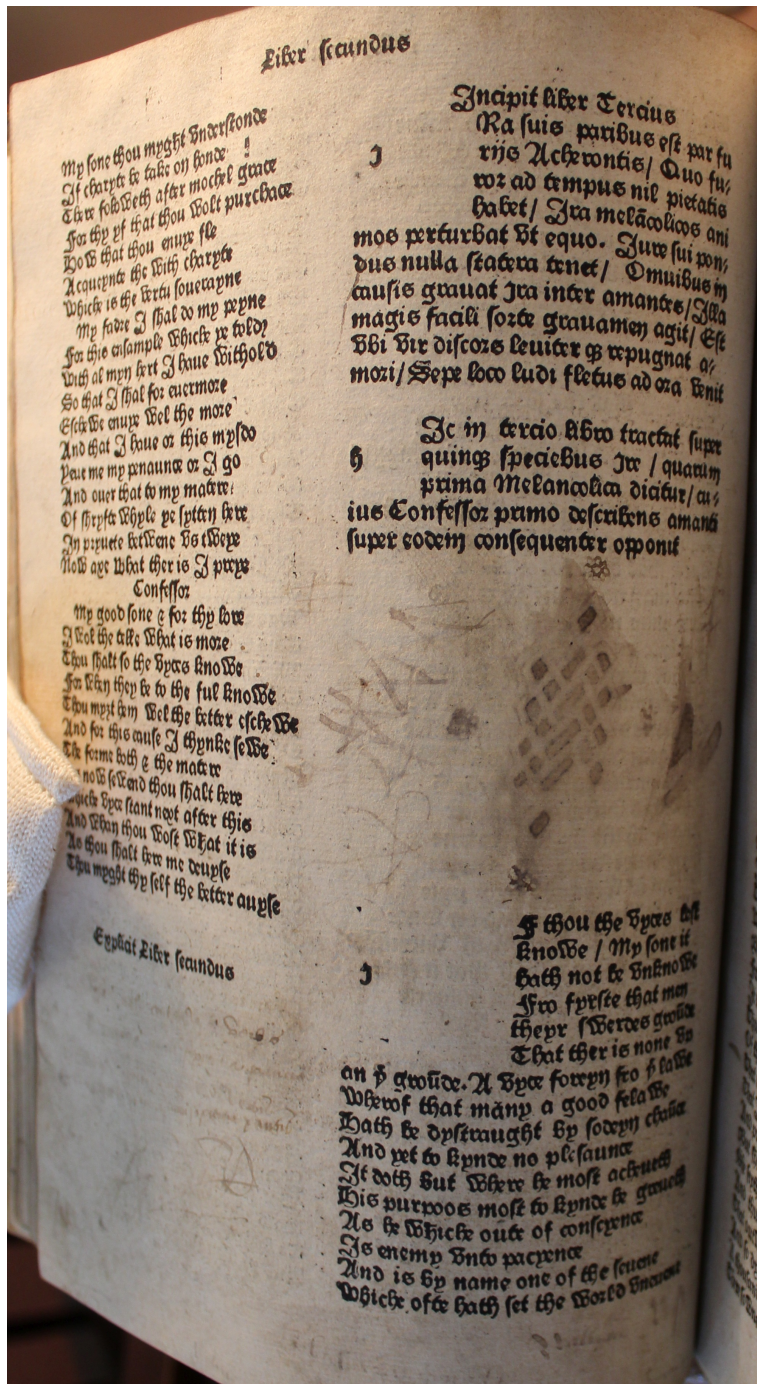
Figure 4.22: Beginning of Book III of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

prima Melancolica dicitur / cu-
ius Confessor primo describens amanti
super eodem consequenter opponit

¶ Thou the vices lest
knowe / My sone it
hath not be vnknowe

Figure 4.23: Detail of decoration in gap before beginning of Book III of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.24: Beginning of Book V of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.25: Illustration inserted between end of Book IV and beginning of Book V in left-hand column in the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.26: Illustration inserted at the beginning of Book V in the right-hand column in the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Figure 4.27: Beginning of Book VII of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

Hym & his pple al in welthe
Of his richesse h. nour & helthe
Here in this world & ellis where the
My sone as we tofore speke
In shrifte so as thou me saydest
And for thyn ese as thou me praydest
Thy louethowes for to kisse
That I the wold telle & wisse
The forme of aristotiles lore
I haue it sayd & somdele more
Of other ensaumples for to assaye
If I thy paynes myght alaye
Through ony thynge that I can say
Do wey my fader I you pray
Of that ye haue to me tolde
I thanke you a thousand folde
The tales sounden in myn ere
But yet myn herte is ellis where
I may my self not restreyne
That I nam euer in loues peyne
Suche lore coude I neuer gete
Which myght make me foryete
O poynte but yf so were I slepte
That I my eyes ay ne kepte
To thynke on loue & on his lawe
That herte can I not withdrawe
For thy my good fader dere
Leue & speke of my matere
Touchyng of loue as we begonne
If that ther be ought ouer ronne
Or ought foryete or lefte behynde
Which falleth vnto loues kynde
Wherof it nedeth to be shryue
Now axeth so that whyle I lyue
I myght amende that is amys
My good dere sone pis
Thy shryfte for to make pleyne
There is yet nomore for to sayne
Of loue which is vnaduysed
But for thou shalt be wel aduysed
Vnto thy shryfte as it bylongeth
A poynte which vpon loue longeth
And is the laste of al tho
I wyl the slethe and than ho

Explicit liber septimus

Incipit Liber octauus

Que facit ad vicium Rhus hec mo
do regula confert / Nec non econtra
qui docet ordo placet / Cecus amor
dudum non dum sua lumina cepit /
Quo tenus impositu deuia fallit iter

P Ost quam ad instanciam amantis
confessi confessor Genius sup hiis que
aristotiles regem Alexandrum edocuit
Vna cum aliarum cronicarum exemplis
seriose tractauit Iam Vltimo in isto oc
tauo volumine ad confessionem in amo
ris causa regrediens tractatu proponit
super hoc quod non Illi primordia natu
re ad libitum voluptuose consequentes
nullo humane racionis arbitrio seu ec
clesie legum imposicione a suis excessi
bus debite refrenantur Vnde quatenus
amorem concernit amantis consciencia
pro finali sui confessionis materia ge
nius rimari conatur

Figure 4.28: Beginning of Book VIII of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.
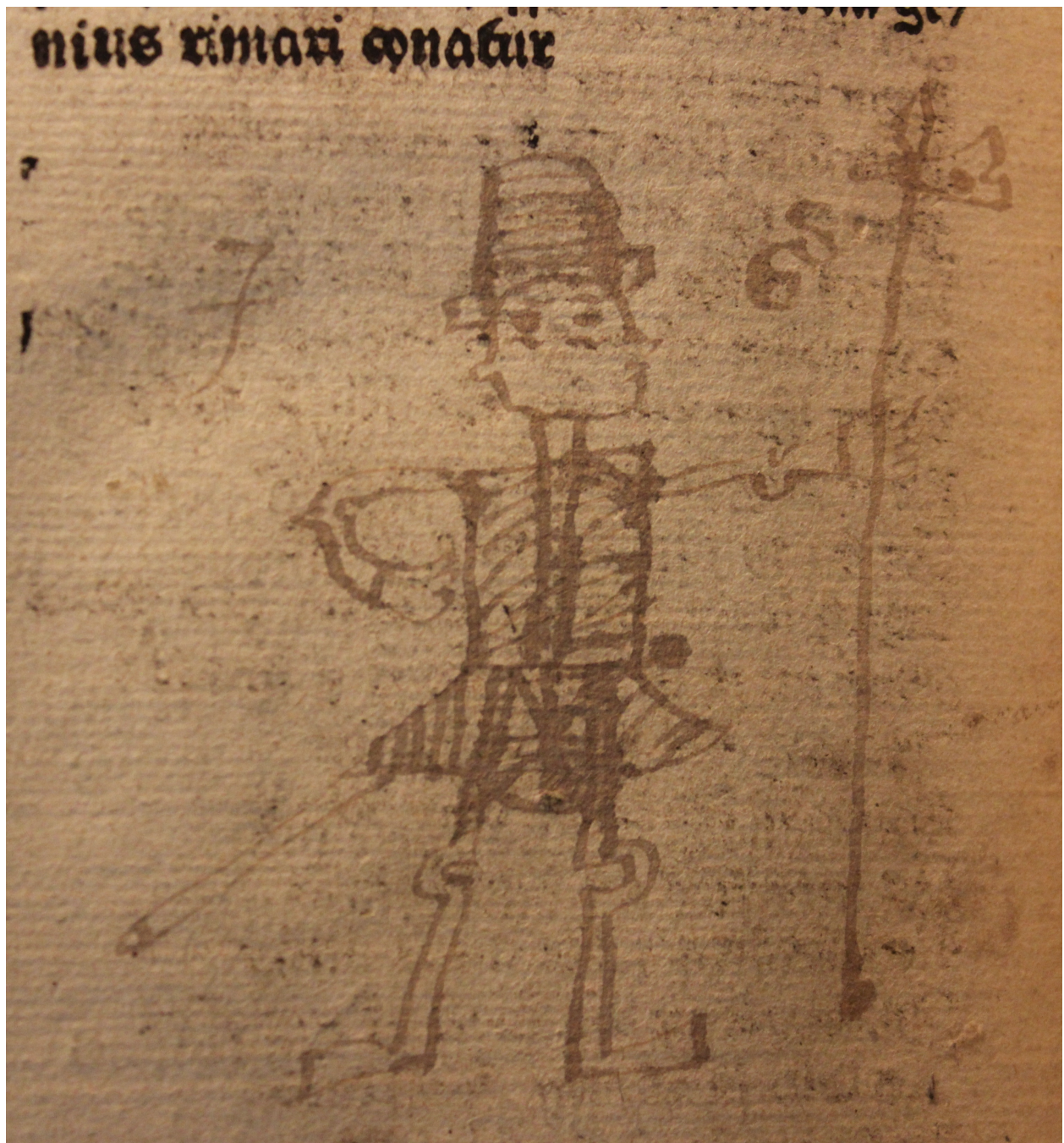
Figure 4.29: Detail of illustration in gap before beginning of Book VIII of the Library of Congress Thacher Collection copy of Caxton's edition of the *Confessio Amantis*. Photo by Vaughn Stewart.

The *Confessio Amantis* as Socially Nimble

When William Blades mentions the blank spaces extant in Caxton's 1483 *Confessio*, he assumes that the printer intended to fill the gap with an artist's work: "The blank was evidently intended for a design of some sort, possibly for a large woodcut, after the fashion of Colard Mansion, who painted all the great cuts to his 'Ovid' by a separate working."[51] It seemed to him perfectly natural that the printer, like his former partner, might want to add some spice to the plain paper with illustration. That idea is so common-sensically straightforward that it undermines the complexity of printing a text with blank spaces for illustration in it. By doing so, Caxton inextricably links his print edition to manuscript production—a traditional mode of replicating texts whose costly nature made them a mark of wealth and status. The hybrid print-manuscript codex that issued from Caxton's printshop provides a purchaser with a base text which may be embellished and made more manuscript-like.

Caxton's *Confessio* thus becomes a socially nimble text for socially nimble buyers. The inclusion of optional embellishments such as rubrication, borders, and illustration have long marked texts as being more valuable and expensive to produce, belonging to the wealthy and elite. Decoration therefore becomes a marker of social status, undoubtedly the reason why the elaborate borders in the 1477 *Canterbury Tales* are linked to the Haberdasher's Company. The fact that Caxton could supply a rubrisher or binder when a purchaser either did not have such a connection or perhaps wanted to spend less money on the entire package also pushes the

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[51] Blades, *The Biography and Typography of William Caxton, England's First Printer*, 136.

signification of decoration away from an expression of personal taste and toward the idea that it is a status marker. During the incunabular period, workshops could even standardize the distinctions between identical copies of texts, providing carefully illuminated initials for one type of customer and simple red initials for another.[52]

The actual copies of the *Confessio* examined above display this to some extent. In general, the blanks are left mostly blank. Perhaps readers did not have much to say about a text seemingly more important to own than to read. Yet respecting the blank spaces may be a sign that readers valued the potential for the bettering of the text through embellishment, even if no plan was ever set forth to accomplish it. Owners also occasionally embellish the texts themselves, making their print book look like what they think a manuscript should, especially notable in the case of the *Confessio* in the Thacher Collection in the Library of Congress. The result is that the status of the *Confessio* based on its embellishment is in a state of permanent flux.

The manuscript context further supports the social ambiguity of the *Confessio*. Although it was clearly a work seen as being worthy of deluxe production—especially given the high number of "standard" manuscripts extant in decorated form—the text also could be adapted to the educational status of its owner by translating or curtailing the Latin apparatus. Caxton's own Table in his edition can be seen, as I have argued, as a method to aid readers whose Latin skills are lacking.

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[52] Mary C. Erler, "Devotional Literature," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. Lotte Hellinga and J.B. Trapp, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 509. Erler examines a 1497 book of hours printed by French printer Jean Philippe (*STC* 15885). There are four identical copies except for decoration. Two are on vellum with uncolored woodcuts, but gold, blue, and red ink is used throughout. The two on paper "have their majuscules picked out throughout in off-shades of red and blue, closer to brown and aqua" (509). All four copies are contemporaneous, leading to the conclusion that these different types of decoration were standardized.

The result is that the *Confessio Amantis* printed by Caxton in 1483 becomes an object that meets the social requirements of a vast range of possible purchasers. From the wealthy elite who were able to pay for binding and rubrication to those who did not care or could not afford for those finishing touches, the *Confessio* bent to their purchasing desire. The production of the *Confessio*, then, engages in a similar fashion the ways that Caxton uses paratexts to position his print books as simultaneously works only to be read by nobles and works through which one can become noble by reading. The *Confessio Amantis* thus appeals to both the elite and rising middling sorts who could now obtain such books. Yet I believe the idea that Caxton's *Confessio* is a socially unfixed text is the primary appeal of the text. Even when a reader may not have embellished the book, that potential elevation likely beckoned.

Conclusion

William Caxton had an expensive funeral. Examining the rates paid for most funerals during the time, William Blades concludes that "These rates are considerably above those paid by the majority of the parishioners, and are equalled in a very few instances; another evidence of the superior position held by our Printer in his parish."[1] This historical moment crystallizes many of the insights in the foregoing study. Clearly, Caxton's own funeral was a display of his wealth and status. Blades even calls him "superior" to other parishioners. There is a sense that his funeral proves the socially elevating power of print—even if not as a reader but as a seller. As an industrious and clever member of the middling classes in London, he was able to rise above the norm and establish himself as one operating in the liminal space between the common people and the truly noble. And yet, it's entirely fictive. Caxton certainly cannot enjoy any perceived social elevation from a lavish funeral: he's dead.

The negotiation of political and literary authority through print is likewise an utter fiction. The import of Caxton's funeral—both for historians and the attendees, I imagine—derives from its incongruity with his peers. It stands out because someone like him should not have a funeral like that. Thus, our understanding of Caxton's funeral is always beholden to the concept that his

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[1]Blades, *Life and Typography of William Caxton*, 75; Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography of England's First Printer*, 188, notes that the expenses for Maude Caxton—potentially William Caxton's wife—were only half of the cost for the printer's.

social station is actually lower than his final display of wealth might suggest. He butts up against a social boundary that he can potentially stretch but never break. Nevertheless, Caxton's funeral also conveys his ability to exploit seemingly ancillary methods of differentiating himself as superior to his own social milieu.

This study aims to make visible the manifold ways that such negotiations can occur within print books themselves: paratexual, literary, political, and physical. The ways examined here, though, are by no means exhaustive. Indeed, that status of print books during the incunabular period as an emerging form of textual transmission—somehow both an extension of and a complete break from manuscript production—makes pinning down the exact ways such negotiations happen particularly difficult. Surely, there are many more paths to tread than are (or can be) covered here. And I believe those paths hold promise for new insights into the foundation of early modern literary tastes, the reception of Chaucer, the creation of the editor's role in fashioning print editions, the contemporary construction of the Wars of the Roses, and the linkage between print readership and social station. Such investigations will require great methodological and theoretical flexibility to situate and to understand better printers' works not in the way that critics understand Chaucer or Lydgate, but on their own peculiar merits.

Indeed, one goal of this study is to display the importance of printers' paratexual materials in our critical understanding of late medieval and early modern literature. A reader of the foregoing study once remarked, "I didn't know Caxton's paratexts could be so interesting." I am genuinely thankful for the praise, yet the comment also speaks to the continuing reputation of early English printers as particularly dull writers. True, their paratexts rarely, if ever, reach the poetic heights of Chaucer or any other oft-lauded author of the medieval period. Yet this study shows that there is much to be gained from these "non-literary" texts.

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