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## Introduction

Let us begin with an early early modern edition of a work by a late medieval author. In 1532, Thomas Berthelette, printer to the King, published John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Berthelette's was not the first edition of Gower's poem – William Caxton had issued it in 1483 – but, with the exception of Berthelette's own, largely identical reprint of 1554, none was to follow until the early nineteenth century. Those who read the *Confessio* from the time of Sir Thomas Wyatt to that of the early Romantics chiefly read him as mediated by Berthelette.

In preparing his edition, Berthelette took decisions which shaped the authorial construction of Gower. Caxton had not typographically distinguished between the different parts of Gower's text, but Berthelette did: he printed the English text in blackletter, the Latin glosses in a smaller blackletter font, and the Latin verses in a Roman font. Since the Latin glosses were printed not in the margins but within the main columns, the resulting appearance of a text which is continually interrupted suggested that Gower was "a compiler and not a poet in the same way as, for example, Chaucer" (Echârd 117). What may have reinforced the impression that Berthelette's edition is a compendium of stories gathered by Gower is the detailed table of contents, extending over ten pages, which precedes the *Confessio*. The view of Gower as compiler of a disjointed hodgepodge has little in common with that of modern scholarship. C. S. Lewis, for instance, held that "Gower everywhere shows a concern for form and unity which is rare at any time and which, in the fourteenth century in England, entitles him to all but the highest praise" (198-99). What provided an impression of compilation, in other words, was the *Confessio*'s bibliographic constitution in Berthelette's edition more than Gower's artistic design.

In addition to suggesting that Gower was a compiler, Berthelette's edition casts him in the role of commentator by means of the prominent Latin glosses before the stories, which guide the readers' response to them

(Machan 156). For evidence of the influence of Berthelette's construction of Gower as commentator, one may need to look no further than *Pericles*, the play which modern scholarship suggests Shakespeare wrote in co-authorship with George Wilkins (Vickers 291-332). The play dramatizes the story of Apollonius as told in Book VIII of the *Confessio*. Shakespeare and Wilkins's indebtedness to Gower is such that they are believed to have worked with a copy of the *Confessio* open before them (Bullough 360). But Gower not only provided one of the chief sources for *Pericles*; he also functions as a character within it, "Gower" being the name of the Chorus figure who appears before each act and at the end of the play, summarizing and commenting on the action. Shakespeare and Wilkins, then, dramatized not only a tale told by Gower but also Berthelette's bibliographic construction of Gower as commentator.

In a well-known passage of his "Commentary on Peter Lombard's Sentences," St Bonaventure distinguishes the *auctor* from the *commentator*, the *compiler*, and the *scriptor*. Whereas the words of the *auctor* form "the principal part" of a text with "those of others being annexed merely by way of confirmation," the *commentator* chiefly writes down the words of other men and adds his own "merely to make clear the argument," and the *compiler* simply "put[s] together material . . . not his own" (Minnis and Scott 229). Berthelette's edition in some ways fashions Gower as a *compiler* and *commentator* more than as an *auctor*.

The dedicatory epistle addressed to King Henry VIII is in keeping with Berthelette's strategy of down-playing Gower's authorial status. Berthelette affirms that "it was not moche greater payne to that excellent clerke the morall John Gower to compyle the same noble warke / than it was to me to prynt it / no man wyll beleue it / without confering both the printis / the olde and myn to gether" (sig. aaiir). In order to highlight his own agency, Berthelette belittles that of Gower, who was not an *auctor* but a "clerke" whose only merit was to "compyle" the *Confessio*. It seems entirely fitting that Berthelette also adds the epithet to Gower's name which has done the greatest damage to his reputation through the centuries: "morall John Gower." Berthelette's address "To the Reader" praises the *Confessio*'s "furtheraunce of the lyfe to vertue" (sig. aaiiv) and its "manyfolde eloquent reasons / sharpe and quicke argumentes / and examples of great auctorite / perswadynge vnto vertue / not onely taken out of the poetes / oratours / history wryters / and philosophers / but also out of the holy scripture" (sigs. aaiir-v). Berthelette's paratext was decisive, as Tim William Machan has shown, in establishing the "judgment of morality as Gower's preeminent characteristic" (152).

The passage of Berthelette's dedicatory epistle from which the above words are excerpted deserves to be quoted more fully, since it illustrates that Berthelette's understanding of Gower's authorship was contested. Addressing King Henry VIII, Berthelette (sig. aaii<sup>r</sup>) writes:

I had printed this warke [i.e. the *Confessio*] / to deuyse with my selfe / whether I myght be so bolde to presente your hyghnesse with one of them / and so in your gracis name putte them forthe. your moste hygh and most princely maieste abasshed and cleane discouraged me to so to do / both because the present (as concernynge the value) was farre to symple / as me thought / and bycause it was none other wyse my acte / but as I toke some payne to prynte it more correctly than it was before. And though I shulde saye / that it was not moche greater payne to that excellent clerke the morall John Gower to compyle the same noble warke / than it was to me to prynt it / no man wyll beleue it / without conferring both the printis / the olde and myn to gether.

This little-noticed passage provides a fascinating glimpse of the monarch's view of authorship. Berthelette wanted to dedicate the *Confessio* to Henry, but Henry was reluctant, and what accounts for his reluctance is his view of authorial agency. For Berthelette, Gower's agency in compiling and his own agency in printing are similar – Gower's "payne" was "not moche greater." For Henry, however, the "acte" was basically Gower's, not the printer's, who did no more than improve an earlier printing. And the honour and prestige that are bestowed by a royal dedicatee should be reserved, in Henry's opinion, to the author.

The privileged position Henry VIII seems prepared to assign to the published author may seem surprising. When the Stationers' Company was incorporated in 1557 – ten years after Henry's death – to regulate the workings of the book trade, the right to reproduce texts came to inhere precisely not in authors but stationers. Once a text had reached the hands of a stationer, an author had little or no power over its dissemination. Many texts reached print unbeknownst to the author, and even more texts, in particular fictional texts, were published without an author's name on the title page (North). What is often ignored, however, is that a Royal Proclamation of 1546, late in Henry VIII's reign, required that "every book should bear the author's and the printer's name" (McKenzie 39). The attempt to make the author's name an integral part of books seems to have been short-lived and superseded by the royal charter of incorporation of 1557. Nonetheless, late in the reign of King Henry VIII, it appeared for a short time that the book trade would be more author-centred than it subsequently became. Henry's opinion as reported by Berthelette – according to which the author is the sole



agent involved in book production worthy of the dignity of royal patronage – may well reflect the spirit of the 1546 Royal Proclamation which highlighted the authority and responsibility of authors.

The bibliographic makeup of Berthelette's *Confessio* and its reception history make of the edition a crucial document in the authorial construction of Gower. Chaucer – who, like Gower, had been edited by Caxton in the 1480s, and who had his works published by William Thynne in 1532 – kept being re-edited, notably by John Stowe in 1561, Thomas Speght in 1598 and 1602, John Urry (with others) in 1721, and Thomas Tyrwhitt in 1775. Gower's *Confessio*, by contrast, continued to be read in Berthelette's edition. As Chaucer was solidifying his position as the father of English poetry (see Cooper below, 29-50), the Chaucer-Gower pairing increasingly played in the latter's disfavour, a development in which Berthelette's edition may have played its part.

Stressing Berthelette's importance for the making of "Gower" must not blind us to the importance of Gower himself in this process. The initial paratext – address to the reader, table of contents, and dedicatory epistle – takes up the first fourteen pages of Berthelette's edition, but then Gower is allowed to announce his authorial project in his own voice: "I wol go the myddell wey, | And wryte a boke bytwene the twey; | Somwhat of lust / and somewhat of lore" (Air). Gower's prologue and Latin commentary frame the love narratives with an apparatus which lend his writings authorial prestige and argue for its moral usefulness. Gower modelled the form of the *Confessio* on the commented versions of classical texts of his time, in particular Ovid, a form which thus comes with an ambitious authorial claim (Minnis "De Vulgari Auctoritate"). In addition to claiming the status of author by means of the formal constitution of his work, Gower enters the fiction of the poem as a literary persona (Amans identifies himself as "John Gower" in his reply to Venus at VIII.2322), and, as Robert R. Edwards helps us see below (59-60), he does so by explicitly equating the persona with the author: "fingens se auctor esse Amantem" (I.59 gloss). As Edwards shows, Gower was "the paradigmatic author in late-medieval England" (57). In the *Confessio*, he not only conspicuously fashioned himself as an author; he also fictionalized his own authorship.

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Bridging the medieval and the early modern – which our literary histories and institutional practices too often keep apart – Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and its edition by Berthelette can serve to highlight an important aim of this collection. The medieval text and its early modern edi-

tion also bring together several key issues which the following essays address, and the collection is loosely assembled around four of them, as reflected by the order of the contributions: authorial self-fashioning, the fictionalization of authorship, the posthumous construction of authorship, and the nexus of authorship and authority. Other thematic groupings might have been possible, and the collection has not been divided into formal parts, since they would suggest greater compartmentalization than it seems desirable to impose. Nonetheless, each of the following essays is related to others, and the aim of this part of the introduction is to make them enter into dialogue with each other – and with authorship studies more generally.

Thanks to Harold Bloom, the subject of fatherhood has long been important to thinking about authorship. According to *The Anxiety of Influence*, the author's Oedipal struggle with his poetic father to secure his own survival into posterity is of greatest relevance to the romantic period, though the second edition of Bloom's study traces the dynamic back as far as Shakespeare. Helen Cooper's essay articulates a model very different from Bloom's which is of particular relevance to the medieval and early modern period, in which authorial filiation is not a source of anxiety but of self-fashioning. In this model, poetic sonship is a source of pride and ambition, something not to be overcome but vindicated. Rather than killing the poetic father so as not to be killed by him, the poet chooses his father and proclaims him as the source of his poetic life, giving him voice and authority, much as the muses or divine inspiration are said to do in other texts. This form of authorial self-fashioning which functions through the invocation of poetic ancestry becomes possible once earlier writings have identifiable and identified authors, in other words, once "the authority of story [has made] the transition to the authority of the author" (34), a development in English literary history for which Cooper establishes the importance of the Ricardian age with Gower and, in particular, Chaucer. Cooper's essay thus provides an early history of English poets placing themselves in an authorial genealogy, inheriting from their predecessors not only the authority of a tradition within which they can place themselves but also "the right to attach their own names to their poetry" (36) – the right, in other words, to be perceived as authors.

Edwards's essay complements Cooper's by exploring how Gower and Chaucer fashioned themselves as authors. As Edwards shows, important work on medieval authorship has been done which focuses on pedagogy – the study of canonical authors in teaching – and exegesis, which allows us to distinguish the role of the author from other roles in textual production, such as those of the commentator and the compiler. His essay adds to this work by investigating how medieval authorship

can inflect internally the meaning of aesthetic creation, as evidenced by the works of Chaucer and Gower. Edwards demonstrates that Gower had the “ambition to be seen as an author” and insisted “on the coherence of his canon” and “authorial project” (58-59); similarly, Edwards shows that “authorship is an issue internal to Chaucer’s writing throughout his career” and that he too “has a precise sense of his poetic canon” (63). Whereas Laȝamon, around the turn of the thirteenth century, had considered himself a compiler, Chaucer and Gower clearly thought of themselves as authors.

The invocation of poetic ancestors which Cooper investigates is of course not the same thing as their actual use as source texts. Chaucer, as Cooper points out, drew on many contemporary or near-contemporary writers, although he neglects to mention most of them, aligning himself instead with classical poets at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*. As Lynn Meskill’s essay reveals, even Ben Jonson, although he filled the margins of the 1605 edition of *Sejanus* with references to the classical authorities on whom he drew, consciously fails to record other borrowings. Despite these omissions, the *Sejanus* quarto records Jonson’s indebtedness to Tacitus, Juvenal, and other classical authors so conspicuously that the 1605 quarto is a “typographic monument to authorship” (75). With Jonson, in other words, the material book becomes the locus in which Jonson fashions himself as author, and he does so by proudly placing himself within an authorial genealogy.

It is precisely by rendering visible his debts to others that Jonson stages what Joseph Loewenstein has called “possessive authorship.” For Jonson, giving their due to others and staking a claim to his own clearly go hand in hand. As Meskill’s comparative study of the use of sources in *Sejanus* and *Julius Caesar* shows, the nature of Shakespeare’s debts to Plutarch is not unlike that of Jonson to his sources, but contrary to the 1605 *Sejanus*, editions of *Julius Caesar* render the playwright’s debts to Plutarch invisible. Shakespearean invocations of authorial ancestry, apart from Gower in the collaborative *Pericles*, tend to be rare and indirect. Shakespeare’s model of authorship, in other words, is radically different from Jonson’s and Spenser’s, to whose laureate authorship Shakespeare may have responded with a “counter-laureate authorship,” as Patrick Cheney has suggested (*Shakespeare’s Literary Authorship*). Not only Meskill’s but also Johann Gregory’s contribution to this volume build on Cheney’s argument, and Gregory, like Meskill, sees Shakespeare’s authorial self-fashioning in contrast to Jonson’s. He holds that Shakespeare’s thinking about authorship made him craft plays, like *Troilus and Cressida*, in which “the author’s drift” is precisely not stressed, in which “Shakespeare leaves the significance of his plays, and even the value of his own authorship, to reflect into the future” (103). This helps us rec-

ognize a model of distinctly unpossessive authorship which may throw new light on the choice of titles like *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*.

Whereas Shakespeare turned against Spenser's model of laureate authorship, Milton built upon it. Spenser and Milton enlist themselves in the great epic tradition, Spenser fashioning himself as a modern-day Virgil whose generic career pattern he first imitated and then revised (Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight*), Milton as a modern-day Homer: "he stages himself as blind narrator" in *Paradise Lost* and "explicitly invokes the parallel with Homer . . . and his desire for similar renown" (118). As Neil Forsyth, from whose essay these words are quoted, shows, Milton fashioned his public persona very carefully, "more so than any previous writer, even Spenser and Ben Jonson," and "made an extraordinary effort" to keep control over his works (111-12). Milton's writings return to himself so recurrently that a scholar could devote a whole monograph to *Milton on Himself* (Diekhoff), which, as Forsyth argues, shows that Milton not only succeeds Homer but also anticipates Wordsworth, who famously devoted *The Prelude* to the "Growth of a Poet's Mind" – Wordsworth's own mind, that is.

While Forsyth places Milton's notion of authorship on the trajectory that leads from Homer to Wordsworth, Stephen Hequembourg contrasts Milton with Marvell. As is well known, both served Cromwell's Council of State as Latin secretary, and both were poets and controversialists, yet the authorial personae they construct in their political and religious pamphlets could hardly be more different. Hequembourg focuses on pronouns, arguing that Marvell's "subtle formulations of authorship in the field of political and religious polemic" provide him with "an opportunity to elaborate an ethics of representation – to inquire who is able to speak for others, against others, or in the place of others" (126). He shows how Marvell, "unable and probably unwilling to adopt Milton's monolithic 'I,' . . . finds himself caught in a network of rival pronouns" (126) – we, thou, you, he, and it, while "the authorial 'I' disappears almost entirely" (132). Given their very different use of pronouns, it seems fitting that while Milton's writings keep returning to himself, Marvell continually escapes from himself, changing chameleon-like, to borrow the image from the subtitle of Nigel Smith's recent biography.

The essays by Edwards, Meskill, Gregory, and Hequembourg suggest that the authorship of those who traditionally head the medieval and early modern canon, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, may be better understood if we are simultaneously aware of the authorship of their contemporaries: Chaucer *and* Gower; Shakespeare *and* Jonson; Milton *and* Marvell. Chaucer's authorial project, as Edwards shows, interacts



with that of his contemporary Gower and provides a counterpoint to it. Shakespeare's authorial invisibility (Meskill) and the difficulty of locating his authorial drift (Gregory) are brought into focus by Jonson's self-assertive authorial visibility, indeed monumentality. And Milton's "strong single voice" and "monolithic 'I'" (125-26) gains in distinctiveness, as Hequembourg shows, if considered alongside Marvell's more uncertain, shifting, and searching authorial voice, gesturing towards a text that speaks "for and in place of its author" (126). Read side by side, the essays by Meskill and Hequembourg suggest that the authorial dynamic between Jonson and Shakespeare is not unlike that, a bit over half a century later, between Milton and Marvell. Jonson and Milton are two of the three "self-crowned laureates" to whom the late Richard Helgerson devotes the influential study of that title, so the similarities between their possessive authorial personae has not escaped critical attention. Yet the continuities between Shakespeare's and Marvell's self-effacing authorial projects have been less noticed. Shakespeare, the perfect ventriloquist, disappears behind his characters, infusing himself into all and none of them; Marvell disappears behind his pronouns with an ethics of authorship that leads to his self-effacement. The cases of Shakespeare and Marvell suggest that we would benefit from a fuller account than is currently available of forms of self-concealing authorship.

The contributions introduced so far focus on individual medieval and early modern authors (Chaucer, Gower, Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, and Marvell) who use various devices like paratexts and the material book, references to their own works or their biography, invocations of poetic fatherhood, or pronouns in order to fashion their own authorial persona. Another group of contributions – by Patrick Cheney, John Blakeley, and Colin Burrow – is less interested in such forms of authorial self-fashioning than in how texts comment on more general configurations of authorship of their time, and in how they do so by fictionalizing authorship. In their analyses of fictionalizations of models of authorship, all three essays, as we will see, respond to the work of the late Richard Helgerson.

Patrick Cheney locates a hitherto neglected fictionalization of early modern authorship in the sublime, which shares "a commitment to the project of *literary greatness*" (141). His inventory of the early modern sublime includes, for instance, a list of tragedies – from Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* to John Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* – which "critics have independently identified as seeming to be about, finally, the making of a great tragedy" (150). The Longinian authorial sublime, Cheney argues, "better theorizes much early modern literature than does Aristotle, Horace, or Sidney" and played "a centralizing role in the advent of modern English authorship" (137). Cheney's project, in other words, is



to identify a form of authorship which is central to early modern literature but does not conform to the Helgersonian model. Specifically, Cheney's essay amounts to a revision of Helgerson's model of laureate authorship. For Helgerson, what serves the project of literary greatness is the authorship of the self-crowned laureate, whose poetry benefits the state and the church, the laureate poet serving as a spokesman for the nation and as a teacher. Cheney identifies in the sublime "a new standard of authorship, located not simply in rational, patriotic paradigms of classical or Christian goodness, but also in the eternizing greatness of the author's literary work" (155-56).

John Blakeley focuses not on laureate authorship but on Helgerson's notion of the Elizabethan writer as prodigal (*The Elizabethan Prodigals*) by examining the dramatization of authorship in the so-called *Parnassus* trilogy of plays, produced anonymously at the University of Cambridge late in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Even though written in Cambridge, the plays constitute a kind of dramatization of London's literary field of their day, featuring two of Shakespeare's fellow actors (Richard Burbage and William Kemp), a stationer (John Danter), and extended references to numerous writers (including Shakespeare, Jonson, and Spenser). As Blakeley puts it, "the plays enact what could be described as a materialist analysis of the conditions of literary production" (172) and thus constitute an excellent source for how professional authorship was viewed at the time. According to Helgerson, Elizabethan writers identified with the prodigal son, their careers conforming to the narrative of the prodigal son (from rebellion and wantonness to guilt) except for the concluding restoration. In this Helgersonian model (as exemplified by George Gascoigne, John Lyly, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, and Philip Sidney), the writer as prodigal thus ends by turning away from literature in disillusionment. What Blakeley finds in the *Parnassus* plays is something quite different, however, namely "literary pursuit [which] is figured not as rebellion, but as obedience," with "no evident anxiety, prevarication, or other reservation about the goal of authorship" (166).

Colin Burrow engages with Helgerson by revising and refining his classification of late-Elizabethan writers into amateur (e.g. Philip Sidney), professional (e.g. Robert Greene), and laureate (e.g. Edmund Spenser), suggesting that the three types of writers "were in fact much less distinct in their origins" (176) than Helgerson allowed. He argues that poetic authorship in the second half of the sixteenth century "was substantially defined by changing relationships" between "a range of agents who would today be described as 'editors' . . . and authors" (176). Burrow shows how the representation of authorship in the paratexts of books of poetry witnesses the gradual emergence of the individual author from "fictions of collaboration" (187). The essay thus charts the

genealogy of a model of authorship, “laureate authorship,” which emerges, Burrow argues, not so much from a new kind of poet and poetry as from a new way of representing (or *fictionalizing*) poetic writing in paratexts, a representation which sees authorial identity and activity as independent of those friends, editors, and overseers who had been central to the prefatory rhetoric of volumes of poetry all the way back to Tottel’s miscellany and *The Mirror for Magistrates*. Where Helgerson saw the birth of the laureate author Burrow identifies the “absorption of the editor and overseer functions into the figure of the author” (195). Like Cheney’s argument about the fictionalization of literary greatness through the sublime and Blakeley’s examination of the fictionalization of authorship in *Troilus and Cressida*, Burrow’s essay thus revises and adds to Helgerson’s work on early modern authorship while paying tribute to the powerful influence it keeps exerting.

An important corollary of Burrow’s argument about the absorption of the editor or “overseer” into the author figure is his demonstration that in the decades before this absorption took place, the author – like Thomas More, Wyatt, or Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey – was typically dead by the time his works appeared in print. As Burrow puts it, “a central assumption of the mid-sixteenth century literary scene, and one which persisted until the final decade of the century” is that “major poetic works are generally retrospective” (182). Berthelette’s 1532 and 1554 editions of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* with which this introduction started are a case in point. The publication of poetic works after the death of the author is part of a broader cultural mechanism, the posthumous construction of authorship. Authors are not born but made, and the making of a canonical author does not stop at the writer’s death. For the most prominent medieval and early modern authors, this mechanism has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Seth Lerer has shown, for instance, how the fifteenth-century literary system decisively shaped the cultural status of Chaucer. Thomas Dabbs has argued that the nineteenth century made Christopher Marlowe, and Michael Dobson that the eighteenth century made Shakespeare, while Gary Taylor has examined how successive ages from the Restoration to the present have continually reinvented Shakespeare.

The essays by Emma Depledge and Julianna Bark contribute to this analysis of the posthumous construction of authorship. They do so by adding to Dobson and Taylor’s work on Shakespeare, who may well have had the most complex afterlife of all authors in the canon. Depledge’s examination of Shakespeare alterations of the Exclusion Crisis (1678-1682) raises questions about the relation between adaptation and authorship. Like Burrow, Depledge considers paratext as a crucial location in which authorship is constructed, and, as in the books Burrow

examines, the paratextual construction of authorship is far from stable. In Burrow's essay, the significant changes are diachronic; in Depledge's, they are synchronic and media-specific: the paratexts written for performance in the theatre (prologues and epilogues) stress Shakespeare's authorship, whereas the paratexts written for print publication (dedications and prefaces) vindicate the adapters' authorship. The prominence of "Shakespeare" in prologues and epilogues of this politically unstable period, Depledge argues, results from the strategy of claiming in a context of tight theatre censorship that politically sensitive, topical adaptations were no more than innocuous plays by a playwright long dead. As print censorship was lax during the same years following the lapse of the Licensing Act, publication in book form left the adapters free to reclaim the plays as their own. The plays Depledge examines thus are or are not authored by Shakespeare, depending on the kinds of paratext one consults, demonstrating "with exceptional clarity the contingency of authorship at a specific moment in history" (211).

The contingencies which determine the posthumous construction of "Shakespeare" result, as Dobson, Taylor, and Depledge show, in changing images of the author. As Bark's essay demonstrates, this mechanism also applies to literal images. She argues that debates over the authenticity or not of purported likenesses of Shakespeare can tell us more about how Shakespeare was authorially constructed at a certain time, by certain people, than about the credentials of the portraits' provenance. The recent debate over the Cobbe portrait, championed by the Doyen of Shakespeare studies, Stanley Wells, general editor of the Oxford Shakespeare *Complete Works* and Chairman of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, seems a case in point. Similarly, that the Chandos portrait is often considered the only extant life portrait of Shakespeare may have more to do, as Bark suggests, with that portrait's ownership by the National Portrait Gallery than with evidence that would vouchsafe its authenticity. Jointly, the essays by Depledge and Bark demonstrate that authorship is shaped by posthumous representations in word and image, at historically specific moments like the Exclusion Crisis as well as across the centuries.

While the posthumous construction of medieval and early modern authors continues to this day, that of ancient authors was ongoing in medieval and early modern England. Rita Copeland investigates the latter as reflected by medieval grammatical curricula and the lists of authors they include. What confers authorial prestige in these reading lists, as Copeland shows, are not "qualities inherent in the authors" but their capacity to serve "towards forming ideal readers" (246). In other words, "the 'advanced authors' of the classical canon are directed towards forming ideal readers, not imitative authors" (246). The reading lists

Copeland examines have in common that they “decisively shift their attention away from whatever may be in the text and direct it to what is in the reader” (246-47). They range in time from no later than the middle of the twelfth century (Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores*) to after 1450 (a collection of epitomes of classical and medieval works), leading Copeland to conclude that “there is much less of a difference between medieval and early humanist uses of ancient literary culture than we often assume” (246).

Copeland’s essay speaks to the contingent construction of authors long dead. It also alerts us to the intimate relation between authorship and authority: what readers confer on authors is authority, and it is the bestowing of authority by readers that makes authors. The close relation is embedded in the words and was even more so in the medieval period. The *auctor* is he whose writings have authority. When Chaucer’s Geoffrey, in *The House of Fame*, says that “Non other auctour alegge I” (314), the dominant meaning of “auctour” is what we now call “authority” (see *OED* author, n.4): his telling of Dido’s lament, he is claiming, rests on no other authority than his own dream.

The close relation between authorship and authority is also addressed in the remaining contributions to this collection, by Stefania D’Agata D’Ottavi, Nicole Nyffenegger, Alice Spencer, and Alastair Minnis. D’Agata D’Ottavi, like Hequembourg, focuses on pronouns. She does so to distinguish between what she argues are two different uses of “I” in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, respectively designating the narrator and the invented author. The latter claims to be translating a “Latin – and therefore authoritative – text” by “the imaginary author Lollius” (253) and “engages in a constant comparison between his own work and that of the imaginary author,” thus becoming a “character in the vernacular story” (253) who is allowed to suggest that “his understanding of the events is different from that of his source” (258). By the end of the poem, D’Agata D’Ottavi argues, Chaucer’s invented author-translator has “appropriated the imagined authority of the fictitious Latin source” (260).

The imagined transfer of authority from past *auctor* to present author which D’Agata D’Ottavi finds in *Troilus and Criseyde* is central, Nyffenegger argues, to medieval historiography and, specifically, the chronicle of Robert Mannyng of Brunne (thought to have been completed in the 1330s). Examining the claims for authority made by the “writing I” (266), Nyffenegger recognizes in them the historiographer’s diachronic struggle for authority: “There are those authors before him . . . whose authority he sometimes undermines in order to establish his; there are those authors who will come after him . . . Naturally, he does not want *them* to undermine *his* authority in order to establish theirs” (266). As a



result, she argues, historiography “becomes a dynamic of appropriation and control: the author wants as much of the authority from the *auctores* as he can get, and he wants to lose as little as possible of his own to future authors” (266-67). A specific strategy to suggest authorial control, according to Nyffenegger, is to represent the source as a physical book which, because of its physicality, can be handled and thus controlled. Nyffenegger suggests that such “gestures of authorship” (267) are present in medieval historiography generally and are deployed by Mannyng with particular skill.

Whereas Mannyng acquires his authority by appropriating his predecessors’, Osbern Bokenham – Spencer argues – grounds his authority in topography. Bokenham’s mid-fifteenth-century lives of native saints in the recently discovered Abbotsford *Legenda Aurea* and his geographical treatise, the *Mappula Angliae*, see in Britain’s marginal place on the *mappae mundi* grounds for its “exceptionalism and exaltation” (280). Spencer argues that Bokenham uses the “topographical localisation of native saints in an attempt to locate his own authority” (289): “topography serves to locate . . . not only the saintly corpse, but also the literary authority of the hagiographical corpus” (277). By foregrounding the geographical origins of his native saints, Bokenham thus claims for himself a specifically English authorial identity. His project, Spencer argues, is in effect a re-evaluation of the medieval English canon, “claiming for his purportedly ‘plain’ vernacular the illustrious status which Gower, Chaucer and Lydgate implicitly asserted for their own aureate styles,” thus rooting “literary authority in linguistic authenticity” (282).

In the concluding essay, Minnis cautions that if we want to arrive at an accurate understanding of late medieval concepts of the author, we must not separate secular and sacred literary theory. What partly occasioned the rise in the authority of poetic authorship, Minnis contends, is the way poetry’s relation to theology was perceived: poetry shared with theology and the Bible “certain styles and methods of literary procedure” (305), such as figurative, affective, and imaginative writing. This association of theology, queen of the sciences, with poetry was problematic since it was running the risk of demeaning theology, obliging “generation after generation of medieval theologians to defend the epistemological and moral credentials of their subject and the ‘scientific’ basis of its knowledge” (305). On the other hand, as Minnis shows, the relation of theology and poetry was beneficial to the latter and was “exploited to great effect by innovative literary theorists of trecento Italy, including Francis Petrarch and Giovanni Boccaccio” (303), resulting in a significant increase in the authority of poetic authorship.



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Although this introduction has organized the following essays around four topics, some essays contribute to several of them, and the divisions are far from water-tight. Two topics are examined in work on both medieval and early modern literature (authorial self-fashioning and the posthumous construction of authorship), whereas one has attracted more attention from those working on early modern (the fictionalization of authorship) and another more from those focusing on medieval texts (the authorship/authority nexus). This distribution of thematic and period interests – even though it was not originally intended but has organically grown out of the work produced for this collection – may in itself make an important point about the continuities and differences in medieval and early modern authorship. Both deserve to be stressed: the continuities since the institutional iron curtain between the “medieval” and the “early modern” easily makes us lose sight of them; the differences because they may give us a better sense of historically specific configurations of authorship.

Concerning the continuities, although one might think that the historicist thesis, aided by Michel Foucault,<sup>1</sup> about the post-medieval origins of the author may no longer need refutation (Burke, Vickers), it remains common to associate the “birth” or “emergence” of the English author with the early modern period (Dutton, Pask). Yet the English author was alive and well at least as early as Ricardian England. As this collection makes clear, Chaucer and Gower thought of themselves and each other as authors and were perceived as such by their contemporaries. Chaucer’s posthumous construction as author developed continuously in late medieval and early modern England (Lerer, Krier). Print culture did not start affecting English authorship until late in the fifteenth century, but it aided the production not only of early modern but also of medieval authors, as the example of Berthelette’s Gower edition illustrates, and as the study by Alexandra Gillespie has more fully demonstrated. Even English laureate authorship, whose beginnings used to be located with Spenser (Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates*), has now been firmly pushed back as far as John Skelton (Griffiths; Cheney, *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry* 115-38) and John Lydgate (Meyer-Lee). In other words, our understanding of early English authorship remains incomplete unless we think of it in terms which are genuinely medieval-

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<sup>1</sup> “There was a time when the texts we call ‘literary’ (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author . . . A reversal occurred in the seventeenth or eighteenth century” (Foucault 149).

and-early-modern and recognize the various continuities from the times of Chaucer and Lydgate to those of Shakespeare and Milton.

At the same time, there is no denying that the configurations of authorship in medieval and early modern England underwent considerable change. What changed, most obviously, are the material conditions in which writers worked and had their texts disseminated. For professional authors like Robert Greene and Thomas Nashe to emerge, for instance, a flourishing commercial theatre and book trade were necessary. As Blakeley writes, it is in the Elizabethan period “that for the first time it becomes possible to earn a full-time living as a writer” (162) in the marketplace. Spenser and others after him used print in ways which decisively shaped their perception as authors. Not only the material conditions but also the theory of authorship changed. Whereas the medieval author was usually considered a secondary efficient cause, subordinate to the primary efficient cause, God (Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* 94-103), the humanist poetics of Italians like Cristoforo Landino and Julius Caesar Scaliger and, in their wake, Philip Sidney and George Puttenham came to conceive of the poet as an ex-nihilo creator by analogy to God (Mack). We may recognize here the result of long-term, large-scale changes brought about by humanism and the reformation, by secularization and what Barthes called the “prestige of the individual” (49). Yet such master-keys to historical causation, as we are rightly warned below, must not blind us to the local contingencies with which authorship is always bound up: Burrow’s diachronic account of poetic authorship in the latter half of the sixteenth century takes its course not as “a simple consequence of large-scale historical changes, but partly because of a sequence of accidents” (190). Any attempt to reduce the history of medieval and early modern authorship to a single overarching narrative is thus bound to fail. What we need instead are local, detailed case studies, which is what this collection aims to supply.

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