

Repairing and Completing

While some readers of Chaucer fretted over the archaic and potentially faulty words borne in manuscript books, others were worried by the missing leaves and textual gaps that plagued their copies. In the books considered here, the belated interpolation of missing words, lines, and whole leaves suggests a pursuit of bibliographical and narrative closure for Chaucer's oeuvre. At the same time, this type of book use is always reliant on the creative engagement of those who continue, complete, and perfect these works, and on an understanding of the codex as open to such change and transformation. The desire for closure in the Chaucerian book begins, unsurprisingly, with its first makers, who had long sought the poet's works in their most complete state, a scholarly quest energised by the seemingly unfinished nature of several of his works.¹ Working from an incomplete exemplar, the scribe of the earliest surviving copies of the *Canterbury Tales* anticipated an ending for the incomplete *Cook's Tale* by leaving blank space on the page for its conclusion to be filled in.² In other manuscripts of the *Tales*, some scribes improvised to create an effect of completeness – by omitting the *Cook's Tale* altogether, by supplying other spurious lines, and, most commonly, by compensating for the absence by adding the apocryphal *Tale of Gamelyn* immediately after the *Cook's* fragment, where it is linked as 'another tale of the same cooke', according to one manuscript.³ These decisions reveal the fixes devised by Chaucer's

¹ These include the *House of Fame*, *Anelida and Arcite*, the *Legend of Good Women*, the *Cook's Tale*, and the *Squire's Tale*.

² Timothy L. Stinson, '(In)Completeness in Middle English Literature: The Case of the *Cook's Tale* and the *Tale of Gamelyn*', *Manuscript Studies: A Journal of the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies*, 1.1 (2016), 115–34 (123).

³ BL, MS Royal 17 D.xv, fol. 66^v. Seventeen of the twenty-five copies of *Gamelyn* supply such a link. See *TCT*, II, p. 171; *The Tale of Gamelyn, from the Harleian MS. No. 7334, Collated with Six Other MSS*, ed. by Walter William Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), p. xvi; Stinson, '(In)Completeness', 126.

earliest critics when they were confronted by the instability of his oeuvre, and capture the pursuit of completeness on the page.⁴

The early printers, too, discovered inconvenient gaps in the material remains of Chaucer's works. Famously, Caxton, who could 'fynde nomore' of the *House of Fame* when he came to publish his 1483 edition, composed and printed twelve lines to conclude the poem.⁵ In de Worde's 1498 edition of the *Tales*, the incomplete *Squire's Tale*, which trails off abruptly near the beginning of a new section in the narrative, was followed by an earnest note from the printer: 'There can be founde no more of this forsayd tale. whyche I have ryght dilygently serchyd in many dyuers scopyes'.⁶ Later recycled in Thynne's influential edition, de Worde's note about the missing end to the *Squire's Tale* would be disseminated in each successive print until the eighteenth century. Faced with the variability of a literary legacy in manuscript, Chaucer's early printers were thus 'led to systematize [the earlier] intermittent ad hoc strategies for dealing with the problem of completeness'.⁷ In Thynne's case, the appropriation of the earlier printer's comment caused his son Francis to avow that his father had 'made greate serche for copies to perfecte his woorkes, as apperethe in the end of the squiers tale'.⁸ The *Squire's Tale* would be acknowledged as incomplete for centuries to come, but the fiction of completeness remained fundamental to the commercial enterprise of editing and publishing Chaucer. Although they were prone to inheriting spurious lines or gaps from their manuscript exemplars, the printed editions could profess to present the text in an improved and expanded state – not 'in leues all to-torne', as printer Robert Copland imagined the Chaucerian manuscript book, but one sold in newly printed authoritative editions. As we have seen, the successive printed volumes of Chaucer's collected *Workes* pursued an ideal of definitiveness. It is an aspiration conveyed as much in their claims of novelty and fidelity to what Chaucer wrote as in the material heft of the

⁴ Windeatt, 'Scribes as Chaucer's Early Critics', 119–41.

⁵ For discussion of Caxton's epilogue to the *House of Fame*, see Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 62–4.

⁶ *The boke of Chaucer named Caunterbury Tales* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1498; *STC* 5085), sig. m6^r. As Dane notes, de Worde's note was appropriated without attribution in Thynne's 1532 edition: 'There can be founde no more of this fore said tale, whiche hath ben sought in dyuers places' (1532, *STC* 5068; sig. H2^r). An editorial comment identical to that of Thynne would be included in all editions until 1687, and was updated by Urry's edition in 1721 to confirm that the ending could not be found in 'all the Printed Books that I have seen, and also MSS.' (sig. R2^r). See Joseph A. Dane, "'Tyl Mercurius House He Flye": Early Printed Texts and Critical Readings of the "Squire's Tale"', *ChR*, 34.3 (2000), 309–16 (312–13).

⁷ Edwards, 'Chaucer from Manuscript to Print', 5. ⁸ Thynne, *Animadversions*, p. 6.

large folios produced by Thynne and the later editors.⁹ Speght's declaration in the 1602 dedication that he has 'reformed the whole Worke' using a combination of manuscript and print witnesses encapsulates this sense of his own edition's reliability and thoroughness.¹⁰ That desire for textual and bibliographical completeness is founded on a conception of the Chaucerian oeuvre as a known and recoverable entity, capable of being accessed, copied, contained, and preserved in books. Joseph A. Dane has pointed out that the semblance of stability in the entity he calls the Chaucer book is ultimately illusory given its 'problematic multiplicity' in thousands of surviving copies.¹¹ This might be so from the vantage point of the modern bibliographer, yet the fact that early modern readers hand-reproduced printed texts in order to repair and restore older copies shows that they invested the idea of the Chaucer book with some degree of textual stability. For all print's susceptibility to variance, the impression of its reliability and near-completeness was one actively cultivated by the printers, stationers, and editors responsible for making new books of Chaucer's works, and who announced that they had 'repair'd / And added moe' to his fragmented corpus.¹² The success of their venture is evident in the early modern use of printed books as a model for supplying the unsatisfying gaps, blanks, erasures, and lacunae found in old copies. The book's ability to be reshaped and repaired in the ways surveyed by this chapter is predicated on its openness to change – to destruction as well as improvement. Although these repairers of manuscripts pursued an ideal of textual fixity inherited from print, their variability brings them back in line with Dane's assertion of each copy's singularity – it is only amplified in the perfected and completed volumes under consideration here, for every book's individualised programme of completion and repair makes it all the more unique. This ability of the codex to tolerate seemingly endless additions and completions suggests that the form of the book might render it, for all the efforts of Chaucer's perfecting early readers, 'a constitutively incomplete and unfinishable object'.¹³

The present chapter tracks the historical convergence of incomplete Chaucerian texts in manuscript with the seemingly authoritative printed

⁹ On the stature of Speght's 1598 *Workes* compared to contemporary folios, see Francis X. Connor, *Literary Folios and Ideas of the Book in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 99 and n. 25.

¹⁰ *Workes* (1602), sig. [a]3^r. ¹¹ Dane, *Tomb*, p. 4. ¹² *Workes* (1598), sig. [a]6^v.

¹³ Alexandra Gillespie and Deidre Lynch, 'Introduction', in *The Unfinished Book* (Oxford University Press, 2020), ed. by Gillespie and Lynch, pp. 1–15 (p. 6).

copies that followed them. Its subjects of interest are the material and textual absences that early modern readers found in early Chaucerian books, the measures they took to fill them, and the attitudes to Chaucer and his books that lay behind such acts. This impulse to complete and perfect was roused not only by conspicuously unfinished or damaged works but also by more innocuous absences: the gaps left during copying, or blank spaces allotted for decoration. Blank space, as Laurie Maguire has argued, ‘activates the reader’s restorative critical instincts’, and such absence spurs the modes of perfecting considered in this chapter.¹⁴ The means and methods of repair carried out by later book owners in their ‘torne’ and ruptured manuscripts exposes contemporary concerns with the integrity and preservation of Chaucer’s oeuvre, thereby positioning repair as one of the most revealing forms of perfecting undertaken by his early modern readers.

2.1 Mutilated Manuscripts

The volumes under discussion were carefully repaired in this later period but like many medieval books, they had all been previously despoiled or damaged through neglect.¹⁵ Before they were valued as old and rare copies of Chaucer’s writing, some copies were prized for the attractive decorative art most prominently on display in their borders and which likely served as motivation for their removal.¹⁶ Beyond their susceptibility to iconoclasm, old books were subject to destructive household and commercial uses and to the ravages of time.¹⁷ In particular, the durability of parchment saw manuscripts repurposed for myriad material purposes. Christopher de Hamel has shown that the use of discarded vellum as a structural reinforcement for European bindings has been in practice for over a millennium, and long before the introduction of moveable type.¹⁸ Parchment fragments from European medieval manuscripts have been found strengthening

¹⁴ Laurie Maguire, *The Rhetoric of the Page* (Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 1.

¹⁵ While it is seldom possible to have absolute precision about the dates at which leaves or decorative elements were removed from manuscripts, the presence of manuscript replacement leaves (dateable on the basis of script) provides a *terminus ante quem* for their removal.

¹⁶ For example, in CCCO, MS 198, which has had its illuminated borders cut out on fols. 110, and 195, and in CUL, MS Gg.4.27, Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 600, and Lichfield Cathedral Library, MS 29, described in this chapter.

¹⁷ For a vivid account of children’s interactions with the Helmingham manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* in a sixteenth-century household, see Seth Lerer, ‘Devotion and Defacement: Reading Children’s Marginalia’, *Representations*, 118.1 (2012), 126–53 (130–5).

¹⁸ Christopher de Hamel, *Cutting Up Manuscripts for Pleasure and Profit* (Charlottesville: Book Arts Press, 1996), p. 5.

bindings, wrapping the goods sold by grocers, and repurposed as stiffening material for clothing in later periods.¹⁹ Such habits of book-breaking gathered momentum during the Reformations of the sixteenth century, a period marked by iconoclastic fervour and suspicion of the material remains of the medieval past.²⁰ During the sixteenth century, images cut from manuscripts might be pasted in to serve as up-market adornment in devotional printed books, while discarded parchment sheets might elsewhere serve as cheap wrappers for newly printed books in bookbinders' shops. Some enthusiasts, like Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), who was furnished with samples of ancient handwriting snipped from two early Gospel books at Durham Cathedral, collected manuscript fragments for their palaeographical interest.²¹ The bookseller and collector John Bagford (d. 1716), motivated by an interest in the history of scripts and typography, compiled, sold, and gifted fragments of medieval and rare early printed books (sometimes whole albums of them) to his associates and clients, including Humfrey Wanley, Hans Sloane, and Pepys himself.²² The majority of Bagford's manuscript fragments seem to have been obtained from binding waste created from books that were cut up in the sixteenth century.²³

John Manly and Edith Rickert, together responsible for the eight-volume editorial feat titled *The Text of the Canterbury Tales Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts* (1940), had a choice word for such books and their texts: 'mutilated'.²⁴ It is a word uncomfortable to modern ears for its connotations of physical brutality, but one they used to describe the

¹⁹ See de Hamel, *Cutting Up Manuscripts*, p. 6; Erik Kwakkel, 'Wearing a Book', <https://erikkwakkel.tumblr.com/post/88698949876/wearing-a-book-books-are-objects-to-read-from>.

²⁰ Hannah Ryley, 'Constructive Parchment Destruction in Medieval Manuscripts', *Book 2.0*, 7.1 (2017), 9–19; Nicholas Pickwood, 'The Use of Fragments of Medieval Manuscripts in the Construction and Covering of Bindings on Printed Books', in *Interpreting and Collecting Fragments of Medieval Books*, ed. by Linda L. Brownrigg and Margaret M. Smith (London: Red Gull Press, 2000), pp. 1–20.

²¹ De Hamel, *Cutting up Manuscripts*, pp. 7–8; Rosamond McKitterick and Joyce Irene Whalley, 'Calligraphy', in *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge, Vol. 1v: Music, Maps and Calligraphy*, comp. John Stevens, Sarah Tyacke, and Rosamond D. McKitterick (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1989), pp. 6–7.

²² Bagford's study of printing history led him to produce a memorandum on the history of printed Chaucer editions, with which Thomas Hearne later engaged in his edition of Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*; see Milton McC. Gatch, 'John Bagford, Bookseller and Antiquary', *British Library Journal*, 12 (1986), 150–71 (164–5); and Milton McC. Gatch, 'John Bagford as a Collector and Disseminator of Manuscript Fragments', *The Library*, 6th ser. 7.2 (1985), 95–114 (96–7).

²³ Gatch, 'Manuscript Fragments', 114. Bagford is also known to have owned a Caxton *Canterbury Tales*; see Dane, *Tomb*, p. 103.

²⁴ A label applied, for example, to BL, Egerton MS 2863, BL, Additional MS 25178 and CCCO, MS 198.

state of many of the manuscript books this chapter will discuss. Within the lexicon of the book world, where it has resided for hundreds of years, ‘mutilated’ takes on a more benign appearance. But the word and others like it reveal a deeper obsession with bibliographical completeness that has long been present in language which figures the book as a human body. If (as this book’s Introduction lays out) the Latin *imperfectus* denotes a body which is not in its complete and fully realised state, *mutilus* is its more terrible twin, used to describe those bodies that have been made imperfect through absence or excision of some part.²⁵ In the early modern period, to mutilate was ‘To make Vnperfect’, as a sixteenth-century English-Latin lexicon records. ‘Imperfectus’, meanwhile, was listed in that dictionary as a synonym for ‘Vnperfect, maimed, or wanting some thing’.²⁶

Religious, classical, and literary books, texts, and canons of work could all be appraised according to this vocabulary of bodily perfection and mutilation. Leah Whittington locates the genesis of this idea in the language of the Italian humanists who, surveying the incomplete volumes that transmitted an impoverished record of the totality of Greek and Roman learning, ‘turn[ed] to metaphors of mutilation to register their grief and indignation, and to announce their project of cultural reconstruction’.²⁷ Completing, like correcting, was a philological endeavour bound up with the humanists’ agenda of historical recovery. And as with the practices of emendation and *castigatio*, the project of textual repair was pitched in morally freighted terms: integrity, virtue, and dignity.²⁸ In English, it was a lexicon available to the recusant Catholic William Reynolds when he denounced the Calvinists for introducing into Luther’s works

the most filthy mutations and corruptions . . . In one place some wordes are taken away, in an other many mo, some where whole paragraphs are lopte of . . . Where Luther doth reprove the Sacramentaries, there especially those falsifiers tooke to them selues libertie to mutilate, to take away, to blotte out and change.²⁹

In Reynolds’s view, this textual violence mounted a challenge to both theological and historical verity. John Healey, in his translation of

²⁵ *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. *mutilus; imperfectus*.

²⁶ Rider, *Bibliotheca Scholastica*, sig. 2Lr¹.

²⁷ Leah Whittington, ‘The Mutilated Text’, in Gillespie and Lynch, pp. 429–43 (p. 432).

²⁸ Whittington, ‘The Mutilated Text’, pp. 440–2. See also Chapter 1, p. 65.

²⁹ ‘Lopte of’ is glossed in the margin as ‘Detruncati’, as Reynolds is here translating from the Latin of Joachim Westphal; see William Rainolds, *A refutation of sundry reprehensions, cauels, and false sleights* (Paris: for Richard Vestegan?, 1583; STC 20632), sig. A4^r.

Augustine's *Of the citie of God* (1610), describes Cicero's *De Fato* as 'wonderfully [i.e. exceedingly] mutilate, and defectiue as we haue it now'.³⁰ An inverted invocation of the same trope appears in Shakespeare's *First Folio* (1623), whose plays are proclaimed in the prefatory epistle to be 'cur'd, and perfect of their limbes . . . as he conceived them'.³¹ These images hearken, too, to a longer tradition of likening the human body to the book and other material texts. Richard de Bury's image of the fire at Alexandria's library as 'a hapless holocaust where ink is offered up instead of blood' and the archetypal description of Christ's crucified body as a charter are prominent late medieval appearances of the conceit.³² Like bodies, old books in that period could be described as 'aged and worn out' (*vetere et debili*), as falling apart (*caducus*), headless (*acephalus*), or grey with age ('for aege all hooere').³³ In their tendency to deteriorate with time, books were similar to bodies according to this worldview – and like a person, a mutilated book was fundamentally imperfect.

When Manly and Rickert classified Chaucerian manuscripts as mutilated, or when historical readers described old books by analogous terms – mangled, lopped off, cut to pieces, dismembered, or imperfect – they were thinking about them in terms of the completeness that they lacked, and imagining them relative to other, ideal books.³⁴ Books could be messy and imperfect, but this is not a state that most readers desired for them. As Copland's description of an 'al to-torne' Chaucerian book suggests, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries inherited manuscripts in varying states of deterioration and neglect. Even after manuscript books had outworn their welcome as reading material, their illuminations were prized as decoration, and often excised.³⁵ One such purloining of a painted Chaucer portrait from a fifteenth-century manuscript of Hoccleve's

³⁰ John Healey, *St. Augustine, Of the citie of God* (London: George Eld, 1620; *STC* 916), sig. S4^v.

³¹ See Emma Smith, *Shakespeare's First Folio: Four Centuries of an Iconic Book*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 281–337.

³² Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, trans. by Ernest Chester Thomas (Oxford: published for the Shakespeare Head Press by B. Blackwell, 1970), pp. 72–75; Emily Steiner, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 49–52. My thanks to Lucy Allen-Goss and Bruce Holsinger for these examples.

³³ Daniel Sawyer, 'Missing Books in the Folk Codicology of Later Medieval England', *The Mediaeval Journal*, 7.2 (2017), 103–32 (114); Erler, *Copland*, pp. 137–43; Whittington, 'The Mutilated Text', pp. 436–8.

³⁴ Sawyer, 'Missing Books', 123–4.

³⁵ On this phenomenon, see de Hamel, *Cutting Up Manuscripts*, pp. 7–8; Sherman, *Used Books*, pp. 107–9; Stella Panayotova, 'Cuttings from an Unknown Copy of the *Magna Glossatura* in a Wycliffite Bible (British Library, Arundel MS. 104)', *British Library Journal*, 25 (1999), 85–100.

Regement provoked the ire of a reader in the sixteenth century, who subsequently inscribed two stanzas of doggerel verse onto the same page:

Off worthy Chaucer
here the pickture stood
That much did wryght
and all to doe vs good

Summe Furyous Foole
Have Cutt the same in twayne
His deed doe shewe
He bare a barren Brayne.³⁶

With some wit, the verses memorialise the absent ‘pickture’ and ‘worthy Chaucer’ himself. Their real subject, however, is the ‘Furyous Foole’ who did the ‘deed’. The culprit is figured as a moral and intellectual antithesis to the benevolent Chaucer; while the poet ‘much did wryght’, the despoiler of this book wrought only destruction.³⁷ Righteous outrage at the dismemberment of medieval manuscripts, it turns out, is a great Chaucerian tradition. Describing the same lines in the last century, Derek Brewer could not help but concur: ‘All readers will echo the sentiments expressed by the infuriated sixteenth-century reader’.³⁸ Early in the eighteenth century, John Urry noted of another imperfect manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* that ‘It has been a noble book, but by some wicked hand many of the leaves are cutt out in diverse places of the book’.³⁹ Of CUL, MS Gg.4.27 (later discussed), Urry wrote that it is ‘a very fine book’ but laments the loss of many leaves and its pilgrim-figures, ‘which I have not seen in any other MS of this author, & doubtless were once all there, but the childishness of some people has robbed us of them’. The perpetrators of this destruction are, in such accounts, ‘childish’, ‘wicked’, and ‘Foole[s]’. In truth, there are many reasons for historical readers to have cut up old books; not all of them are malicious and some were even aimed at preservation.⁴⁰ Such terms, however, reflect an often rash moral judgement of the people who cut

³⁶ BL, MS Harley 4826, fol. 139^r; Brewer, *Critical Heritage*, 1, p. 96.

³⁷ On the varied reasons for removing author portraits from books, see Chapter 4, p. 212.

³⁸ Brewer, *Critical Heritage*, 1, p. 97.

³⁹ Formerly the Norton MS, now BL, MS Egerton 2863. Urry’s notes are cited from his copy of Speght’s 1602 edition, Bodl. MS Rawlinson Poet. 40a, fol. 3^r.

⁴⁰ The ‘Calligraphical Collection’ assembled by Pepys is one such case. On early modern collections of historical fragments and specimens as situated ‘[b]etween the poles of loss and possibility’, see Whitney Trettien, ‘Creative Destruction and the Digital Humanities’, in *The Routledge Research Companion to Digital Medieval Literature*, ed. by Jennifer E. Boyle and Helen J. Burgess (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 47–59 (p. 55).

images and leaves from old books, and one which was implicitly projected onto the imperfect books themselves.

While the language of mutilation implied the moral failure of those responsible for the act, the damaged volume itself was frequently allied not with the perpetrator but with the book's creator. Thus, the book became a metonymic representation of the author's physical body and of their body of work.⁴¹ To mutilate any individual copy was also to rupture the integrity of the author's whole *corpus* – a threat literalised in the clipping out of Chaucer's painted portrait from the *Regement* manuscript. This figural association between the individual copy and the author's entire body of writing undergirds the anxiety discernible in the comments on the mutilated works of Luther and Cicero and lent further urgency to the project of textual repair. For such authors, as for Chaucer, the worry about the fragmentation of their works is informed by an appreciation of their historicity and cultural significance. All the works Chaucer 'did wryght' make him 'worthy', but the earliest copies risked slipping into neglect and disrepair. Historians of the medieval and early modern book have already begun to reckon with, survey, and theorise the loss, destruction, and archival absences that occupy the penumbra of their area of study. Accounts of pre-modern mending, repair, and other programmes of preservation before the nineteenth century are fewer, but these acts – the subject of this chapter – constitute a prehistory of bibliographical conservation and a worthy complement to the expanding history of book loss.⁴² Supplying missing text copied from readily available printed editions onto new (or newly furnished) leaves was one means of perfecting incomplete manuscript copies, but one whose motives and methods have not yet been fully accounted for or theorised.

If printed volumes did not explicitly purport to be an exhaustive repository of all that the poet wrote, they were nonetheless positioned as the authoritative record of the corpus of diverse Chaucerian works rescued from oblivion. No surviving medieval manuscript (not even Holland's Gg) ever made the same claim. Enterprising early modern readers thus seized the opportunity to repair and complete texts contained in medieval manuscripts according to their newer printed counterparts. For Chaucer's works,

⁴¹ Whittington, 'The Mutilated Text', p. 437.

⁴² Recent studies of book loss and destruction include Sawyer, 'Missing Books'; *Book Destruction from the Medieval to the Contemporary*, ed. by Gill Partington and Adam Smyth (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Richard Ovenden, *Burning the Books: A History of the Deliberate Destruction of Knowledge* (London: John Murray, 2020). On repair, see Trettien, 'Creative Destruction'; Sonja Drimmer, 'A Medieval Psalter "Perfectured"'.

print culture became not only the mode of their dissemination in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but an unexpected contributor to their restoration and survival in earlier manuscript copies.

2.2 Supplying Lost Leaves

Perhaps the best-known case of the destruction and repair of a Chaucer manuscript is that of CUL, MS Gg.4.27, the Cambridge copy described by Urry as 'very fine'. It is a justifiably famous collection which contains a greater number of Chaucer's works than any other manuscript, and a copy unique for its combination of minor poems – the *Legend of Good Women*, the *House of Fame*, and the *Parliament of Fowles* – with the more substantial *Troilus* and the *Canterbury Tales*.⁴³ In addition to its role as a witness to early canon formation, the manuscript is distinguished by an elaborate programme of illustration and decoration, again unique amongst Chaucer manuscripts. In its original state, the book contained at least one, and possibly two, full-page illustrations.⁴⁴ It was decorated with borders to mark major textual breaks, including the beginning of every tale and prologue, and illustrated with pilgrim portraits and with depictions of Vices and Virtues from the *Parson's Tale*. Many of the book's illustrations were removed sometime before the end of the sixteenth century, taking with them significant sections of the text written on the corresponding leaves. Malcolm Parkes and Richard Beadle have suggested the possibility that the illuminations were removed for the sake of preservation (rather than on the 'childish' whims condemned by Urry) and that, having safeguarded its most precious parts, 'The rest of the manuscript could be discarded since from 1532 onwards virtually all the texts in this volume would have been available in print'.⁴⁵

Joseph Holland, the antiquary who owned the manuscript around 1600, had other ideas.⁴⁶ Although nothing definitive is known of the book's

⁴³ Unlike Lydgate, Hoccleve, and Charles d'Orleans, whose works appeared in single-author manuscript compilations, with the exception of Gg 4.27 (which itself contains several non-Chaucerian texts) there is no material evidence that Chaucer's minor works were collected with the *Canterbury Tales* in the fifteenth century. See Kathleen Forni, *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Counterfeit Canon* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p. 25.

⁴⁴ On what were once fols. '130^v' and '131^r'. The description of the manuscript that follows is indebted to Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works*, pp. 1–68.

⁴⁵ Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works*, p. 66.

⁴⁶ The first four folios of Gg are also missing and it is reasonable to assume that they were already absent in 1600, since Holland marked his ownership with a note, 'JOSEPH HOLLAND 1600', on what was then the first leaf of the manuscript, fol. 5^r. See Pace, 'Speght's Chaucer', 225.

provenance before that date, the details of its repair and embellishment under Holland's instruction have been thoroughly documented.⁴⁷ Far from confirming the obsolescence of the plundered manuscript book, the printed editions that Holland had at his disposal provided the means for its restoration. Holland's project of perfecting the damaged manuscript included supplying the text lost during the removal of the book's pilgrim portraits and illuminated borders. When he inherited it, the beginnings of a group of lyrics, the five books of *Troilus*, the *General Prologue*, and the introductions of many individual tales all lacked their medieval leaves.⁴⁸ Copying from Speght's 1598 edition, Holland's scribe supplied the opening section of *Troilus and Criseyde* (1.1–70) and multiple missing sections in the *Canterbury Tales*, which were inserted into the manuscript on a series of eighteen parchment supply leaves in a stylish and extremely neat italic hand (see Figure 2.1).⁴⁹ Holland's perfecting of Gg went considerably beyond the repair of its ruptured text – extending to cleaning its annotated margins, and adding new literary and biographical material about Chaucer – but I am concerned here with the most glaring signs of the book's incompleteness, and his intention to fill them in.⁵⁰ In this context, the choice of writing support is telling for, as Cook observes, the use of parchment 'suggests a specific investment in the unity of the book itself.'⁵¹ For Holland, who rightly identified Gg.4.27 as a historically important attempt to collect Chaucer's works in a single codex, the decision to perfect it through consultation with the latest Speght edition was an astute one. Like Speght's *Workes*, Holland's manuscript aspired to a degree of completeness. Its integrity was threatened by the earlier excisions it had borne, and the repairs undertaken by Holland were an attempt at setting this right. For instance, the supply leaf which replaces the lost opening leaf to *Troilus and Criseyde* is headed 'The five Bookes of Troilus and Creseide', a title not matched by the printed edition (where the incipit heralds only 'The Booke of Troilus and Creseide'),⁵² as though the person who made these repairs wished to emphasise the contiguity of the first supplied leaf with what follows. The scribe also smoothed over the inevitably sharp transitions between the early modern and medieval hands by adding catchwords and

⁴⁷ In addition to the studies by Parkes and Beadle and Pace, see Cook, 'Joseph Holland', 165–88 and Caldwell, 'An Elizabethan Chaucer Glossary', 374–5.

⁴⁸ For the manuscript's collation see Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works*, pp. 8–9.

⁴⁹ For a full description of the lost sections of the text, see Parkes and Beadle, *Poetical Works*, pp. 4–6.

⁵⁰ For Holland's other interventions in Gg, see Chapters 1, 3, and 4, pp. 54–60, 133–41, 151–3, 169–70, 213–4.

⁵¹ Cook, 'Joseph Holland', 173. ⁵² *Workes* (1598), sig. 2G1^v.

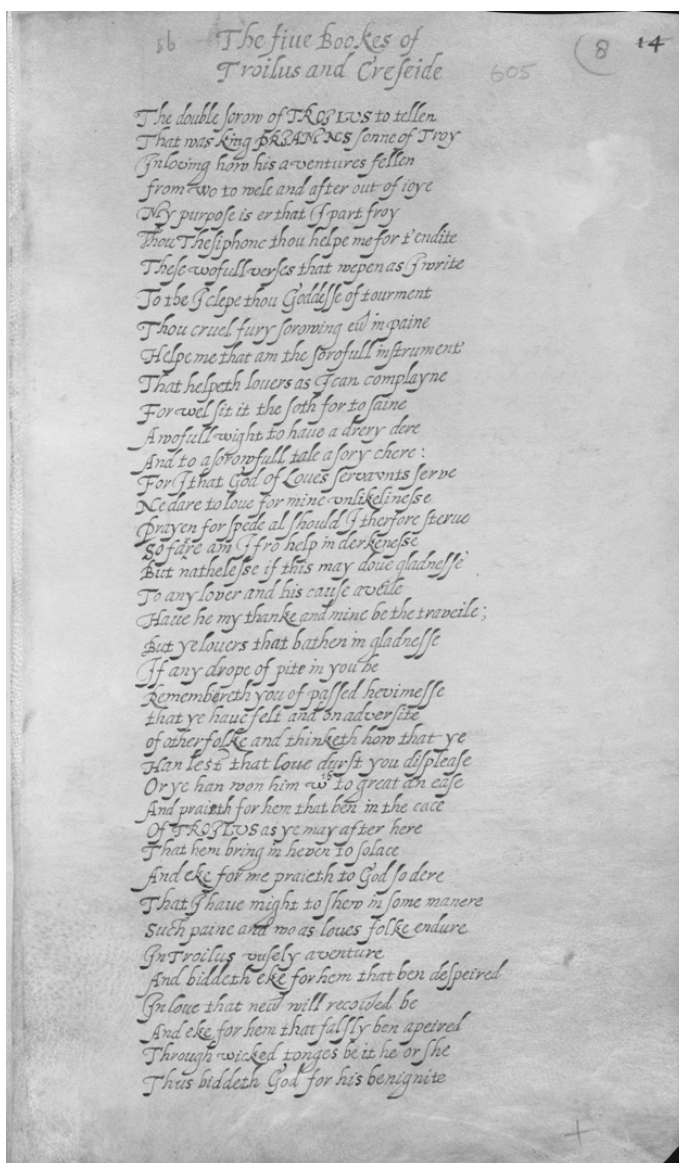


Figure 2.1 A parchment replacement leaf for the opening of *Troilus and Criseyde*.
CUL MS Gg.4.27(1), fol. 8^r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of
Cambridge University Library.

incipits, drawing attention to the repairs and highlighting the book's newly restored status. As Cook notes, the bright blue ink used for this purpose may have been a choice designed to echo the book's surviving decoration.⁵³

Holland understood that textual integrity was essential to the project of historical preservation, and he expended considerable resources and effort to this end. A glance at some of the other books he had copied and completed illustrates the importance he attached to the idea of repair. A sixteenth-century manuscript now held at the British Library contains a collection of painted arms executed by Holland. This book is a copy of rolls of arms for Devonshire and Cornwall produced during the fifteenth century. On the inside back cover of his own transcript, Holland (who was himself from Devon) recorded the source of his copy and gave a reason for this work in a note dated 1584: 'because manie of their names are almoste worne out [in the original], I haue sett them downe agayne / as neere as I can according to the auncient writinge'.⁵⁴ As Holland tells it, the primary motivation for collecting this historical material was not possession, but preservation. Another of his manuscripts, now in the College of Arms, is a fourteenth-century copy of *The Seege of Troye* and a purported translation of *Historia regum Britanniae*.⁵⁵ But like his Chaucer, that manuscript was incomplete, so Holland supplied the wanting text on an additional paper leaf and dutifully recorded his intervention in a note dated 1588. Having noticed that 'the end of this booke is imperfect', he wrote, he subjected it to close examination against 'an auncient originale written in lattine by Gefferay of Monmouth de gestis Britonum; (out of the which this semeth to be Translated)', and 'thought it good to make this addition out of the sayd Gefferay of Monmouth'.⁵⁶ Although these interventions date from more than a decade prior to Holland's remodelling of Gg, they reveal him to be concerned with the same practices of transcription, collation, and repair seen in his Chaucer and reflect a concern with historical preservation that would be a lifelong preoccupation.⁵⁷ The leaves that he supplied to Gg achieve a similar end, by

⁵³ Cook, 'Joseph Holland', 175.

⁵⁴ Holland's own book is BL, Additional MS 47171 and it was copied from London, College of Arms, MS M.3 'Tiltinge'. For the relationship see *A Catalogue of English Mediaeval Rolls of Arms*, ed. by Anthony Wagner (Oxford: Printed by Charles Batey for the Society of Antiquaries, 1950), pp. 111–16.

⁵⁵ London, College of Arms, MS Arundel xx11. This copy of the *Seege* is an abridged version of *IMEV* 3139 while the latter text is a composite translation of the *Historia* and Wace's *Brut*. See Robert A. Caldwell, 'The "History of the Kings of Britain" in College of Arms Ms. Arundel xx11', *PMLA*, 69.3 (1954), 643–54.

⁵⁶ The ending and note are written on fols. 81^r and 82^r respectively.

⁵⁷ There are further echoes of the bibliographical perfecting seen in Gg in Holland's other books. For example, MS Arundel xx11 contains additional but unrelated medieval material that was probably appended by Holland himself: a fragment of two leaves from a Lectionary of the Gospels (s. ix/x)

mending Chaucerian texts which were in danger of becoming fragmented.⁵⁸ In light of his commitment to repairing old books, it is significant that Holland used the Latin word *procurare* – meaning ‘To see to, or to take heed of a thynge; to chearishe: to keepe’ – to describe his relationship to the splendidly illuminated Lovell Lectionary, an early fifteenth-century book he owned and which he saw as a type of family heirloom.⁵⁹

Gg.4.27 is exceptional for the scope achieved by those who initially conceived it, and Holland’s additions show that he recognised its attempt at assembling Chaucer’s works. But damaged Chaucerian manuscripts of less ambitious sorts also inspired similar programmes of perfecting through the supplying of missing leaves bearing text copied from print. Another manuscript book, Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 600 (henceforth Ld1), is a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* from around the middle of the fifteenth century. According to Manly and Rickert, it was ‘[o]riginally a rather expensive MS’, but its condition had deteriorated by the early seventeenth century, when it came into the hands of John Barkham (1571/2–1642), an antiquary and clergyman who would eventually gift the book to Archbishop William Laud in 1635. Around this time, and most likely under Barkham’s direction, eighteen parchment leaves were supplied to repair some of those missing in the book, and an additional leaf for a table of contents was added.⁶⁰ Transcribing the lost text from a printed copy of Chaucer, probably the 1602 edition, the early modern scribe wrote in black ink and produced a tidy if laboured imitation of the secretary hand written by the original scribe (see Figure 2.2).⁶¹

This seventeenth-century approximation of the book’s original aesthetic extends to the new decoration, where flourished initials, running heads, and parafr signs have been carefully executed by the scribe in a style

and two sets of three leaves from a psalter (s. ix). The whole is united by a contemporary binding of blind-stamped boards with the initials ‘IH’ tooled into both covers.

⁵⁸ Henry Bradshaw, the nineteenth-century Cambridge librarian, removed Holland’s additions when he took the book apart to study its codicological structure; see Richard Beadle, ‘Bradshaw’s Chaucer: Some Preliminary Observations’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 17 (2019), 557–74 (568–9).

⁵⁹ Thomas Cooper, *Thesaurus Linguae Romanae et Britannicae* (London: Henry Denham, 1578; *STC* 5688), sig. 516^r. The inscription on fol. 1^r of BL, MS Harley 7026 specifies that Holland took the manuscript into his care so as to preserve love and respect (‘propter amorem et reverentiam Fundatoris preservari procuravit’) for John Lord Lovell (d. 1408), who commissioned the book as a gift to Salisbury Cathedral.

⁶⁰ The replaced leaves are fols. 2–3, 29–30, 50, 88, 100–1, 140, 143, 194, and 298–304. Barkham’s scholarship also connects him to John Speed, who engraved the Progenie portrait of Chaucer for Speght’s editions; see T. F. Henderson and D. R. Woolf, ‘Barkham, John (1571/2–1642), antiquary and historian’, *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1421>.

⁶¹ Seymour, *Catalogue*, II, p. 176.

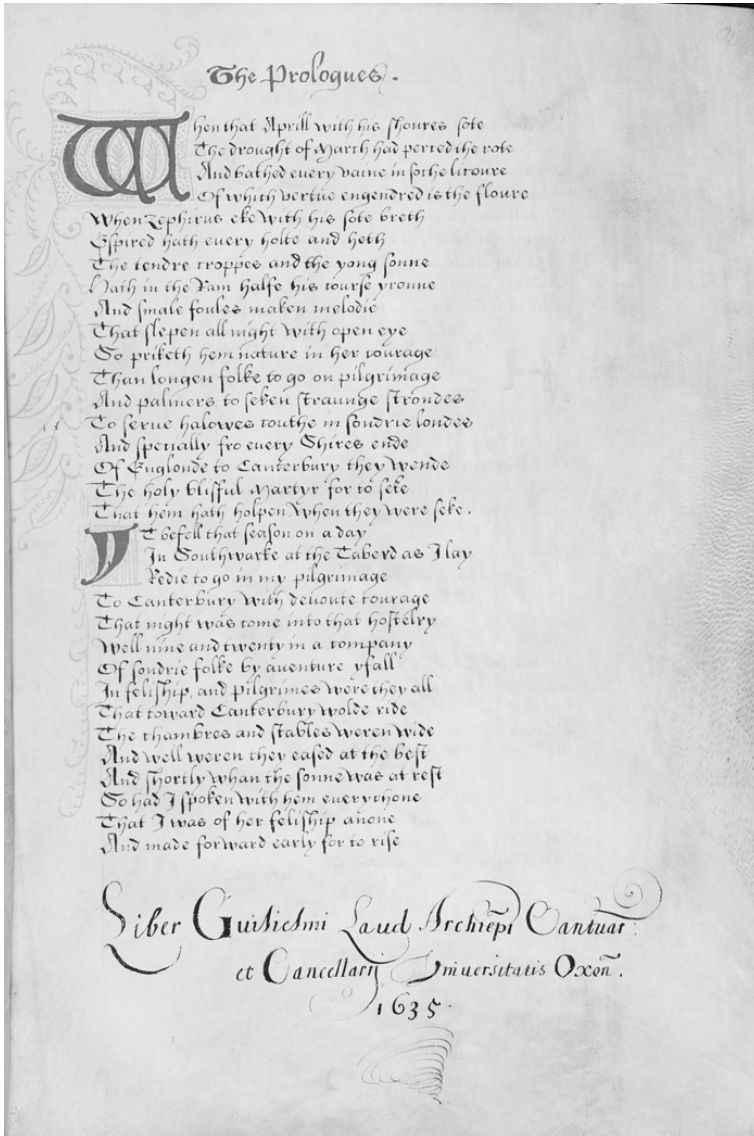


Figure 2.2 A parchment supply leaf in the *General Prologue*, imitating the secretary hand of the fifteenth-century scribe. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 600, fol. 2^r.

generally compatible with the rest of the book. The same may not be said of the new colour scheme, which has been described as ‘a crude imitation . . . of the original decoration, but in red, yellow, and black’.⁶² Despite these incongruities, it is clear that considerable effort was expended in the process of repairing the damaged medieval book that would become LdI. For a volume that was ‘evidently in very bad condition’, the procurement of parchment, the thorough cleaning of the medieval leaves, the supplying of missing text and decoration, and its new leather binding show that the book was subjected to a scheme of perfecting by its early modern owner in preparation for its presentation to Laud.⁶³ Together with the three other manuscripts and a collection of coins which he presented to the Archbishop around the same time, Barkham’s gift of the newly repaired *Canterbury Tales* volume was designed to appeal to Laud’s historical interests as a collector, possibly in the hope of securing preferment.⁶⁴ As a Latin inscription to Laud signed by Barkham on fol. 1^v indicates, the gift functioned as a type of presentation copy – not of a literary work written by Barkham himself, but one whose repair he commissioned as a token of the friendship and shared interests of the two antiquaries.⁶⁵

While Holland saw the repairing of Gg’s missing text as an opportunity to supplement it with material about Chaucer’s life and canon which he had seen published in the printed volume, Barkham’s means of improving the condition of LdI involved restoring the book to a state near its original. Although both men used the latest printed edition to perfect their respective manuscripts, the final products show two varying materialisations of what a complete Chaucerian book could be. For Holland, the book should be as capacious as possible, accommodating not only additional Chaucerian content, but also a medieval fragment which he saw as belonging to the same broad historical period and to the same vernacular literary tradition.⁶⁶ Meanwhile, Barkham’s cleaned-up and polished copy of the

⁶² *TCT*, p. 311.

⁶³ *TCT*, pp. 311–12. Marginalia have been scraped away, for example, on fols. 131^v, 160^r, 172^r, and 176^v.

⁶⁴ The three other books are Bodl. MSS Laud Misc. 30, 178, and 264; see Henderson and Woolf, ‘Barkham’.

⁶⁵ The book is inscribed ‘Eminentissimo Archipraesuli Cant. Domino suo summe Reverendo / Devinitissimus; Deuotissimus / Johannes Barkham [To the most eminent Archbishop of Canterbury, his most Reverend Lord; his most devoted servant John Barkham]’.

⁶⁶ Holland also added to Gg a thirteenth-century quire of fourteen leaves containing the Middle English romances *Floris and Blancheflur* (IMEV 2288.8) and *King Horn* (IMEV 166) as well as ‘Assumpcion de nostre dame’ (IMEV 2165). This loose quire, now bound separately as CUL, MS Gg.4.27(2), was inserted by Holland after the Lydgate at the end of the original manuscript, but before the added *Retraction* and the material that follows. See further discussion of Gg’s supplements in Chapter 3, pp. 133–41, 151–3, 169–70.

Canterbury Tales for Laud reveals an imitative quest for authenticity cultivated in the writing support, archaising script, decoration, and *mise-en-page* adopted by the manuscript's new scribe. His additions show that he wished to preserve some visual elements particular to the medieval manuscript book, but used the printed copy as a means of improving its text. In each case, the use of supply leaves to effect repairs in damaged manuscripts exposes the bibliographical ideals of those who oversaw these efforts of completion.

Although Barkham's restored *Canterbury Tales* approximates the aesthetic of a fifteenth-century manuscript, that volume nonetheless preserves further evidence of print's impact on the idea of the Chaucer canon. One of the leaves added to Ld1 in the seventeenth century (fol. ii^r) now bears two columns of text written in a contemporary hand, possibly that of Barkham himself (see Figure 2.3).⁶⁷ The first, left-hand column is headed 'The order of this book MS' and consists of a numbered list of the volume's contents, beginning with '1. The Prologues of the Author' and ending with '25. The Parson'. The second, right-hand column is titled 'The order of the Printed' and contains another numbered list of tales as they appear in Speght's edition, which does not wholly correspond to that of Ld1. For the person who drew up this table, 'the Printed' volume provided a benchmark by which the older book could be measured. Notes surrounding the two columns on the same page witness a rare moment of reading early modern print and a medieval manuscript in parallel.

Ld1 also contains the spurious *Tale of Gamelyn*, introduced in the original scribe's incipit as the Cook's main contribution to the storytelling game: 'Here begynneth the Cokes tale Gamelyn'.⁶⁸ To accommodate this interpolated tale in the frame narrative, the manuscript treats the fragment that is now called the *Cook's Tale* (about an apprentice named Perkyn Revelour) merely as a 'prolog' to *Gamelyn*.⁶⁹ The seventeenth-century annotator observed the importance of *Gamelyn* in a marginal note beside the table of contents: 'This Tale of the Cooke, is perfect in this MS. but the Publisher of the Printed, hath omitted it, supposing it has been lost. vide f.16 of the printed'.⁷⁰ Indeed, the early editions before Urry did not include

⁶⁷ Thomas Hearne believed it to be Barkham's hand; see Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years*, p. 222.

⁶⁸ fol. 62^v. For a consideration of the manuscript evidence for *Gamelyn's* place in the canon, see A. S. G. Edwards, 'The *Canterbury Tales* and *Gamelyn*', in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honour of Jill Mann*, ed. by Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 76–90.

⁶⁹ Twenty-two of the twenty-five surviving manuscripts containing *Gamelyn* position it immediately after the *Cook's Tale*; see Edwards, 'Gamelyn', p. 83.

⁷⁰ fol. 1^r.

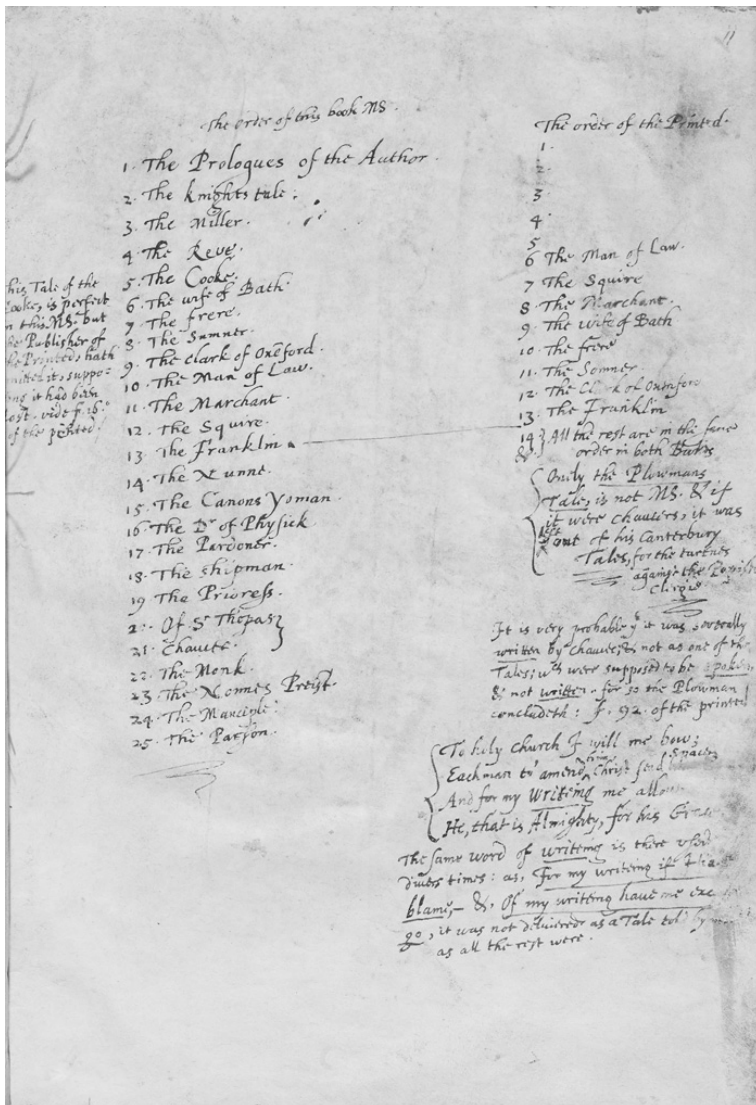


Figure 2.3 A collation of the manuscript's contents with a printed edition, possibly by John Barkham. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 600, fol. ii^r.

Gamelyn, but those of Speght do comment on the unfinished status of the *Cook's Tale* of Perkyn Revelour: 'The most of this Tale is lost, or else neuer finished by the Authour'. In Speght's 1602 edition, this note is printed on the verso of 'Fol. 16', the same page cited by the creator of the manuscript's table of contents when he cross-referenced his book with 'the Printed'.⁷¹ It is clear that the annotator, following the scribal incipit that refers to 'the Cokes tale Gamelyn', assumed *Gamelyn* to be the missing bit of the *Cook's Tale* which Speght had deemed 'lost'. The marginal note conveys a certain pride that the tale 'omitted' from the printed edition was 'perfect in this MS', his own copy of Chaucer.

Beside the table of contents, another set of notes written in the same hand weighs up the manuscript's completeness in relation to Speght. Here, after the listing for the *Franklin's Tale*, the annotator has observed that 'All the rest [of the tales] are in the same order in both Bookes', with one exception:

Only the Plowman's Tale, is not MS. & if it were Chaucers, it was ^left out of his Canterbury Tales, for the tartnes against the Popish clergie. It is very probable yt it was severally written by Chaucer, & not as one of the Tales, wch were supposed to be spoken & not written

The *Plowman's Tale*, a satire against the clergy, had appeared in copies of Chaucer's *Workes* since Thynne's 1542 edition and was accepted during the early modern period as a genuine addition to the *Canterbury Tales*. But this reader of LdI concludes that the purported origins of the *Plowman's Tale* in writing deviate from the orality fundamental to the premise of the *Canterbury Tales*. He observes of the *Plowman's Tale* that 'The same word of writeing is there vsed diuers times', citing examples, and concludes that 'it was not deliuered as a Tale told by mouth as all the rest were'. Barkham is known to have been a learned antiquary and it is likely that the hand is his; if so, he shows better judgement of Chaucer's canon than Speght himself, who believed the *Plowman's Tale* to be 'made no doubt by Chaucer, with the rest of the Tales. For I haue seene it in written hand in Iohn Stowes Librarie in a booke of such antiquitie, as seemeth to haue been written neare to Chaucers time'.⁷² The seventeenth-century annotator of LdI doubts this straightforward history, suggesting instead that the tale was written separately by Chaucer and excluded from the *Canterbury Tales* due to its anticlerical content. Speght had claimed that a copy of the *Plowman's*

⁷¹ *Workes* (1602), sig. D4^v.

⁷² *Workes* (1602), sig. Qr^v; see further discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 157–8.

Tale ‘in written hand’ was proof of its Chaucerian origin, but Barkham’s copy, in which it was ‘left out’, provides grounds for the clergyman to speculate that the text may have had a separate origin.

Each of these comments on the transmission of the *Plowman’s Tale* and *Gamelyn* captures this annotator’s efforts to delineate the borders of the Chaucerian canon and to assess the completeness of his manuscript – an endeavour enabled by the existence of multiple versions of the *Tales* in written and printed copies. Quite conveniently for Barkham, his book is determined to be superior on both counts, containing what was assumed to be a full copy of the *Cook’s Tale*, and excluding the incongruous *Plowman’s Tale*. This attentiveness to the transmission history of the *Canterbury Tales* and the implied orality of the pilgrimage frame show a critical appraisal of Speght’s printed edition in relation to its manuscript counterpart. Barkham’s desire to repair the book for presentation to the Archbishop, it would seem, was not guided by solely aesthetic concerns for the torn volume, but also by a concern for the textual integrity of a book which he already deemed to be ‘perfect’ in several respects.⁷³ So successful was this project of repairing Ldi that the manuscript was later used as an exemplar to supplement the text of another manuscript.⁷⁴ For both Holland and Barkham, recently printed copies of Chaucer’s *Workes* allowed them to transform their damaged manuscript books into objects of aesthetic as well as historical value, suitable to be cherished by their owners or gifted to a worthy recipient.

Another manuscript of the *Tales* which benefitted from codicological repair in the early modern period was TCC, MS R.3.15 (hereafter Tc2), a late fifteenth-century paper copy likely associated with Archbishop Matthew Parker and once owned by Thomas Neville (1548–1615), former Master of Trinity College in Cambridge.⁷⁵ Noticing that the text began

⁷³ In fact, not all of the missing leaves have been supplied; for example, there is text missing between fols. 207 and 208, between the *Physician’s Tale* and *Pardoner’s Prologue*; between fols. 247 and 248 (*Melibee* and *Monk’s Tale*); and between fols. 263 and 264 (*Nun’s Priest’s Tale* and *Manciple’s Tale*).

⁷⁴ Ldi is the source of the copy of *Gamelyn* supplied into BL, MS Egerton 2726 by Timothy Thomas around 1730; see *TCT*, pp. 130–5, and Chapter 3, pp. 170–2.

⁷⁵ Neville’s other gifts to the college include some of its treasures, such as the Eadwine Psalter; see Ovenden, ‘Libraries of the Antiquaries’, p. 560. The manuscript appears in an inventory of manuscripts owned by the Archbishop’s son John, and the red crayon common amongst the Parker circle has been used to paginate the book and to inscribe the letters ‘TW’ on fol. 5^r. Neville’s older brother, Alexander Neville (1544–1614), had served as Parker’s secretary, although the trajectory by which the manuscript could have moved from Parker’s circle to Neville is not known for certain. See Sheila Strongman, ‘John Parker’s Manuscripts: An Edition of the Lists in Lambeth Palace MS 737’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, 7.1 (1977), 1–27 (5–7) and J. B. Mullinger and Stanford Lehmburg, ‘Neville [Nevile], Thomas (c. 1548–1615), college head and dean of Canterbury’, *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/19965>. On the letters ‘TW’ and

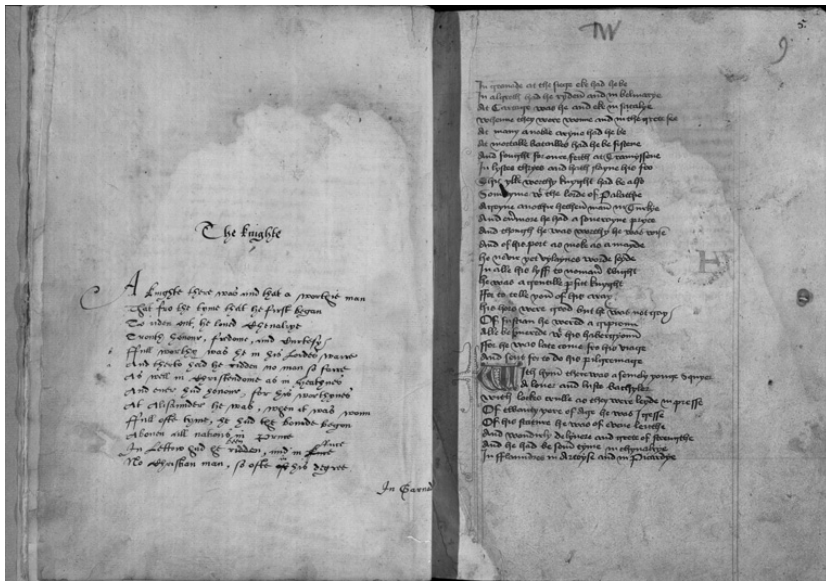


Figure 2.4 A paper replacement leaf in the *General Prologue* alongside a fifteenth-century original, with text lined up to avoid a gap. TCC MS R.3.15, fols. 4a^v-5^r. The Master and Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge.

abruptly, halfway through the description of the Knight (1.56), someone furnished paper leaves and copied the missing lines (1.1–55) under the newly supplied headings of ‘The Prologues’ (1.1–42, fol. 3^v) and ‘The Knight’ (1.43–55, fol. 4a^v). It may have been Nevile (who bequeathed the book to Trinity) or a Parker associate who carried out this work but whoever it was wrote in a fluent secretary hand with sixteenth-century features.⁷⁶ They began the *Knight’s Tale* halfway down a fresh page so it would join up more smoothly with the medieval text’s continuation of that tale on fol. 5^r (1.56 ff.) (see Figure 2.4). There are other leaves missing from this copy (gaps which also result in loss of text) but only the first two were

their use in Parkerian books, see Mildred Budny, *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue*, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University in association with Research Group on Manuscript Evidence, Parker Library, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 1997), 1, pp. 248–9.

⁷⁶ Philip Gaskell, *Trinity College Library: The First 150 Years*, Sandars Lectures, 1978 (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 81. The paper used for the supply leaves dates from the sixteenth century; see Daniel Mosser, ‘Tc2’, *A Digital Catalogue of the Pre-1500 Manuscripts and Incunables of the Canterbury Tales*, www.mossercatalogue.net/.

replaced by the early modern copyist, who also copied the additional items that were placed at the beginning and end of the book.⁷⁷ Here, the principal concern for the integrity of the *Tales* was limited to its opening, where the lost text was plainly visible at the head of the volume.

Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 739 (Ld2) is a late and plainer manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*, but one in which an early modern codicological repair also survives. This book contains more than 450 individual corrections to the Middle English text, generally concentrated in a few tales.⁷⁸ At the end of the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, however, appears a tipped-in leaf (fol. 140a^r) on which a set of twenty-eight lines which were omitted by the original scribe – and known as the ‘words between the Summoner and the Friar’ – have been supplied (see Figure 2.5).⁷⁹ They appear to have been transcribed from Caxton's first edition.⁸⁰ The writing support chosen for the job was vellum; on the verso of the supplied leaf is the text of a thirteenth-century treatise on canon law. The physical dimensions of this fragment enlisted to serve as a replacement leaf are noticeably smaller than the manuscript's other leaves, but its comparative flimsiness might signal not parsimoniousness but the substantial difficulty of obtaining medieval vellum for copying. Despite such evident effort, the work of perfecting this book is itself incomplete. The version of the *Summoner's Tale* in this copy is a truncated form also found in a handful of other manuscripts, in which the text ends at l. 2158 and an additional four spurious lines provide a narrative transition to the *Clerk's Prologue*. Observing this discrepancy between Ld2 and the printed copy that was evidently at hand, the early modern annotator crossed out the four spurious lines, drew an arrow towards this cancelled text, and noted instead the absence of two leaves (‘Hic desunt 2 folia’).⁸¹ Unlike the lines missing in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*, they did not (or could not) supply these missing leaves.

The work of perfecting a book by supplying missing text, as such examples illustrate, could itself be left unfinished in some copies. But the fact that the completing of medieval manuscripts was sometimes attempted piecemeal is a reminder of the exceptional and purposeful nature

⁷⁷ The other missing leaves are in Q2 (1.971–1098, *Knight's Tale*) and Q12 (111.1049–1115, *Wife of Bath's Prologue*). Further supplementation to this manuscript is discussed in Chapter 3, pp. 141–2, 161–3.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 1, pp. 68–72.

⁷⁹ 111.829–56. *TCT*, p. 317 suggests that the omission may be a result of scribal eyeskip.

⁸⁰ There are some textual clues that the exemplar for the early modern transcription was a Caxton. For instance, the annotator has ‘Good dame’ at 111.853, as does Cxi. All the other early printed editions have ‘Do dame’.

⁸¹ fol. 158^v. The missing lines are 111.2159–2294, a loss common to several *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts of textual group *d*; see *TCT*, II, pp. 227–42.

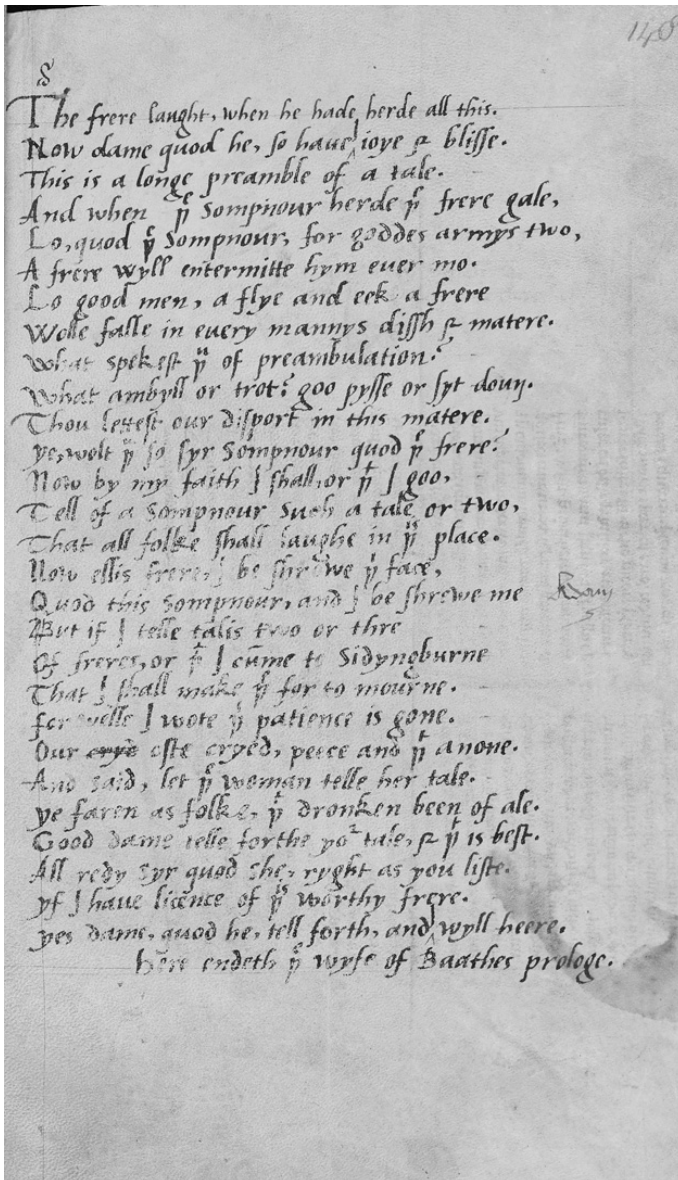


Figure 2.5 A replacement leaf supplying text in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Bodl. MS Laud Misc. 739, fol. 140a^r.

of these efforts. The process of sourcing exemplars, materials, and copyists for the making of manuscript supply leaves (especially those written on parchment) was neither easy nor inexpensive. Even those cases where only some missing parts of the text were repaired – for example, the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* at the expense of the *Summoner's Tale*, or the beginning of the *Canterbury Tales* rather than leaves in the middle of the book – reveal something about early modern taste and judgement. In Ld2, not only do the newly supplied lines offer a smooth transition to the *Wife's Tale*, which immediately follows, but they also sow the narrative seeds for the bitter *animus* between the Friar and the Summoner which will later be developed in their own respective tales.⁸² While the replacement leaves surveyed here represent varying degrees of planning, improvisation, and execution, they all show the attempts of early modern readers to compensate for material absences in a range of manuscript books, normally by completing them with text copied from printed editions. If manuscripts are considered in the context of their textual lacunae, it is not surprising that early modern readers of Chaucer should have relied on print for access to complete and authoritative versions of the text. This evidence of the use of print to repair and complete such books revises the assumption (*pace* Parkes and Beadle) that a damaged and incomplete Chaucer manuscript 'could be discarded . . . from 1532 onwards'. Instead, it shows that the existence and accessibility of printed copies of Chaucer did not hasten the obsolescence of manuscripts, but enabled their repair, preservation, and continued use at the hands of new readers.

It is worth noting that the spirit of renovation and repair which such supply leaves expose was not unique to readers who consulted manuscripts alongside print. Lichfield Cathedral Library, MS 29, a *Canterbury Tales* manuscript copied around 1430, contains four parchment replacement leaves that were added in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. This book was part of a bequest of 1,000 volumes made to the Cathedral by Frances Seymour, Duchess of Somerset in 1673.⁸³ Leaves are missing from the beginning of the *General Prologue* (fol. 1), and from other moments of transition in the frame narrative; two were the outer leaves of their respective quires, while three were internal. The book's tight binding makes it difficult to determine whether these losses were accidental or deliberate (or some combination of the two), but it is a virtual certainty that all of the lost leaves were accompanied by the vivid decoration seen in

⁸² Paul E. Beichner, 'Baiting the Summoner', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 22.4 (1961), 367–76.

⁸³ B. S. Benedikz, *A New Catalogue of Printed Books in the Library of Lichfield Cathedral* (The Dean and Chapter of Lichfield, 1998), p. 5.

the illuminated initials and borders elsewhere in the manuscript.⁸⁴ The additional lost leaves marked changes of action from the *Squire's Tale* to *Merchant's Prologue* (fol. 93), from the *Friar's Prologue* to the *Friar's Tale* (fol. 125), from the *Prologue of Sir Thopas* to the *Tale* that follows it (fol. 206), and from the Host's interruption of the *Tale of Sir Thopas* and the opening to Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* (fol. 209). All but the lattermost of these five leaves have been replaced by early modern supply leaves.⁸⁵

These four leaves have been tipped in, 'usually on to the small remnants of the lost leaves'.⁸⁶ And intriguingly, the person who copied these leaves for the Lichfield manuscript in the early modern period may have used another manuscript, not a printed edition, as a source.⁸⁷ With characteristic candour, Manly and Rickert determined that 'The supplied leaves . . . show a feeble and unsuccessful attempt to imitate the original writing, with crude ornament in crimson ink'.⁸⁸ While the early modern leaves in Gg and in Ld1 seem to have been professionally and meticulously copied and decorated (in italic and an archaising style respectively), the mixed, sometimes hasty, hand of Lichfield's supply leaves does not make such concessions to the book's original anglicana script (see Figure 2.6). But if the copying and decoration lack finesse in their execution, the whole project was nonetheless motivated by great care, evident in the procurement, pricking, and ruling of the new parchment leaves, and in the rendering of running heads and initial words in red ink. As in Holland's Gg, an interest in restoring the book's visual as well as textual integrity is evident in other details which create an effect of continuity across the fifteenth-century leaves and the early modern additions. The carefully portioned margins, number of lines per page, rubricated running heads, incipits, and explicits all deliberately mirror the *mise-en-page* of the book's original leaves. It is in this sense that such old books might be considered perfected – not because their later repairs blend in seamlessly with the original leaves (for they do not), but

⁸⁴ Amongst the losses is what the manuscript's first limner, responsible for fols. 1–104, called 'i hole venett' – a full-page border probably for the missing fol. 1 – in his tally for payment on fol. 104^v. In this manuscript, tales are introduced by demi-vinets (decorative initials linked to three-quarter-page borders) and links and prologues by champs (decorative initials which extend into the margin). See *TCT*, p. 323.

⁸⁵ A sixth missing leaf, the original fol. 293, probably blank, was also not replaced. See *TCT*, pp. 321–2.

⁸⁶ *TCT*, p. 321.

⁸⁷ Certain variants present in the transcribed text are not consistent with any one printed edition. For example, in *Sir Thopas* 'prilace' (v11.720) is a reading that survives in no early edition, and in only one manuscript (CUL, MS Mm.2.5), which differs from the supplied text at other points. In most cases, the newly transcribed text (unlike the original text proper) accords with that in Sussex, Petworth House National Trust, MS 7, whose scribe, coincidentally, also copied the second half of the Lichfield manuscript.

⁸⁸ *TCT*, p. 325.

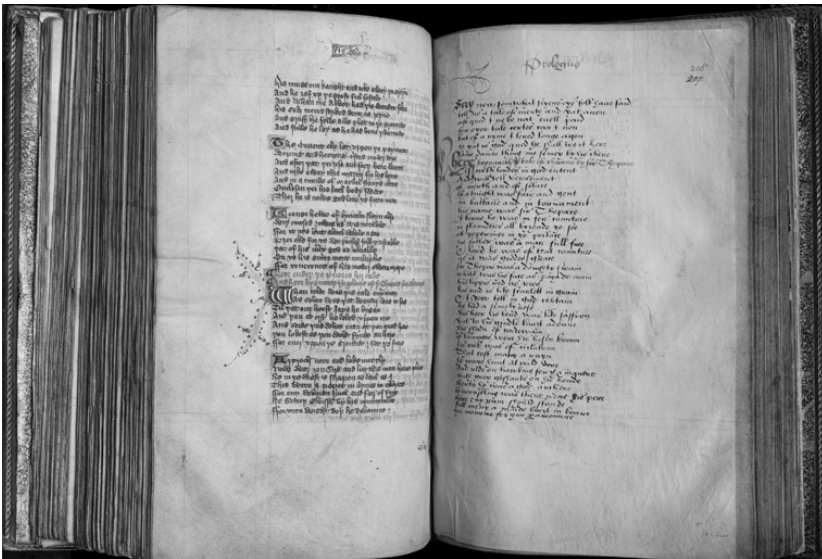


Figure 2.6 An early modern replacement leaf in the *General Prologue* alongside a fifteenth-century original. Lichfield Cathedral Library, MS 29, fols. 205^v-206^r. © Lichfield Cathedral.

because the books were subject to effortful, sometimes intensive programmes of repair in order to supply their missing parts. The early modern supply leaves in a book like the Lichfield *Canterbury Tales* thus underline a desire for bibliographic completeness which was common to many readers of medieval manuscripts, whether or not they completed their books using printed exemplars.

As might be expected, the early modern intention to mend old books with newly supplied leaves was not particular to manuscripts either. Like the fifteenth-century manuscripts which are the focus of this book, the oldest printed books were sometimes subject to the same fate of destruction and repair. There is evidence of this practice in the Pepys collection, which in the late seventeenth century held incunabula containing missing leaves. Clerks were duly tasked with copying new transcriptions to replace lost parts of these texts.⁸⁹ Thus Pepys, who was accustomed to taking clippings

⁸⁹ In Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys Library, nos. 1945, 1997, and 2126, copies of *The game of chess* (Caxton, 1483), *Chronicles of England* (William de Machinlia, c. 1486), and John Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* by Bartholomaeus Anglicus (Wynkyn de Worde, c. 1496). See J. C. T. Oates, *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge*, ed. by N. A. Smith (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978), 1, pp. 195–7; McKitterick, *Rare Books*, p. 121 and n. 38.

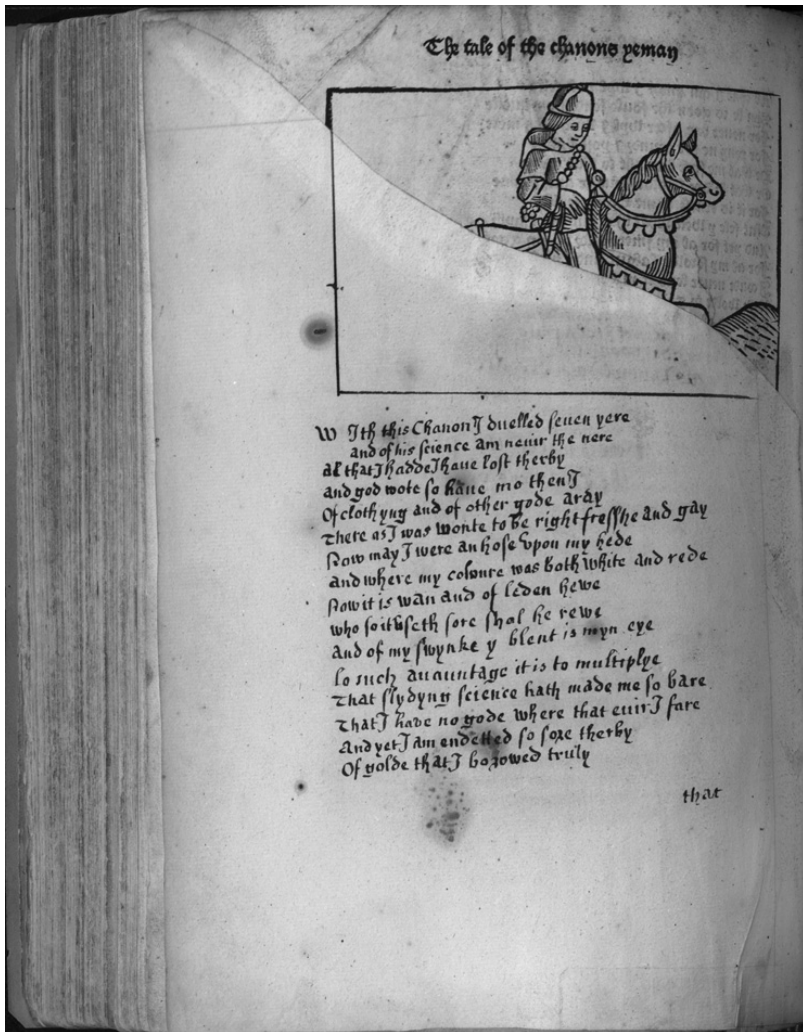


Figure 2.7 Early modern repairs imitating the printed page in a copy of Caxton's second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. Fondation Martin Bodmer, Coligny, Inc. B. 70, sig. 2d7^v. Digitised and reproduced courtesy of the Bodmer Lab, University of Geneva.

of medieval manuscripts owned by others as samples, proves to have been less tolerant of incompleteness in his own books. We may locate a Chaucerian example of the same phenomenon in a c. 1483 Caxton *Canterbury Tales*, now in Geneva, which lacks thirty-one leaves, and

which already had several leaves damaged and torn in its pre-modern history.⁹⁰ An early owner repaired these leaves by patching holes and tears, furnishing partially torn leaves with new paper, and recopying missing passages on the freshly mended pages (see Figure 2.7). A watermark on one of the newly added leaves suggests a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century date for the repairs, while similarities between the supplied text and Richard Pynson's c. 1492 edition single it out as the repairer's most likely source text.⁹¹ The material and textual mending of this copy by an early modern user illuminate certain bibliographic expectations about the early printed book which parallel those gleaned from the previously discussed manuscripts. In this case, the copyist supplied the missing text in an archaising script that approximates the black letter in which Chaucer was printed until the eighteenth century. Significantly, they also reproduced extraneous technical and visual details from the printed edition which were no longer strictly necessary in a manuscript copy: the indented spaces left blank for decorated initials at the beginning of tales and prologues, page signatures, and a catchword.⁹² This programme of repair may have been necessitated by the desire to supply the missing text, but efforts were made to match the aesthetic of the original page and to ensure visual continuity with the rest of the book. Medieval manuscripts and the earliest printed copies of Chaucer therefore have certain aspects of their reception in common – notably their status as objects of value for later collectors like Pepys, who dealt in both.⁹³ But medieval manuscripts, as David McKitterick observes in his recent history

⁹⁰ Cologny, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Inc. B.70; *STC* 5083. On this copy, see Singh, 'Caxton and His Readers', 233–49.

⁹¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, [*Canterbury tales*] (Westminster?: Richard Pynson, c. 1492; *STC* 5084). The details in the supplied manuscript text peculiar to Pynson 1492 are evident, for example, in the *Canon's Yeoman's Tale* where 'white and rede' appears where all the other black letter editions have 'fresshe and rede' (v111.727); and in the inversion of the lines 'There as I was wont to be right fresshe and gay / Of clothyng and of other good aray' (v111.724–5, sig. 2d7^r). The watermark features a large fleur-de-lis in a shield with the initials 'WR' at the base; the watermark is most similar to those catalogued as Briquet 7210 and Heawood 1721, although the absence of any complete sheets of paper in the repairs prevents the identification of any countermarks. See C. M. Briquet, *Les Filigranes: Dictionnaire Historique Des Marques Du Papier Dès Leur Apparition Vers 1282 Jusqu'en 1600*, ed. by A. H. Stevenson (Amsterdam: Paper Publications Society, 1968), 111; Edward Heawood, *Watermarks: Mainly of the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Hilversum, Holland: Paper Publications Society, 1950).

⁹² Ink transfer onto the original pages suggests that the pages were physically repaired and then rewritten, rather than vice versa, eliminating the practical need for catchwords or page signatures.

⁹³ For other material and textual repairs in early modern printed Chaucers, see Cook, *Poet and the Antiquaries*, p. 181; and Antonina Harbus, 'A Renaissance Reader's English Annotations to Thynne's 1532 Edition of Chaucer's *Works*', *RES*, 59.240 (2008), 342–55 (346).

of print and bibliographical rarity, also ‘have their own trajectories’, and it is these that the present work seeks to trace.⁹⁴

In identifying the pattern of print-to-manuscript transmission in the history of reading Chaucer, this study highlights a phenomenon which confounds expectations about the linear progression of objects through historical time and the value of newness in relation to the old. Manuscripts perfected in these ways show that readers appreciated their age and material properties even as they sought to improve their texts. The creation of supply leaves for damaged or unfinished Chaucerian manuscripts may thus be taken as a proxy for their value in the early modern period. It is a value that could be construed in economic, cultural, social, antiquarian, textual, or other terms – meanings which are seldom expressed but which are hinted at in their owners’ expenditure on parchment and scribal labour, in the careful collation of one text with another, in the use of a book to pledge friendship and loyalty, or in the efforts of imitation and decoration taken during repair. In turn, the omitted, torn, and lost leaves returned to manuscripts by their readers and owners affirm the utility of print in enabling the appraisal and renewal of older books.

2.3 Textual Lacunae: Reading the Gaps

Unlike the transcription and intercalation of leaves replacing lost text, the filling in of textual gaps is a type of preservation which happens on a smaller scale, typically on the level of the word or the line. Compared to the loss of whole leaves or quires, scribal lacunae might seem a relatively minor imperfection, but early modern readers often noticed and filled in these gaps. This attention to the minutiae of the page provides a valuable record of early modern resistance to incompleteness in the corpus of medieval Chaucer manuscripts. The lacunae exist because scribes sometimes interrupted the flow of their copying when they noticed something either missing or puzzlingly amiss in their exemplars.⁹⁵ As Wakelin explains, the resulting gaps may be interpreted as thoughtful scribal pauses, and suggest ‘a plausible aspiration to perfect the book in stages’.⁹⁶ This *gradatim* perfecting of books in scribal workshops is also discernible on the manuscript page at points when one hand suddenly intervenes to correct or supplement what another has copied. In the earliest manuscript of the

⁹⁴ McKitterick, *Invention of Rare Books*, p. 637.

⁹⁵ On the two reasons Middle English scribes left gaps in the text, see Daniel Wakelin, ‘When Scribes Won’t Write: Gaps in Middle English Books’, *SAC*, 36.1 (2014), 249–78 (esp. 260–7).

⁹⁶ Wakelin, ‘When Scribes Won’t Write’, 271.

Canterbury Tales, for instance, a scribe contemporary with the main copyist found two missing lines as well as two half-lines and, lacking a reliable exemplar, ‘was forced to rely on his own invention to fill these gaps’.⁹⁷ In print, too, textual gaps could invite completion. Peter Stallybrass, who has studied the proliferation of printed forms designed to be filled in by hand, has remarked that ‘the history of printing is crucially a history of the “blank”’. Early modern readers were accustomed to gaps, and to filling them in.⁹⁸ They operated in a do-it-yourself textual culture which invited people to take the book’s completeness, accuracy, appearance, and configuration into their own hands – for instance, to correct and amend printed texts by hand, to locate suitable maxims for recopying or material extraction, or to unite choice titles in a desired binding.⁹⁹

For some readers, the habit of supplying missing words or whole lines was a natural response to a type of incompleteness which was relatively commonplace.¹⁰⁰ The production of medieval manuscripts often included the processes of locating exemplars; preparing and ruling the leaves; copying, rubricating, correcting, and decorating the text; and binding the resulting book. But this process did not necessarily unroll in a sequential manner, and many manuscript books contain some evidence of things having been done out of order, of having been started and then aborted, or of having been planned but never begun at all. Such is the case in a Parkerian copy of *Troilus and Criseyde*, a fifteenth-century manuscript in which space was apportioned for a *de luxe* programme of over ninety images, but which lacks all but its frontispiece illustration.¹⁰¹ In another copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, the mid-fifteenth-century scribe, who named himself ‘Cornhyll’, left an abundance of gaps – not only for unavailable bits of text such as the ending of the *Squire’s Tale*, but also for images.¹⁰² Throughout the manuscript, lacunae ranging in length from seven lines to twenty-three (and probably intended for portrait miniatures of the

⁹⁷ This scribe (Hengwrt’s Hand F) is generally agreed to be that of Thomas Hoccleve; see Simon Horobin, ‘Thomas Hoccleve: Chaucer’s First Editor?’, *ChR*, 50 (2015), 228–50 (236).

⁹⁸ Stallybrass, “‘Little Jobs’”, p. 340. The point is also argued in Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship*; and Maguire, *Rhetoric of the Page*.

⁹⁹ Smyth, *Material Texts*, pp. 22–3, 95–6; Gillespie, *Print Culture*, pp. 46–60; Knight, *Bound to Read*, pp. 150–79.

¹⁰⁰ In practice, wealthy collectors like Holland, Cotton, and Parker could hire scribes to carry out such repairs, rather than implement them themselves. On the employment of scribes and amanuenses by early modern antiquaries, see Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney*, pp. 118–33.

¹⁰¹ For this manuscript, CCCC, MS 61, see *Troilus and Criseyde: A Facsimile of Corpus Christi College MS 6r*, ed. by Elizabeth Salter and M. B. Parkes (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978).

¹⁰² BL, MS Harley 1758, in which fol. 75^{r-v} and two (now excised) leaves were left for the conclusion of the *Squire’s Tale*. Cornhyll’s signature appears at the end of the book, on fol. 231^r.

pilgrims) have been left between the rubricated explicits and incipits, thereby punctuating the conclusion of one speaker's tale and the start of another's prologue. In one such case, a blank space which stretches across an opening from fol. 126^v to 127^r and which separates the end of the *Clerk's Tale* from the beginning of the *Franklin's Prologue* has been populated not with pictures of the pilgrims but with birth records for the children of Jane Otley and Edward Foxe, who owned the manuscript in the sixteenth century.¹⁰³ For the most part, though, these yawning gaps in Cornhill's manuscript remain vacant, and remind us that filling in either a book's missing text or pictures, even when exemplars might have been at hand, was not an unthinking reflex but a deliberate act intended to finish a text left incomplete.

In the Fairfax manuscript, a mid-fifteenth-century miscellany containing short courtly works of Chaucer, Lydgate, and others, two quires were also left blank at the beginning as well as at the end of the manuscript to await further text.¹⁰⁴ The Fairfax scribe was a scrupulous copyist. Where words and lines were missing in his exemplar, he left blank spaces on the page and observed the absence with a note ('hic caret versum') in several places, perhaps signalling that he or a colleague should revisit and fill these gaps, although neither ever did.¹⁰⁵ The meticulous John Stow was one reader who noticed these gaps. In Fairfax, he seems to have paid closest attention to the texts of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, and the anonymous Middle English poem *Chance of the Dice*, which Stow also believed to have been written by Chaucer.¹⁰⁶ In this manuscript, Stow not only supplied glosses and contextual and historical tidbits, but he also restored missing snippets of text.¹⁰⁷ In *Temple of Glass* and *Book of the Duchess*, Stow supplied one and two missing lines respectively, showing an instinct for textual completeness rooted in his philological and antiquarian preoccupations.¹⁰⁸ In the case of Chaucer's dream poem – which was missing two lines, for each of which the Fairfax scribe

¹⁰³ For provenance see *TCT*, pp. 204–6.

¹⁰⁴ For a full description and facsimile of the manuscript, see John Norton-Smith, *MS Fairfax 16* (London: Scolar Press, 1979), to which my discussion is indebted.

¹⁰⁵ On fols. 89^f, 103^r, and 180^v, 181^v, in copying the *Legend of Good Women* and the *House of Fame* respectively. On *caret* and other scribal notes which describe absence, see Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, pp. 258–61.

¹⁰⁶ On *Chance of the Dice* (*IMEV* 803), see Walter W. Skeat, *The Chaucer Canon: With a Discussion of the Works Associated with the Name of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), p. 126.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 4, pp. 182–94.

¹⁰⁸ On fol. 67^r, Stow supplied l. 320 (missing in the original text of *Temple of Glass*), 'his matire was of the ballads fewe', which is the reading in Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2006. In the *Book of the Duchess*, a space left on fol. 133^v by the original Fairfax scribe has been supplied by Stow

left a one-line space – Stow’s source text appears to have been that of his predecessor, Thynne, or a later print based on it.¹⁰⁹ It has been recognised by Edwards that Chaucer’s early printers had to undertake a certain degree of ‘textual housekeeping’ in order to prepare their texts for the press, since ‘printed texts had to meet audience expectations that were different from those for manuscripts’.¹¹⁰ Stow’s minute additions to Fairfax show him undertaking a different but recognisable type of textual housekeeping – not necessarily adapting manuscript texts for print, but using printed books as a means of textual repair.

Another early modern reader of Fairfax was confronted by a longer gap at the foot of fol. 130^r, where the *Book of the Duchess* stops abruptly after its first thirty lines. The verso of the same leaf (fol. 130^v) is also blank, and the copying resumes at the head of fol. 131^r, but at a different point in the story. The lacuna created by this interruption is a visual as well as narrative disruption, appearing during a description of the dreamer’s lovesickness only to pick up in the midst of the tale of Seys and Alcyone. A seventeenth-century reader with a hand that seems later than Stow’s supplied the missing sixty-six lines (ll. 31–96), either from Thynne or from a later edition based on his text (see Figure 2.8).¹¹¹ The linguistic particularities of this transcription are worth noting. In copying Chaucer’s text from print to manuscript, this later anonymous reader took the opportunity to modernise certain words from Thynne – for instance, ‘her’ becomes ‘ther’ and ‘nyl neuer’ becomes ‘will neuer’. And after copying line 96, the last line on fol. 130^v and the final line that had been missing, the annotator also added catchwords (‘Had such’), in imitation of the original scribe’s hand and in anticipation of the line to follow. Such welding is an attempt to establish visual unity between the pair of previously disjointed leaves and to restore the manuscript book to a state even better than its original. While the single lines filled in by Stow operate on a different scale from the sixty-six lines later supplied by the seventeenth-century hand, both annotators register a striking response not to the book’s matter but to its unfinishedness.¹¹² Each shows an instinct to improve the *Book of the Duchess* by completing the lacunae found in its text, and each turned to

with the line, ‘Suche marvayles fortunated than’ (l. 288); and on fol. 141^v with the line, ‘But whether she knewe, or knewe it nought’ (l. 886).

¹⁰⁹ It is not certain when Stow encountered Fairfax, but it is most likely to have been around 1600; see Chapter 4, p. 187.

¹¹⁰ Edwards, ‘Chaucer from Manuscript to Print’, 6.

¹¹¹ The lines are likewise missing from all manuscript witnesses.

¹¹² The same seventeenth-century hand also filled in a one-line gap in the *House of Fame* on fol. 182^r (‘Some within and some without’, l. 2036).

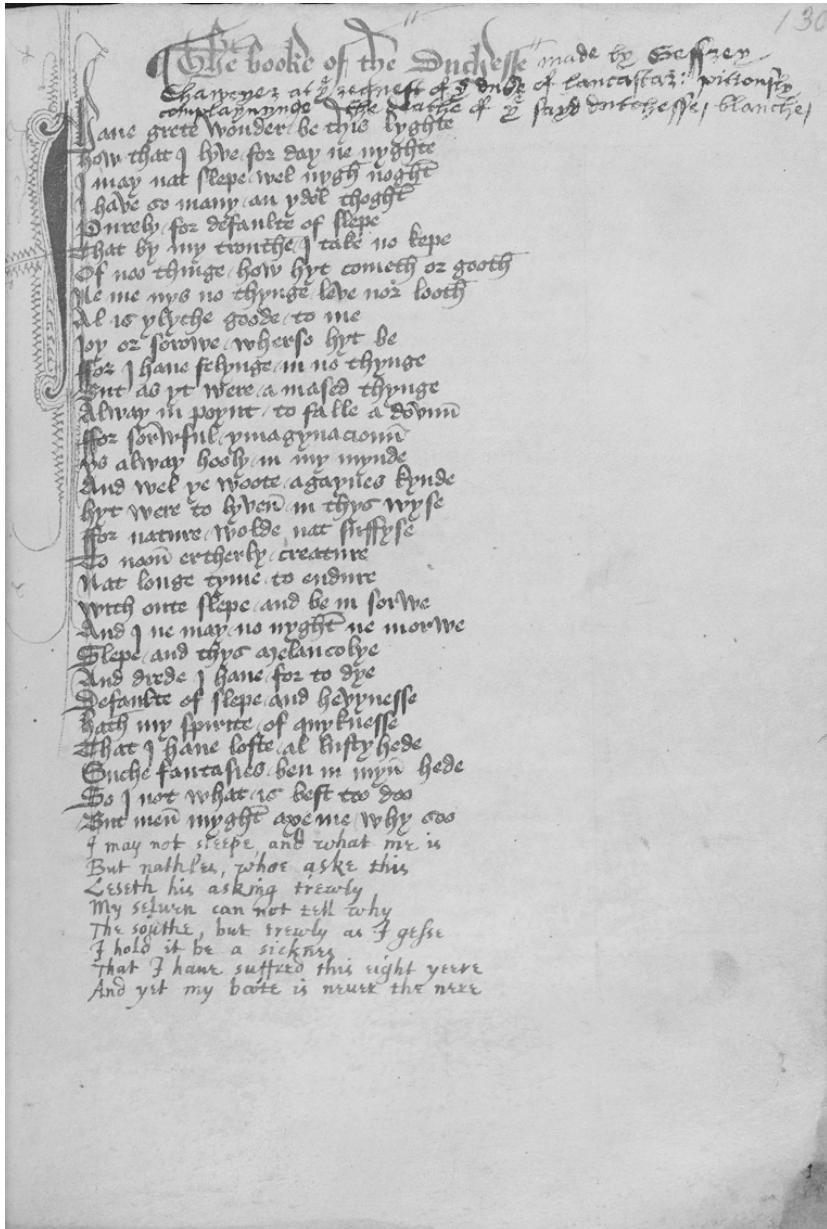


Figure 2.8 Filled-in space in the *Book of the Duchess*. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, Bodl. MS Fairfax 16, fol. 130^r.

readily available printed books for what they believed were reliable copies of Chaucer's dream vision.¹¹³

Another significant textual gap in Fairfax appears at the end of the *House of Fame*. These lines have a complex history which is bound up with the seemingly unfinished nature of the *House of Fame* itself. The final line of Chaucer's poem in the authoritative witnesses (including Fairfax) occurs at the precise point where the dreamer Geoffrey espies 'A man of gret auctorite' (l. 2158) whose appearance promises to restore order to the poem's cacophony.¹¹⁴ In other manuscripts, however, the copying appears to have stopped even before this – at the point where the embodiments of a lie and a truth jostle for passage ('And neyther of hym myght out goo', l. 2094). The copy on which Caxton based his 1483 edition contained this earlier ending but he was evidently displeased with the lack of narrative resolution, and so composed a tidy twelve-line ending for the poem himself, which sees the dreamer awakening and writing down his dream. Caxton conscientiously printed his own name beside the new verses and added a further prose note surmising that since he could not locate its ending, Chaucer had probably 'fynysshid' the poem prematurely at the 'conclusion of the metyng of lesyng and sothsawe'.¹¹⁵ When it came time for Thynne to prepare the *House of Fame* for his 1532 edition, he relied on a text which, like Fairfax, ended with the 'man of gret auctorite'. Thynne would have recognised the discrepancy between the ending in his copytext (l. 2158) and that of Caxton (l. 2094), but liked the earlier printer's neat 'conclusion' for the poem enough to retain it. His solution was to rewrite the first two-and-a-half lines of Caxton's continuation, removing mention of the jostling 'lesyng and sothsawe' in order to fuse them seamlessly with the last line in his own exemplar, l. 2158. From 1532, this became the form in which the end of the *House of Fame* was printed and read until the nineteenth century: with both Caxton's continuation and Thynne's rewritten lines, but without any indication of their spurious

¹¹³ The authenticity of ll. 31–96, 288, and 886, none of which are attested in any manuscript witness, has been questioned by modern critics; see N. F. Blake, 'The Textual Tradition of *The Book of the Duchess*', *English Studies*, 62.3 (1981), 237–48.

¹¹⁴ This is the last line of the poem in Fairfax and in Bodl. MS Bodley 638; the third manuscript witness, Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2006, ends even earlier, at l. 1843. For an overview, see Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Early Reception of Chaucer's *The House of Fame*', in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception*, ed. by Isabel Davis and Catherine Nall (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2015), pp. 87–102.

¹¹⁵ *The book of fame made by Gefferey Chaucer* (Westminster: William Caxton, c. 1483; STC 5087), sig. d3^r.

status, or of Caxton's initial concern that Chaucer may have left the poem incomplete. All of this reveals an accretive process by which Chaucer's poem was 'fynysshyd' by two early and influential editors who reconciled the manuscript evidence before them with a new ending which offered the satisfaction of a neat 'conclusion'.

Encountering the printed conclusion alongside the substantial gap left for it in Fairfax, the same seventeenth-century reader (who filled in the gap in the *Book of the Duchess*) supplied the twelve lines:

And therewithall I abrayde
 Out of my sleepe halfe afrayde
 Remembring well what I had seene
 And how hye and ferre I had beene
 In my goost, and had great wonder
 Of that the god of thunder
 Had let me knowen, and began to write
 Lyke as ye haue heard me endite
 Wherefore to study and rede alway
 I purpose to do day by day
 Thus in dreaming and in game
 Ended this litel booke of Fame. /

Here endeth the booke
 of Fame.¹¹⁶

The lines have been copied from Thynne or a later edition based on it.¹¹⁷ But the annotator also diverges from Thynne's text in the decision to supply an explicit – 'Here endeth the booke of Fame' – which appears almost redundant in its position following Caxton's final couplet, 'Thus in dreaming and in game / Ended this litel booke of Fame'. By filling this textual gap, the new annotator responded not only to the unsatisfying lack of an ending in Chaucer's poem, but also to an invitation to supply the missing text cued by the blankness of the page left by the original scribe. This reader's heavy-handed explicit heralds the appearance of this new ending and supplies a closure with whose absence the original scribe, Caxton, and Thynne had all previously grappled. Consistent across these successive layers of editorial and readerly finishing is a preference for completeness motivated by a concern with the text's integrity and preservation. The confected endings in the scribal and editorial history of

¹¹⁶ fol. 183^v.

¹¹⁷ Contrary to the suggestion of Norton-Smith in the Fairfax facsimile (p. xvii), it is unlikely that the source of the filled-in lines was a Caxton edition; see N. F. Blake, *William Caxton and English Literary Culture* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), p. 300.

Chaucer's works, John Burrow has observed, 'betray a desire for immediate closure, as if the texts could not, without discomfort, be left gaping open'.¹¹⁸ The latterly filled-in gaps, blanks, and lacunae in medieval manuscripts confirm the susceptibility of early modern readers to the same desire.

In a Glasgow copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, another seventeenth-century reader took to their manuscript of Chaucer with the same intention to perfect its incomplete text. Glasgow, MS Hunter 197 (U.1.1), which also contains *St Patrick's Treatise on Purgatory*, was copied by the father-son pair of scribes named Geoffrey and Thomas Spirleng, who were working in Norfolk in the late fifteenth century. The Spirlengs left the manuscript with forty gaps for words, phrases, and lines they could not or did not copy, and which often show them 'choosing not to copy things they thought they could not correctly render', such as illegible or unusual text in the exemplar.¹¹⁹ A later reader, probably working in the late seventeenth century, noticed these gaps and decided to fill them. The furnishing of textual lacunae was part of a larger programme of perfecting undertaken by the same person, who dutifully reports at the head of fol. 1^r that the manuscript has now been 'Compared with ye printed Copy'.

On the basis of textual variants which the annotator transcribed from the print, the comparison text is likely to have been Stow's edition.¹²⁰ This reader was diligent, often recording the source of his interventions with a discreet abbreviation – 'pr.' – after the words themselves, to signify the printed origins of these additions.¹²¹ Like Spirleng, this later copyist from print to manuscript was committed to supplying the best readings. Some of Spirleng's largest gaps occur on fol. 65^r, where parts of five individual lines in the *Tale of Sir Thopas* have been left incomplete (see Figure 2.9). The early modern copyist finished the first line by directly filling in the blank space – 'His Jaumbes <were of cure buly>' – following the printed exemplar. But the transcription of the other line endings is more tentative, and they have been written not in the obvious gaps that had been left for that purpose by the first scribe, but in the column's right-hand margin. Such annotations witness the early modern reader's response both to cues left by the book's first copyist and to the text in a seemingly authoritative 'printed

¹¹⁸ John Burrow, 'Poems Without Endings', *SAC*, 13.1 (1991), 17–37 (23–4).

¹¹⁹ Wakelin, *Scribal Correction*, pp. 61–3.

¹²⁰ Seymour, *Catalogue*, II, p. 83. See, for example, *Sir Thopas*, VII.914, where this reader has copied that Thopas feeds his horse 'herbs finde & good' (fol. 65^r), a variant that appears with the same orthography in Stow's edition only.

¹²¹ For instance, on fols. 5^r, 5^v, 6^r, 6^v, 7^v, 12^r, 12^v, 17^v, 25^r, and 35^v.

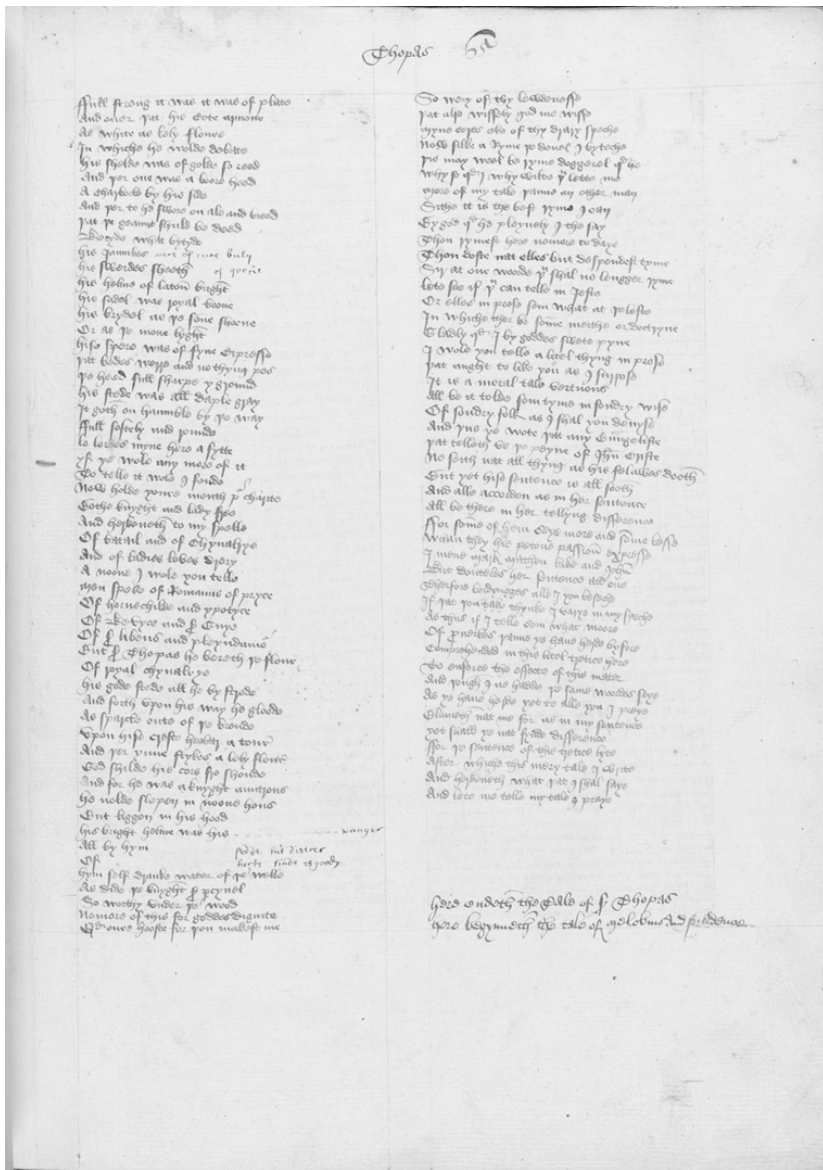


Figure 2.9 Filled-in gaps in *Sir Thopas*. University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections, MS Hunter 197 (U.1.1), fol. 65^r.

Coppy'. The annotator guessed, correctly, that these were textual cruces which the original scribe had been unable to resolve, and which resulted in a series of gaps. Some of the supplied words in this passage would have been curious to an early modern ear and eye – such as 'cure buly' for *quyrboilly* or boiled leather; 'wanger' for *wonger* or pillow; 'destrer' for *dextrer* or warhorse – while others like *yvorie* and *finde & good* would have been familiar, so the annotator's hesitation to fill the gaps in the latter two cases is curious.¹²² Perhaps it is the earlier scribe's silence on these points, marked by five ominous blank spaces in the text block, which likewise led the later reader to be cautious about the readings in the printed copy and to relegate the supplied line endings – 'of yvorie', 'wanger', 'fedde his distrer', and 'herbes finde & good' – to the margins.

The Glasgow copy of Chaucer is unusual for the number of gaps left in the text by the Spirlengs, but not for its evidence of later annotators who were eager to fill them. Another fifteenth-century manuscript, a copy of *Troilus and Criseyde* at the British Library, contains five instances of gap-filling by a later hand with sixteenth-century features. Some of these additions are written over erasures and in this case, too, the supplied text is likely to have originated in a print.¹²³ Similarly, it is possible that the careful annotator of Ld2, whose hand appears over rubbed-out words more than two dozen times in that copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, was populating gaps of someone else's making.¹²⁴ For such book owners, the seemingly trivial act of completing the text by filling in blank spaces was part of a sustained intellectual engagement with the puzzles presented by the medieval manuscript, and another way that they could perfect scribal copies of Chaucer's works which were visibly wanting. The afterlives of manuscript books up to two centuries after Caxton show that it was not only the early printers or editors like Stow who engaged in textual house-keeping of the sort described by Edwards. It emerges from the copies considered here that early modern readers – the consumers for whom Middle English texts were tidied up by the makers of printed books – were liable to do their own upkeep, repair, and perfecting of incomplete manuscripts. By keeping the old books functional and intact, those readers assured their continued use and longevity.

As with replacement leaves, the dislike of blank space or the opportunistic filling in of gaps is not in itself a consequence of print culture. Some

¹²² v11.875–6 and 912–14.

¹²³ BL, Additional MS 12044, fols. 6^r, 26^v, 27^v, 50^v, and 57^r; see Seymour, *Catalogue*, 1, p. 62.

¹²⁴ Chapter 1, pp. 71–2.

campaigns of decoration in medieval manuscripts, for instance, were carried out decades after space was allocated for them initially.¹²⁵ What print offered to early modern readers of Chaucer was an accessible and seemingly authoritative model for repairing and completing older copies. For these readers, the interrupted narrative and the blank page were unwelcome absences in the Chaucerian manuscript book, and printed copies provided a template for finishing them. In the care and attention they show to filling gaps in Chaucer's oeuvre, these forms of perfecting echo the interest previously observed in relation to his words. Like correcting, glossing, and emending, the repairing and completing of his manuscripts demonstrate Chaucer's elevation as an object of philological study and a site of cultural value in the early modern period.

2.4 Mutilated Bodies and Books

The early modern instinct to supply lost leaves or missing words on the pages of a Chaucer manuscript reveals a predisposition for textual and bibliographical completeness conditioned and enabled by print. This chapter has cited the fact that the philological project of textual recovery employed a trope of corporeal destruction and reconstitution and has alluded to the moralised tenor of this discourse. Mutilation, it has been shown, was used as a master metaphor for damaged and fragmented books since the Italian Renaissance, and one which provides vital context for the early modern acts of repair with which this chapter is concerned. I wish now to revisit the concept through a more critical lens and to consider some of the latent anxieties signalled in this language of bookish perfection and mutilation.

The scholarly language of perfecting or 'making good' a faulty book is as fraught as the descriptors 'perfect' and 'good' suggest in their everyday usage. The suggestion that historical texts have moral properties has been entrenched in modern bibliography at least since A. W. Pollard's proposal that some of Shakespeare's early play texts were 'bad quartos' with no textual authority. As Random Cloud suggested over four decades ago in a denouncement of this idea and the editorial traditions behind it, 'The real problem with good and bad quartos is not what the words denote, but why we use terminology that has such overt and prejudicial connotations'.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Kathryn M. Rudy, *Piety in Pieces: How Medieval Readers Customized Their Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2016), pp. 8–9.

¹²⁶ Random Cloud, 'The Marriage of Good and Bad Quartos', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 33.3 (1982), 421–31 (421).

This implicit moral orientation of textual criticism is discernible across the entire constellation of the humanist intellectual endeavour. According to Tim Machan, the study of Middle English texts inherited the ‘moral overtones that characterised as degeneration the developments a text underwent through transmission’. Carolyn Dinshaw has likewise exposed the ‘pervasively moralised, gendered diction’ inherent to modern textual criticism.¹²⁷

For example, Sidney Lee’s 1902 census of surviving copies of the First Folio categorised entries according to his own hierarchy of perfection: Class I represented ‘Perfect Copies’, Class II, ‘Imperfect’, and Class III ‘Defective’ ones.¹²⁸ For collectors in the nineteenth century, the best copies were those that were ‘tall’, or in ‘handsome’ bindings.¹²⁹ Emma Smith has pointed out that the use of such terms is problematic; due to the ‘anthropomorphic drift of the use of a term for assessing human not bibliographic proportions’, Lee’s classifications ‘slipped uneasily into a judgement on the owners themselves’.¹³⁰ The same range of descriptors was used in modern philological scholarship on medieval manuscript books. As Tom White has demonstrated, for late nineteenth-century medievalists, the concept of ‘defectiveness’ was available in that period ‘as a powerfully generic metaphor that conjoins editorial theory’s moralism and positivism with contemporary discussions around disability, class, and race’.¹³¹ ‘Perfect’ books were complete; ‘imperfect’, ‘defective’, or ‘mutilated’ ones were not. These bookish words still have currency in scholarship today but their histories are not neutral, as scholarship in the field of disability studies has shown.¹³² Rather, they enfold historical attitudes to human bodies of the past which, like the books to which they would be compared, were seen as unfinished, incomplete, or fragmented. An excavation of the past usage and historical register of these now ubiquitous terms is appropriate to the widening and self-critical purview of the history of the book.¹³³ A knowledge of their

¹²⁷ Machan, *Textual Criticism*, p. 16; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 13.

¹²⁸ Smith, *Shakespeare’s First Folio*, p. 296.

¹²⁹ Smith, *Shakespeare’s First Folio*, p. 298; Dane, *Tomb*, p. 130.

¹³⁰ Smith, *Shakespeare’s First Folio*, p. 297.

¹³¹ Tom White, ‘National Philology, Imperial Hierarchies, and the “Defective” *Book of Sir John Mandeville*’, *RES*, 71.302 (2020), 828–49 (845).

¹³² Susan M. Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), esp. pp. 1–22; Douglas C. Baynton, *Defectives in the Land: Disability and Immigration in the Age of Eugenics* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

¹³³ An approach modelled, for example, by Alexandra Gillespie, ‘Turk’s-Head Knots’, in Gillespie and Lynch, pp. 201–18.

origins also deepens our understanding of the latent historical anxieties around textual loss encoded in these terms.

Printed and handwritten artefacts alike have long been described as though they were bodies, and consequently idealised in a language of perfection (and its lack) that is steeped in prejudiced views about their reliability and authority. For Aristotle, whose influence on the matter would persist until the Enlightenment, the human female body existed in a perpetual state of ‘mutilation’ or ‘deformation’, terms which he also applied to the physical conditions of castration, disability, and dismemberment.¹³⁴ In the Aristotelian tradition adopted by Galen, the less-than-perfect female body was viewed as an incomplete expression of the male form, and all bodies which deviated from the normative male standard were comparatively deficient.¹³⁵ Early modern medicine and theology inherited these ideas about imperfect bodies, and used the language of mutilation to characterise them. In the same period that the collected plays of Shakespeare were advertised (as was noted) as ‘cur’d, and perfect of their limbes . . . as he conceived them’, children born with physical disabilities could be described as ‘mutilate of some member’.¹³⁶ The pairing ‘imperfect and mutilate’, used to refer to people who were missing limbs, encapsulates the historical antithesis between the ideas of incompleteness and perfection.¹³⁷

This troubling resonance within the nomenclature adopted by scholars and historians of the book is important to confront in itself, and it is essential to an understanding of the intellectual scaffolding upon which modern conceptions of the book have been built. Such concerns are not as distant from Chaucer as they might initially appear. Although it does not explicitly invoke the rhetoric of mutilation and perfection, one of Chaucer’s tales exposes the imbrication of the concept of completeness in gendered, ableist, and even bookish ideals. The Wife of Bath, whose first named characteristic in the *General Prologue* is the fact that she is ‘somdel

¹³⁴ Charlotte Witt, *Ways of Being: Potentiality and Actuality in Aristotle’s Metaphysics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 110–11.

¹³⁵ *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*, ed. by Alcuin Blamires, Karen Pratt, and C. William Marx (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 39–42.

¹³⁶ William Cowper, *The anatomy of a Christian man* (London: T[homas] S[nodham], 1611; *STC* 5912), sig. F1^r.

¹³⁷ William Tyndale, *The whole workes of W. Tyndall, Iohn Frith, and Doc. Barnes* (London: John Day, 1573; *STC* 24436), sig. 2P3^v. More recently, the discriminatory connotations of ‘mutilate’ have seen it phased out of discussions of congenital disorders and its use in clinical contexts questioned; see Hope Lewis, ‘Between Irua and Female Genital Mutilation: Feminist Human Rights Discourse and the Cultural Divide’, *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, 8 (1995), 1–56.

deef, goes on in her *Prologue* to explain that her condition results from a single biblioclastic act:

By God, he smoot me ones on the lyst,
For that I rente out of his book a leef,
That of the strook myn ere wax al deaf.¹³⁸

She later clarifies that what she finally ‘rente out of’ her husband Jankyn’s misogynist book was more than a single ‘leef’: ‘Al sotheynly thre leves have I plyght / Out of his book, right as he radde’.¹³⁹ In her telling, the bodily violence she suffers is a direct requital of her own violation of the book’s textual integrity.¹⁴⁰ It is an equivalence embedded in the poetic form of her *Prologue* itself, where ‘leef’ is twice used as the rhyme word for ‘deef’.¹⁴¹ Alisoun’s enduring punishment – to be ‘al deaf’ for the rest of her life – points once again to the twinned historical anxiety about faulty books and imperfect bodies encoded in the very language used to describe and study those books.

The language of the book world is still replete with corporeal imagery: books have spines and joints, and pages possess a head and a foot. Those that show signs of damage are still labelled ‘defaced’, ‘dismembered’, ‘defective’, or ‘mutilated’ by modern scholars. Less apparent, and teeming beneath this language, is its mass of pejorative associations. This analogy made by early modern people between the imperfect book and the body matters because it helps to account for the sometimes radical efforts taken to restore, complete, preserve, and perfect old books that were wanting some part. In this context, for an early modern book to be imperfect meant not simply that it fell short of an abstract ideal, but that it was fundamentally, unsettlingly, and undesirably incomplete.¹⁴² If books were not already in a complete state, however, then they could be *made* perfect by the scholars who styled themselves as the healers and restorers of a fragmented literary culture. The somewhat solipsistic position of the early modern scholars and collectors who felt compelled to preserve old and endangered books is also expressed in their chosen language – in Poggio’s use of the Latin *integer* to describe the ‘bodily integrity and moral blamelessness’ of the restored text,¹⁴³ and in Joseph Holland’s choice of *procurare*, a word related to modern English *cure*, from the Latin *curare*

¹³⁸ III.634–6. ¹³⁹ III.690–91.

¹⁴⁰ Tory Vandevanter Pearman, *Women and Disability in Medieval Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 67.

¹⁴¹ Also at III.667–8. ¹⁴² *OED*, ‘mutilate, v.’, 1.

¹⁴³ Whittington, ‘The Mutilated Text’, p. 440.

(meaning to take care of, to care for, or to heal or cure) to describe his relationship to a medieval manuscript book.¹⁴⁴

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The history of the book is peppered with arresting stories of bibliophilia and destruction, and of volumes at turns cherished and plundered. Sometimes, these whirlwind trajectories can be tracked through the history and provenance of a single copy.¹⁴⁵ Following Chaucer's books from their fifteenth-century origins and into the early modern period brings to light a comparatively neglected history of book repair and conservation *avant la lettre*. In an era better known for its destruction and disassembly of manuscripts, this surviving evidence of book repair is worthy of note. It has been suggested by Burrow that unfinished works written by 'named vernacular masters' such as Chaucer were more likely to be published posthumously during the Middle Ages.¹⁴⁶ Then, as now, even a fragmented text by a venerable Middle English *auctor* was invested with a high cultural value. But a complete text was superior to a fragmentary one and in the course of their scribal and later print publication, attempts were made to conclude or at least superficially wrap up Chaucer's incomplete works in these new tellings: the Cook is assigned the *Tale of Gamelyn*, the dreamer in the *House of Fame* wakes up to write his poem, and the *Squire's Tale* is capped off by a series of apologetic explicits. These efforts to paper over the textual cracks in Chaucer's oeuvre speak to a pre-modern desire for closure. Burrow argues that this preference for completeness dissipated in the twentieth century, a period when '[w]hat we like is openness'.¹⁴⁷ Many readers in the late medieval and early modern periods, however, tried to recover, complete, and multiply what was in danger of being lost. In isolation, the filling in of physical tears in a book's parchment, of lost leaves, and of lacunae in the written text by later readers may appear idiosyncratic; assessed cumulatively, they articulate an ideal of wholeness pursued by the people who made these repairs.

¹⁴⁴ *OED*, 'cure, *n.*', 1.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example, Kathryn M. Rudy, *Image, Knife, and Gluepot: Early Assemblage in Manuscript and Print* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2019).

¹⁴⁶ Burrow, 'Poems Without Endings', 18. ¹⁴⁷ Burrow, 'Poems Without Endings', 35.