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# Joseph Holland and the Idea of the Chaucerian Book

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MEGAN L. COOK

*Colby College*

FOR MORE THAN FIVE hundred years, the poems and other writings of Geoffrey Chaucer have been available to readers in print as well as in manuscript. William Caxton began producing editions of Chaucer no later than 1477 (having printed several texts by Chaucer's contemporary John Lydgate the previous year), and by 1532 Chaucer's works could be purchased in a large, single-volume folio edition, a first for an English author.<sup>1</sup> The multiple formats in which Chaucer was available meant that early modern readers, like contemporary scholars, had a choice among different formats and versions of his texts. A newer printed edition might offer a more complete or correct version of a poem, along with useful explanatory

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I would like to thank Dr. Suzanne Paul and the librarians and staff at the Cambridge University Library Special Collections for facilitating my access to MS Gg.4.27 and related materials.

1 Caxton printed *The Canterbury Tales* (STC 5082), *Anelida and Arcite* (STC 5090), and *The Parliament of Fowls* (STC 5091) in or around 1477, and Chaucer's *Boece* (STC 3199) in the following year. The first single-volume edition of Chaucer's works, *The works of Geffray Chaucer newly printed, with dyuers works whiche were neuer in print before* (STC 5068) was printed in 1532 by Thomas Godfray. It is the ultimate source for Speght's 1598 edition of the *Works*, discussed in this essay, mediated by intervening editions published in 1542, 1550, and 1561.

materials, while an older manuscript could carry both cultural and scholarly authority borne out of its apparent antiquity and proximity to the author.<sup>2</sup>

A conventional narrative of textual transmission sees Chaucer's manuscripts as the point of origin, and printed books as copies. However, this is not always the case. Bibliographic evidence indicates that in certain instances the printed Chaucer book—more plentiful and accessible than its manuscript analogues—could assert a significant effect on the way that Chaucer's manuscripts were read, interpreted, and preserved. These moments of “inverted transmission,” at which early printed editions of Chaucer inform a later reader's handling of medieval manuscripts, challenge our sense of the inevitably progressive nature of textual influence. More specifically, they invite us to consider what the idea of the Chaucer book has meant to successive generations of readers, as well as to recognize moments at which early books can productively trouble familiar binaries like medieval and early modern, original and copy, and manuscript and print.

One such moment of asynchronous influence involves Joseph Holland (d. 1605). Holland was a lawyer, member of the Inner Temple, and active participant in the Elizabethan Society of Antiquaries.<sup>3</sup> Organized around 1586 by William Camden, with assistance from his former student Robert Cotton, the Society of Antiquaries was a London-based group of lawyers, heralds, schoolteachers, and other historical enthusiasts, most of whom had a professional interest in the English past.<sup>4</sup> They met biweekly to hear and

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2 For example, justifying his inclusion of the (apocryphal) *Plowman's Tale* in his 1598 edition of Chaucer, Thomas Speght writes, “For I have seen it in written hand in John Stowes Library, in a Book of such Antiquity, as seemeth to have been written near to Chaucer's time” (at c.5).

3 A brief biography of Holland appears in Christina DeCoursey, “Society of Antiquaries (act. 1586–1607),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, accessed 22 January 2015, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.colby.idm.oclc.org/view/article/72906>. See also Robert A. Caldwell, “Joseph Holland, Collector and Antiquary,” *Modern Philology* 40 (1943): 295–301.

4 On William Camden and the Society of Antiquaries, see Wyman H. Herendeen, *William Camden: A Life of Context* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007): 309–33. On Cotton's influence on the projects of the Society, see Kevin Sharpe, *Sir Robert Cotton, 1586–1631: History and Politics in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979): 17–37.



discuss papers on a preset topic; examples include the origins of sterling money in England, various legal concepts, and the historical duties of figures like the Earl Marshall. Records indicate that Holland delivered at least twenty papers to the group, making him one of the Society's most active members.<sup>5</sup> Unsurprisingly, given his active research profile, Holland owned, or left his mark in, several surviving manuscripts from the late medieval period.<sup>6</sup>

Most notably, sometime before 1600, Holland became the owner of the large poetic miscellany that is now Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27 (hereafter referred to as Gg). Though Gg contains Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* and several anonymous shorter poems, the bulk of its pieces are Chaucerian. Its text of the *Canterbury Tales* is closely related to Ellesmere's, and its version of the *Legend of Good Women* includes the unique "G" version of the prologue.<sup>7</sup> The manuscript also includes the *A.B.C.*, *Lenvoy de Chaucer a Scogan*, *Truth*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *Parliament of Fowles*.<sup>8</sup>

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5 Many of these papers are collected and published by Thomas Hearne in *A Collection of Curious Discourses Written by Eminent Antiquaries upon Several Heads in Our English Antiquities*, 2 vols. (London: W & J Richardson, 1775).

6 In addition to MS Gg.4.27, Holland at one time possessed what are now London, College of Arms, MS Arundel 23 (containing the Middle English *Seege of Troye* and translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regnum Britanniae*) and London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian E.v (the cartulary of Reading Abbey), and his papers indicate familiarity with a range of historical and genealogical documents. See Caldwell, "Joseph Holand." For a brief account of other manuscripts owned by London-based antiquarians, see May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 67–68.

7 The most recent comprehensive study of the manuscript is Matthew Clarke Wolfe, "Constructing the Chaucer Corpus: A Study of Cambridge, University Library, MS. Gg.4.27" (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 1995). See also Jacob Thaisen, "Orthography, Codicology, and Textual Studies: The Cambridge University Library, Gg.4.27 'Canterbury Tales,'" *Boletín Millares Carlo* 24–25 (2005–2006): 379–94. CUL Gg.4.27 is "Gg" in Manly and Rickert's six-text edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. On the manuscript's text of the *Legend of Good Women*, see George Kane, "The Text of the Legend of Good Women in CUL MS Gg.4.27," in *Middle English Studies Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Douglas Grey and Eric Gerald Stanley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 39–58.

8 For a full description of the manuscript and its contents, see M. B. Parkes and Richard Beadle, eds., *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Facsimile of Cambridge University Library MS GG.4.27*, 3 vols. (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1979).

In their facsimile edition of the manuscript, Malcolm B. Parkes and Richard Beadle date Gg to the second half of the first quarter of the fifteenth century, making it one of the oldest surviving Chaucer manuscripts and among the first attempts to bring together a significant portion of Chaucer's writings in a single book.<sup>9</sup> Although the book's earliest owners are unknown, it was likely the product of a "provincial" workshop, probably in East Anglia.<sup>10</sup> The text is the work of two scribes, operating cooperatively; the scribe responsible for the overwhelming majority of the text—Parkes and Beadle's Scribe A—is distinguished by his eccentric orthography, a feature that could have caused the language of the manuscript to appear especially distant and unfamiliar to its early modern readers.<sup>11</sup>

Although a less extravagant manuscript than Ellesmere, Gg's text of the *Canterbury Tales* originally featured a series of pilgrim portraits and full-page miniatures at the beginning of both the *Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*.<sup>12</sup> It also includes a unique set of allegorical illustrations to the *Parson's Tale*. In the later fifteenth or early sixteenth century, the full-page illustrations, along with the majority of the pilgrim portraits, were removed. This mutilation deprived the book not only of these illuminations, but also of the text on their verso. While the non-illustrated texts in the manuscript were not affected by these excisions, they significantly impact the readability of the *Canterbury Tales*, the first long work in the manuscript and one likely to attract the attention of any reader.

It is not clear exactly how Gg came into Holland's possession at the end of the sixteenth century, but even in its damaged state it must have held special appeal as a Chaucerian book of obvious and significant antiquity. Holland could have undertaken a simple repair job, supplying the lost passages and perhaps updating some of the more difficult spellings. In this, he

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9 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:10.

10 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:63–64.

11 This scribe is also responsible for copying part one of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS e Musaeo 116, as well as University of Missouri–Columbia MS Fragmenta Manuscripta 150 (a single leaf). On his work, see Thaisen, "Orthography, Codicology, and Textual Studies," as well as Robert A. Caldwell, "The Scribe of Chaucer MS Gg.4.27," *Modern Language Quarterly* 5 (1944): 33–46.

12 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:58–60.

would have had an analogue in an anonymous sixteenth-century annotator of Bodleian MS Bodley 368, who updates the syntax of lines 1973–88 of the *Legend of Good Women* to bring them more in line with early modern norms.<sup>13</sup> Instead, Holland chose to perform a more thoroughgoing renovation of his manuscript, one that shows the influence of sixteenth-century printed editions on his idea of what a collection of Chaucer's writings could, and should, look like. Working in concert with a professional scribe both to mend the book and to supplement its original contents, Holland draws primarily on Thomas Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer, *The Works of our Antient and lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chavcer* [sic] (fig. 1).<sup>14</sup> Rather than limit himself to replacing the missing text and restoring the book to its original fifteenth-century form, Holland incorporates new poems and other material found in the *Works*, including excerpts from the *Life of Chaucer* written by Speght (with assistance from John Stow) that preface Chaucer's texts, as well as the hard word list included at the back of the volume. In this way, a late sixteenth-century printed book comes to serve, paradoxically, as Holland's model for his fifteenth-century Chaucer manuscript. In other words, changes that Holland makes to Gg are determined not only by the damage that it bears, but also by his awareness of a gap between the bibliographic or codicological idea of "Chaucer's works" as embodied in Gg and in Speght.

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13 See fol. 80v in *Manuscript Bodley 368: A Facsimile*, intro. Pamela Robinson (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1982). Robinson suggests that these additions, like Holland's engagement with Gg, reflect "scholarly interest in Chaucer's poetry" (xxxix).

14 On Speght's edition and his work as an editor, see Megan L. Cook, "Making and Managing the Past: Lexical Commentary in Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* (1579) and Chaucer's *Works* (1598/1602)," *Spenser Studies* 26 (2011): 179–222; Derek Pearsall, "John Stow and Thomas Speght as Editors of Chaucer: A Question of Class," in *John Stow (1525–1605) and the Making of the English Past*, ed. Ian Gadd and Alexandra Gillespie (London: The British Library, 2004), 119–25; William Kuskin, "'The Loadstarre of the English Language': Spenser's 'Shepheardes Calender' and the Construction of Modernity," *Textual Cultures* 2 (2007): 9–33; Tim William Machan, "Speght's Works and the Invention of Chaucer," *Text: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Textual Studies* 8 (1995): 145–70; and especially Pearsall, "Thomas Speght," in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1984), 71–92.

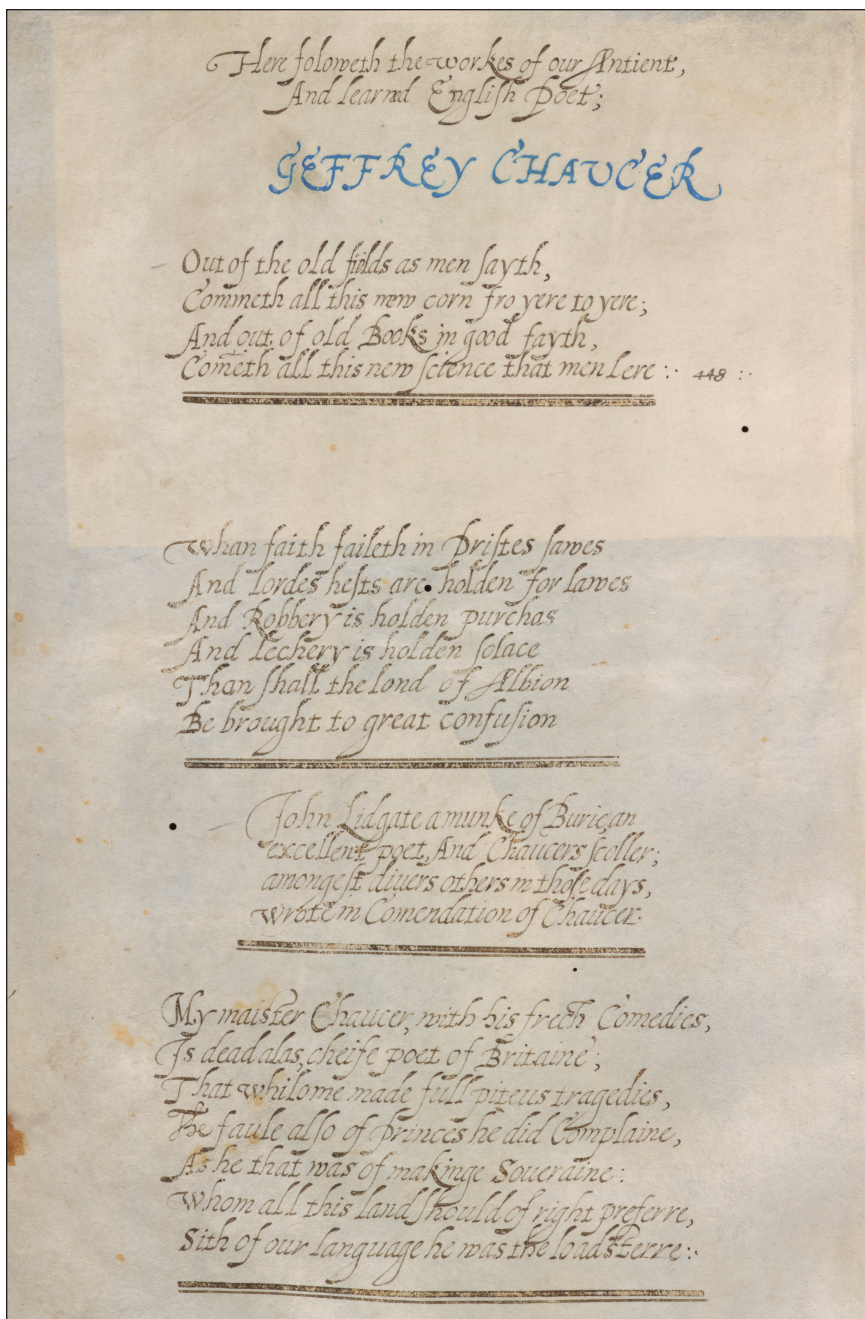


FIGURE 1. Handwritten title page modeled on the printed frontispiece to the 1598 edition of Chaucer's collected works. Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27.2, fol. 4v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Speght's was the newest and most complete edition of Chaucer available. While Chaucer's collected *Works* had been continually available in print since William Thynne's first edition of 1532, Speght's edition distinguishes itself from its predecessors by adding a host of explanatory and supplementary materials to Chaucer's texts. In 1598, these include a life of the poet, some comments on his versification, brief summaries ("arguments") of his longer poems and of individual Canterbury tales, a glossary of "old and obscure words," a list of authors cited by Chaucer, and translations of Latin and French words and phrases. Speght's *Works* also include a full-page engraving by the historian and cartographer John Speed, depicting Chaucer as he appears in the Hoccleve *Regiment of Princes* portraits and surrounded by an extensive and intricate genealogical diagram (cf. fig. 2).

There is good reason to believe that Holland and Speght knew each other personally, if not at the time Holland acquired Gg, then shortly thereafter. In 1602, Speght revised his edition of the *Works*, adding two new texts, one of which—Chaucer's *A.B.C.*—he copied from Gg.<sup>15</sup> Like Holland, Speght had connections to the Society of Antiquaries: in the course of his work with Chaucer, Speght received assistance from the antiquarians John Stow, who supplied materials for his *Life of Chaucer*, and Francis Thynne, the source of many of the changes made in the revised 1602 *Works*.<sup>16</sup> Both Thynne and Stow presented papers at meetings of the Society of Antiquaries, as did Holland, and a note in Thynne's commonplace book (now London, British Library, MS Stowe 1047) indicates that in 1604 or 1605 Holland lent him the cartulary of Reading Abbey (now London, British Library, MS Cotton Vespasian E.v) for use in his own research.<sup>17</sup>

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15 See George B. Pace, "Speght's Chaucer and MS Gg.4.27," *Studies in Bibliography* 21 (1968): 225–35. The other text, the apocryphal *Jack Upland*, Speght took from John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*.

16 See Pearsall, "John Stow and Thomas Speght as Editors of Chaucer." On Thynne's engagement with Chaucer, see Megan Cook, "How Francis Thynne Read His Chaucer," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 12 (2012): 215–43.

17 London, British Library, MS Stowe 1047, fol. 113.



As a lawyer, amateur herald, and antiquarian, Holland was in a position to appreciate both the historical value of early manuscripts and the usefulness of newer scholarship that collected, organized, and corrected information drawn from medieval sources.<sup>18</sup> In his paper “Of the Antiquity and Use of Heralds in England,” delivered to the Society of Antiquaries on 28 November 1601, Holland notes that Chaucer’s wife (whom he does not name) was the sister of Katherine Swynford, and that they were the daughters of “the Guyon king of arms,” a heraldic title that Holland would have discovered in Speght’s *Life of Chaucer*.<sup>19</sup> In a paper on the ancient cities of England, delivered in 1598, he refers to Holinshed and Camden, as well as records in the church of St. Peter in Exeter; a 1601 paper cites Holinshed and an “antient charter” from the reign of Henry III.<sup>20</sup> In addition to demonstrating the influence of Speght’s *Works*, then, the changes that Holland makes to Gg show how the combined appreciation for old books and new scholarship that marks late Tudor antiquarianism could play out bibliographically in the case of a specific Middle English literary manuscript.

Though well documented, Holland’s role in the transmission of Gg is not immediately apparent today, his material contributions having been removed when the manuscript was rebound under the supervision of the Cambridge librarian Henry Bradshaw in the late nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> A reader who calls up the manuscript today will receive what is now denoted MS Gg.4.27.1, a very large codex in a late twentieth-century white leather binding, encompassing what remains of the original fifteenth-century manuscript. From the time of Holland’s ownership until the early twentieth century, this was bound with the materials now cataloged as Gg.4.27.1(b)

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18 For a variety of perspectives on Tudor uses of the medieval past, in both literary and extra-literary contexts, see the essays collected in Sarah Kelen, ed., *Renaissance Retrospections: Tudor Views of the Middle Ages* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2013). On the production of early modern historiographies and chronicles dealing with the Middle Ages, see May McKisack, *Medieval History in the Tudor Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971); and the sections on “The Making of Holinshed” and “Historiography” in *The Oxford Handbook of Holinshed’s Chronicles*, ed. Paulina Kewes, Ian A. Archer, and Felicity Heal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

19 Hearne, *Curious Discourses*, 2:60.

20 Hearne, *Curious Discourses*, 2:38–39; 2:32–33.

21 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:67.

and Gg.4.27.2. The former is comprised of the leaves added by Holland and his scribe to replace material lost when the illuminations were excised from the fifteenth-century codex, as well as additional material taken from the paratext of Speght's edition of the *Works* and at least two other copies of Chaucer's poems (Holland's version of "Gentilesse" includes an extra stanza not attested in any other copy of the poem, and his version of the "Retraction" to the *Canterbury Tales* comes from Caxton's 1483 edition [STC 5083]).<sup>22</sup> Gg.4.27.2 is a fragment of a fourteenth-century manuscript containing a portion of the early Middle English romances *Floris and Blanchefleur* and *King Horn*.<sup>23</sup> In size and appearance it is considerably humbler than the Chaucerian materials it accompanies, and it is possible that Holland added it to the larger book primarily as a way to preserve the small and therefore fragile booklet. Its inclusion here, rather than in one of Holland's other manuscripts, might reveal a specific interest in early literary works, but there is no readily apparent connection to Chaucer.

Gg.4.27.1(b) consists of a total of thirty-five leaves, mostly written in the hand of Holland's scribe, whose work also appears in several other books owned by Holland, including London, British Library, Cotton MS Vespasian E.v and MS Harley 7026.<sup>24</sup> The leaves containing passages from the *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde* were inserted into the manuscript at the points where the missing lines would have originally appeared, and the new poems and supplementary material were placed at the beginning and end of the codex. Notably, all of the added leaves are parchment, consisting of large sheets of about the same size as those used for the original manuscript. The use of parchment as a support, rather than the paper that would have been more readily available in 1600, suggests a specific investment in the aesthetic unity of the book itself. The contents of these pages, however, point to a desire to expand the text of the manuscript beyond its original scope in ways informed by Speght's printed edition of the *Works*.

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22 These materials are reproduced in volume 3 of Parkes and Beadles' facsimile, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*.

23 For further discussion, see Rosamund Allen, ed., *King Horn: An Edition Based on Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27.2* (New York: Garland, 1984).

24 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:66.

Since the original distribution of the materials now bound as Gg.4.27.1(b) indicate that Holland intended them to be read as part of the manuscript, it makes sense to consider the fifteenth-century manuscript and Holland's additions as a single codicological unit. The changes made to Gg while the book was owned by Holland can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Marks and additions, as well as erasures, made on the surviving fifteenth-century leaves
2. Supplementary leaves added to supply missing text, and intercalated with the original leaves
3. New poems added on additional leaves, added at both the front and back of the codex
4. Explanatory material adapted from the paratext of the 1598 Speght *Works*, added at both the front and back of the codex

Taken together, these interventions show Holland engaged deeply not only with the Chaucerian text, but also with the physical form and conceptual scope of the book itself.

Surviving marks within the fifteenth-century codex are few. Holland apparently had the manuscript cleaned, removing readers' marks and other evidence of earlier use. Parkes and Beadle note one particularly interesting erasure near the portrait of the Reeve on fol. 168, which originally warned prospective readers to "beware to rede this tale for it is fulle of vnclenlynnesse."<sup>25</sup> Holland did, however, leave his own reader's mark at several points in the book, indicating that he could and did read the manuscript, despite—or perhaps because of—its unconventional orthography.<sup>26</sup> There is other evidence that Holland considered the volume suited for ongoing use: at the

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25 Parkes and Beadle write, "Holland also cleaned up the manuscript, erasing the kinds of inscriptions and pen trials recording the reactions or inattention of sixteenth-century readers, which one usually finds scattered on the pages of Chaucer manuscripts" (*Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:66). They note additional erasures on fols. 311, 424, 426v, 427, 430, and 471.

26 Parkes and Beadle (*Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:10) suggest that whoever removed the illustrations held the opposite view: the pictures were worth preserving, but the difficult text was no longer of use. On orthography in Gg, and its relation to the spelling of exemplars



beginning and ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and throughout the *Canterbury Tales*, his scribe adds incipits and catchwords to clarify transitions where connecting text has been lost due to the removal of illustrations. These additions are made in bright blue ink, which might have been chosen because of the way it echoes the colors of the surviving manuscript decorations, although the elegant italic hand used by Holland's scribe contrasts sharply with Scribe A's mixed Anglicana hand. The scribe also wrote the name of his employer and the date 1600 in capital letters on what is now the manuscript's first folio, containing the beginning to Chaucer's *A.B.C.*, to which he also provides the title. Today, while the title remains on this page, Holland's name and the 1600 date have been expunged by a later owner or conservator, placing Holland's significant role in the transmission of the text and its contents under an uncommonly literal form of erasure.

Holland's decision to add in the passages lost when the illustrations were removed also supports the idea that he regarded Gg as a book to be used and read. Folios 11 through 29 in Gg.4.27.1(b) supply the lines missing from the *Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, drawn from the 1598 Speght Works. Most of these passages are written in the scribe's even hand, the same hand that copies incipits and explicits into the original portion of the manuscript (the project was finished by someone else writing in a rougher hand with more secretary features). The presence of the same hand in both the older portion of the manuscript and the new pages, along with the use of parchment as a support in both, creates a visual and textual continuity between the new sheets and the original pages. Once inserted into the body of the manuscript, the intercalated leaves allow for uninterrupted reading of both *Troilus* and the *Canterbury Tales* for the first time since the mutilation of the manuscript.

While the general practice was to place these passages at the point in the manuscript at which the lines would have originally appeared, the *Retraction* to the *Canterbury Tales* appears at the end of the volume. Gg very well might have originally included the *Retraction*, since the *Parson's Tale* con-

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used by Scribe A, see Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:46–56, as well as Thaisen, "Orthography, Codicology, and Textual Studies."

cludes on fol. 443v and the *Legend of Good Women* picks up on what is now the following page (now fol. 445) without any loss of text, despite the stub of a missing leaf.<sup>27</sup> Emending the text in Holland's usual manner would have meant inserting the *Retraction* here, between the ending of the *Parson's Tale* and the beginning of the *Legend of Good Women*. Instead, Holland's scribe copies the text with other short pieces near the end of the volume, where they appear between the *Temple of Glass* and Holland's adaptation of Speght's hard word list. As Matthew C. Wolfe notes, this would seem to indicate that Holland, like other early readers, considered the *Retraction* a kind of closing statement that applied not to the *Tales* alone, but to the Chaucerian corpus more generally.<sup>28</sup>

Because the *Retraction* is not found in 1598 Speght *Works*, Holland must have learned about it from another source. While it is absent from all the sixteenth-century collected editions of Chaucer's *Works*, it appears in about half of the surviving complete manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, and four of the five editions of the *Canterbury Tales* published before 1532.<sup>29</sup> Holland's copytext appears to have been Caxton's second edition of the *Canterbury Tales* or a manuscript derived from it (1483; STC 5083), a source whose influence is not otherwise apparent in Holland's alterations to the book. It is

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27 Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 3:10.

28 See Matthew C. Wolfe, "Placing Chaucer's 'Retraction' for a Reception of Closure," *Chaucer Review* 33 (1999): 427–31.

29 Recent work on the *Retraction*'s manuscript transmission includes Stephen Partridge, "'The Makere of This Boke': Chaucer's Retraction and the Author as Scribe and Compiler," in *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 106–53; Daniel J. Ransom, "Prolegomenon to a Print History of the Parson's Tale: The Novelty and Legacy of Wynkyn De Worde's Text," in *Closure in the Canterbury Tales: The Role of the Parson's Tale*, ed. David Raybin and Linda Tarte Holley (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University Press, 2000), 77–93; Miceál F. Vaughan, "Creating Comfortable Boundaries: Scribes, Editors, and the Invention of the Parson's Tale," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400–1602*, ed. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 45–90; Charles A. Owen, Jr., "What the Manuscripts Tell Us About the Parson's Tale," *Medium Aevum* 63 (1994): 239–49; and James Dean, "Chaucer's Repentance: A Likely Story," *Chaucer Review* 24 (1989): 64–76.

possible, then, that the *Retraction* appears where it does because the exemplar came to Holland's attention after work had already been completed on those leaves intercalated into the main portion of the book.

The appearance of the *Retraction* in Gg speaks to Holland's interest in expanding the Chaucer canon beyond materials found either in Gg or in the 1598 *Works*, and to at least some familiarity with earlier printed editions of Chaucer. However, Holland's scribe omits the opening lines of the *Retraction*, in which Chaucer solicits the prayers of his readers, and adjusts religious language throughout the text. The conclusion of the text in Gg reads:

But of the translacion of Boece de consolacione, and other books,  
as of legendys of Sayntes, and omelyes, moralitie, and deuotion; that  
thanke I of o[ur] Lord Ihesu Crist, besechyng hem that from hens-  
forth vnto my lyuys ende, he sende me grace to be waylle my gyltes;  
that it maye stande vnto the sauacion of my soule: and graunt me  
grace of very repentance, confession and satisfaction to doe in this  
present lyfe through the benygne grace of hem that is king of kings,  
and preest of all prestys; that bought vs with the pretious blood of  
his herte; so that I may bee one of hem at the day of dome that shal  
be sauyd: Qui cum patre, et Spiritu sancto, viuit et regnat Deus,  
p[ro] Omnia secula seculorum Amen.<sup>30</sup>

In Caxton, by contrast, the speaker thanks not only Jesus Christ, but also "hys blessyd moder, and alle the sayntes of heuen."<sup>31</sup> (In Holland's text, an overzealous corrector, perhaps even Holland himself, has also rubbed away most of "sancto" in "Spiritu sancto.") The changes here take Chaucer out of the penitential economy of intercessory prayer, and transpose the prayer into the language of grace, understood in Protestant terms and in keeping with the early modern understanding—derived largely from a mix of apocryphal texts like the *Plowman's Tale*—that Chaucer had been a religious

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30 Fol. 483v.

31 L.3v.

reformer.<sup>32</sup> While Holland's decision to add the *Retraction* to his book suggests he believed it had a meaningful connection to the rest of the canon (all of the added texts are Chaucerian), the changes to the text—whether instituted by Holland or his scribe or at an early phase in transmission—show how a received sixteenth-century notion of Chaucer as an author with particular religious views could outweigh the textual authority of an exemplar. If Chaucer was a proto-Protestant and the *Retraction* is Chaucerian, then the circumstances under which the *Retraction* appears in Gg suggests that it is the text, not the image of the author, that must change to accommodate this seeming contradiction.

Considering the *Retraction* brings us to those leaves bound in with Gg at the beginning and end of the manuscript. Rather than simply restoring the book to its “original” condition, these additions serve—like the inserted leaves—to make Gg a more accessible and user-friendly book. As noted above, Holland and his scribe add several shorter poems that do not appear in Gg in an apparent effort to round out the Chaucer canon. “Bon Counsail” (in Speght, this poem appears under the title “A Saying of Dan Iohn” [Ooo.2v] and is attributed by John Shirley to John Lydgate<sup>33</sup>), “Chaucer to his emptie purse,” and “Chaucers words to his Scrivener” appear together on a single page, originally bound at the back of the book. All three of these

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32 For a general overview, see Linda Georgianna, “The Protestant Chaucer,” in *Chaucer's Religious Tales*, ed. C. David Benson and Elizabeth Robertson (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), 55–69. Much contemporary scholarly discussion of this view of Chaucer has revolved around the attribution of the apocryphal *Plowman's Tale* to Chaucer in early modern editions (including Speght's). On the *Plowman's Tale*, see Andrew N. Wawn, “The Genesis of the *Plowman's Tale*,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 2 (1972): 21–40; and Wawn, “Chaucer, *The Plowman's Tale*, and Reformist Propaganda: The Testimonies of Thomas Godfray and *I Playne Piers*,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 56 (1973): 174–92. See also Joseph Dane, “Bibliographical History versus Bibliographical Evidence: The *Plowman's Tale* and Early Chaucer Editions,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library University of Manchester* 78 (1996): 47–61.

33 Shirley attributes the poem to Chaucer in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20, p. 9; the attribution is repeated in London, British Library, MS Additional 29729, a manuscript copied from a Shirley exemplar (see fol. 132). The poem first appears in John Stow's 1561 edition of Chaucer's *Works*, where it appears alongside several other poems copied from the Trinity College manuscript.

were first printed in John Stow's 1561 edition of Chaucer's *Works*, and subsequently reproduced by Speght in 1598. Holland's choice of these poems, from among the wider selection of (mostly apocryphal) pieces added by Stow and reproduced by Speght, suggests a particular interest in Chaucer's authorial persona, as well as a desire to update the Chaucerian canon represented by Gg.4.27 to include more shorter, courtly pieces. Sometime after the additional pages were added, Holland also copied Chaucer's short poem "Gentilesse" onto the very first folio of the manuscript. Holland's version of the poem contains a fourth stanza that is not attested in any other manuscript or printed version, suggesting that this text (unlike the pieces at the back of the book) was copied from a manuscript now lost.

The remaining leaves contain material adapted from the prefatory and concluding materials found in the 1598 Speght *Works*. In form and in content, these additions are clearly modeled on the Speght volume, and they represent the most radical shift away from the manuscript's original design and toward a printed model. They are also among the most complex elements of Holland's manuscript, since they draw selectively on the wider array of material found in Speght, adapting and paraphrasing to accommodate the specific organizational and spatial constraints of the manuscript.

The most striking addition here is not, in fact, an adaptation at all, but a copy of John Speed's engraving depicting "the Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer," the only printed material in what is otherwise a handwritten and hand-drawn production (fig. 2). At the center of Speed's image is a large portrait of Chaucer, modeled on that found in manuscripts of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* (thus constituting yet another layer of print/manuscript interaction). In it, a rotund and goateed Chaucer, looking serious in a smock and wide-sleeved garment, holds a penknife in his right hand and a string of rosary beads in his left. A heraldic shield appears in each corner of the portrait: the Chaucer family arms at the top (the version on the right features a hand grasping a pen; on the left is a unicorn), the Roelt arms used by Chaucer's son Thomas on the lower left, and the quartered Roelt and Burghersh arms of Thomas's wife Maude in the bottom right. Directly below the portrait, Speed depicts the double tomb of Thomas and Maude Chaucer, shown *in situ* at the Ewelme parish church, where it survives today. Cut from a copy of the 1598 *Works*, the copy of the engraving





FIGURE 2. *The Progenie of Geffrey Chaucer*, inserted engraving by John Speed. Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.4.27.1 (b), fol. 3r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

bound with Gg is fully tinted and additionally furbished with gilt, displaying Holland's heraldic skills to maximal effect.<sup>34</sup> This addition pulls in two directions: like the other paratextual information copied over from the 1598 Speght *Works*, this image conveys important historical information, anchoring Chaucer at a particular moment in English history and situating him in a matrix of knowledge about the English past. At the same time, the lavish embellishment exceeds the purely informative. It responds to the engraving's monumental, memorializing function, and recalls the deluxe and colorful illustrative program put in place by the manuscript's fifteenth-century creators.<sup>35</sup>

Opposite the Speed engraving on the recto of fol. 2 (which was originally bound in as fol. 3 in the manuscript), Holland's scribe adapts a passage from Speght's *Life of Chaucer*, discussing the poet Hoccleve, whom the Speed engraving identifies as the source for its portrait. In Gg the passage reads:

Thomas Occlve of the office of the privye seale, sometime Chaucers  
Scoller, for the loue he bare to his master Caused his picture to be  
truly drawn in his booke de REGIMINE PRINCIPIS dedicated  
vnto kinge Henry the fift; according to the which this folowinge  
was made by John Spede: And the sayde Occlve in that booke  
where he setteth downe CHAVCERS picture addeth these verses:

Although his life be queint, the Resemblaunce  
Of him hath in me so fresh lifelines;  
That to put other men in remembrance  
of his person, I haue here the likenes  
doe make to the end in sothfastnes  
That they that of him haue lost thought and minde  
By this peinture may agayne him finde[.]<sup>36</sup>

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34 On this image, see Martha W. Driver, "Mapping Chaucer: John Speed and the Later Portraits," *Chaucer Review* 36.3 (2002): 228–49.

35 For a detailed discussion and description of the tomb, see E. A. Greening-Lamborn, "The Arms on the Chaucer Tomb at Ewelme," *Oxoniensia* 5 (1940): 78–93.

36 MS Gg.4.27(b) fol. 2v. The equivalent passage in 1598 Speght *Works* appears on c.1v–c.2.

He continues:

The same Author agayne in the same Booke in Comendation of  
CHAVCER

My deare maister, God his soule quite;  
My fader Chaucer, faine wold haue me taught;  
But I was younge, and leered lite or nought:  
But welaway so is mine hart woe,  
That the honour of English tongue is deed,  
Of which I wont was counsayle haue and reed;  
O master dere, and fader reuerent,  
My master Chaucer, flower of Eloquence,  
Mirror of fructious entendement,  
O vniuersall fader of science;  
Alas that thow thine excellent prudence  
In thy bed mortall, mightiest not bequeath[.]<sup>37</sup>

Holland's version of this second passage actually combines and transposes the two longer quotations from the *Regiment of Princes* given in full by Speght, although he does so in such a way that the logical sense of the text is preserved.<sup>38</sup> By rearranging and condensing Hoccleve's text, Holland ensures this passage appears directly opposite the engraving, in which the *Regiment of Princes* portrait takes center place.

Here, a desire for a specific *mise-en-page* seems to determine what is copied, and to play a stronger role in Holland or his scribe's treatment of materials taken from Speght than either the authority of Hoccleve's text or Speght's use of it. In Speght, the comments on Hoccleve appear in the "His Bookes" section of the *Life of Chaucer*, and the quotations appear among a

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37 Gg.4.27(b) fol. 2v.

38 The passages quoted in Speght correspond to lines 1958–74 and 2077–93, 2101–7 in Lydgate's text. See Charles R. Blythe, ed., *Regiment of Princes* (Rochester, NY: TEAMS Middle English Texts, 1999). Holland, however, quotes lines 2077–79, followed by 1958–66.



series of poetic tributes collected in a concluding section labeled “His Death” (fols. c.1v–c.2). The engraving is printed on a single leaf, and it is tipped in at a variety of positions in surviving copies of the *Works*, most frequently opposite the prefatory poem “On the Picture of Chaucer” on fol A.4v. By bringing together the engraving and these lines from Hoccleve in his own manuscript, Holland creates an opening in which praise of Chaucer appears on one leaf, and the engraved portrait on the opposite. Once again, Gg looks forwards and backwards, evoking both the appearance of fifteenth-century *Regiment of Princes* manuscripts and Speght’s late-sixteenth-century imitation of the same. While the other added materials could, in theory, have been produced alongside the original manuscript, the engraving is a distinctly later production, disrupting the fantasy of codicological and temporal unity: the Speed engraving traces Chaucer’s “progeny” down to the sixteenth century, and the image itself is produced using a technology that did not exist when Gg was created.

On the next page, Holland creates a frontispiece for his manuscript by adapting the language of the elaborate 1598 title page. His heading, “Here foloweth the works of our Antient, And learned English Poet GEFREY CHAVCER,” follows the wording and orthography of the frontispiece, down to the use of a classicizing “v” in “Chavcer.” The use of the term “Works” on this page situates Gg in a genealogy of Chaucerian canon formation and shows that Holland recognized the manuscript as a pre-print attempt to bring together a representative if not complete Chaucer canon. The fact that Holland adds only a few short poems to the manuscript further suggests that, for Holland, not all texts were equally “essential” to a Chaucerian collection. Holland seems content to follow the lead of the original compilers of Gg, who include the Chaucerian “greatest hits”—the *Canterbury Tales*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the *Parliament of Fowles*—most frequently referenced by early modern readers and writers and, indeed, still most commonly taught and read today.

Below this heading, Holland copies from 1598 Speght *Works* three short verse excerpts, which together function as epigraphs for the collection as a whole. The first of these, the opening of the *Parliament of Fowles*, appears in a cartouche on the title page of copies of the 1598 Speght printed by

Joseph Wight and Bonham Norton (STC 5078), where Holland may have seen it. The two other passages are less obvious choices. The first of these is a set of three couplets:

Whan faith faileth in Pristes sawes  
 And lords hest are holden for laws  
 And Robbery is holden purchas  
 And lechery is holden solace  
 Than shall the lond of Albion  
 Be brought to great confusion[.]<sup>39</sup>

These are the first six lines of a prophetic poem that is sometimes attributed to Chaucer and sometimes to Merlin (IMEV 3943). Holland would have found them in his 1598 copy of Chaucer at the end of a series of poems (“Eight Goodly Questions,” a poem dedicated to the Order of the Garter, and this untitled prophecy) sandwiched between the end of the table of contents and an interior title page for the *Canterbury Tales*, a position they had occupied since William Thynne’s 1532 edition of the *Works*.<sup>40</sup>

This passage, in other words, is one that the casual reader would be unlikely to stumble upon, and its presence here indicates Holland had more than a passing familiarity with the paratextual elements of Chaucer’s printed *Works*. In their reference to the “lond of Albion,” the lines riff on the connection between Chaucer and Englishness, echoing the language of the title above, which stresses that Chaucer is, indeed, an English poet. The prophetic quality of these lines might have attracted the attention of a reader interested in Chaucer as an esoteric or mystical figure, though there is little to suggest Holland was a reader of that sort.

Below this are seven lines from Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* in praise of “My maister Chaucer,” the “loadsterre” of the English language. They are introduced by the following gloss: “John Lidgate a munk of Burie, an excellent poet, And Chaucers scoller; amongst diuers others in those days, wrote in

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39 MS Gg.4.27(b) fol. 4v.

40 Fol. A.iv. On these poems, see Greg Walker, *Writing under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 59–64.

Comendation of Chaucer.” The same Lydgate passage appears in Speght’s biography of Chaucer, but while Lydgate is mentioned several times in the paratextual materials to the *Works*, he is never called a “scoller” of Chaucer. For an analogue, one must look to the Speed engraving, which Holland clearly knew well and which calls Hoccleve Chaucer’s “Scholar.” More tantalizingly, one might also look to the epistle to Gabriel Harvey in Spenser’s *Shepheardes Calendar* (1579), which does identify Lydgate as Chaucer’s “scholar.” William Kuskin has argued, in the context of Spenser’s text, that this designation denies Lydgate creative agency while at the same time positioning him as an “authentic” witness to Chaucer’s genius.<sup>41</sup> It is in this sense that these lines are deployed by Holland. The representation of both Hoccleve and Lydgate as “scollers” could also be taken as an attempt to construct a genealogy of Chaucerian students or scholars, of which Holland himself is also a part. Taken together, these three passages point toward an assiduous reader taking pains to craft his book in the image of Chaucer as he was understood at the end of the sixteenth century, emphasizing his Englishness, his role in the development of vernacular poetics, and his increasing “antiquity.”

A digest of Speght’s *Life of Chaucer* appears on the following leaf, once again evoking the arrangement of the Speght *Works*. Bypassing the (accurate) material on Chaucer’s parentage found in Speght, Holland’s version zeros in on those details that might have especially appealed to a late-Tudor antiquarian like himself: he writes that Chaucer was born in London, was educated at Oxford (Holland’s summary includes Speght’s claim that Chaucer studied with John Wycliff), and then was a lawyer of the Inner Temple—where, not coincidentally, Holland himself was also a member. Chaucer’s wife is of little consequence, save that through her Chaucer acquires an impressive brother-in-law in John of Gaunt. Interestingly, Holland includes the detail, originating in Leland and repeated by Speght but not widely referenced elsewhere, that Chaucer “flourished in fraunce, and got himself great commendation there, by his diligent exercise in lerninge,”

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41 See William Kuskin, “‘The Loadstarre of the English Language’: Spenser’s ‘Shepheardes Calender’ and the Construction of Modernity,” *Textual Cultures* 2 (2007): 9–33.

although he does not elaborate. Holland also records Chaucer's traditional death date, 25 October 1400, and offers a brief description of Chaucer's gravesite in Westminster Abbey. Holland's comments offer a plausible first-hand account of the tomb as it appeared at the end of the sixteenth century, although, as Alexandra Gillespie and Joseph Dane have noted, it is difficult to account for the variation among early modern descriptions of Chaucer's tomb and its inscriptions.<sup>42</sup>

The final leaf in this section contains material taken from the concluding section of Speght's *Life of Chaucer*, which concerns posthumous tributes by later poets. Holland's account reads:

Amongest divers lerned men that of late tyme haue written in commendation of CHAVCER as mr William Thynne in his Epistle to Kinge Henry the Eight, mr Ascham, m<sup>r</sup> Spencer, M<sup>r</sup> William Camden, mr Frauncis Beaumont and others: we may conclude his praises with the Testimony of the most worthiest gentilman that the Court hath afforded of many years, S<sup>r</sup> Phillip Sydeny knight; In his Apologie for poetry, sayth thus of him: Chaucer vndoubtedly did excellently in his Troylus and Creseid[a]; of whom truly I know not whether to mervaile more; either that he in that mistie time could see so clearly, or that wee in this cleare age, walke so stumblingly after him.

Holland thus reproduces, in miniature, the key features of Speght's prefatory materials, which themselves work to situate Chaucer as an author of stature equal to the great classical and continental writers: an impressive

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42 See Joseph Dane and Alexandra Gillespie, "Back at Chaucer's Tomb: Inscriptions in Two Early Copies of Chaucer's Workes," *Studies in Bibliography* 52 (1999): 89–96. On Chaucer's epitaph, see also Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 70–72; Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 147–75; Thomas Prendergast, *Chaucer's Dead Body: From Corpse to Corpus* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39–43; Derek Pearsall, "Chaucer's Tomb: The Politics of Reburial," *Medium Aevum* 64 (1995): 51–73; Dane, "Who is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?—Prolegomena," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 57 (1994): 99–123; Dane, *Who Is Buried In Chaucer's Tomb?* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998): 11–32.

title page, information about the poet's life and tomb, and a collection of tributes attesting to the poet's ongoing importance.

Holland also adds materials found at the back of Speght's *Works* to the end of his own manuscript, most notably an extensive hard word list. Gg's glossary is based on Speght's 1598 lexicon, although it is somewhat abridged. In Speght, Middle English terms are presented in blackletter while their modern synonyms are printed in roman type. In Gg, Middle English terms are written in an italic hand, and their contemporary synonyms in secretary, an arrangement that imitates Speght's typographic distinction between older and newer forms of English. Most of the definitions are taken over directly from Speght, with occasional modifications, and a few new entries are added, perhaps in response to specific challenges posed by the unusual orthography of the manuscript. At the end of the glossary, the scribe has also added page numbers for Chaucer's *A.B.C.* and the *Temple of Glass*, which are not found in the 1598 edition. (He also includes updated page numbers for the individual legends within the *Legend of Good Women*.)

On the following folios, which constitute the last of the added leaves, someone (not Holland's scribe) has copied over the arguments section of the 1598 Speght *Works* (the argument for the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* was copied over separately, and inserted in the body of the manuscript just before the *General Prologue* at fol. 132). Since folio numbers have been added in the margins, this section functions as a kind of annotated index; however, here again the materiality of the medieval manuscript and its printed successor butt up against one another, since the arguments follow the order and selection of the texts as they appear in Speght, rather than their arrangement in Gg. This means that the list includes texts, like the *Romaunt of the Rose* and the *Boece*, that do not appear in Gg, and that those texts that do appear in Gg are listed in a different order than they are found in the manuscript. This index, even as it brings Gg closer in line with the functionality and appearance of Speght's printed book, ultimately underscores the differences between Gg and the printed *Works*.

The dialogical relationship between Holland's fifteenth-century manuscript and a book printed nearly two hundred years later means that, while Holland clearly recognized Gg as a comprehensive collection of Chaucer's writings, his understanding of what such a collection "should" look like was

informed, at least in part, by Thomas Speght's 1598 edition, *The Workes of our Antient and lerned English Poet, Geffrey Chavcer*. Joseph Holland was a careful and enthusiastic custodian of Gg. Using the best resources available, he and his scribe attempted to remedy deficiencies in its text, supplement its canon with additional works, and ensure that future readers of the manuscript were equipped with the interpretive tools needed both to read Chaucer's works and to understand their cultural import. His care for the manuscript as a physical object, perhaps best exemplified by the use of parchment rather than paper for the additional leaves, suggest that Gg held, for him, a kind of Benjaminian aura: even without a date or more rigorous understanding of its origins, Holland sees it as older, closer to the poet, and at some level more "original" than a printed book. At the same time, his understanding of how this book can best fulfill its objective as a collection of Chaucerian pieces is clearly derived from later printed editions. The result of this "reverse transmission" is that, in Holland's pursuit of the ideal Chaucerian book, the fifteenth-century object is remade in the image of its sixteenth-century descendant. Through the introduction of material taken over from Speght, Gg becomes an object retroactively shaped by its own reception. Thus the book—with Holland's alterations—becomes a testament to the past success of Gg and other manuscripts as vehicles for the cultural promotion of Chaucer and his writing.

The hybrid book created by Holland is not, however, what a reader who calls up Gg will see today. Most traces of Holland's involvement have been removed from the original manuscript, including the additional leaves, in an effort to preserve the book in the form most like that intended by its fifteenth-century creators. There are good reasons for the removal of these post-medieval additions, but separating the materials now catalogued as Gg.4.27.1, Gg.4.27.1(b), and Gg.4.27.2 elides their past history as a single codex. Considering Gg's use at the hands of Holland within the context of its longer institutional history points toward the challenges and ambiguities that this cross-temporal interaction can pose, and how certain decisions can efface the post-medieval history that both preserves and inevitably transforms medieval manuscripts.