THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

AMERICAN CHAUCERS

Candace Barrington

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Tom's sixteen-year old friend: *What's your mom do?*
Tom: *She teaches Chaucer.*
Friend: *What's a Chaucer?*
Tom: *No. Not a what, a who. . .*
Chaucer's a fourteenth-century poet, dude.

This book is dedicated to
my son, Tom, for admitting he knows who Chaucer is, and
my daughter, Katherine, for knowing how funny that admission is

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ABBREVIATIONS

PMacKPapers	Percy MacKaye Papers
KGSBPapers	Kathrine Gordon Sanger Brinley Papers

INTRODUCTION: POPULAR AUDIENCES, AMERICA, AND CHAUCER

Through the end of the twentieth century, most reception studies of Chaucer focused on his learned readers—academics and literati who approached Middle English verse armed with a distinctive set of reading practices and an ease with antique languages. In frequently bypassing popularizations of Chaucer, these studies created the impression that mainstream audiences "virtually ignored" Chaucer and his works.[1] However, the publication of Steve Ellis' *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* during Chaucer's sexcentenary in 2000 opened "Chaucer's various manifestations in modern culture outside the academic area" to our attention, encouraging scholars to examine Chaucer's function in the popular marketplace.[2] My study accepts Ellis' challenge and continues his groundbreaking work with five chapters focusing on Chaucer's appearances in American popular culture over the past two hundred years. By setting aside the preconceptions about reception studies that have so far excluded serious study of the intersections between the "father of English letters" and American popular culture, this study considers what these intersections tell us about Chaucer's verse and American culture.[3] These popular productions, which I call American Chaucers, may provide nonacademic audiences with considerable misinformation about Chaucer, his verse, medieval mores, and fourteenth-century England; simultaneously, these popular productions demonstrate how Chaucer's difficult alterity and canonical cachet combine to create a chameleon text suitable for adaptation to various American concerns and values.

As might be expected, Americans based far fewer of their popularizations on Chaucer than on Shakespeare. Within this comparatively small group, I have chosen to examine only a subset of these American Chaucers because I want to provide a thick study of each production. In selecting this subset, I looked for imaginative works created by American nonacademics for nonspecialist, or popular, American audiences. Under the broad umbrella "imaginative works," I have chosen works from many different

genres: nineteenth-century literary anthologies; Percy MacKaye's play, pageant, and opera, all titled *The Canterbury Pilgrims*; James Norman Hall's memoir *Flying with Chaucer*; Anne Maury's pageant *May Day in Canterbury*; Kathrine Gordon Brinley's one-woman performance *Chaucer Lives*; and Brian Helgeland's film *A Knight's Tale*. All these works share some characteristics that make them particularly suitable for my study. First, whether written texts or dramatizations, they all announce their appropriation of Chaucer. At the same time, their references to Chaucer expect only a familiarity with his name and a vague awareness of his historical literary importance, not a thorough knowledge of his work. In addition, these versions do not emulate Chaucer by, for instance, imagining a tale-telling pilgrimage with a whole new set of travelers headed to a new destination. Let me refine this point a bit further: these works do not appropriate Chaucer's story lines or codes and put them into American dress; rather, they usually take American characters, narratives, and codes and put them into medieval English garb, renewing Chaucer by incorporating his life and poetry into intertexts and concerns more familiar to American audiences. As mosaics incorporating their contemporary culture and Chaucer's verse, these American popularizations of Chaucer transform both to create a new text, thereby illustrating the adaptability of Chaucerian narratives and characters to key features of American ideology. Also, these American Chaucers minimize their audiences' literacy problems by eschewing the Middle English written text and adopting translations, often in the form of performance models: plays, pageants, operas, films, even one-woman readings and dramatizations. And finally, each American Chaucer uniquely removes itself from the Middle English text, broadens its potential audience, and remakes Chaucer—a poet of great historical, geographic, and linguistic distance from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans—in the image of its audience. As a result, these secondary transmissions of Chaucer not only initiate the most uninformed Americans, and sometimes the most illiterate, into the mysteries of an astonishingly complex text, but also, despite significant bits of misinformation, contribute (ironically enough) to Americans' understanding of Britain's literature and its past.

In choosing these American Chaucers, I also looked for a variety of creators. Redactors of many stripes have used Chaucer's combination of accessibility and distance to justify transforming him and, in doing so, have found him a convenient vehicle for delivering apparently incongruent ideas to the educated American public, that wide middling range who do not read books for a living but still recognize the cultural approbation attached to canonical authors.[4] Editors looking for morality have had a malleable text easily reconfigured to their own morality, while writers seeking interesting characters have mined Chaucer's pilgrims for the pious and the

eccentric, for the vicious and the egregious. In the following chapters, you will find poets and dramatists, men and women, soldiers and entrepreneurs; all have borrowed Chaucer's cultural capital and claimed his characters and tales as their own.

My choice of texts has excluded a great number of equally fascinating works that I could not locate or logistically fit into this study. For instance, I have set aside British productions, even if they achieved some success with American audiences.[5] Also, though I have included such dramatizations as plays, pageants, opera, and film, I exclude other visual arts, such as book illustrations.[6] And I have saved for another study parodies and narratives that imitate *The Canterbury Tales*' structure without relying on its tales and characters.[7] I hope still to examine Samuel McChord Crothers' "The Pardoner," from *The Pardoner's Wallet* (1905), the intriguingly titled "Why I Read Chaucer at Seventy" (1933) by Dr. James Bryan Herrick, and General Ethan Allen Hitchcock's hermetic study of Chaucer's minor writing *Spenser's Poem, Entitled Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, Explained; with Remarks Upon the Amoretti Sonnets, and Also Upon a Few of the Minor Poems of Other Early English Poets*.[8] Also worth extended consideration are underground comic books, the dramatic productions of Chaucer and Company (chaucertheatre.org), and the film short, "G-Spots?" Daniel Fine and Carla Stockton's adaptation of *The Wife of Bath's Tale*.[9] For the large corpus of children's Chaucer, I direct readers to Velma Richmond's extensive study, *Chaucer as Children's Literature*; additional Chaucerian works for children include Seymour Barab's opera *Chanticleer* and the animated film *Rock-a-Doodle*.[10] Another promising arena, the 1914 New Orleans Mardi Gras parade featuring floats based on themes taken from Chaucer, was being investigated by Julian Wasserman before his death in 2003 and deserves completion.[11] Most tantalizing is the now-lost *Wife of Bath*, a Warner Brothers television movie starring Natalie Wood that aired May 22, 1955.[12] Rather than provide a full accounting of Chaucer's presence in American culture, this book seeks to trigger interest in these and many other American Chaucers awaiting us.[13]

My selected American Chaucers demonstrate the ways that American myths are compatible with many of Chaucer's defining characteristics—the journey, the competition, the undergirding religious purpose, the conglomeration of various voices and genres, the rowdiness and bawdiness coupled with profound piety, and the easy communion between the high, middling, and low elements of society. Since 1830 or so, versions for American audiences have not attempted to recover an authentic Chaucer; rather they have confronted Chaucer's fourteenth-century dissimilarity with rampant modernizing and bowdlerizing, freely transforming his life and poetry into popular media. The resulting popular Chaucer bears little

resemblance to the academic Chaucer; in fact, encountering popular Chaucer can be very disorienting for those scholars and teachers who strive to approximate "authentic" readings. But for popularizers, this difference is not a problem; indeed, it is an advantage. As Ellis contends, "Chaucer is a popularizer's dream: a poet whose work is regarded as accessible, cheerfully realist and thoroughly English, but who is divided from the public awaiting him by difficulties of language and an unfamiliar historical context."[14] My study demonstrates that American Chaucers stake their claim at this intersection of accessibility and remoteness. Because their audiences are indifferent to any misrepresentations, popularizations of Chaucer can capitalize on his canonical status while engaging with American trends; American Chaucers thereby become convenient, authoritative vessels for promoting values wildly divergent from fourteenth-century England's.

To speak of American Chaucers, however, raises at least two questions. The first, "What is signified by 'American'?" I will quickly dispatch: I use the terms "America" and "American" to refer to the places, people, and cultures eventually known as the United States of America. The second question "Which Chaucer?" needs a more detailed explanation, for "Chaucer" can refer literally to the historical man, or metonymically to either his work or the material texts transmitting his work. The rest of this introduction explores the implications of each of these references for our understanding of "Chaucer."

"Chaucer" as Material Text

We find that Chaucer incrementally appears in America in various forms, traveling a circuitous route that anticipates the many ways the poet and his verse were eventually reconfigured for popular audiences in America. Because no American editions of Chaucer were published until the nineteenth century, the New World reception of Chaucer begins with the presence of British editions in the colonies.[15] That is, from 1650 to 1800, Chaucer came to America through books published in Britain; these books fall into four modes, each new mode incrementally addressing a more popular audience: Middle English folios, modernizations, single-volume and multivolume anthologies, and Dryden's *Fables*.

Middle English Folios

The first of the modes to appear in the colonies, the Middle English folios had the narrowest impact because the folios appeared at a time when few colonists were interested in secular letters. For most transplanted Britishers, New England provided a refuge from the contamination of worldliness,

and the devout Protestants who settled there resisted stocking vain secular literature in their libraries alongside treasured devotional, theological, and practical works.[16] These colonists had little room on their shelves for books that did not edify, and they concurred with John Foxe, who saw the printing press as part of the providential design: "the blessed wisdom and omnipotent power of the Lord began to work for his church; not with sword and target to subdue his exalted adversaries, but with printing, writing and reading: to convince by light, error by truth, ignorance by learning."[17] Because Chaucer was generally associated on both sides of the Atlantic with secular entertainment rather than religious truth, he was not found in the large libraries of colonial intellectuals such as John Winthrop or Cotton Mather.[18] Nor was he found in the smaller libraries of parish clergy. Boston bookseller Samuel Gerrish issued in 1718 a catalogue of "curious and valuable books" from the recently deceased Reverend George Curwin's library, a collection of 565 books in folio, quarto, and octavo consisting of "Divinity, Philosophy, History, Poetry, &c." Despite its promises of poetry and curiosity, the only imaginative works named were such classical mainstays as Virgil and Homer. None of the titles belies that any version of Chaucer might hide within its covers.[19] Again, when Gerrish issued in 1725 another catalogue of books owned by two retired pastors, "Mr. Rowland Cotton, late Pastor of the Church in Sandwich, and Mr. Nathanael Rogers, Late Pastor of a Church in Portsmouth, in New-Hampshire, Deceas'd," their libraries evidenced no trace of belles-lettres.[20]

As this aversion to secular letters waned, some colonists eagerly sought English literature as a way to address, even remove, the stigma of provincialism and its resulting sense of inferiority.[21] Once their reading expanded beyond religious texts to secular matter, the more sophisticated colonists imported from London and Glasglow Middle English Chaucer editions that included folios like Thynne's mid-sixteenth-century editions, Stow's 1561 edition, Speght's 1602 edition, and Urry's 1721 roman-letter edition. Speght's and Urry's editions had the advantage of glossaries, lists of difficult words, and a "Life" of Chaucer that attempted to make the verse more accessible. As evidenced by wills and catalogues for estate book sales, college-educated men were the first to own these folio editions of Chaucer. The earliest example is Daniel Russell of Charlestown, who died in 1679, just ten years out of college. He left in his will a library that included two folio Chaucers, presumably Thynne's.[22] By the time of the Revolutionary War, Thomas Jefferson considered Chaucer an essential volume for a gentleman's library, including a folio Chaucer in a basic library catalogue created at Robert Skipwith's request, though it is not clear whether Chaucer's reputation or an interest in ancient language or something else caused Jefferson to include the volume in this list.[23]

Readership of Middle English Chaucer did not penetrate far down the social stratum, and the college-educated men who owned British copies of Chaucer seemed responsible for ensuring that fledgling community libraries owned a copy as well. An undated will of William Logan, Esquire bequeathed a 1602 edition of Speght's Chaucer listed in the Library Company of Philadelphia's 1789 catalogue.[24] Similarly, Harvard graduate Thomas Ward donated many of his college texts, including Urry's 1721 folio of Chaucer's *Works*, to the Redwood Library Company in Newport, Rhode Island in 1764.[25] Coupled with the absence of extant bookseller catalogues listing a Middle English Chaucer, this scant evidence seems to indicate that Chaucer's colonial readership was basically fashionable, college-educated gentlemen who special-ordered the folios, and that any Middle English editions of Chaucer at these subscription libraries (which required memberships and fees, and did not cater to the public at large) resulted from bequests by such men.[26]

In all, Middle English editions of Chaucer had a negligible impact on common readers in America. At the end of the eighteenth century, when booksellers and libraries began to flourish, few of their catalogues had a copy of Chaucer in the original Middle English, and the presence of Middle English Chaucer in America remained limited to classrooms and scholars' chambers.[27] Perhaps, as it was said, owning a beloved black-letter volume of Chaucer was enough to endear an inquiring soul to James Russell Lowell, antebellum Boston's intellectual patriarch.[28] And probably Charles Edmund Stedman had Middle English Chaucer in mind when he memorialized the poet's Westminster tomb as the goal for other pilgrims like him "from lands that distant be."[29] Similarly, the young military officer who found consolation in 1860 remembering his own "cheerful little library" with the "genially pleasant faces (or rather backs) of Chaucer" was likely recalling a Middle English edition.[30] Nevertheless, Chaucer's Middle English works must have too much resembled a foreign text to invite a great demand in literature's popular market.[31]

Modernizations

Post-Revolutionary-War bookseller catalogues and library records reveal that most middle-class readers favored two eighteenth-century modernizations of Chaucer's works imported from Britain: George Ogle's *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; Modernized by Several Hands*, printed in three volumes in the middle of the seventeenth century, and R.J. Dodsley's *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1758).[32] Besides presenting themselves as rescuing Chaucer from the obscurity of his language and the backwardness of his culture, these modernizations became more

reader-friendly with their roman rather than black-letter typeface.[33] We find the 1803 catalogue for H. Caritat's Circulating Library, a commercial venture, promoting Ogle's volumes as "most adapted to attract all classes of poetical readers."[34] Around the same time, both modernizations were available in mid-Atlantic and New England public libraries, and began appearing more regularly in bookseller catalogues. However, we do not know how extensively beyond the eastern seaboard these editions traveled before the American Civil War. Tantalizing evidence in the oral folklore of the Ozarks includes analogues to the *Miller's Tale*, the *Reeve's Tale*, the *Pardoner's Tale*, and the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, which tempt us to wonder if a modernized collection, such as *The Muse in Good Humour: Or a Collection of Comic Tales &c. from Chaucer, Prior, Swift, La Fontaine, Dr. King, and Other Eminent Poets* (1744), made its way west.[35]

Anthologies

In addition to the modernizations discussed, Chaucer appears in more abbreviated forms via the poetry anthology, another format that appealed to middle-class readers. Soon after the Revolutionary War, American booksellers and circulating libraries began to stock a bewildering assortment of British one-volume literary anthologies, miscellanies, and pocket libraries. When these books included Chaucer, they tended to represent him both as the progenitor of the British literary heritage and as a contemporary whose voice transcends time despite his ancient language. While few featured an untouched Chaucer, the anthologies are the first medium to disseminate Chaucer widely to a popular American audience interested in appropriating Britain's cultural heritage and bestowing it on the next generation. By presenting Chaucer as essential to every family's literary and moral education, these anthologies targeted literate readers with ample pocketbooks and cultural ambitions.[36]

Dryden's Fables

A fourth and perhaps less obvious form that brought an updated Chaucer to America was Dryden's *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, adapting and modernizing *The Knight's Tale*, *Nun's Priest's Tale, The Wife of Bath's Tale*, and the Parson's portrait from the *General Prologue*.[37] It regularly appears in advertisements and catalogues from before the Revolutionary War and well past the Civil War. In the March 18, 1756 *Pennsylvania Gazette*, David Hall, a Philadelphia book importer, lists in his merchandise several duodecimo editions advertised for their entertainment value: *Arabian Nights Entertainment, Cole's Select Tales and Fables, Cervantes Novels*, and *Rollin's*

Belles Lettres. In the midst of these small, easy-traveling books is tucked Dryden's *Fables*.[38] By the first decade of the nineteenth century, the *Fables* appeared on the shelves of the Redwood Library Company (1764), the Library Company of Philadelphia (1789), H. Caritat's General and Increasing Circulating Library (1799 and 1803), and John Dabney's Circulating Library in Salem, Massachusetts (1794 and 1801).[39] According to library and bookseller records, it appears that Dryden's version of Chaucer was more widely dispersed in early nineteenth-century America than any edition of Chaucer's work, whether in modern or medieval English.[40]

It is evidently through Dryden's *Fables* that Chaucer first enters American homes and finds, rather surreptitiously, a female readership, for American purchases of Dryden's *Fables* were promoted in the early nineteenth century by the immensely popular *Aikin's Letters to a Young Lady, on a Course of English Poetry*, which appeared in circulating library catalogues soon after it was first published in London in 1804 and then reprinted in 1806 in the United States.[41] John Aikin, a Scottish doctor and polymath, wrote *Letters* purportedly to supplement a young friend's receiving a multivolume set of English poets, perhaps one of the many *British Poets* versions featuring Aikin's critical or biographical prefaces.[42] Beginning with Pope before glancing backward to Dryden, *Letters* appears at first to indulge the Romantic appraisal of medieval poetry and pass over Chaucer, calling him an author of a "rude and tasteless age."[43] In fact, however, Aikin does not completely exclude Chaucer, for the first four pages of the doctor's third letter examine Dryden's "principal" poetry, the *Fables*, looking almost exclusively at the Chaucerian works that Dryden translated. Yet the *Letters* reader might not realize she was learning about Chaucer, for Aikin attributes most of Chaucer's characteristics to Dryden. For instance, he explains that the reader of "Palamon and Arcite"

> cannot fail to receive much entertainment from the richness of the scenery and variety of adventures; and as a study in the poetical art, few pieces in the English language deserve more attention. Dryden was versed in the learning of the school, and was fond on all occasions of pouring forth his knowledge upon abstruse and speculative points. You will therefore find, intermixed with the description and sentiment proper to the story, many allusions relative to astronomy, theology, metaphysics, and other branches of philosophy, which perhaps you will think tedious. But in proportion as you have acquired a taste for poetry, you will dwell with delight and admiration upon his creations of the fancy, some of which are equally bold in the conception, and vivid in the representation. The temples of Venus and Mars are draughts of this kind, finely contrasted. . . .The purely narrative part of the tale flows easy and copious; and though protracted with great variety of circumstance, keeps up the interest to the very conclusion.[44]

Although Aikin has prefaced his comments on Dryden by acknowledging *The Canterbury Tales* as the source text, he quickly drops all mention of Chaucer and treats the *Fables* as springing solely from Dryden's poetic genius. Aikin's focus on the poem's language of "description and sentiment," perhaps a legacy of his earlier attempts to construct a theory of poetry based on methods of scientific inquiry, means that he urges readers to pay careful attention to those rhetorical tropes and allusions rooted in Chaucer's original text.[45] Curiously then, Aikin's *Letters* introduces his unsuspecting female American readers to Chaucer, the author he previously excluded as too vulgar.

If young women and their education guardians were following Dr. Aikin's recommendations, then many young Americans were reading Chaucer, in the guise of nonmedieval Dryden, as a writer of amusing tales and brilliant description. For not only does Dryden's *Fables* appear more often on bookseller lists and in library catalogues than do any specific works of Chaucer, but Aikin's course on English poetry for young women, along with his biographical and critical prefaces to the *Select Works of the British Poets*, was widely sold, appearing often in American catalogues and libraries. Only if young American women read Dryden closely and Aikin carefully would they know they were reading translations based on Chaucer. This subterranean arrival into America through Dryden and Aikin anticipates the mixed messages that American audiences repeatedly receive about Chaucer: important yet vulgar, needing polishing ere he shine.[46]

After 1830, Britain continued to export editions of Chaucer, primarily reprints of a more recent modernization, R.H. Horne's *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernized* (1841); an edition still found in many American libraries, it features verse and prose versions by Horne, William Wordsworth, Thomas Powell, Leigh Hunt, Robert Bell, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning.[47] Although my concerns with the post-1830 importation of Chaucer from Britain are limited, it should be noted that British interests in influencing American tastes did not cease in 1776. For example, Frederick Furnivall's introduction to Chaucer "begins and ends. . .with reference to England's imperial mission."[48] Consequently, we should not be surprised to learn that, well past the American Civil War, Americans received Chaucer primarily from versions edited and published by the British.

Although all the American Chaucers I examine in these chapters begin with an encounter with a material text, only James Hall's *Flying with Chaucer* (1929) is built entirely around such an encounter. As we will see, Hall transforms a green leather-bound edition of *The Canterbury Tales* into a talisman that helps him endure the tedium of imprisonment in a German POW camp, and then a decade later it provides him solace as he

reconsiders the worthless risks that war and war rhetoric demand of young men. Though he reads the verse, Hall's primary encounter with Chaucer is imaginatively to inscribe his own tale (I call it the "Prisoner's Tale") in his volume's blank endpages. Hall's embrace of his Chaucer volume questions and eventually discredits the World War I verities that propelled millions of young men to forfeit their freedom and lives for a misdirected cause.

"Chaucer" as the Verse

Nearly two hundred years after Daniel Russell's will lists Thynne's two volumes, the discussion of Chaucer's verse appears on the American cultural landscape with Ralph Waldo Emerson's many literary excurses. Emerson had already left the pulpit at Boston's Second Church in 1832, toured Europe for nearly a year, and entered the lyceum circuit on a quest to deliver a blend of education and entertainment to audiences across the young republic, when nearly midway through his 1837 speech now known as "The American Scholar," he made an observation so banal that it is easy to overlook. Reflecting on the remarkable "character of the pleasure we derive from the best books," Emerson wrote:

> We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer, of Marvell, of Dryden, with the most modern joy,—with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all *time* from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet, who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well-nigh thought and said.[49]

In this passage, we see a nineteenth-century American, one whose creed of American exceptionalism included both independence from inherited ideas and the assumption that British models stifled American ingenuity, reading Chaucer's verse as prefiguring his own thoughts.[50]

Emerson's reading Chaucer's verse as that of a kindred spirit derives partially from the American scholar's literary transcendentalism, and partially from a larger cultural sense that Americans were the needful, indeed rightful, heirs to early British culture, especially its medieval heritage. The British history and culture that preceded the discovery of the New World were an inheritance that most Americans, at least those in the original thirteen colonies, considered theirs as much as Britain's.[51] Later, post-Revolution Americans found in Chaucer and other British poets an immediate shared literary history, for these Americans saw themselves as the ultimate beneficiaries of the great *translatio studii*, whereby European learning and arts had progressively moved westward, from Asia Minor to Rome to

western Europe, with the United States as the last stop. Furthermore, Americans seemed to sense strongly that they were closer in spirit to medieval England than were the contemporary British. In their freshness and innovation, Americans (and their institutions and arts) were, as George Berkeley exulted in 1723, "[n]ot such as Europe bred in her decay" (17); he believed that future poets would look back and declare this era "another golden age" (13).[52] According to Berkeley's lines, Americans and their arts are bred with the same undefiled purity that early Britain had possessed. America's national culture was experiencing its own invigorated "middle age," for it was no longer the child indebted to a paternal England nor yet in its decline. So Emerson's appropriation of Chaucer reflects the young republic's broader sense that it had legitimately inherited Britain's medieval past because America's newness provided fertile soil for transplanting the cultural heritage from depleted European ground.[53]

In a different way, however, Emerson's appropriation also transforms Chaucer's verse by subjecting it to the colonizing temperament permeating American culture. Although Emerson repeatedly denounces many of the young nation's imperial enterprises—slavery, the war against Mexico, and the expulsion of Native Americans—his transformation of British belles-lettres into what he himself "well-nigh thought and said" illustrates the tension between his political activism and his aesthetic ideology.[54] This transformation also suggests how fully this most thoughtful American ingested and absorbed the colonizing spirit that had marked the New World enterprise from the start.[55]

Sixty years later Theodore Roosevelt, another prominent American reading Chaucer's verse, maintained a greater distance between himself and the great English poet's narratives. In a letter to Thomas Lounsbury regarding the scholar's three-volume *Studies in Chaucer* (1892), Roosevelt expresses concern about the impropriety of some Chaucerian tales, thereby seeing Chaucer's verse through his ideology of vigorous manhood:

> *My Dear Mr. Lounsbury*: The praise of a layman can count but little in relation to a book on a subject requiring special and peculiar knowledge. Still, I cannot refrain from writing you to tell you how much I have enjoyed your "Chaucer." Of course there were parts that would appeal most to the professed scholar of Chaucer's works, but much the greater part of each of your three volumes cannot but please even the multitude like myself, not only because of the extremely interesting matter which they contain, but because of the delightful style in which they are written. But having just reread Chaucer in consequence of your book, I must protest a little against some of his tales, on the score of cleanliness. It seems to me that the <Friar's Tale and> prologue to the Sompnour's tale, and the tale itself, for instance, are very nearly indefensible. There are parts of them which will be valuable to

> the student of the manners of the age simply from the historical standpoint, but as literature I don't think they have a redeeming feature. On the other hand, I must confess that it was only on account of what you had said that I ever cared for the prologue to the tale of the wife of Bath and the tale itself. I have always regarded them with extreme disfavor, knowing that, as a matter of fact, among the men I knew, of every ten who had read them nine had done so for improper reasons; but after reading what you said I took them up and read them from a changed point of view, and am now a convert to your ideas.[56]

Granted, Roosevelt may not represent the average American "layman," yet he does claim to speak for the American "multitude," and his reactions to Chaucer's verse and to Lounsbury's book encapsulate many Americans' conflicted responses to Chaucer throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lounsbury's reader-friendly scholarship helped Roosevelt appreciate the Wife's prologue and tale, yet as the foremost embodiment of social hygiene the future president remained unconverted regarding the unwholesome nature of some tales.[57] He responded positively to Lounsbury's life of Chaucer, commended in reviews as "the best, beyond a doubt, that has yet to be written," and to Lounsbury's placing Chaucer in a medieval cultural and intellectual context.[58] In short, as did apparently many other educated Americans by the end of the nineteenth century, Roosevelt wanted Chaucer's verse enlivened by a comprehensive historical context and purged of unclean elements.

When Roosevelt continues his letter by commending Lounsbury's "eminently wise proposition" that editors should present Chaucer using nineteenth-century orthography, he underscores another chief difficulty the American "multitude" faced when reading Chaucer's verse: the radical dissimilarity between his English and modern English. Although Roosevelt appreciated Lounsbury's practical solution to the problem, American skeptics might have agreed with a coeval assessment by Ambrose Bierce:

> God grant I know not envy, nor
> When chatting over cup and saucer,
> Betray my secret hunger for
> The high renown of Geoffrey Chaucer.
> Yet now at last I seem to see
> My way to equal approbation:
> When I'm as hard to read as he
> Phonetes of that far generation
> Will study me and say: "How grand!—
> So difficult to understand!"[59]

Behind Bierce's witticism lies the suspicion that the Brits were once more pulling the wool over the eyes of Americans, that Chaucer's "high renown" ensued simply from the hard work required to understand him. Unlike academic readers, who looked to the alterity of Chaucer and the Middle Ages as an escape from the unpleasant realities of the modern world, Bierce and Roosevelt wanted a Chaucer more in line with puritanical values, sanitized of his shocking vulgarity, cleansed of his linguistic obscurity. Whatever visions Americans had of transplanting the old world culture in the new land, America was never fertile enough to yield many lay antiquarians eager to decipher verse written half a millennium and a full ocean away.

In Emerson's praise of Chaucer's verse as saying "that which lies close to [his] own soul," in Roosevelt's hesitation to read Chaucer "on the score of cleanliness," and in Bierce's suspicion that Chaucer's "high renown" rested on the hollow blocks of difficult study, we see the reasons that Chaucer's verse entered the list of books Americans should read, as well as the reasons that so few read it. As Roosevelt's and Bierce's reactions demonstrate, many nonacademic Americans were wary of Chaucer's verse unadulterated. But rather than toss out the solidly canonized forefather of the English literary heritage, Americans were happy to have a Chaucer reconstituted to seem more like them, neither too vulgar nor too abstruse. Willing to meet this desideratum and having little concern for British values, indigenous productions of Chaucer remade his verse in the image of American values.

In this collection, my chapter on nineteenth-century anthologies is particularly concerned with the ways Americans reconfigured Chaucer's verse to fit American concerns. Anthology editors in the 1800s provided worldly, upwardly mobile Americans "tired of being be-Britished" with suitably modified cultural capital.[60] Though memories of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 were beginning to fade, many Americans were still suspicious enough of the British and their Whig ideology to care little about British literary culture.[61] Consequently, nineteenth-century reproductions of Chaucer incorporated simultaneously a knowledge of and an indifference to his reputation, such as the ironic assessment voiced by humorist Charles Farrar Browne's bumpkin persona, Artemus Ward: "It is a pity that Chawcer, who had geneyus, was so unedicated. He's the wuss speller I know of."[62] The fictional Ward assumes his audience is educated enough to know about Chaucer and his place in literary history; at the same time, Ward reduces Chaucer's alterity to a case of bad spelling, a barrier that anyone in Browne's audience could sympathize with. Laughing off the burden of Britain, many middle-class Americans nonetheless valued British traditions without venerating the

entire British literary corpus, and editors and writers felt free to remix and reconstruct England's ancient letters to reflect modern democratic values.

The literary anthologies were among the first cultural productions to respond to this new American attitude toward Britain's literary heritage. Published after America's final military conflicts with England in 1815 and before America's first Chaucerian scholarship at the end of the nineteenth century, these anthologies appropriate and gradually remake Chaucer's works in ways analogous to America's burgeoning imperial project, providing an instructive site for us to observe the process of naturalizing imperialism for American readers. The resulting bowdlerizations, corrections, vulgarizations, and abbreviations record Americans progressively redefining their relationship to the British cultural heritage in light of the country's new imperial project. In their uses of Chaucer, these anthologies capture the moment when Americans changed from being the colonized, the recipients passively accepting cultural goods, to being the colonizing, the appropriators reformulating and refashioning a foreign people's cultural artifacts. Over the course of America's first century, Chaucer's poetry does the invisible cultural work that allows the young nation's expansionist policies to appear consistent with domestic and historical formations.

"Chaucer" as the Historical Man

In addition to the two metonymic uses of "Chaucer," this study is concerned with literal references to the historical Chaucer. Less than a generation after Emerson revealed his affinity with Chaucer's verse, James Russell Lowell helped begin the American tradition of scholars publishing accessible essays and books about the life and works of Chaucer as the historical figure.[63] Lowell's display of genteel erudition, *My Study Window* (1869), reproduces for lay readers the commonplace biographical elements with an American twist, such as comparing Chaucer to Columbus for opening "new worlds to us" (233). Even Thomas Lounsbury's authoritative *Studies in Chaucer* (1891) imagines audiences from both the academy and Main Street. Many of its chapters first appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* and *Nation*, and the book as a whole assumes a wide range of readers sharing Lounsbury's interest in the ways Chaucer's verse naturally evolves from the poet's life experience. Later, studies by such eminent Chaucerians as George Kittredge and J.S.P. Tatlock exude a breezy tone in their biographical details establishing that Chaucer is "'modern' in the sense that he is timeless and deals with the human essence."[64]

Besides providing accessibility to Chaucer the man, these studies took Chaucer off the page, most famously in Kittredge's proposition that we best understand *The Canterbury Tales* as a roadside drama, with Chaucer as

both playwright and featured actor.[65] This "unbooking" was aided by John Manly and Edith Rickert's return to the archives that uncovered the "facts of his career" and provided real-life identities for *The Canterbury Tales* pilgrims.[66] From a wealth of data, Manly and Rickert pieced together a portrait of Chaucer no longer dependent on either his verse or the traditions passed from one generation of Chaucerians to the next. Quilted from scraps of information, much of it preserved through accident or providence, Manly and Rickert's portrait of Chaucer and his London acquaintances (transformed into the Canterbury pilgrims) infused Chaucer's biography with a fresh, historical vitality. According to this paradigm, Chaucer did not imagine Harry Bailey; instead, the poet stayed at the Tabard Inn and watched the innkeeper fast-talk an unwary guest or two. Chaucer did not conjure the Man-of-Law; he had dealings at court with an attorney named Pinchbeck. Together with Kittredge's thesis, Manly and Rickert's scholarship helped Chaucer cease being merely a name on a title page and static portrait attached to revered verse; "Chaucer" became, instead, an animated figure reciting tales told on a trip to St. Thomas' shrine.

Three of my chapters focus on the ways that Americans reconceived Chaucer the man. Two instances, Percy MacKaye's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1903) and Brian Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale* (2000), refigure Chaucer as an entrepreneurial American artist and emphasize his reputation for breaking with old-fashioned literary values and successfully inaugurating a new vernacular verse welcoming the voice of commoners.[67] MacKaye's play recreates *The Canterbury Tales*' roadside drama in order to advocate funding the American stage with enlightened public support and obviate theatre's need for commercial profitability. Exploring the poet's role in American society, MacKaye's verse drama capitalizes on Chaucer's traditional status as the first English poet laureate, a position MacKaye imagines provided Chaucer with both honor and institutional support, in order to argue that society should support poets, dramatists, and other artists. In exchange for this support, the play maintains, the poet-dramatist can articulate lower-class concerns while simultaneously inculcating values that benefit the upper class. To get *The Canterbury Pilgrims* produced, MacKaye revised the play script for a traveling troupe, a large pageant, and an opera. In each revision, he amended the original play and promoted social theories that reflected his difficulties making a living as a playwright in pre–World War I America. Similarly, Brian Helgeland's film, *A Knight's Tale*, presents Chaucer's literary innovations as the result of the poet's risky habits, behavior he learns to harness after encountering the American-like pragmatics of a social-climbing knight-in-the-making. While *A Knight's Tale* adds a dimension of British literary history to American popular culture, its near

blasphemous reconstructions assert American independence from British control and hierarchy.

Finally, my chapter on Chaucer's female impersonators demonstrates the ways Chaucer became a voice through which enterprising women could ventriloquize their aspirations in a post–World War I America not particularly receptive to self-sufficient women. At Wheaton College, a Massachusetts women's school, Anne Maury wrote a 1927 May Day pageant that, while remaining within the confines of a canonical text, allowed the students to adopt masculine roles and practice new behaviors claimed as their own by a young generation of women. Around the same time and across the country, Kathrine Gordon Brinley was delivering Chaucerian lectures in "authentic [medieval] dress" to women otherwise denied access to classroom explications of Chaucer's difficult verse. Humored to some extent by male university medievalists, Brinley carved a niche wherein she styled herself a preeminent Chaucer scholar. Like MacKaye and Helgeland, Maury and Brinley share with their medieval sources an oral and performative immediacy. In place of the materiality of fourteenth-century texts, they gave their audiences the materiality of the dramatic performances. In place of the alterity of fourteenth-century characters, they gave their audiences the familiarity of contemporary actors. These productions reveal Americans' nostalgia for the stable, ordered society medieval Britain was imagined to have offered its contemporaries. At the same time, these works anticipate the increasingly nonwritten discursive practices that become associated with twentieth-century American popular culture. Most importantly, though, Maury and Brinley used Chaucer to escape gender stereotypes.

I have chosen a rough chronology of subject matter as the organizing principle for the five chapters in this volume analyzing the ways Chaucer—the book, the verse, and the man—have been appropriated for American popular audiences. Chapter 1 looks at nineteenth-century anthologies, chapters 2, 3, and 4 examine productions from the first third of the twentieth century, and chapter 5 considers a film released in 2000. Together these chapters reveal not a teleological sequence (of either progressive sophistication or increasing debasement), but the myriad ways Chaucer can be manipulated to fit values far removed from either the fourteenth century or professional scholars. Furthermore, rather than grouping the chapters to highlight the three meanings of the term "Chaucer" outlined above, I have opted to use this introduction make that distinction. These popular appropriations blur the literal and metonymic meanings of "Chaucer," a messiness exploited by each of these American Chaucers.[68]

CHAPTER 1

IN THE PARLOR WITH ESQ. GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Outside academic circles today, the term "poetry anthology" usually evokes sentimental collections, such as *Best Loved Poems of the American People*, or it conjures memories of introductory literature surveys and the eight-pound, two-thousand-page books on the frontline of transmitting cultural capital to American students. In either case, poetry anthologies are a maligned breed. Students in literature surveys groan under the weight of academic anthologies; instructors find them inadequate. Progressives charge they resist change; conservatives lament their capitulation to untested trends. If anthologies are not charged as the covert manipulations of overly invested academics, they are dismissed as catering to middlebrow tastes with simpering moralities, such as the ones William Bennett prefixed to each story in his collections for families, *The Book of Virtues* and *The Moral Compass*[1] In her examination of the genre, Rachel Hadas borrows E.M. Forster's geographical analogy describing the novel to explain that

> poetry anthologies tend to be bounded by two chains of mountains: poetry on the one side and reference books of volumes of literary history on the other. Neither the one nor the other, poetry anthologies are liable to the respective kinds of critical scrutiny both poetry and reference books are subject to. As individual books of poems often do, poetry anthologies give rise to queries about their predecessors, their intended audience, their aesthetic, their themes, and the principles of their arrangement. But as works of literary history or reference often are, poetry anthologies are open to accusations of bias, exclusion, falsification of the record, ignorance, and wrongheadedness.[2]

However anthologies are judged, though, they remain a convenient instrument for transmitting, sustaining, and creating literary capital in American classrooms at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

If we turn to the now overlooked anthologies of British literature published in the 1800s, we discover that anthologies once thrived outside the schoolhouse. In the early nineteenth century, the anthology was imagined as the primary conduit of culture, part of the great *translatio studii* in which cultural traditions are transmitted westward, from ancient Asia Minor to early modern Europe to newly democratic America, a progress celebrated by Thomas Jefferson in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, where he remarked that "Great Britain's empire was 'fast descending' because 'her philosophy had crossed the channel, her freedom the Atlantic.' "[3] An early American medium for this process was a Boston venture, the *Monthly Anthology*, which had two stated purposes: to preserve and transmit a venerable literary tradition, and to cultivate and promote the creation of literary arts.[4] Though short-lived, this periodical anticipated the issues and tensions characterizing the single-volume anthologies. It questioned the divide between imported and home-grown literary culture, lamented the tendency of Americans to let money dominate literary practice, and in the end failed to resolve how Americans should incorporate European letters without producing an overly derivative native literature. According to the *Monthly Anthology*'s editors, anthologies up to that point had had "a considerable influence upon the literature of a people. . . .[T]hey confounded absurdity and rectified opinion; they roused attention and engaged it in the service of the Muses; and formed and refined the publick taste."[5] The contributors imagined that anthologies, by presenting judicious essays and literary specimens, could cultivate the taste of the public for new art works of the highest caliber:

> America in the freedom of her government, the face of her territory, the native powers of her citizens, the toleration, which subjects no reasonable efforts of the mind to penalty or dismay, and the rich capital of England's learning, which community of language enables her with facility to use as her own, has certainly opportunity and inducements to vie with any nation upon the earth in the pursuit of literary distinction. . . .[6]

In these ways, *Monthly Anthology* typifies the American anthology's roles in transplanting and claiming for its own "the rich capital of England's learning."

Over the course of the nineteenth century, such literary anthologies and poetry miscellanies gradually replaced handwritten commonplace books of colonial America as repositories of literature. By collecting assorted literary works, these anthologies ostensibly functioned as home libraries or as samplers for the numerous small libraries dotting the American landscape.[7] Indeed, they transmitted England's literary heritage, not just from teacher

to student, but from one social class to another, from one generation to the next, and from England to America. Whereas the academic and social elite had once had almost exclusive claims to the British poetic heritage, inexpensive anthologies placed Britain's literary jewels in the hands of middle-class readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Printed anthologies, miscellanies, and other collections of poetry began appearing in American book catalogues as early as 1797 and were in public circulation by the early 1800s. William P. Blake's Library, Book, and Stationery catalogue lists among its offerings *Beauties of Poetry, Garland of Flowers, Lady's Cabinet of Polite Literature*, and *Looking Glass of the Mind, or Intellectual Mirror*.[8] At the same time these anthologies made the poetry more accessible, they eventually made the accompanying cultural capital easier to display. Deluxe edition features, such as leather covers, gold embossing, and elaborate illustrations, not only tripled the book's cost but encouraged owners to display the books prominently on parlor tables, thereby marking the owner's taste and financial success.

Because many Americans acquired one or more of these anthologies for show rather than for careful reading, we should be careful about our readership claims. In providing middlebrow American readers with an alternate means for acquiring cultural currency, these anthologies substituted what one placed on the parlor table for what one read and studied. With a single gesture, owners could conspicuously display their cultural acumen, and with a single glance, guests could recognize the book's apparent value without intimate knowledge of its contents. For this reason, this study transfers attention from the reader to the editor. As purveyors of an apparently simple cultural currency, editors filled each volume with their interests, freely cutting and polishing the poems to fill collections glistening with such titles as *Gems of English Poesy, Legendary Cabinet, Magic Carpet, Strings of Diamonds*, and *Golden Treasury*. These nineteenth-century anthologies, therefore, are more than unmediated samplings of verse. Every aspect of the anthology required the active intervention of editors and publishers, who had an agenda shaped by fluctuating cultural, political, and economic concerns.

Despite their lowly status, the nineteenth-century American anthologies, as we will see, performed a variety of cultural tasks beyond poetic appreciation or dissemination. Moreover, they record a tension in America's shifting cultural practices, what John Carlos Rowe has identified as Americans' contradictory self-conceptions as a people "shaped by a powerful imperial desire and a profound anti-colonial temper."[9] In just a few decades, America had transmogrified from a colony seeking independence to an expansionist, imperial power with little sympathetic memory of being colonized.[10] No longer the colonial recipient of cultural

goods or subject to the paternal arrogance of foreign imperialism, the United States was now the imperial power, itself a consumer of raw materials underutilized and misunderstood by the indigenous possessors.

During the anthology's heyday, the United States was embarking on a long period of geographic, economic, and political expansion, both internal and external, hidden behind a vocabulary that, according to Van Alstyne's *The Rising American Empire*, "side-step[ped] the use of terms that would hint at aggression or imperial domination"; the United States instead used terms like "Monroe Doctrine," "no entangling alliances," "freedom of the seas," and "good neighbour policy."[11] It should perhaps then be no surprise to see the public commitment to this expansionist enterprise, along with its rhetoric, permeate other facets of American culture, including its literary publications.[12]

While exploiting land and raw goods to fuel their domestic economy, Americans were, simultaneously, appropriating and reconfiguring British belles-lettres in ways that both mirrored and justified their imperial enterprises. Thus, when the anthologies also appropriated Britain's cultural capital—that reservoir of literary and aesthetic practices that Englishmen venerated as the key to their national identity—and transformed it into expressions of middle-class American values, they quietly articulated what Edward Said identifies as imperialism's "structure of attitude and reference": the sense that other cultures invite, even require, domination of and assimilation into America's cultural enterprise.[13] In short, the anthologies colonized England's cultural treasury, mining it for purposes that seem to have little to do with poetry. Seen in this way, the anthologies become less a debased genre and more an artifact, recording the cultural work that popular genres perform.

Two general components of the anthology convey this cultural work: the selected poems themselves and the paratexts. The paratexts, including prefaces, introductions, indices, and illustrations, allow editors and publishers to justify their choices, omissions, values, and criteria.[14] Each paratext readily provides the editor's or publisher's slant on a genre that seems best defined by its monotonous similarity, as well as an overt editorial statement of how the anthology has shaped the poetry and how it hopes to shape the reader. The poetry selections, on the other hand, more subtly reveal the editor's aesthetic criteria. Which poets and which verses the editor chooses certainly reflect popular trends and tastes. Beyond the selection process, however, is the question of how the poem will be presented. In order to align the selected poems with larger cultural principles, editors often bowdlerize, simplify, modernize, abbreviate, and "correct" poetic texts. Unlike the paratexts that overtly state the premises underlying the texts, the poem's revisions embed unspoken cultural temperaments. Often, then,

the paratexts and the poems seem to contradict one another. When, however, we examine the poetry's presentation closely, we can see evidence of unspoken cultural forces shaping individual choices and explain the apparent contradiction. Rather than disparage the editors for their choices or shudder at their paratextual apparatus, we can examine these nineteenth-century anthologies for the cultural history they offer us.

The interactions between the anthologies of the 1800s and the cultural forces shaping them come into sharper relief when we focus on a single author. Chaucer makes a good focal point because several aspects of his poetry lend themselves to extensive editing. Because some of his tales are bawdy, nineteenth-century editors often felt justified expurgating unseemly passages. Also, because nineteenth-century scholars enjoyed no consensus on the essential and authentic Chaucerian texts, editors were not limited to a set canon, or even a good edition.[15] Consequently, because Chaucer's oeuvre provided such a vast pool from which to choose, editors could choose any number of lines that did not overlap with their competition. But perhaps the most significant reason for using Chaucer as a focal point is the shift in literary tastes between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries from the narrative to the lyric. Even without space limitations, nineteenth-century editors tended to trim his lines to manageable, aphoristic passages resembling the verse then in vogue. Because Chaucer is conveniently and justifiably malleable, editors consistently transformed the fourteenth-century verse into a vehicle for ideas more accurately derived from the nineteenth century. The ideological work is performed not only by the introductions, head notes, and prefaces, but also by lines cut from Chaucer, the formal arrangements and juxtapositions, and the illustrations. Anthologized Chaucer, therefore, provides a glimpse of the ways Americans embraced the heralded forebear of British poetry and remade him into their own image.

Whether the editor was British or American provides the best index of how Chaucer's poetry was represented, with other characteristics clustering around that distinguishing factor. The British editors tended to include lengthy prefaces and arrange their poets chronologically, developing a historical continuum culminating in contemporary poets; they preferred extracts that focused on the distinctly British character and emphasized Arnoldian aesthetics. American editors, on the other hand, tended to arrange the poems thematically, minimize introductory remarks, freely modernize or translate Chaucer's Middle English, and decontextualize the medieval setting. Much of the rest of this chapter is devoted to describing these two trends, understanding their precedents, and speculating on the cultural factors that helped account for the differences between them.

In order to survey anthologies that repackage Chaucer for the American bourgeois reader, I established a set of simple criteria to determine which American anthologies to include. First, and most obvious, the anthology needs to include something attributed to Chaucer; this requirement immediately narrows the base because many nineteenth-century anthologies begin with Shakespeare and the Elizabethan poets, while most go back no further than the eighteenth century. Equally obvious is the need for the anthology to have been published (or, in the case of the British anthologies, republished) in the United States, with an American audience in mind; as we will see, however, English editors had intentions different from American editors, even when they both anticipated an American audience. Next, the anthology needs to have been aimed at the common reader, not just the scholar or the student; I bracket the student anthology because it was marketed not to students but to teachers, who belonged, or were presumed to belong, to the learned community, not to a middlebrow audience.[16] Furthermore, the anthology needs to have come in only one or two volumes, so the editor was forced to choose among Chaucer's works and not free to present simply everything available; the one- and two-volume anthologies are true florilegia, while the multivolume editions tend to be mini-libraries. Finally, the anthology needs to have been published during the nineteenth century because the presentation of Chaucer to the reading public shifted dramatically once American universities institutionalized Chaucer Studies at the turn of the twentieth century; that is, during the nineteenth century, it remained possible for nonspecialists to edit Chaucer, but once Kittredge was established as a Chaucerian at Harvard in 1896, unauthoritative editions became unthinkable.[17] In all, I located eight anthologies meeting these criteria, the first appearing in 1831, the last in 1893.[18]

Legacies from pre-1800 Anthologies

Before we examine the eight anthologies mentioned, let us consider their origins. Their immediate predecessors are poetry collections produced during Britain's grand flush of anthologizing in the eighteenth century. Most of these excluded Chaucer because, as Caroline Spurgeon explains, his verse appeared too irregular and his terms too quaint.[19] Even when booksellers began marketing multivolume collections that promised a panoramic and totalizing sweep of British literary history later in the century, many editors deemed Chaucer too ancient. Those anthologies that do give a nod to the earliest forms of English poesy, such as *The British Parnassus* (1714) and *The Complete Art of Poetry* (1718), divest Chaucer of his "old-fashioned garb" by presenting Chaucerian specimens extracted

from Dryden's 1700 modernizations.[20] Editors of these volumes preferred a Chaucer newly dressed—but not, by the way, scrubbed of his bawdiness—and reproportioned for a pleasant evening's read. In 1782, Chaucer features prominently in *John Bell's British Library*, a hundred volume compilation noted for its refusal to leave anything out.[21] The first of the cheap series reprints after *Donaldson v. Beckett* (1774) abolished perpetual copyright, and priced at 1s6d a volume, *Bell's Library* was affordable to a wide audience.[22] In the first fourteen volumes, Bell collected just about every text that could be associated with Chaucer: A Life of Chaucer, Tyrwhitt's Preface, Essay on Chaucer's Language, Discourse on the *Canterbury Tales*, *The Canterbury Tales (including The Cook's Tale of Gamelyn, The Plowman's Tale, The Pardoner and Tapstere's Prologue*, and *The Merchant's Second Tale), The Romaunt of the Rose, Troilus and Creseide, Testament of Creseide, Legend of Women, A Praise of Women, La Belle Dame sans Mercy, The Assembly of Ladies, Chaucer's Dreame, The Assembly of Foules, Cuckowe and the Nightingale*, ten short poems, "Certaine Balades," Testimonies of "learned men concerning Chaucer and his Works," and a glossary. Among *The British Parnassus, The Complete Art of Poetry*, and *Bell's British Library*, we can detect two competing impulses: either to present Chaucerian lines isolated from their context and stripped of medieval antiquity, or to situate a full-bodied Chaucer as part of a historical continuum.

These two impulses provided a legacy for the nineteenth-century British and American anthologies' presentations of Chaucer: the British anthologies tended to preserve a fuller Chaucer, while the American anthologies tended to represent a stripped down Chaucer. On the one hand, the British, following Bell's lead, are historically minded collections, preserving Chaucer in his authentic Middle English garb, substantiating his paternity with an engorged textual body, and cajoling the reader with extensive editorial aids. These anthologies present the poetry author by author, in a more or less historical progression. They consistently portray Chaucer as the father of English literature, often include critical and appreciative introductions, and usually regularize, rather than modernize, Chaucerian English. By the end of the nineteenth century, British anthologies also tend to be less amateur and more reliant on the rhetoric of authority than those earlier in the century.[23] Though still aimed at the common reader, the later ones assure the reader access to the good taste that only honorable birth and extended study could hitherto afford. They include Chaucer both to reproduce the English poetic canon's founding moment and to forge a national identify via a universally available national literature.

Paradoxically, though, these two goals undercut each other. In order to make Chaucer accessible to a wide audience, the editors frequently excerpted

short passages from Chaucer's significantly longer works; thus isolated (and often modernized), Chaucer's lines become less medieval. So, although these anthologies purport to present an authentic Chaucer, the results resemble the aesthetic and moral values of nineteenth-century England. The tensions continue when we consider, also, that these editions were republished and marketed to an American audience. Although it may be ironic that British publishers exported their national literature to a nation newly divorced from Britain, the aims actually corresponded with those of the expanding British Empire, becoming as it were a cultural and economic expansion that at least partially succeeded where the empire's political and institutional project in America failed. By marketing these *Bell*-inspired anthologies to American audiences, British publishers continued to treat America as a colonial outpost ready, even desirous, to accept and imitate British culture and history. As part of this project, these anthologies refuse to admit that America had become an empire in its own right, developing its own culture and history.

Those collections with American editors reject Bell's historical model, following instead *The British Parnassus* and *The Complete Art of Poetry* model of a Chaucer reminted and reproportioned to contemporary tastes. Not reluctant to modernize Chaucer, American anthologies did not hide their refashioning of Chaucer (and other canonical poets) behind a guise of historical accuracy. Moreover, by presenting poetry in thematic groups with such formulaic labels as Poems of Nature, Poems of Love, Poems of Tragedy, Personal Poems, and Poems of Patriotism and Freedom, these anthologies displaced Chaucer as the founding British poet laureate; rubbing elbows with Winthrop Mackworth Praed and Frederick Locker, Chaucer seems no more distinguished than any other poet. Anthologies of the second sort provide no context for the verse, no historical background, no literary continuum. With only one exception, they print selected lines from Chaucer's verse under titles that guide the reader to an appropriate interpretation. Just as the British-edited anthologies exported to America reflected England's imperial practices, so the American-edited anthologies corresponded with America's own imperial perspective, making Britain the mother lode to be mined for gems, rather than the motherland arbitrating cultural values.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the two legacies intertwine and result in the eccentric *A Thousand and One Gems of English and American Poetry*, delicate poetic pearls removed from their setting and loosely strung together.[24] With no introduction, no head notes, and no concern for textual accuracy, *A Thousand and One Gems* completely unleashes Chaucer from his historical harness and, as we will see, co-opts his name in the service of America's colonizing fever. The anthology's editor not

only mimicked American colonization practices when he cut, stripped, and relabeled the fourteen lines misattributed to Chaucer, but also defends, through this selection, America's aggressive imperial policy.

These anthologies record more than differing editorial practices on either side of the Atlantic; they also record the tension between America's abandoned role as a colony and its transformation into a colonizing power. We find that in the period between the nation's final military conflicts with England in 1815 and America's first academic Chaucerians at the beginning of the twentieth century, American anthologies appropriate and gradually remake Chaucer's works to suit the aims of the American imperial project. Over the course of America's first century, Chaucer's poetry is made to do the invisible cultural work that allows the young nation's expansionist policies to appear consistent with domestic and historical formations. These anthologies also have much to tell us about the logistics of canon formation. Even when anthologies grossly distort, misrepresent, and abandon history, their act of including works under Chaucer's name in an anthology confers upon him (and his works) the aura of being canonical, worthwhile, even necessary reading for all citizens, whether lowbrow, middlebrow, or highbrow. These anthologies initiate a circular process in which they borrow literary authority from Chaucer and subsequent poets and at the same time embed Chaucer into a canon that insists he be treated with due reverence and respect (even when the anthologies themselves withhold it).

British Anthologies

During the heyday of cheap reprints, several British publishers produced anthologies that include Chaucer. The common reader they targeted was the middle- or lower-middle-class reader, but not necessarily the literate workers for whom the cheap reprints were still not cheap enough.[25] An early British anthology presenting a historically contextualized Chaucer, *The Beauties of the British Poets*, was edited in 1831 by George Croly, an English poet of little renown.[26] It provides a fine example of an anthology adhering to a *dulce et utile* aesthetics, whereby a reader exposed to the best of British literary arts could expect to profit both morally and intellectually; and England, by extension, could expect to profit from a citizenry thus enlightened. Indeed, these broader, public purposes structure Croly's preface. Although it closes with a nod toward the intimate nature of his project—the project "was commenced. . .by a literary friend to whom the idea originally suggested itself as a personal amusement" (xvi)—the preface mostly concentrates on the historical development of English poetry in order for Croly to demonstrate the inherent superiority of

British arts. Croly's argument relies on a great man theory that traces early English poesy from Chaucer, through Spenser, to Shakespeare. More narrowly, he animates his history of British poetry with an awareness of its imperial roots. In his preface we hear language that echoes coeval justifications for British exploits in the Middle East and Asia when he explains that

> [t]he era of English Poetry commences with the Norman Invasion. Anglo-Saxon Poems had existed; but their topics, their rudeness, or the decay of the language, extinguished them in the presence of a superior dialect and a more fortunate time. The violence of the Norman Conquest [to the language]. . .was more than compensated by the novelty, richness, and vigour of the results. The poetical soil was ploughed roughly; but, in the act, its native fertility was put in motion—the old encumbrances were swept away, and a new and lovely vegetation was left free to spread and luxuriate. The transfer of the Norman Court to England was the transfer of a warlike, romantic, and regal system, into a land of native generosity and courage, yet hitherto but little acquainted with the higher arts of nations. (v–vi)

Croly's *Beauties of the British Poets, with a Few Introductory Observations* is a narrative governed by imperial conquest and the bestowal of high culture on an undercultivated but fertile people. His anthology continues that project by sending out the best of English poetry to those peoples likewise fertile but primitive in their cultural development. Croly embarks on his mission compelled by the sense that "the writings of the great poets of England cannot be put into the popular hand too often, in too pleasing a form, or under too accessible circumstances" (xvi). He invokes a vision that poetry, not religion, has become the guardian of wisdom and consolation.[27] To ensure that the English-speaking common reader profits from the export of England's best poetry, Croly's volume slightly modernizes spelling, vocabulary, syntax, and metrics.

For Croly, the primary function of poetry is to mold readers according to the martial and intellectual vigor of a nation. In order to avoid his readers imitating a weak model, Croly's "Introductory Observations" casts Chaucer as an idealized nineteenth-century gentleman: "a classical student, a lawyer, a soldier, a mathematician, and a theologian"—even "an exile for the Reformation" (vii and viii). In other words, Chaucer was a fourteenth-century version of the multifaceted gentleman that this volume would enable its reader to become. This sense that Chaucer anticipated modern British mores by nearly five centuries is underscored by the lines representing Chaucer's work. For the opening selection to his *Beauties*, Croly prints a highly reduced version of the *General Prologue*,

omitting the first eighteen lines and beginning with the narrator's stay at the Tabard Inn:

> Befelle, that in that season on a day,
> In Southwark at the Tabard as I lay,
> Ready to wenden on my pilgrimage
> To Canterbury, with devout courage,
> At night was come into that hostelrie
> Well nine and twenty in a compani
> Of sundry folk, by aventure yfalle
> In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all
> That toward Canterbury wolden ride.
> The chambers and the stables weren wide,
> And well we weren eased at best.
> (27, 1.19–29)[28]

By beginning at the *General Prologue*'s eighteenth line, the selection insulates the reader not only from the rhetorically complex opening lines, but more significantly from the clear references to the journey as a pilgrimage prompted in part by religious devotion to St. Thomas à Becket. Rather, the narrator and his "sundry folk" are simply adventurers enjoying the English countryside and spacious accommodations, an activity not too distant from the common reader's own.

Next, Croly's *Beauties* omits sixteen of Chaucer's portraits. The remaining portraits—the Knight, the Squire, the Yeoman, the Prioress (including the brief reference to "another Nun" and "Priests three"), the Monk, and the Parson—provide a vision of English society reduced to the landed gentry and the clergy. The Knight's abbreviated portrait emphasizes his imperial exploits protecting "Christendom" against "Heatheness" in the faraway lands of Alexandria, Prussia, Lithuania, and Russia. Though the clergy bear the taint of medieval England's Roman Catholicism, the Prioress and the Monk carry their Romanism lightly, she preferring the company of "two small hounds" and he the thrill of the hunt, and the Parson could easily be any of the rectors populating Jane Austen's novels. The anthology further establishes the pilgrims' moral rectitude by eliminating the rascally Herry Bailly and his tale-telling wager. By emphasizing a gentrified morality, this *General Prologue* presents a convivial group portrait of rather familiar Englishmen taking a pleasant holiday to the coast.

This abbreviated *General Prologue* is followed by verses titled "Descriptions of the Kings of Thrace and India." Taken from *The Knight's Tale* (1.2128–33, 2135–40, 2142–51, 2155–68, 2171, 2174–78, 2185–86), these short portraits emphasize oriental splendor. Beyond its selection of lines detailing the rubies and diamonds studding the clothes and crown of

kings Lycurgus and Emetrius, the passage achieves its foreign outlandishness by eliminating the kings' retinues and emphasizing the exotic animals that accompany the royal pageant. Instead of "An hundred lordes. . .in his route, / Armed ful wel, with hertes stierne and stoute" (1.2153–54), Croly's Lycurgus is surrounded only by

> . . .snow-white hounds,
> Twenty and more, as great as any steer,
> To hunten at the lion or the deer;
> And followed him, with muzzle fast ybound.
> (35, compare to KnT 1.2148–51)

Similarly missing are Emetrius's hundred lords, the "dukes, erles, kynges" (1.2182) in Chaucer's original who join the Indian king "[f]or love and for encreess of chivalrye" (1.2183–84). In Croly, the Indian king's only companions are an eagle and "[f]ull many a lion and a leopard tame" (36, 1.2186). The isolated orientalism of the kings' portraits contrasts with the ordinariness of the English characters portrayed in the *General Prologue*. By coupling the two sets of portraits, the anthology lets Chaucer first express Britain's moral and cultural superiority, and then commandeer and subjugate oriental splendor.

Croly's anthology is thus a paradox. On the one hand, it adheres to a historical presentation of Chaucer: the introduction, the chronological arrangement, and the retention of Middle English point to Croly's acknowledgment of Chaucer's historical distance. On the other hand, Croly reformulates Chaucer so that he and his work conform to contemporary British ideals. Beyond reproducing a history of British literature that echoes nineteenth-century justifications for imperial conquest, Croly reconstitutes the historical Chaucer as a member of the Victorian gentry. Next, Croly remakes Chaucer's verse so that *The Canterbury Tales*' travels and pilgrims resemble behavior and characters familiar to Croly's readers. Finally, by isolating the descriptions of the foreign elements in *The Knight's Tale*, Croly completes the portrait of a poet appropriating the exotic Near East. Thus, under the guise of historical accuracy, Croly actually creates a version of Chaucer approximating the ideals of nineteenth-century imperial Britain.

Nearly half a century later in 1878, a different sort of British anthology appeared in America. Published by Riverside Press, one among the numerous publishers specializing in inexpensive editions of English masterpieces after 1847, *The Family Library of British Poetry* re-imagines the purposes of the popular anthology.[29] Like Croly's *Beauties*, *The Family Library* provides a historical continuum of British poetry that begins with Chaucer in the fourteenth century and adheres to the tenet that reading Chaucer confers

on its audience a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon excellence. It differs from Croly's, as the title implies, by narrowing its audience to the family, "the best and happiest result of civilization" (v). Before mentioning what the collection includes, the editors note that it excludes "everything which might not be read with profit and delight by the fireside" (v). Nevertheless, the Arnoldian aesthetic dominates their choices, specimens kindling a "love of human nature and reverence for God" in their readers. The father reading these poems to his family gathered around the fireplace could "plant in the growing mind [the] seed of the highest poetry [and] make the boy and girl thoroughly enthusiastic for grand sentiments and ideas as expressed through the imaginations of creative spirits" (vi). This anthology may present a historically diverse collection, yet it unites the collection under the rubric of Victorian family values.

The Chaucerian selections reflect the book's explicit appeal to family, even though Chaucer did not write children's poetry. In the case of *The Family Library*, the editors printed all of the *General Prologue* and then several short excerpts from which families ostensibly could absorb both entertainment and moral instruction. Some of the excerpts provide convenient examples of how boys should act: combining titillating gore with devout obedience to family and nation, *The Prioress's Tale* (called the "Boy Martyr") presents a schoolboy's brave piety and meek loyalty undeterred by throat-slashing Jews; "de Hugelino, Comite de Pize" from *The Monk's Tale* shows two "litel children" gallantly offering themselves as their starving father's next meal; and, "The Temple of Mars," extracted from *The Knight's Tale*, prepares boys for their martial duty by detailing the bloody scenery of war. Other excerpts, the short descriptions of Emelie (also from *The Knight's Tale*) and Creseide, evoke passive models of womanhood. The selections continue with depictions of personified Nature from *The Knight's Tale, Legend of Good Women*, *Complaint of the Black Knight*, and *Parliament of Fowles*; excerpted meditations on Slander from the *House of Fame* and on Beauty from *Romaunt of the Rose* complete the program. By extracting and resetting the poems, the editors transform Chaucer's narrative poetry into static set pieces for moral and patriotic edification.

A good example of the editors' transformation is a set of lines excerpted from *The Knight's Tale* and retitled "Morning in May." Pulled from a narrative of passion and perceived betrayal (among other themes), the passage isolates Arcite's observation of Maytime rites:

> The busy larke, messanger of daye,
> Saueth in hire song the morwe graye;
> And fyry Phebus ryseth up so brighte,
> That al the orient laugheth of the lighte,

And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
And silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.
And Arcite, that is in the court ryal
With Theseus, his squyer principal,
Is risen, and loketh on the merye day.
And for to doon his observaunce to May,
Remembryng on the poynt of his desire,
He on his courser, stertyng as the fir,
Is riden into the feeldes him to pleye,
Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
And to the grove, of which that I yow tolde,
By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
To maken him a garland of the greves,
Were it of woodebynde or hawethorn leves,
And lowde he song ayens the sonne scheene:
"May, with alle thy floures and thy greene,
Welcome be thou, wel faire fressche May,
I hope that I som grene gete may."
(12–13, 1.1491–1512)

Unless the reader knows that Arcite's rival, Palamon, is spying on him, or that Emily, "the poynt of his desir," is unavailable, the isolated scene romantically portrays Arcite's careful and precise "observaunce to May." There is no treachery and no falsehood, just the hope of youthful desire properly channeled through the springtime rites of ancient Britannia. The implication that the passage accurately represents Chaucer's verse is reinforced here and elsewhere by presenting the verse in a regularized Middle English rather than in a fully modernized or translated English. Consequently, the passage celebrates a Victorian England ideal surreptitiously projected onto the Middle Ages.[30]

The next anthology I discuss also paradoxically combines historical concerns with a Chaucer remade in the image of Victorian England. In 1883, Funk and Wagnalls, operating under the principle that "bad cheap literature could be offset by good cheap literature," printed F.W. Farrar's anthology, *With the Poets: A Selection of English Poetry*.[31] Rather than admitting "many poems by writers altogether unknown, or long forgotten," thereby making "room for some passages of only tenth-rate excellence" and excluding "others of the supremest merit" (iii), Farrar, the canon of Westminster, collected from "our best poets" lines that "seemed most likely to be of use in forming the taste of young readers" (iv). As did the editors of Riverside's *Family Library*, Farrar imagined parents supplementing the moral and imaginative education of their children with this book. And like *The Family Library*, *With the Poets* places Chaucer in a historical continuum while simultaneously reconfiguring his poetry to conform to

Victorian sensibilities. Accordingly, Farrar chose Chaucerian texts that apparently fit this purpose: the Squire's portrait, the Parson's portrait, seven stanzas from *The Man of Law's Tale* describing the pathos of Constance's obedience as she is set afloat with her child, and "The Last Verses of Chaucer—'Fly from the Press.'"[32] *The Man of Law's Tale* extract is particularly effective in achieving Farrar's expressed goals because the collection provides no context for Constance's exile. It begins with receipt of the letter forged by Constance's mother-in-law ordering the banishment of the innocent queen and her infant, includes her prayers to the Virgin Mary, and concludes with her embarkation on the ship "with an holy entente" (32). The uninitiated reader cannot understand the cause of her extradition, the true legitimacy of her child, the conditions of her journey, or her eventual and happy reunion with her husband and her father. In short, the passage isolates and emphasizes the "natural pathos" of the spiritually faithful, thereby arousing the young reader to noble conduct and pure thoughts (iv–v). Although the emotional intensity in *The Man of Law's Tale* is certainly an important element, the unabridged tale questions the legitimacy of a model that values women most when they suffer most. Out of this original context, Constance resembles a pre-Raphaelite damsel. Again, through strategic omissions and isolation, Chaucer's verse is stripped of complexity and remade into Victorian vignettes.

The last British-edited anthology I discuss continues the paradoxical combination of historically minded paratexts with decontextualized and excerpted passages that conform to Victorian sensibilities. At the same time, however, this edition demonstrates the tendency of British anthologies to become progressively more concerned with authority. Printed in 1889 and edited by Thomas Humphry Ward, former fellow at Oxford, *The English Poets* benefited from the bona fides of Walter Skeat and Matthew Arnold, who served as major consultants. The collection attempts to be a one-volume history of English literature, gathering "as many of the best and most characteristic of [English poems] as should fully represent the great poets, and at the same time [omitting] no one who is poetically considerable" (vi).[33] Thus, the text eschews translating Chaucer and retains his original spellings, for reasons Ward explains in his lengthy introduction to Chaucer:

> It ought to be not only possible, but easy, for an educated reader to learn the few essentials of Chaucerian grammar, and for an ear at all trained to poetry to tune itself to the unfamiliar harmonies. For those who make the attempt the reward is certain. They will gain the knowledge, not only of the great poet and creative genius that these pages have endeavoured to sketch, but of the master who uses our language with a power, a freedom, a variety, a

> rhythmic beauty, that, in five centuries, not ten of his successors have been found able to rival. (14)

Although the prefatory notes and the editors' academic credentials might suggest that the common reader requires extensive guidance in order to read Chaucer's verse, Ward's admonition suggests otherwise. With Chaucer as the master, simply trying to read his poetry will result in a certain, undeniable reward. The reader becomes the rightful heir to Chaucer's poetic virtue—power, freedom, variety, and beauty. The antiquity of Chaucer's verse, combined with the easy reward of reading it, argues that the virtues necessary for the vigorous work of empire-building have belonged to the English for a long time and are the legitimate inheritance of the common reader.

The ten selections, generally excerpts, are labeled as such and headed with brief explanations of their context in the longer work. Ward's notes are certainly more scholarly than the moral instruction in the previous anthologies. For example, the first excerpt, the opening of the narrator's dream in *The Book of the Duchesse*, is headnoted "The following passage is given as a specimen of Chaucer's earliest or French period. The date is 1369" (15).[34] He chose these lines not only to move or edify the reader, but also to provide a representative specimen from Chaucer's oeuvre. A similar principle governs other choices, such as extracts from *The Hous of Fame* and the *General Prologue*. Alongside this instructional principle, however, other selections focus on lines of great emotional or imaginative pathos, such as the moment when Troilus falls in love with Criseyde at the Temple, the poet's lament when Constance is falsely charged with the murder of Dame Hermengild, "Lenuoy de Chaucer" at the close of the clerk's story of Patient Griselda, and a condensation of *The Franklin's Tale* featuring Dorigen's complaint to Fortune. Although this anthology wears the mantle of scholarship, its selections from Chaucer indicate that it retains the corollary purpose of edifying its readers' moral imagination.

During the nineteenth century, the British anthologies progressively adopted more pretensions of scholarly texts: their editors were more closely aligned with the academy, they included more copious introductions, and they became more prescriptive in their selections. Whereas Croly's 1831 edition has poems "tried at the tribunal of popularity," Ward's 1889 edition assures its readers that the poems were "chosen and judged by those whose tastes and studies especially qualify them" for the task (vi). Poetry may have been an efficient venue for the edification of the growing middle classes in the English-speaking world, but as far as the later collections were concerned, England's academic elite determined the proper reading. At the same time the British exported Chaucer in order to remake the world in

their own likeness, they instantiated their cultural superiority by closely guarding how Chaucer would be received by an increasingly irreverent colonial audience. Because these anthologies originated in Britain and were then exported to American families, they became the cultural seeds sown in the fertile yet uncultivated hearts and minds of America's men and women, as well as of its girls and boys. They attempted to claim the hearts and souls that armies and corporations left unvanquished. As we will see, however, their cultural victories were only partially realized, foiled by the American anthologies that mined the Chaucerian raw materials for their own cultural projects.

American Anthologies

Anthologies edited by Americans demonstrate the young nation's perception of itself as part of an inevitable westward progression of learning; they also display America's willingness to remake British letters to suit its own purposes, which range from rejecting the mother culture's values to privileging accumulation of profit over the dispensing of culture. The first American collection featuring selections from Chaucer, the 1819 edition of Ezekiel Sanford's *The Works of the British Poets with Lives of the Authors* published in fifty duodecimo volumes, falls outside the parameters I established for this study.[35] However, as the first collection with an American editor, *Works* establishes a new standard and tenor for many subsequent popular anthologies published in America by articulating the nation's willingness to transform British poetry to fit American myths. As such, it merits a brief consideration.

First, Sanford and his associate editors were not professional men of literature. They were, instead, publishing entrepreneurs with enough literary acumen to put the volumes together as a business venture and to sell subscriptions to the reading public.[36] In fact, their promotion of British authors was undoubtedly an attempt to avoid royalty payments.[37] Next, the collection imagines as its audience the common reader with no training in either classical languages or literature; therefore, it prints the text with contemporary typeface and relies on the Tyrwhitt edition of Chaucer, itself a somewhat regularized and popularized edition.[38] Third, this first American edition expurgates the bawdy Chaucer favored by eighteenth-century anthologies. For example, as part of his project to "reject everything unpure" (16), Sanford reshaped *The Miller's Tale*, discarding the first 232 lines describing the characters and the illicit affair between "hende" Nicholas and Alisoun. Then, after Nicholas' scheme with John the Carpenter, the tale stops short, ending with John installed in the tub and "awaiting on the rain, / if he it here" (52, 1.3642) and omitting the

tryst between Alisoun and Nicholas, the wooing of Absolon, the kisses, the hot coulter, and the final humiliation of John. In Sanford's edition, the tale becomes an odd portrait of a learned astrologer playing the straight role of a second Noah, urging his friends to prepare for the next flood.

Most importantly for my project, Sanford's edition records a characteristically American attitude toward British literature. At the close of the editor's preface, Sanford remarks on earlier projects in Britain, such as Bell's:

> An immense mass of vapid poetry is thus foisted into the. . .collections on the other side of the water. In this country, however, we do not feel the necessity of sustaining the national character by a superstitious reverence of English authors, merely because they are old; and all that is excellent in English poetry, may, we think, be easily included in the compass of fifty volumes. (1.xi)

Unlike the British, who thought it "their duty to compensate unusual neglect by overrunning admiration," Americans owed no false allegiance to either the whole pantheon of British poets or their individual works. Consequently, Sanford felt free to print only fifty volumes, a plan that not only reduced subscription costs but caused the reader "no real loss of pleasure" (1.xi). In fact, unable to locate enough suitable British poetry to complete the publisher's promised subscription, the editors filled the final three volumes with translations of continental and classical poetry. Sanford and later American anthologists shied away from the antiquarian zeal of *Bell*'s Chaucer; they refused to pull from oblivion whatever poetry the author had written or to deem it "worthy of name and place in the temple of British Apollo" (1.xi). They remade the British poets in a way profitable to the publisher and convenient to the reader, with no debts due the British heritage.

Thus, though not a true anthology, Sanford's American collection of British poets provides an important basis for my study of anthologized Chaucer for several reasons: it presents Chaucer not through scholars but through amateur polymaths (as the early British anthologies also did); it reworks the poetry for the common reader; it expurgates bawdy Chaucer; and it resists blind loyalty to the British cultural heritage. All these characteristics became even more pronounced in subsequent American-edited anthologies that appeared during the nineteenth century. From the textual and paratexual evidence, we can clearly see that Americans embraced a different attitude toward the British poetic heritage. Sanford's heirs chose smaller bits and made no pretense about the transformative effects of poetry. For nineteenth-century American anthologists, poetry did not make better citizens, better Christians, or better children. Rather,

poetry was a cultural commodity for publishers to sell and for American parents to pass onto their children, who could possess it as a marker of good breeding to be cashed in for social and economic improvement. In this way, the American anthologies expose the crass commercial exchange undergirding all the anthologies. Whereas the British editors promised that fireside poetry readings would promote higher virtues, the American editors observed that an edition's ability "to supply a real public need" had prompted multiple printings.[39] The British guaranteed the anthology's value because it transferred virtues to the reader; the Americans guaranteed the anthology's value because it transferred economic profit to the publisher—and to book agents and traveling salesmen who blanketed the nation after the Civil War—and conferred the appearance of good breeding to its owners. Consequently, the benefits and beneficiaries of the cultural exchange radically shifted as anthology production crossed the Atlantic.

The first of the American-edited, one-volume anthologies discussed in this chapter, Charles A. Dana's *The Household Book of Poetry*, was initially published in 1857 and later fully revised in 1882.[40] Dana exemplified the different character that American editors evidenced. Neither a scholar nor an antiquarian, he was a multifaceted generalist. A long-time managing editor for the *New York Tribune* and later the *New York Sun*, Dana served as assistant secretary of war during the Civil War; afterward, he planned and edited the *New American Cyclopædia* with George Ripley.[41] Actively engaged in birthing American culture and values, Dana used the anthology to create a distinctly American literary tradition.

To create this American tradition, Dana borrowed extensively from the British, preferring to offer "whatever is truly beautiful and admirable among the minor poems of the English language," including British, American, and translated poems (xiii). Rather than collecting the best that English poesy had to offer, Dana aimed to recover "fugitive poetry," whose pleasures had been limited "to scholars and to limited circles," and to present a "considerable store of treasures" to the "general public" (xiv). By focusing on the minor poems, Dana rejected the mother country's values and demonstrated the American refusal to adopt the British canon uncritically. Facing the paradoxical need to include the English literary tradition in an American anthology, he allows that while Americans might read British poetry, they should not blindly adopt British aesthetic values.[42]

Dana's decision to focus on minor poems—together with his arranging the poems not chronologically but "according to their own ideas and motives" (xiii)—created a new version of anthologized Chaucer. By preferring the minor poems, he bypassed the predictable extracts from *The Canterbury Tales* and the perennial favorite "Fly from the Press"; instead

in his early printings, he chose the pseudo-Chaucerian *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and *Flower and the Leaf*.[43] While the poems' static processions can arguably fit his "Poems of Nature" category, their considerable length and their obsolete language stand in unexplained and intractable contrast to the surrounding poems, such as Wordsworth's "March" and a translation of Pierre Ronbard's French poem, "Return of Spring." Without a prefatory essay, modernized language, or historicized literary context, *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and *Flower and the Leaf* are conspicuously not the "familiar friends" Dana claimed to gather for American households.

When he issued a revised edition in 1882, Dana further identified his book with the middle-class "parlor" or "gift" book, those handsome illustrated anthologies noted for their leather binding, gilded lettering, and ornately inscribed bookplates.[44] In this later edition, Dana showed no blind loyalty to the British literary canon. At the same time, he did not jettison Chaucer completely from the collection, apparently because he understood the significant literary capital of Chaucer's name. Dana retained his version of Chaucer among the British riches he claims for Americans by remaking the pseudo-Chaucerian lines to appeal to American tastes with half the number of lines and modernized language: he dropped *Flower and the Leaf* and replaced the original *Cuckoo* with Wordsworth's translation. The anthology's topical arrangement places this "Chaucerian" *Cuckoo* after three other poems, each addressing a cuckoo, by John Logan, William Wordsworth, and Frederick Locker. Unless one knows that Chaucer (to whom the poem is attributed) is a fourteenth-century poet, little in Wordsworth's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* hints at its medieval origins, and Chaucer is completely transformed, as the following stanza indicates:

> Good Nightingale! thou speakest wondrous fair,
> Yet, for all that, the truth is found elsewhere;
> For Love in young folk is but rage, I wis,
> And Love in old folk a great dotage is;
> Who most it useth, him 'twill most impair.
>
> (19)

Though the hints of Middle English ("thou," "speakest," and "wis") seem to strive for an archaic effect, the medieval lines are otherwise stripped of their antiquity, and Chaucer is rendered into a familiar lyric poet of Wordsworthian splendor. Choosing a modern translation with the added bonus of Wordsworth's association better addressed his project's competing interests: reaping financial reward, shaping American cultural values, marketing high culture to a popular audience, and snubbing British cultural values.

Dana's *Household Book* was successful enough to draw several competitors. These poetry collections share two distinctively American characteristics: thematic arrangement and ahistorical appreciation. Having measured the American desire for culture to be delivered in convenient and easily absorbed formats, American editors increasingly distanced their publications from the British ones. One publisher, J.B. Ford & Co., issued *A Library of Poetry and Song* in 1889.[45] In addition to its eccentric yet recognizable amalgam of poetry, the anthology distinguished itself from Dana's *Household Book* with an introduction by American pundit William Cullen Bryant, who was seen as "a sort of living memorial to the culture of which he was considered a representative."[46] Handsomely bound and engraved, the volume was one of the parlor books distributed in the millions by salesmen canvassing door-to-door and coast-to-coast.[47]

For its Chaucerian selections, the *Library* turns away from the awkward Court of Love poems (exemplified by *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* and *Flower and the Leaf*) and includes instead the portraits of the Prioress and the Parson under the heading "Descriptive Poems." Although the juxtaposed portraits are the identical chopped-up text used in Croly's British anthology, their new context profoundly alters them. Whereas Croly's Prioress seems quaintly benign when presented as one of several pilgrims, the *Library's* Prioress seems a pointed example of Romish silliness standing in stark contrast to the Protestant-like earnestness of the Parson. Now more than simply an example of antique verse, the pair becomes a denominational commentary reflecting American prejudices and fears driven by large tides of immigrants who seemed overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. Consequently, this anthology jostles for its market share by adding Bryant, an American-born cultural authority, and indulging American prejudices. Its presentation of Chaucer thus simultaneously rejects and feeds on British cultural authority.

This simultaneous eagerness to profit from British poetry while disregarding its British context appears in Henry T. Coates' 1878 American-edited anthology *The Fireside Encyclopedia of Poetry*.[48] Coates' preface repeatedly places the volume in the context of Dana's groundbreaking work, "discard[ing] the chronological arrangement followed by most compilers, and [adopting] the plan of classifying each poem according to its subject-matter, originated by Mr. Charles A. Dana" (v). Unlike Dana's anthology, though, Coates' *Encyclopedia* claims to eschew minor poetry and represent "all that is best and brightest in our poetic literature," whether the poems have received that commendation from "the best critics and reviewers" or have "touched the popular heart" (v). His promise to provide only complete poems probably explains his Chaucerian choice, "Good Counseil of Chaucer," a poem typically deemed minor. He places it in the section titled

"Moral and Didactic Poetry," a convenient *olla podrida* for those poems whose "under-currents so run in opposite directions as to threaten the entire foundation upon which the title of a poem is based" (v). Despite its difficulties, such a classifying rubric emphasizes how "human nature has been ever the same" (vi), for "Kingdoms have risen and been forgotten, languages been formed and fallen into disuse, but love, patriotism, sorrow and death, are the same in all ages and climes" (vi).

Wedged between Frances Anne Kemble's "Faith" ("Better trust all and be deceived") and Henry King's "*Sic Vita*" ("The flight is past—and man forgot"), Chaucer's medieval poem loses its potential irony. Furthermore, because of its inconsistently modernized spelling and some unique transcription errors, the poem oddly combines medieval and modern spellings, thereby making little sense to most readers.[49] As a result, confusion threads its way throughout the poem. Presented in isolation from any aid and bookended by Kemble's and King's aphoristic verse, Chaucer's "Good Counseil" becomes a patchwork of uninspired and contradictory platitudes. In a sense, Coates' Chaucer has been stripped to the minimal, but most easily conveyed, capital: the poet's name.

Although these three American editions present a Chaucer unrecognizable to most twentieth-century Chaucerians, together they provide some evidence that the American poetry anthology not only strived for popularity but achieved popularity with American audiences. Twenty-five years after the first edition, Dana's collection merited a "thoroughly revised and greatly enlarged" edition whose preface claims that *Household Book* had spawned numerous imitators, a claim supported by the many nineteenth-century thematically arranged anthologies still remaining on some library shelves. *The Library of Poetry and Song* likewise claims to enjoy an immense popularity. In the edition I examined, an appended advertisement expresses the publisher's "gratification at the flattering reception given to the 'Library of Poetry and Song,' the best evidence of which is the fact of the 20th edition having been called for in little more than six months from the publication of the first. It has seemed to supply a real public need" (iv). If these profit-driven claims are true, it seems that American audiences were quite ready to appropriate English poets, including Chaucer, remade to their liking.

This willingness to make Chaucer reflect an American ideal is best evidenced by the Chaucerian selection included in an 1884 illustrated volume edited by Edwin O. Chapman and issued by Hurst and Company, a New York publisher known for its cheap reprints. Titled *A Thousand and One Gems*, the volume features short, aphoristic excerpts and seems to take to heart Dryden's claim that Chaucer "is a rough Diamond, and must first

be polish'd, e'er he shines."[50] The lead poem, credited to Chaucer and polished beyond all recognition, is titled "Mercy":

> But, sith 'tis so there is a trespass done,
> Unto Mercy let yield the trespassour.
> It is her office to redress it soon,
> For Trespass to mercy [is] a mirrour.
> And like as the sweet hath the price by sour,
> So by Trespass, Mercy hath all her might;
> Without Trespass, Mercy hath lack of light.
>
> What should Physic do but if Sickness were?
> What needeth salve but if there were a sore?
> What needeth drink where thirst hath no power?
> What should Mercy do, but Trespass go afore?
> But Trespass, woll be little store;
> Without Trespass near execution,
> May Mercy have ne chief perfection.

Although the lines previously appeared in Bell's 1782 *British Library* as stanzas 3 and 4 of a Chaucerian work called "A Ballade" (13.127), the verses had already been tossed out of the Chaucerian canon by Tyrwhitt in 1775.[51] It may at first seem puzzling why Chapman plucked these obscure, discredited lines as his sole specimen of Chaucer's poetry. But rather than disregard the poem as an example of careless editing, I suggest that it provides the best example of American editors' tendency not to approach Chaucer with the white-glove, scientific fastidiousness of a learned professional. It illustrates their tendency to reject the Chaucer venerated as the father of English poetry and to re-imagine his poetry in terms that reflect American cultural concerns, in this case, normalizing America's commitment to imperial expansion.

In its title, *A Thousand and One Gems*, the collection announces how these poems should be approached: as exotic specimens collected and strung together. As only the first of a thousand and one gems, "Mercy" corresponds to archetypes that color much American cultural production of the period. The poem's primary conceit is the Petrarchan opposition between allegorized Trespass and Mercy, but it works the imperial argument by transforming the quasi-religious terms "trespass" and "mercy" as used in a fifteenth-century Court of Love poem into the vocabulary of territorial acquisition. Isolated from its earlier religious or amorous contexts, the term "trespass" connotes the realm of property rights. That is, we are provided an allegory in which Trespass has transgressed Mercy's established territorial divisions. And this transgression has already occurred

when the poem opens. Mercy, however, cannot press her legal claims. Whether her inability to press her claims is for want of martial, judicial, or economic power, we are not told, because she cannot even articulate her claim: the first line begins *in medias res* with a silencing "But." Furthermore, Mercy will not receive compensation for the trespass; instead, *she* should make "redress," remedying the transgression by re-clothing it as a domination she desires, even requires, in order to receive the self-knowledge that domination supposedly confers. The subsequent eleven lines argue that Mercy's consequent self-knowledge is an equitable recompense for whatever her losses might have been. In fact, without the trespass or the trespasser, Mercy cannot know herself because "Trespass to mercy [is] a mirrour." Though the Chapman edition omits the copular "is," the linking rhyme of "mirrour" and "trespassour" establishes and legitimizes Trespass as integral to Mercy's self-perception.

The verses do not stop, however, with self-understanding. They further argue that Trespass strengthens Mercy. Trespass's presence endows Mercy with "all her might," which she would otherwise lack; without the offending trespass, the poem argues, Mercy would be less than herself, would become the darkness of the farthest continents. Ultimately, the verses ask "What should Mercy do, but Trespas go afore?" implying that Mercy's very existence depends upon the fortuitous intervention of Trespass. By silencing Mercy's prior existence and validating Trespass's transgression, the poem works the imperialist argument that Mercy—like Chaucer, British poetry, the Native American, the American frontier, and other distant territories—gains from the trespass, for only when she has been subjugated can her true worth be brought out of the darkness and revealed in the light delivered by Trespass.

As we see in this survey, early British anthologies imagine themselves exporting English authors to a primitive but decidedly English-biased colony, thereby delivering a high culture available only from the culturally superior British. By the end of the century, however, American anthologies echo the Americans' own colonization project by repackaging British poems as gems to be mined for increasing the wealth of the American empire.

The anthologized verse of other poets might also expose the same cultural tensions, but I suspect none would to the extent that Chaucer's poems do. Of course, Chaucer's historical priority and his canonical artistry justify his work's inclusion in any anthology displaying the treasures of English language poetry. But several aspects of his work resist anthologizing. His long narratives, his bawdiness, his medieval alterity, and his obscure language are large enough obstacles that few nineteenth-century anthologies included Chaucerian specimens. At the same time, these obstacles

have decided benefits. They permit editors to repackage Chaucer without compunction. Paradoxically, then, his foreignness makes his work malleable enough to present American aesthetics and ideology. Chaucer is not a distant mirror, allowing Americans to see themselves more clearly; instead, he becomes a carefully polished and crafted lens through which Americans refract and justify their behavior. This quality will continue to be apparent in subsequent American presentations of Chaucer, where his name becomes a vessel to be filled with evolving American values.

CHAPTER 2

SIR GEOFFREY, PERCY MACKAYE, AND CIVIC ART

During the spring of 1917, New York's Metropolitan Opera lavishly launched the premiere performances of Reginald de Koven and Percy MacKaye's *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.[1] One of the first full-length American grand operas to appear on the Metropolitan's stage, the opera received primarily lukewarm reviews: it seemed neither very grand nor very American. Sung in English by a largely German cast, the opera was frequently critiqued for being no more intelligible to the audience than an opera in German or Italian.[2] The only English words universally recognized by the audience were in Act Two, when the German-accented "Vife of Bat" cried "Shud upp-phh!"[3] On the evening of the fifth performance, however, the audience was probably less concerned than before about discerning the fine points of the pilgrims' journey to Canterbury, preoccupied instead with the news due from the White House at any minute.

For months, the captains of American commerce and industry, many of whom were at the Metropolitan on that evening of April 2, were eager for President Wilson to declare the nation at war against Germany and its allies.[4] At the end of the third act, the audience learned President Wilson had advised Congress to accept "the status of belligerent," which the behavior of the Imperial German Government had thrust upon the American people.[5] As the *New York Herald* reported, the news spread as "the blackface typed extras" were passed from the lobby "to the orchestra seats and then to the boxes."[6] Within five minutes, patrons had abandoned all decorum and newspapers were spread out over the box railings. The American audience was jubilant at the news. Whereas the librettist had once hoped the Chaucerian opera would "[restore] old merry England to the imaginations of men" and turn their minds to the woes of England under assault, this night the war in Europe captured American imaginations

and turned their minds away from *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.[7] When it came time to begin the fourth and final act, Maestro Bodanzky soberly entered the orchestra pit and conducted the musicians in the national anthem; spontaneously, the audience stood up and sang along. James W. Gerard, the U.S. ambassador recalled from Germany, marshaled three cheers for President Wilson, and the house of 3,500 roared with approval for the president's war message.[8] After the cheering died down, Bodanzky led the orchestra in "The Star-Spangled Banner" for a second time before finally starting Act Four.

The final act began in front of Canterbury Cathedral's impressive west entrance, with the Canterbury Girls chorus hawking their wares. Then entered the Wife of Bath (German alto Margarete Ober), dressed "gorgeously as a bride," ready to claim husband number six, and gloating about her newly won "pot of honey."[9] In the middle of a phrase, unable any longer to control her anxiety about the impending entry of the United States into hostilities against her native land, Mme. Ober fell back in a dead faint: "In that condition, she was lifted and dragged off with some difficulty; not to reappear, while the other stars made the best they could of the closing act without her."[10] Offstage, Robert Leonhardt, the German baritone singing the role of the Knight, also fainted but was revived in time to join the final chorus.[11]

Despite the episode of the fainting Wife of Bath, ticket receipts for the Metropolitan's seven productions of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* merited extending the opera company's contract with de Koven for another season. But before the next season began, not only the fainting Germans but all German nationals were sent home, forcing the cancellation of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*' second season and allowing its chances to join the Metropolitan's repertory to slip away. The opera, however, had faced a Sisyphean task: it sought to bring a vernacular libretto and music to an audience that distinguished itself from the rabble precisely by dismissing the American vernacular in favor of European standards of verse and music. As much as the opera was undermined by the repatriated Germans, ultimately the opera was undermined by the production conditions, in particular the decision to use German soloists to sing the principle parts in English, a decision neither the composer nor the librettist could control.

The strong influence of production conditions in determining the success or failure of stage performances is a central filament threading its way through the history of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*. That history stretches back to 1903 when Percy MacKaye—a little-remembered dramatist and essayist flourishing in the years before Eugene O'Neill dominated the American stage—first transformed Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* into a play. Rather than reenacting Chaucer's canonical masterpiece as a tale-telling pilgrimage,

MacKaye's play recreates the pilgrims' journey with new intertwined narratives that explore the social role of the literary artist in terms that echo the ideas and rhetoric developed by socially progressive American intellectuals of the nineteenth century. Building on Chaucer's purported position as poet laureate in Richard II's court, MacKaye's play depicts the poet being provided the resources to write serious, innovative verse. In exchange for this support, MacKaye's Chaucer provides literary services to the royal court and helps reinforce the social status quo. MacKaye's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* presents Geoffrey Chaucer and his position at court as the model American poets should emulate. In MacKaye's hands, Chaucer's court position demonstrates to Americans the ideal conditions for supporting poets, and Chaucer's works illustrate the promised consequence of that patronage.

Over the course of fifteen years, MacKaye retooled this play featuring the poet–patron relationship into three different formats: a play script for a traveling troupe, a large pageant extravaganza, and the opera libretto. In each reincarnation, Chaucer and his *Tales* were an unlikely but powerful choice. Although the gospel of medievalism had been preached by a generation of literati as an escape from the vulgarity of the American present, Chaucer's poetry did not figure largely in American popular culture during this interval between the Spanish-American War and World War I, his work remaining the provenance of the higher education classroom and his name only somewhat familiar to middle-class readers.[12] Consequently, *The Canterbury Tales* was a convenient canonical source for MacKaye because Chaucer's cultural cachet added a veneer of seriousness to an otherwise broadly comic play script very much in line with the melodramatic comedy then popular on the American stage. At the same time, because Chaucer's works were largely unknown to American audiences, MacKaye could safely modify the *General Prologue*'s implied narrative in order to demonstrate the benefits to both poet and society of a patronage system that would allow artists to create works based on high art values made accessible to all audiences.

Each time MacKaye reformatted *The Canterbury Pilgrims* for a different presentation, however, the new context modified the relationship between poet and patron in the play: the print text, completed as a commission for a stage star, argues for the importance of powerful individuals who support artists; the traveling-troupe play script, produced on college campus venues, implicitly argues for tighter affiliation between the theatre and universities; the pageant, created to elevate a community's regional profile, demonstrates drama's usefulness to local merchants; and the opera, written to prove that American vernacular language and music could be adapted to grand opera, ends up illustrating elite institutions' resistance to vernacular arts. Although MacKaye in every case claimed to be promoting a higher

artistic and social good, the various reincarnations of his work replicate the interests of those sponsoring each production.

Behind the repeated recreations of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* was MacKaye's presumption of the near impossibility of supporting himself and his family by writing serious literary works in turn-of-the-century America.[13] But MacKaye addressed this issue head-on. Throughout his career, he explored various ways to institute and sustain a civic theatre that would allow creative and financial freedom for the literary artist writing serious drama. In addition to using *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to depict the social value of public patronage for the literary artist, MacKaye wrote essays in which he aggressively advocated America's need to nurture both the noncommercial theatre and poet-dramatists like him rather than look abroad for inspiring drama.[14] From his earliest works to his last published interview, MacKaye consistently maintained that poets were necessary for preserving the social order and should therefore be publicly subsidized.[15] The essays and lectures he wrote while simultaneously retooling *The Canterbury Pilgrims* for different formats explain why the old commercial theatre must be abandoned and replaced by a new civic theatre: as long as dramatists were beholden to the commercial theatre, they could not support themselves without appealing to the lowest common denominator; so, to assure that dramas of the highest literary caliber were produced on American stages, the entire theatrical endeavor, from script production to closing curtain, would have to be supported as any other civic institution.

In return, MacKaye argued, the dramatist would write artful theatre edifying all classes of society. In the play, in its productions, and in his essays, MacKaye explains that the patronage system benefits not only the artist but also the patrons, for the various forms of civic theatre could indoctrinate new immigrants, redeem the leisure of restless workers, and restore a sense of civic unity destroyed by industrialization. In each case, MacKaye assures his audiences that the sufficiently sustained artist could offer serious work curing social ills and making the lower classes more malleable to the established social order.[16] MacKaye's presentation of Chaucer and his verse in *The Canterbury Pilgrims* becomes the platform that dramatized the American playwright's argument.

Percy MacKaye and Early-Twentieth-Century American Theatre

At the time MacKaye began writing *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, most commentators agreed that the economic conditions in which American playwrights worked determined the quality of their plays. Held in low regard, dramatists and their plays were casualties of the entire disreputable American

theatrical system, deemed by most observers as degenerate, dull, and unlively.[17] They blamed this poor quality on the commercialism of theatres that fed the unsophisticated tastes of their audiences, a commercialism abetted by the national duopoly of the Theatrical Syndicate and the Shubert Brothers, which "aimed at and almost succeeded in controlling the American theatre by coercion, bribing critics, boycotting newspapers, blackballing actors, and hogtying managers and owners of theatres."[18] Until World War I, the Syndicate and the Shuberts controlled which plays were produced and which actors performed.[19] Though based in New York City, both organizations owned theatres all across the United States and sent out traveling troupes featuring stars, especially those with European reputations, who attracted large audiences. This course of action instigated a vicious circle: as the theatres became driven by the star system, expenses went up; to lower expenses, production values were cut and audiences shrank; when audiences shrank, so did revenues, and additional production cuts soon followed. Yet the star remained central to the theatre.[20] Once the Syndicate and Shuberts began fueling their productions exclusively on star power, they had few incentives to produce plays that took any commercial risks. And if theatres produced the cheapest works in order to make a profit, then dramatists had no incentive to write innovative serious drama. Consequently, as long as the commercial theatre placed profit above quality, according to the chorus of critics, dramatists had two choices: they could either make money by writing insipid plays that pandered to the masses, or they could support themselves some other way in order to write serious drama on the side, with little hope it would be produced.[21]

In order for American playwrights to get produced in this commercial environment, this line of complaint went, they could not write plays that registered the complexities of the American experience: unlike serious artists, they could neither experiment with new forms nor engage with the material conditions unique to their era.[22] Instead, they had to manufacture plays according to a blueprint: formulaic melodramas presenting the battle between good and evil in unambiguous terms for the least literate audiences, ameliorating social and economic inequalities, and flattening the complexities of American life in order not to alienate any stratum of the audience.[23] If producers wanted complexity, they would turn either to recent European dramatists, such as Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw, or to recycled productions of Shakespeare featuring star performers. As long as producers wanted scripts that fulfilled all expectations of any audience, anywhere in the country, American playwrights had no reason to break away from the popular formulations.[24]

In these economic conditions, where few writers considered playwriting their primary occupation, much less a serious literary endeavor, MacKaye

sought to "adopt the profession of play writing strictly as an art."[25] His ambition to raise the quality of American arts was fueled by his studies at Harvard, which had exposed him to the Arnoldian judgments that American culture represented all that was crude and dull, that English authors were preferred to American ones, and that the "old European rigidities of the mediaeval order" were infinitely better than the "fluidities bred by American living."[26] MacKaye only partly agreed with this Brahmin verdict of the American literary arts and so, as one admirer put it, set out to express the American experience in those "rich vehicles of association and suggestion handed down from the past, the legends, the folk cycles, the mythologies in which centuries have poured the accumulated meanings of human life."[27]

MacKaye's decision to create serious American drama stemmed from a long-standing desire to extend, even vindicate, the dazzling yet lamentable career of his father, Steele MacKaye.[28] A dramatist famous for his 1880 play *Hazel Kirke*, an actor known for his naturalistic depiction of Hamlet, and a producer clever enough to send out multiple companies of the same show, the elder MacKaye repeatedly sacrificed financial stability for the sake of such theatrical innovations as Delsartian movement, electrical lights, and multiple movable stages.[29] His most daring failure was the Spectatorium, a theatre designed to unite music, drama, and visual spectacle on twenty-five telescoping stages that featured a moat large enough to float replicas of Columbus' fleet. Planned for the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exhibition, the Spectatorium was never completed, stopped by its funders because of cost overruns. In his journals, the younger MacKaye recalls gazing at the unfinished Spectatorium's "gaunt frame," "looming Dante-esque beyond the fairy porticoes of the [Exhibition's] White City."[30] This financial fiasco cost investors enormous sums and so debilitated Steele MacKaye's health that he died the next year. The father's never-to-be-realized dreams shaped and nurtured the son's, leading the younger MacKaye to imagine himself part of a MacKaye continuum: he later boasted to fellow Harvard graduates that "[t]ogether, father and son have contributed to the American drama, in creative continuity, an average of one dramatic work a year for fifty years (1872–1922)."[31] Frustrated by the commercialism he saw strangling the American theatre and goaded to succeed where his father had failed, the younger MacKaye repeatedly sought to change theatrical institutions to make them receptive to his high-minded verse drama.

MacKaye began his project to resituate the American dramatist in his class valedictory address at Harvard's 1897 commencement. In this speech, he dedicated himself to creating a new form of American drama that emphasized man's desires over his "moral incapacity," imagination over raw emotional appeal, and symbolism over realism.[32] In his call to supplant

the realism that dominated the American stage, MacKaye was echoing the Arnoldian aesthetic that privileged Anglophilic standards and that insisted literary arts should elevate their audiences, but MacKaye's project was distinctive in applying these "bookish" goals to the American theatre.[33] He sought to transform popular entertainment by enticing the common man away from the commercial theatre (and even from vaudeville and film, then a novelty) with plays in the tradition of Shakespearean verse drama. Rather than having audiences degraded by the sensationalism he saw staining the theatres of Broadway, MacKaye envisioned a verse drama that ennobled the spirit. In this first articulation of his dramatic theories, MacKaye did not call for any institutional changes, for he initially believed that dramatists themselves could single-handedly rescue the American theatre from the deleterious effects of commercialism. They had only to abandon the gritty depictions of humanity's baser habits in melodrama and to embrace instead the soulful symbolism that found its materials in humanity's imaginative heritage.

These aristocratic ideas proclaimed in his valedictory address were reinforced by an eighteen-month sojourn in Europe where, accompanied by his bride, Marion, he absorbed the Continental artistic ethos and began writing in order "to help the world forward to higher and nobler ideas."[34] Upon returning to the United States in 1900, MacKaye found mutual support from two communities: the Cornish, New Hampshire art colony, and a group of New York writers committed to poetic drama.[35] The young MacKaye family, now augmented by a son, spent most of each year in the arcadian Cornish community; there, near the estate of sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, they found a gathering of artists consciously trying to develop an authentic American culture on par with, but not necessarily independent of, European culture.[36] The colony's distinguished residents, both summer and year-round, were unfailingly supportive of MacKaye, seriously and cheerfully performing in his masques, gathering for readings of his play drafts, and hosting private performances of his plays, masques, and pageants.[37]

In New York, MacKaye associated with a group of dramatists—William Vaughn Moody, E.A. Robinson, Josephine Peabody, and Ridgely Torrence—initially brought together by their disdain for the Theatrical Syndicate's philistine indifference to the "deeper spiritual aspects of dramatic art."[38] This "phalanx of fire" sought to infuse poetry into American drama, thereby elevating it to an art form recognizably equivalent to European imports.[39] Dismayed by the judgments "furnished by the box-office tally sheet," these writers soon expanded their ambitions to rethinking the conditions for psychologically and financially nurturing the dramatic artist.[40] Neither enchanted by Francophilic imagism nor intrigued by Germanic

psychoanalysis, they were less invested in the formal experimentation of poets and dramatists now labeled as "high modernists" and more interested in how art and the artist could function to spread their brand of romantic idealism. As MacKaye later recalled, they saw themselves creating a new environment for their works ex nihilo:

> Throughout most of that period there existed as yet in America no organized dramatic movement, no little theatre, no university theatre, no university course in modern drama (except one, at Harvard, just beginning), no civic or municipal theatre, no poetry society, no anthology or critical summation of American poetry since Stedman's, no poetry journal, or college course in contemporary poetry and drama. Our group began its work without any such things existent. Our incentive was to create them, and some of us helped to attain them.[41]

In other words, MacKaye and his friends were trying to imagine new roles for the theatre and the poet-dramatist in American society. For the first decade of the twentieth century, they were among the first voices to express a desire for a more sophisticated, more intellectual, and more aesthetic dramatic art than they found in the realism then dominating the American stage.[42]

Of this group, "beautifully. . .earnest" Percy MacKaye adopted the role of public poet most seriously.[43] In a career spanning the first half of the twentieth century, he produced a large opus of poetry, dramatic works, and theoretical tracts that tease the reader with a dizzying array of genres and topics, from dramas featuring Greek nymphs to odes on the flying machine, from ceremonies celebrating newly naturalized citizens to treatises on drama promoting the new science of eugenics. Despite this bewildering assortment of topics and interests that contributes to his reputation as "one of the most curious figures in American dramaturgy," he regularly returned to a consistent theme: how best to facilitate the fruitful exchange that emerges when patrons subsidize artists.[44]

Creating *The Canterbury Pilgrims*

Ideas into Drama

The Canterbury Pilgrims, which recreates the originary moment that inspired Chaucer to compose *The Canterbury Tales*, is one of MacKaye's first attempts to celebrate the central relationship between poet and patron. Making Chaucer himself its focus, the play depicts him as King Richard's poet laureate, Sir Geoffrey Chaucer, traveling anonymously with the pilgrims to gather fresh material for his next poetic work.[45] That literary

journey maps the locale and chronology for the play's acts: Act I at the Tabard Inn; Acts II and III three days later in Bob-up-and-down (at the non-Chaucerian One Nine-pin Inn); and Act IV the next day in front of Canterbury Cathedral.[46]

MacKaye's play opens on an April day with the pilgrims gathering at the Tabard Inn and Herry Bailey proposing the tale-telling contest. Except for a short scene depicting the Wife relating the denouement of *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (65–67), the play excludes Chaucerian tale-telling. Instead, the play showcases the pilgrims' distinctive mannerisms and behaviors immortalized in the *General Prologue*. The pilgrims are the familiar bunch, including the less familiar wife of Herry Bailey and all three of the Prioress's priests, named here Joannes, Marcus, and Paulus. To this band, MacKaye adds a few historical characters, some fillers for the market scene in the final act, and another fictional character, the Squire's lady, Johanna, Marchioness of Kent. The play ends at Canterbury as the pilgrims follow King Richard and his entourage—which includes John of Gaunt, John Wycliffe (incongruously resurrected from the dead), Robert de Vere, and the Duke of Gloucester—through the cathedral doors.[47]

In *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, MacKaye weaves together three narrative strands, one drawn loosely from the *General Prologue* and tale links, and two others found nowhere else. The first narrative traces the journeys and observations of Sir Geoffrey, traveling incognito and gathering material for his next poem, which we learn will be *The Canterbury Tales*; as he travels, Sir Geoffrey reads books, takes notes, writes poems, and sketches the opening lines of the *General Prologue*. The two additional narratives are entirely absent from Chaucer's original: a chivalric romance involving the Knight's search for his sister, the Prioress Lady Eglantine, and a dramatic fabliau featuring the Wife of Bath's tricks to snare Sir Geoffrey.[48] The fabliau and romance are connected by the figure of Sir Geoffrey; though pursued by the Wife, he falls for Lady Eglantine. All three narratives are tied together at the destination promised in the first lines of the *General Prologue*, Canterbury Cathedral, where Sir Geoffrey explains to King Richard and his entourage what he has learned about the rabble's discontent, enlists his noble patron's help to avoid marrying the Wife of Bath, and walks off arm-in-arm with Lady Eglantine—but only after he has placated the pilgrims discontented with King Richard. Woven together thus, the three narratives dramatize an idealized exchange between a poet and his patron.

The first and most recognizable narrative reconstructs the pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* wending their way to Saint Thomas à Becket's shrine. In the opening Tabard Inn scene, Sir Geoffrey sits in the corner reading a large manuscript, the Franklin and Shipman watch the Cook and the Miller wrestle, the lisping Friar flirts with a serving maid, the Prioress dotes on her

small hounds and swears by St. Loy, and Herry Bailey welcomes the Knight, the Squire, and the Yeoman. Eventually all of Chaucer's pilgrims join the scene. When Act I ends with the Host proposing that on the pilgrimage "every fellow tell a tale / To short the time" (50), the informed audience might expect that the tales would be enacted—or, in keeping with the metafictional element already introduced, that the pilgrims would encounter or enact the sources for the tales. But MacKaye merely continues the narrative implied by the *General Prologue* by getting Sir Geoffrey and the pilgrims to the cathedral. Encountering King Richard there, Sir Geoffrey explains to his patron the lessons he has learned about the common folk. This strand closes with Sir Geoffrey giving an encomium to soothe the snubbed lower classes.

The first of the two new narratives shows the poet as a gracious, debonair gentleman by featuring the chaste love between the Prioress Lady Eglantine and Sir Geoffrey.[49] Lady Eglantine is planning to travel only as far as Bob-up-and-down, where she will join her brother, a knight named Dan Roderigo d'Algezi, and his son Aubrey (MacKaye's names for the Knight and the Squire), who are returning from the Holy Land. Because the siblings have not seen each other since childhood, they have arranged to wear small tokens as a means of recognition (37). When Dan Roderigo joins the pilgrims at the Tabard Inn and claims he will "pay [his] vows at Canterbury" (7), neither he nor the Prioress recognize each other because they do not expect to meet until Bob-up-and-down and apparently do not see the small tokens. Meanwhile Sir Geoffrey, speaking to both the Prioress and the Knight when each arrives at the inn, pieces together his bits of information about them, realizes their identities, and recognizes that the two are unwittingly traveling together to their meeting point. But he keeps his understanding a secret because he wants to indulge his instant feelings for Lady Eglantine by acting as her protector until she reaches Bob-up-and-down. This chaste romance is interrupted by some shenanigans devised by the Wife, and the play never depicts the Knight and the Prioress's reunion. Sir Geoffrey and Lady Eglantine are reunited, however, and enter Canterbury Cathedral declaring *Amor vincit omnia* (love conquers all) (208).

The second new narrative further establishes the poet's role as mediator between the classes and features the antics of the Wife of Bath, who has set her cap on winning husband number six, with Sir Geoffrey the vintner's son as the perfect candidate. To win him, she makes a wager with Sir Geoffrey that the Prioress is en route not to meet her brother but to meet her lover posing as her brother. According to the wager, if the person with whom the Prioress exchanges the tokens is not her brother, then Sir Geoffrey must marry the Wife. To win the bet, the Wife conspires with

her "swains"—the Miller, the Friar, the Cook, the Shipman, the Manciple, the Summoner, and the Pardoner—to subdue the Knight by surprise, then bind and unclothe him. The Wife subsequently dons his armor and presents herself as the Prioress's brother. When the innocently duped Prioress exchanges tokens with the disguised Wife, the Wife declares victory to Sir Geoffrey and insists that he pay his debt by marrying her at the Cathedral. Sir Geoffrey, unperturbed, keeps the Wife in the dark about his dismay at the prospect of marrying her, but nevertheless gets word through the Man-of-Law to King Richard, asking him to pretend that a sixth husband is forbidden by law, the only exception being if the woman marries a miller. When King Richard ultimately announces his verdict, the Miller claims the opportunity created by Chaucer, and social harmony is restored.

Sir Geoffrey, Civic Poet

By resolving all three narrative strands in an encounter between Sir Geoffrey and King Richard, MacKaye reaffirms the centrality of the relationship between the sovereign and his poet. From the beginning, though his identity is hidden from all the characters but the Knight and the Squire, the audience knows that Sir Geoffrey is King Richard's poet laureate: the dramatis personae identifies him as a "poet at King Richard's court, and Knight of the Shire for Kent" (vii). He is the central character connecting all three narrative threads, and little happens on stage without his knowledge or his involvement. Once the pilgrims reach Canterbury and his identity is revealed, even those who think they have little need for poetry recognize his name and respect his position as a court poet. When the pilgrims meet with King Richard's entourage, Sir Geoffrey assumes the role of intimate adviser to King Richard, and has the prestige of speaking freely when no one else does (203–4). Indeed, every character in the play, from the lowest to the highest, respects Sir Geoffrey, his verse, and his role as poet. The play thus implies that his ability as civic poet to create masterpieces and restore harmony is directly correlated to the respect accorded him as court poet.

According to MacKaye's script, this institutionalized support gives England a public intellectual, a poet with the time and means to indulge his naturally expansive attitude toward all experiences. For example, when the Prioress reformulates the famous "What man artow?" with her timid "What are you?" Sir Geoffrey's response articulates that expansiveness in his ability to cross class lines:

> Why, then, for this dull, English bulk, 'tis true
> A London vintner gat it; but for this

My moving soul, I do believe it is
Some changeling sprite, the bastard of a god,
Sprung from Pan's loins and white Diana's side,
That, like a fawn, I fain must laugh and love
Where the sap runs; yet, like an anchorite,
Pore on the viewless beauty of a book:
Not more enamoured (when the sun is out)
O' the convent rose, than of the hoyden milkweed
Bold in my path. Life, in whatever cup,
To me is a love-potion. In one breath,
My heart hath pealed the chimes above St. Paul's
And rung an alewife's laughter.
(129)

Instead of being burdened with quotidian responsibilities that might squelch his innate expansiveness, Sir Geoffrey's role as court-supported poet allows him to travel about freely, watching, listening to, and learning from all classes of men and women. It also enables him to ventriloquize their individual interests, an ability demonstrated by his rapid-fire code switching: he speaks philosophy with the Clerk (45), astrology with the Doctor (16), soldiery with the Knight (5–6), weather with the Ploughman (18), French with the Prioress (34), and love verse with the Squire (7). Sir Geoffrey explains this multifacetedness as an inherent component of his character: his ability "[t]o live a king with kings, a clod with clods" (30). Thus able to engage with all, Sir Geoffrey speaks the desires within and across the classes. As one example, Sir Geoffrey composes verse at the Squire's request to win the heart of the young man's beloved Johanna; as another, Sir Geoffrey uses his influence to arrange for the Miller to marry the Wife after noticing that the Miller hides his infatuation with the Wife behind a brusque exterior. This poet discards the romantic image of the artist isolating himself from the hubbub in order to create his art, adopting instead the role of public intellectual concerned for the welfare of all men and women.

Sir Geoffrey's ability to empathize with others across class lines is most evident when he poetically articulates the desires and concerns of the common people to King Richard. When the motley group of pilgrims arrives at Canterbury Cathedral, King Richard, obviously friendly toward Sir Geoffrey, asks the poet why he is traveling with this beastly assembly:

What dark adventures have befallen thee since
Thou settest forth from Priam-Bailey's castle?
What inland Circe witched our laureate
To mask his Muse among this porkist rabble?
(203)

Sir Geoffrey replies that he has learned about the discontent of the lower class:

> My Muse went masked. . .from your court
> To learn a roadside rhyme. . .
> "When Adam delved and Eve span,
> Who was then the gentleman?"
>
> (203)

Used by rebels in England's 1381 Uprising, the refrain in these last two lines undermined late-medieval ideology by declaring that no biblical authority supports the tripartite social hierarchy.[50] Earlier in the play the Miller pointedly retorts with this rhyme when Sir Geoffrey scorns the Wife and her swains as "clods and bumpkins all" (71). After initially dismissing both the Miller and his retort as lower-class irrelevancies, Sir Geoffrey a little later soliloquizes on the leveling force of "loamy masks and flesh-tint veils" (73), suggesting his realization of humanity's common ancestry in the soil. By repeating the refrain to King Richard at the end of the play, Sir Geoffrey demonstrates how the pilgrimage has allowed him to understand the scandalous words from a new perspective; he has learned the meaning of this rhyme for the lower class.

Though King Richard is initially angered by hearing the infamous refrain, Sir Geoffrey calms him down by recounting the history of the 1381 Uprising at its Smithfield climax, where King Richard reasserted his role as their benevolent leader: "Whereat you, your Majesty. . ./ Cried out: 'Good fellows, have you lost your captain? / I am your King, and I will be your captain' " (204).[51] Conveniently omitting the king's later betrayal of the rebels (when Richard II declared " 'you will remain in bondage, not as before, but incomparably harsher' "), Sir Geoffrey's short revisionist history brings together both the royal and rebel points of view.[52] In MacKaye's literary reconciliation, Sir Geoffrey then rouses the crowd to cheer King Richard, having rewritten history so as to erase the historical Richard's betrayal of the rebels, causing even the Miller to forget the royal perfidy.[53] Then, beneath the shouting roar, the poet laureate admonishes King Richard, reminding him that his lower-class subjects are his "fellow Englishmen" and, though they labor, their labor is no cause for derision:

> My liege, my dear young liege,
> Are these the dull grunts of the swinish herd,
> Or are they singing hearts of Englishmen?
> Where is *the gentleman*, whose ermined throat
> Shall strain a nobler shout? "When Adam delved"—
> Sire, Adam's sons are delving still, and he

Who scorns to set his boot-heel to the spade
Is but a bastard.

(205)

King Richard not only listens to Sir Geoffrey, but also renounces his self-centeredness in order to embrace his role as the people's king. Sir Geoffrey's words bring about something the rebels at Smithfield could not achieve in 1381: spurring King Richard to return to his proper kingly role. Sir Geoffrey, then, is more than a crafter of pretty or entertaining verse; he is a respected professional who articulates a vision that encompasses multiple layers of society. Speaking the desires of both the rabble and the elite, he is so effective that he is listened to by men of power, who then change their behavior. Sir Geoffrey may begin the pilgrimage as an observer, intent on keeping to his books and verse, but in MacKaye's hands, he becomes an active social agent whose art improves society.

Though Sir Geoffrey mediates between the classes and presents himself as enamored equally of both the "convent rose" and the "hoyden milk-weed" (129), his courtly affiliations are revealed by his preference for the refined over the coarse. In fact, his truest self-expression occurs when he speaks of his cool adamantine love with Lady Eglantine (126–27). His love is not hot and physical, as is the lower-class Wife of Bath's sexuality; rather, his soliloquies on love associate his sentiments with those of the noble class. Moreover, Sir Geoffrey uses his high-level connections and goes to considerable lengths to avoid marrying the Wife. In an exchange that the stage directions make clear is a piece of minor subterfuge, Sir Geoffrey pays the "subtle" Man-of-Law to cite a sham law in King Richard's code and claim it prevents the Wife's sixth marriage (182–84). All the while pretending that he is broken-hearted by this apparent discovery of King Richard's statute, Sir Geoffrey publicly (and disingenuously) offers to bribe the Man-of-Law to find an exception (he has already privately bribed the Man-of-Law to create the fake law). According to the Man-of-Law's phony research, the only recourse is "a special dispensation from the king" (189). Holy deus ex machina! It just so happens that King Richard is in Canterbury, so Sir Geoffrey arranges an audience with him. While Sir Geoffrey introduces the Wife as his betrothed to King Richard, the Man-of-Law whispers the situation to John of Gaunt in an aside (199–200), who then "laughingly aside" fully informs King Richard (200). Playing along with the ruse, King Richard at first refuses to relent on his apparent sacred law that prevents the Wife's sixth marriage (201). Finally, after Sir Geoffrey's (fake) pleas, King Richard agrees to "one exception":

But only one. My law is sacred.—Woman,
I grant to thee the right to wed once more

On one condition. Mark it; thy sixth husband
Must be a miller.—Herald, sound the verdict.
(202)

Sir Geoffrey, both a vintner's son and member of the king's court, successfully straddles the class divide. Given all these machinations, however, we can easily conclude that Sir Geoffrey may understand the lower classes, he may even slum with them, but he does not desire to become one of them. He avoids marrying the Wife, "a hoyden milkweed / Bold in [his] path" (129) by finding her a mate from her own class, and thus restores order, thereby preserving his own privileged status.

Although Sir Geoffrey may be able to change the ruler's behavior, this strong affiliation with the elite class promises that, at least according to MacKaye, the subsidized poet's words will never threaten the status quo. When Sir Geoffrey manipulates events and characters to establish social harmony, it is always in service to hegemonic order. For example, the play ends with allusions to Shakespeare's *Henry V* Agincourt speech in Sir Geoffrey's proclamation reconciling all levels of society:

Give me your hands, my friends. You hear the bells
Which call us to the holy martyr's shrine.
Give me your hands, dear friends; and so farewell:
You, honest parson—sly Bob—testy Jack—
Gentle Sir Knight—bold Roger—Master Franklin—
All, all of you!—Call me your vintner still,
And I will brew you such a vintage as
Not all the saps that mount to nature's sun
Can match in April magic. They who drink it—
Yes, though it be after a thousand years,
When this our shrine, which like the Pleiades
Now glitters, shall be bare and rasèd stone,
And this fresh pageant mildewed history—
Yet they who drink the vintage I will brew
Shall wake, and see a vision, in their wine,
Of Canterbury and our pilgrimage:
These very faces, with the blood in them,
Laughter and love and tang of life in them,
These moving limbs, this rout, this majesty!
For by that resurrection of the Muse,
Shall you, sweet friends, re-met in timeless Spring,
Pace on through time upon eternal lines
And ride with Chaucer in his pilgrimage.
(207)

In Shakespeare's play, Henry V promises that the "band of brothers" will share wonderful memories, and he thereby stirs bravery in the ragged soldiers

facing the daunting French cavalry; similarly, in MacKaye's play, Sir Geoffrey pledges that readers a thousand years hence will read his poetic brew uniting all these companions in "eternal lines," and he thereby stirs hope in the pilgrims consigned to preordained stations in life. Reconciled to their lot by promises of living forever in the memories of men and in the lines of Sir Geoffrey's verse, the lower classes accept the dominant order articulated by the public poet. These final moments of the play provide an addition to the familiar myth of noblesse oblige: the monied class will care for the bumptious groundlings because of a powerful mediating poet.

Percy MacKaye: Civic Dramatist

MacKaye's dramatic tribute to Chaucer, the poet's poet, demonstrates this novice playwright's shrewd addition to his earlier declaration that dramatists could save the American theatre from the invasion of commercialism by taking recourse to a storehouse of imaginative symbols and ideas. Rather than considering only the work created by the lone artist, the play provides an institutional model: a reciprocal relationship between the literary artist and civic power. Through *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, MacKaye suggests that just as Sir Geoffrey's institutionalized role creates poetic art that reconciles civic tensions (and eventually creates the bedrock of English letters, *The Canterbury Tales*), so appropriate support for playwrights like MacKaye would introduce serious and socially beneficial drama into the American theatre. This artist–patron relationship could redress what MacKaye saw as the pathetic state of the American theatre and the intolerable economic conditions for playwrights.

Moreover, the play indirectly claims that MacKaye qualifies for this appropriate support by showing that, because he can do what Sir Geoffrey can do, he too deserves a patron (or at least a producer). First of all, thinking himself an American playwright capable of writing verse drama equal to anything written in Europe, MacKaye wrote the entire play in faux-Chaucerian verse, featuring soliloquies and dialogues redolent of Shakespeare, like Sir Geoffrey's final Agincourt-ish speech. In addition to his tribute to Chaucer's prosody, MacKaye imitates Chaucer's linking non-noble characters to base language by borrowing character types from urban America and slang from its vernacular, associating each class of pilgrims with a coded lexicon familiar to American audiences. The lexicon that he associates with the coarser pilgrims employs contemporary slang, considered at that time to be the distinguishing element of American English, and incorporates lowbrow terms paralleling Chaucer's own.[54] For example, in the opening scene after the Miller has thrown the Cook in a wrestling match, the Cook's overt curse, "'Sblood," is met by the Franklin's ambiguous

vulgarity: "Hold, Master Cook, sith thou hast licked the platter, / Go now and wash the gravy off thy nose" (63). On one level, "gravy" refers to the blood from his nose; on another, it begins the chatter of sexual insult that works its way through the play, for "gravy" can also mean "male or female sexual discharge."[55] Similarly, when the Knight asks if he has found the Tabard Inn, the Host points to the sign hanging over the door of his establishment and says, "Lo yonder, sir, is Herry Bailey's shirt / Flappeth in the wind" (2). Bailey's clear gesture and ungrammatical remark refer the Knight to the business sign, which is reminiscent of a shirt, for a tabard was a short sleeveless coat with armorial markings. Bailey's description of the shirt-shaped sign flapping in the wind also recalls two early-twentieth-century phrases: "shirt in the wind," slang for "a piece of the shirt seen through the fly," and "to flap," slang for "to rob, to swindle."[56] Thus the lines develop the senses that Bailey's inn is not very reputable and that Bailey is not too careful about where he opens his fly. In addition to referring to what is seen on stage—the Cook's bloody nose or the Tabard's sign—the language imitates the sexual bawdry that has persistently characterized Chaucer's American reputation.

MacKaye further Americanizes Chaucer's obscenity by presenting the Wife and her cohort with puns drawing on a sexual underworld associated with the urban proletariat.[57] The indices of this lower-class sexuality begin with the Wife's first entrance where, as Queen Mab, the queen of Fairyland, she sports spurs and a "great round hat," and sits "astride a small white ass, which is fancifully caparisoned like a fairy creature," singing "Come hither, Love!" and announcing

> By God, I ween ye ken not what I am:
> I am the jolly elf-queen, and this is
> My milk-white doe, whereon I ride as light
> As Robin Good-boy on a bumble-bee;
> [*Indicating the ass's ears.*]
> These be his wings.
>
> (22)

She is also accompanied by her "retinue. . .[of] choir-boys from Fairyland": the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Manciple who, along with the Friar, the Cook, the Shipman, and the Miller are labeled in the *Dramatis Personae* as Alisoun's "Swains" (22).

This entrance is awash with sexual innuendo. Alisoun and her retinue are established as outside the genteel marriage norm through language codes taken from early-twentieth-century New York's sexual subculture, where a man could buy sexual services of either men or women without

tainting himself.[58] For example, by labeling the Wife's lackeys "swains," MacKaye refers to the male groupies peopling the entourages of famous actresses, who "lived like queens [and were] lavishly courted," though "not socially accepted in the homes of the genteel."[59] The phrase "choir-boys from Fairy-land" hints at a use of "fairy" coming into wider use at the turn of the century: a "third sex," not necessarily a homosexual, but a self-consciously performative and effeminate man who walked, talked, or acted like a female prostitute.[60] This resemblance to a female prostitute allowed "men to engage in casual sexual relations with [a fairy] without imagining that they themselves were abnormal."[61] By presenting the lower-class characters with these codes, MacKaye further Americanizes Chaucer's similar linking of lower-class sexuality and language.

MacKaye also imitates Chaucer by contrasting the language codes of the lower classes with the cultivated lexicon of the more dignified pilgrims, such as the Man-of-Law, the Merchant, the Knight, the Squire, the Prioress, and Sir Geoffrey himself; this group is clearly a gentrified middle class in service to the Crown and its affairs. Some, like the Man-of-Law, the Merchant, and the Physician, spout terms specific to their fields, recalling less the late-medieval tradesman and more the "Brain Worker," a member of the modern professional-managerial class; this class saw its professional interests tied to producing and protecting "monopolies of information and expertise" in turn-of-the-century America, and its dialogue and actions derive from a semantic field determined by its members' obsession with the control of literacy, literature, and documents.[62] Demonstrating their education and privilege, these characters produce and pass documents, such as the Prioress's letter and Chaucer's verse manuscripts, and manipulate both the ruling and lower classes with their knowledge of arcane subjects. For example, the Man-of-Law high-handedly quotes the law proscribing the Wife of Bath's sixth marriage:

> The statute, sir,—
> The forty-ninth doom of King Richard—saith:
> "One woman to five men sufficeth," or
> "Quid tibi placet mihi placet," sir.
>
> (189)

The Wife simply retorts, "Hog-gibberish!" and King Richard himself tersely questions the same fictitious law with "What! Where?" (200). Though both the lower-class Wife and the royal Richard correctly assess the law as false with their verbal simplicity, the bogus "forty-ninth doom" stands and the managerial class prevails.

The most refined members of this group have an even more telling status marker: appreciation of the poet and his poetry signals their good breeding

and education. For example, the Squire recognizes the sweetness of the disguised Sir Geoffrey's rhyming iambic pentameter. From only a few lines of verse beginning "My dearest heart and best beloved foe, / Why liketh you to do me all this woe?" and ending "It were great wonder if but that ye had / A thousand thousand servants, good and bad: / The most unworthiest servant—I am he!" the Squire identifies Sir Geoffrey as King Richard's poet laureate (7). Furthermore, the Prioress and the Clerk are giddy with excitement at the prospect of seeing the King's poet while they are in Canterbury (193). Finally, Sir Geoffrey's blank verse speech is much closer to Shakespeare than to Chaucer, corresponding with the sense in late-nineteenth-century America that appreciating Shakespeare's verse was a skill requiring education:

> To me, our England is still "merry England!"
> Which nature cirqued with its green wall of seas
> To be her home and hearth-stone; where no slave,
> Though e'er he crept in her lap, was nursed of her;
> But the least peasant, bow'd in lonely fief,
> Might claim his free share in her dower of grace;
> The hush, pied daisy for's society,
> The o'erbubbling birds for mirth, the silly sheep
> For innocence.
>
> (113)

MacKaye's American audiences would recognize any characters appreciating this verse as belonging to the educated classes.[63]

Besides showing his poetic prowess, MacKaye's mingling comic fare with clearly delineated semantic fields constitutes his primary strategy for Americanizing Chaucer. It signals his attempt to fulfill his claim to bring literary drama to a broad segment of American audiences and to replace the crude representations dominating the American stage with ideal forms that could transform and unify the populace. But without a staging, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* could neither demonstrate MacKaye's worth as a dramatist nor help elevate the American theatre.

Early Attempts to Produce *The Canterbury Pilgrims* on the Commercial Stage

MacKaye's play transforming Chaucer and his pilgrims into advocates for the mutual benefits of art patronage began as a work tentatively titled "The Wife of Bath," probably based on hopes of snagging a star actor, a sine qua non for a successful New York run in the dominant theatrical paradigm.[64] In the spring of 1902, MacKaye met with E.H. Sothern, a Shakespearean actor beginning to break with the Theatrical Syndicate to reformulate his

career by turning to serious dramas and independently producing his own plays.[65] As a kind gesture to the son of his long-time friend Steele MacKaye, and perhaps as part of his attempt to establish his own company, Sothern asked to see MacKaye's working manuscript of "The Wife of Bath."[66] A rowdy comedy with appeal for a broad audience, the play caught Sothern's attention, maybe for a number of reasons: its use of an old literary text associated with elite culture, its fourteenth-century setting that fit the current vogue for all things medieval, and its verse lines lending the play a certain eloquence absent from contemporary drama's prosaic deliberateness. Per Sothern's request, MacKaye made changes in the play, which relied heavily on the title character, to make Chaucer the main character and the Wife a supporting role by removing two-thirds of the elements originally drawn from the Wife's *Prologue*; he also renamed the play *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.[67] By June 19, 1902, Sothern had purchased the rights to the completed play and by January 10, 1903, had begun rehearsal, with the stated goal of producing the play for the Actors' Fund Benefit in March 1903.[68] From MacKaye's point of view, Sothern was not only the kind of star necessary for a successful production, but also the enlightened patron who would listen to and support the obliging artist, allowing MacKaye to make a living in theatre without having to bow to its crass demands.[69]

Sothern claimed he, too, wanted to elevate poetic drama in America to the stature it enjoyed in France and England, and his initial enthusiasm for the play seemed genuine.[70] MacKaye's wife, Marion, recorded the actor's support in her journal:

> I must write about Percy's wonderful time with Sothern in Buffalo. He treated him royally, ordering a private room and bath for him right next door to his own, being with him all the time, riding and walking. Such talks as they had! He gave Percy a theatre box. "Poets don't grow on every bush—," he said.
>
> Sothern. . .is delighted with the Chaucer play and if he takes it, he says he will give Percy three hundred dollars down and the same every season until he can produce it.[71]

"These are great days," she concludes, "[t]hank God for recognition, and lastly bless dear Sothern."[72] Sothern seemed to be the entrée to the theatrical world that MacKaye needed, for even though MacKaye sought to write plays that rejected the blueprint demanded by the national theatre duopolies, he understood the power of a theatrical culture that remained fixated on the canonized star. None of MacKaye's notes or correspondence reveals any impatience at this point with commercial theatre, except that he had

difficulty breaking into it. In fact, his archives betray his preoccupation with establishing and recounting the financial terms of every transaction. Less than a year from when he initially met with Sothern and posted an excited note to Marion—"Well, dearest dear heart, we are made!"—MacKaye's hopes for fame and fortune seemed about to be realized.[73]

Immediately, MacKaye began to negotiate publicity and publication based on the prestige he leveraged from both Chaucer and Sothern.[74] An early feature in the *Buffalo Courier* breathlessly explained that

> the play is not yet named. . .and the story of it is still a secret between the author and the great men who have approved of it, Mr. Daniel Frohman and Mr. Sothern. The cause of this secrecy is fear that some rival and eager manager may take the subject and have another play built about it, one which by its worthlessness or excellency, may kill the Mackaye [*sic*] play. Such things have happened in the theatrical world. The play, however, deals with English history and with a period which allows picturesque costuming, romantic scenes and good character bits. Mr. Sothern is likely to produce it next season.[75]

The publicity blitz featured photographs of Sothern but no likenesses of MacKaye or Chaucer; it also stated that Sothern would produce as well as star in the play, and that he had already commissioned Percival T. Moore to compose incidental music and songs.[76] Fortified by Sothern's commitment to stage the play, MacKaye signed a contract with Macmillan to publish *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.[77]

But by mid-March 1903, Sothern's enthusiasm waned, putting the show's production for the Actor's Fund Benefit and the book's publication in jeopardy. Soon thereafter, Sothern announced that his costar, Cecelia Loftus, was ill, and he postponed the opening until May.[78] Finally, Sothern claimed to make the "disconcerting discovery" that Sir Geoffrey's part was overshadowed by the Wife; in April he abandoned his production of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and sold his rights.[79]

Whatever Sothern's real reason for abandoning *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, the play probably did not fit the current theatrical culture as Sothern had once predicted.[80] Even though MacKaye's Sir Geoffrey provided an admirable character for Sothern to embody and the audience to behold, MacKaye later agreed that the play was not a vehicle for a male star, and unless the lead actress were willing to romp around dressed like a knight and end up with the wrestling Miller, it was not really a vehicle for a female star either.[81] Book reviews might be willing to reproduce Macmillan's marketing epithet, "a play of much more than ordinary interest," but neither the play's farcical comedy nor its long stretches of poetic introspection seemed to generate much interest of any kind. Despite all the on-stage activity, the play's potential as a profitable commodity must have been questionable, for

The Canterbury Pilgrims is actually, as we have seen, a play about a grand idea: the mutually beneficial exchange between poets and patrons.

Without Sothern's patronage, MacKaye had no means to produce the play. As Marion put it in her understated way, Sothern's decision was a "very great disappointment to Percy who was sick in bed for three days, what with the strain, overwork and worry."[82] When, however, MacKaye awoke to the real possibility that Macmillan might also abandon the play by canceling publication of the play text, he and Marion spent a frantic week working on the proof sheets and checking the details of the book's production; it was finally published in March 1903.[83] No longer able to trade on Sothern's prestige, MacKaye chose to associate the book with Chaucer as much as he could, as is marked by several of its aspects. The title resembles Chaucer's enough to cause confusion for the unwary, and the cover (designed by MacKaye and not an in-house designer) aligns itself with Chaucer by featuring Chaucer's portrait, lettering, and illumination motifs in the manner of the Ellesmere manuscript (see figure 1).[84] None of this salesmanship, however, helped put the play on stage.

For the next six years, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* languished unproduced. Enticed by the role of the formidable Wife, producer-actress Amelia Bingham in May 1903 announced her purchase of the play's rights and her intention to star (as the Wife, of course) in an elaborate song-and-dance production of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, complete with a cast of 250 players and a few horses.[85] But the production was scrapped that September, and Bingham never staged the play.[86] MacKaye tried to sell it during that time, even offering to rewrite it as necessary. In June 1907, apparently having regained rights to the play, MacKaye offered *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to Viola Allen, saying of Sothern's earlier rehearsals that "the Wife of Bath proved in that test to be an unusually dynamic and vivaciously compelling character." Though the character of the Wife dominates most of the play, MacKaye was prepared to rewrite the fourth act, where she currently faded, "so as to give [the Wife] the stage and the centre of interest appropriate to this tested point of view, and rename the play: 'The Wife of Bath,' a more pertinent and 'taking' title." In effect, in order to have it performed, MacKaye was willing to return the play to where it had been before he rewrote it for Sothern.[87] Except for amateur stagings of the play in 1904 at Bryn Mawr College and Columbus, Ohio's East High School, however, MacKaye's Sir Geoffrey remained within the covers of a book.[88]

Theorizing the Poet/Patron Exchange: *The Playhouse and the Play*

American Civic Theatre

Determined to make his way onto the American stage and frustrated by his failure to get any of his plays adequately produced, MacKaye delivered a

series of lectures from 1907 to 1908 that rethought the American theatrical scene and the role of the dramatist in terms prefigured by his Chaucer of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*. These lectures, gathered into a 1909 book entitled *The Playhouse and the Play and Other Addresses concerning the Theatre and Democracy in America*, advocated a role for the dramatist comparable to Chaucer's role as the king's poet laureate.[89] MacKaye no longer blamed the playwrights' failure of imagination for the state of the American stage, as he did in his 1897 valedictory address; instead, agreeing with the prevailing critical assessment, he blamed institutional failures that allowed commercialism to suffocate theatre. In order to change the theatrical institutions, MacKaye thought of innovative means to organize the theatre, asserting that if Americans transformed the theatre into a financially solvent civic institution, then that institution could create plays of a high caliber that would in turn provide the nation with a common and unifying literary experience.[90] And he provided not only an aesthetic, but also a political and social justification for that change, making the same argument about the dramatist's role in society that he made about the poet's role in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.

Like Sir Geoffrey in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, MacKaye's civic dramatist would be supported by patronage, thereby no longer depending on large crowds buying tickets to see his show. Rather than call for direct patronage by a single person like King Richard or E.H. Sothern, MacKaye proposed placing all dramatic productions under the auspices of a civic institution more akin to *The Canterbury Pilgrims*' royal court that, like other essential civic institutions—libraries and schools, universities and churches, museums and centers of scientific research—would be supported by tax dollars, contributions from wealthy individuals, or endowments of private capital. Instead of expecting dramatists to write plays to make money for businessmen, this civic institution would encourage the nation's wealthy citizens, leading institutions, and communities to allocate money to endow new drama and, with the theatre freed from the profit-making burden, better drama.[91]

One of a cadre of artists or, to use MacKaye's phrase borrowed from medieval guilds, "master crafts[men]," the civic dramatist would receive not only "the highest reward of citizenship—the honor of wise men" but also, of course, honorable remuneration.[92] According to the treatise's more revolutionary proposal, each dramatist could be "secure of an appropriate salary, according to his gifts as a craftsman," unencumbered by the need "vainly to reconcile the objects of his profession with those of a speculative business."[93] Rewards and honor would be based on artistic merit, not on commercial gain, a method of support in contrast with the then-current situation, where filling the playhouses and coffers of management determined the successful playwright.

Again like Sir Geoffrey, MacKaye's civic dramatist would create art serving the interests of his patrons. His serious drama would enhance, even

transform, the lives of all American men and women by instructing them in the ways of civic virtue; this civic drama would neither titillate audiences with excessive emotionalism nor threaten the status quo with serious moral or social questions.[94] Equal to the European drama currently satisfying the tastes of the urban upper classes, MacKaye's civic theatre would infuse the European and classical models with recognizable American characters speaking a distinctly American idiom and addressing uniquely American situations. This new drama, "capable of summing up and expressing the vital conflicts and aspirations" of the American people, would create a united American culture by bringing the Anglo-Saxon moral and artistic traditions within reach of men and women from all classes and backgrounds. By replacing the junk popular culture that had become a primary means of acculturating immigrants, civic theatre would integrate the overwhelming numbers of uneducated, non-Protestant immigrants into a highbrow, homogeneous, and distinctly American culture.[95] Thus, MacKaye promoted a very utilitarian motive for supporting the theatre: in exchange for financial support, the subsidized theatre and its dramatists would help build an American culture that unified the diverse peoples constituting the increasingly restless work force.

The Canterbury Pilgrims *in the Poet/Patron Exchange*

The Playhouse and the Play is not explicitly about *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, but MacKaye certainly had his play in mind when he described a publicly endowed theatre supporting drama that not only entertains but also educates its audience and unifies the several social classes. *The Canterbury Pilgrims* anticipates MacKaye's larger aims in *The Playhouse and the Play*. As a vessel for different but simultaneous messages, one for the masses, one for the upper classes, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* reconciles the polarities of aristocratic and democratic ideals, thereby making the play fit for civic theatre. The play would educate while entertaining uncultured workers and those not otherwise exposed to Chaucer. As a sort of prequel to *The Canterbury Tales*, the play introduces the ancestor of Anglo-Saxon literary excellence to anyone who views it, without requiring even basic literacy. Even though it takes great license with both English history and the poem's narratives, the play provides an easily digestible introduction to a very alien text considered foundational in English literature through the on-stage presence of Chaucer, the pilgrims, the journey to Canterbury, and a host of historical figures. Most of Chaucer's pilgrims are introduced, and their distinguishing attributes are featured, giving a basic sense of at least the *General Prologue* to audiences. The play's performance also provides a sense of Kittredge's theory about the dramatic structure in *The Canterbury Tales*, one of the more

influential bits of Chaucerian scholarship in the early twentieth century.[96] Moreover, even the inclusion of the play's most objectionable character, the saucy Wife of Bath, is justified as teaching a lesson; MacKaye explained in a letter to his publisher that she is the playwright's primary means for revealing the "truth to the broad humour of Chaucer, truth as well to the English upper-peasant type of the 14th century."[97]

Next, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* demonstrates the way MacKaye's proposed civic theatre could profit upper-class patrons: while it provides edifying entertainment, it will unify by promoting the dominant class's cultural hegemony. By making a challenging canonical text accessible to all audience members, the play supports the aesthetic and political judgment of the educated elite. At the same time, the play introduces a vision of a stratified society operating successfully under the banner of a unified nation: the scoundrels are rendered harmless and impotent, while the rulers and bourgeoisie work amicably together to save the lower classes from their folly. Within the play, Chaucer's pilgrims fit the religious ideals of America's dominant Protestant and Anglo-Saxon culture: the Parson promotes a Protestant point of view, the anachronistic Wycliffe (who died three years before the play's 1387 setting) and his outbursts of anticlerical fervor underline the Protestant norm of the play, Sir Geoffrey is not going to Canterbury on a pilgrimage but is heading there on a business trip to join King Richard and his entourage, and the papist heresies of Chaucer's unreformed ecclesiastics are completely eliminated from the behavior and speech of the Friar, the Summoner, the Pardoner, and the Monk—only their titles and costumes would have betrayed their vocation. As exemplified by *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, subsidized civic drama would not celebrate a topsy-turvy world dominated by the lower classes; instead, it would integrate them into American society by helping them understand the dominant American culture, thereby making them better citizens.

First Reincarnation: Traveling Troupe

The first reincarnation of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* appeared in 1909 under the aegis of Charles Douville Coburn, an actor-manager who "heartily" approved MacKaye's strategy of bringing plays into factories and schools.[98] Experimenting with a form of traveling repertory theatre that did not indulge the least common denominator, Coburn had already discovered that "first-rate drama with some literary reputation" and endorsed by scholars and artists could draw crowds.[99] For five seasons, Coburn and his Shakespearean Players had been touring from Massachusetts to Georgia and Missouri, performing Shakespeare at country clubs in order to escape the problems of the commercial theatre yet remain financially solvent.[100] At the

end of their fifth season, Coburn contacted MacKaye regarding the possibility of producing *The Canterbury Pilgrims* "in open air"; he bought the production rights in 1908 and added the play to his repertoire, collaborating with MacKaye in reducing the play by a third to suit his company's format.[101] At the same time he changed the troupe's name to the Coburn Players, Coburn drew on MacKaye's "missionary work" to target universities and colleges because they seemed more receptive to the Coburn productions than did either country clubs or the earlier proposed "factories and schools."[102] When the Coburn Players presented the play's first professional production in Georgia on April 30, 1909, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* took its first major step away from the commercial theatre.[103]

Coburn's early experiments in professionally but profitably (even if minimally) performing *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and other noncommercial plays of its sort rejected many aspects of the Syndicate's and Shuberts' road productions. Coburn kept his expenses low by avoiding high-salaried stars, choosing plays that shared interchangeable costuming, eliminating parts if ticket sales dropped, employing the simple staging of outdoor performances, and performing on stages subsidized by nonprofit organizations, such as colleges, universities, and clubs.[104] His low-cost productions brought professional performances of the classics to populations in not only the nation's metropolitan areas but also its more remote cities eager to see progressive theatre.[105]

By focusing on these venues, Coburn took advantage of two theatrical developments. The first one was the fad for open-air theatres at colleges and universities that resulted from the progressive credo that theatre's educational value would increase if the proscenium stage were eliminated and audiences brought closer to the action of the play; this novelty was reflected in Coburn's pamphlets advertising their troupe as providing fresh air performances.[106] The second one, the emergence of drama as a field of study at several prominent universities (a development led by Harvard's George Baker), was beginning to create audiences particularly interested in plays of ideas rather than of easy sentiment, and in plays promising to uplift the soul in lieu of the reputedly sordid productions suffused with naturalism and realism.[107] When they added MacKaye's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to their tours of campuses, the Coburn Players had readily available audiences that, even if they had not heard of Percy MacKaye or his play, would know enough to be intrigued by the presence of Chaucer.

Coburn shared MacKaye's contempt for the slick professionalism and greedy commercialism of Broadway. Noncommercial without being nonprofit, Coburn's enterprise needed to make money from its productions, unlike such other theatrical experiments as the Little Theatre Movement or Settlement House theatres.[108] Coburn's approach looked promising to

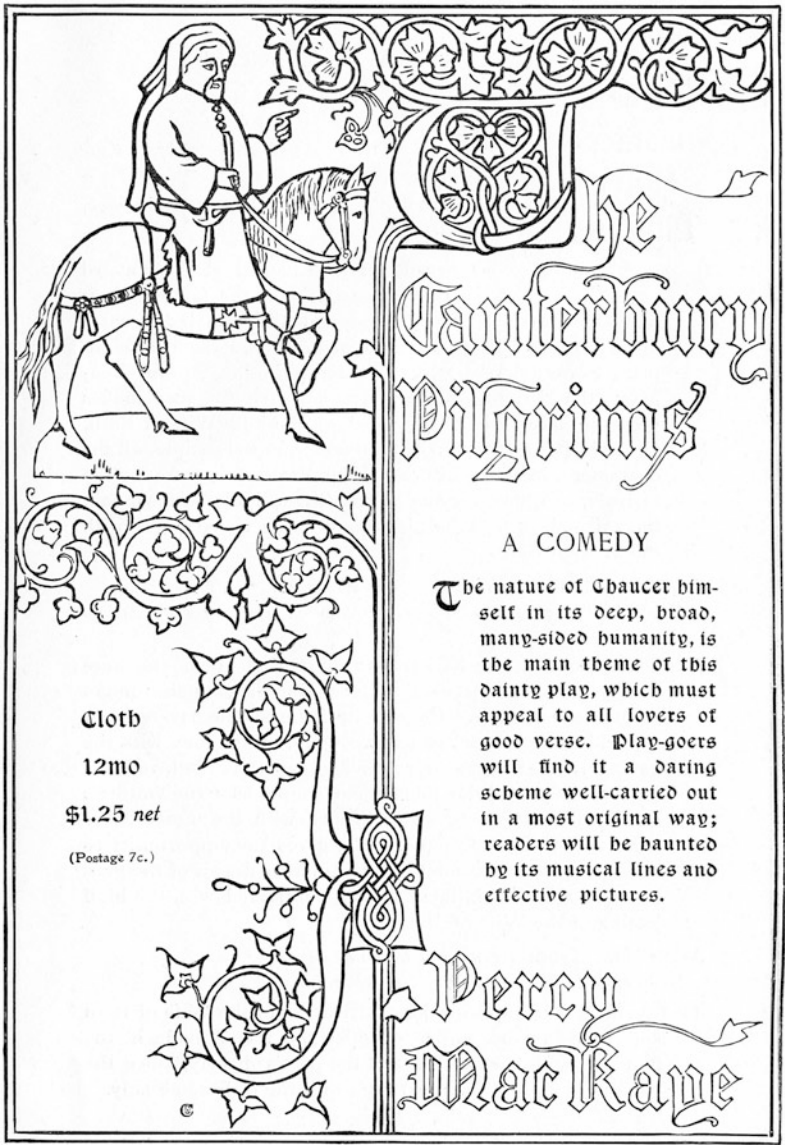

Figure 1 Ad for *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1903). MacKaye Family Archives, Percy MacKaye Papers, Collection housed at Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire, ML5, 149:8. By permission of Rauner Special Collections.

MacKaye as a way to make money from his plays, and he received a royalty check most weeks during the summer touring season; in fact, MacKaye's percentage of the gate receipts seem to have been his only income that first summer.[109] Most importantly to MacKaye, Coburn's 106 performances of the play over six summers (1909–15) provided the play with a measure of popular success, which one historian attributed to the fact that *The Canterbury's Pilgrims* "shows fewer traces of social and aesthetic philosophy" than MacKaye's other plays.[110] Though this early play is indeed one of his less didactic ones, Coburn's decision to include it in his repertory was the more important factor in its relative success.

Coburn's ambitions thus to some extent benefited MacKaye and his play.[111] By touring the country and countering (even if in a small way) the domination of the theatrical duopoly's road show, the Coburn Players, though a pale version of the publicly endowed theatre that MacKaye had imagined in *The Playhouse and the Play*, provided a glimpse of the ways a civic theatre could impart a unifying, serious culture.[112] But there was another way Coburn's productions fell short of MacKaye's ideal: they did not reach a broad audience. Coburn's traveling performances, with a repertory combining classic and contemporary drama, suggested the growing role that colleges and universities would have during the twentieth-century development of noncommercial theatre. Able to subsidize dramatic works without immediate or obvious audience appeal, the stages at universities became an important forum for introducing experimental works and productions. By staging *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and its other noncommercial productions primarily for audiences at higher education institutions, the Coburn Players productions were not exposing a large swathe of the working classes to the serious dramatic arts. Although MacKaye's affiliation with Coburn lent the playwright some financial relief and foreshadowed experimental drama's future home at colleges and universities, Coburn could not act as the patron MacKaye envisioned by providing the dramatist either a long-term salaried position or a working-class audience.

Second Reincarnation: The Gloucester Pageant, 1909

Not long after Coburn purchased the rights to the play in late 1908, MacKaye had yet another way to think about publicly supported theatre: he accepted an invitation to provide a theatrical work for a pageant to be produced that upcoming summer in Gloucester, Massachusetts, a maritime city founded by the Dorchester Company in 1623.[113] The Coburn Players' evening performance of the play was at the center of an ambitious night spectacle that capped over twenty-four hours of civic celebration. Although the play's main characters were enacted by professionals, hundreds

of local citizens filled out the crowd scenes and peopled the choruses, singing music specially composed for the event. MacKaye witnessed the excitement generated in the community by the months of preparation, the effect of participating in rather than merely watching the drama. Based on his experience at Gloucester, MacKaye began to advocate a more specific form of civic drama: community pageants that allowed large numbers of community members to participate in productions, thereby redeeming the underclass's otherwise misspent leisure.

American Pageants: Reconceiving Artistic and Commercial Goals

Pageants may now seem quaint, but in 1909 the Gloucester Pageant was on the leading edge of a movement that began in late-nineteenth-century England, swept across the United States, and remained a presence in America until the mid-twentieth century.[114] In common with MacKaye's vision, England's community pageants depended on civic sponsorship and employed experts in the visual and dramatic arts, with the addition of a new expert, the pageant-master. This new version of civic theatre, however, had a feature not previously considered by MacKaye: pageants ensured the beneficial effects of theatre by incorporating large numbers of the community into the performance. As an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts movement, pageants in Victorian England attempted to recreate within the community and across the nation the organic unity imagined to exist in medieval England by providing all citizens active yet prescribed pageant roles, which in turn were also meant to help citizens adhere to their prescribed social roles. The pageant, according to advocates, does "for the community what religion does for the individual": it satisfies "the need for myth by assigning each individual a role in working out a common 'salvation.' "[115] These roles, "self-sacrifice, solidarity, energized will, militant devotion to a civic cause," strengthen the community's moral core.[116] In the United States, communities feeling overwhelmed by polyglot masses of immigrants turned to pageants to foster a vision of community based on feudal-like interdependence and bonds between the wealthy and poor.[117] Pageant developers found medieval texts, often structured by metaphors of the social organism, particularly useful for staging their ideas.

One of the first large-scale civic productions in the United States, the Gloucester Pageant sought to emulate the English and feature a medieval focus. But emulation posed a problem. In England the idealized agrarian society and the idealized past found a convenient focal point in the medieval age, while for American communities the convergence was not so simple. That is, an American community could feature either a medieval theme or its own history, but it could not feature both. Eric Pape, a Boston artist who

spent his summers in Gloucester and eventually became pageant-master, tried to finesse that problem by arranging for MacKaye to provide *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, thereby conflating Chaucer's medieval pilgrims and New England's founding pilgrims.[118] Using MacKaye's play also meant that Pape, with MacKaye now his pageant-master partner, could promise a grander pageant despite the tight time frame between March and August because he could hire the Coburn Players to perform the play already in production. With *The Canterbury Pilgrims* as the pageant's core, Pape and MacKaye could frame the professionally acted play with tableaus and choruses performed by community groups, thereby adding the local touch and helping the event more nearly resemble an English folk pageant.

For MacKaye, the Gloucester Pageant offered a chance to actualize two important ideas he had promoted in *The Playhouse and the Play*: bringing artful drama to uncultured workers who preferred the fisherman's tavern to a quiet evening reading Tennyson, and relying on civic (rather than commercial) support of the theatre. But as he helped modify the play for the pageant, he soon discovered that his ideals and the community's agenda often clashed. The Gloucester Day Committee, the local men charged with overseeing the Gloucester Day festivities, was interested in a pageant not because it introduced an artistic vision to the fishermen or because it subsidized underpaid dramatists.[119] This small group of citizens, originally entrusted with planning the Fourth of July celebration, decided to expand their mandate and pursue a large extravaganza that would reproduce the economic stimulus produced by the August 1892 commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the city's incorporation, and might even raise enough funds to reconstruct the Roger Conant House, a historic Stage Fort home that once overlooked the harbor.[120]

Behind their proposal for the fund-raising pageant was the desire to elevate Gloucester's standing on the North Shore's Cape Ann. At the northern tip of Massachusetts's fabled Gold Coast, Gloucester in 1909 was a significant fishing city, where boats unloaded their catch and large plants processed the fish. Though the area south of Cape Ann was a summer residence for some of Boston's prominent families, Gloucester's reputation for fishy smells—it was known in the eighteenth century as "Gloucester by-the-Smell"—repelled many prospective summer residents.[121] As late as 1894, Suffolk Country judge Robert Grant had quipped in his book about the North Shore that "civilization properly ceases before you come to Gloucester."[122] Under the guidance of multimillionaire John Hays Hammond and the indomitable energies of local real estate developer Fred Tibbets, the Gloucester Day Committee sought to raise the seaport's profile to attract more tourists and summer residents, especially Bostonians who already vacationed at the North Shore communities just southwest of Gloucester

and so tantalizingly close to the fishing community. For the Gloucester Day Committee, this pageant affair was entirely a commercial venture, not an artistic or social one.

Though their goals were different, incorporating *The Canterbury Pilgrims* into the pageant served the purposes of both MacKaye and the Gloucester Day Committee. For MacKaye, affiliating his play with this novel event generated publicity that he hoped would increase audience sizes for the Coburn Player's traveling production and would secure other pageant commissions for himself. Turning the play into a pageant also provided a way for MacKaye and Pape to demonstrate that the Gloucester Day Committee needed their paid professional services, for a pageant meant more than merely presenting an outdoor performance, which the Coburn Players could do just fine without the framing pageant. Pageants were enormous endeavors requiring all the community's inhabitants to subsume their individual talents into a chorus of anonymous voices conducted by a pageant-master.[123] Bound together in a process of making art that stretched over months of rehearsal preceding the performance, the mix of participants required the strong will of a director with a sure sense of the pageant's final shape.

For the Gloucester Day Committee, MacKaye's dramatized account of Sir Geoffrey and his fictional pilgrims offered novelty, the tease of prestige, and a clear link to Bostonians' prized affinity for all things English.[124] In addition to the expediency mentioned above, the play provided semantic congruities between Gloucester's colonial pilgrims and Chaucer's medieval pilgrims, whose anachronistic incongruity the promotional material tried nimbly to gloss by claiming that "descendants of the Pilgrims of Gloucester will give welcome to the Pilgrims of Canterbury."[125] Finally, even if it meant embracing a tenuous connection to the past, using MacKaye's play about Chaucer appealed to the Committee as a way of reconfiguring Gloucester's standing on the North Shore by presenting it as a culturally significant destination.[126] So, although numerous letters between MacKaye and Pape signal their manipulation of the Gloucester Day Committee by inflating the pageant's artistic significance and their own importance, the committee was very willing to provide the financial support to ensure they produced a spectacular novelty.

Producing and Publicizing the Gloucester Pageant

As the celebration developed, MacKaye and the Gloucester Day Committee each benefited from the publicity marking the Gloucester Pageant as an "unusual. . .celebration by a city so distinctively American."[127] Very quickly the pageant became less about celebrating the city's history and more about

creating history. According to the official program, "[i]t is peculiarly fitting that here where the Massachusetts Bay Colony was founded. . .Gloucester should be the pioneer among the places of the New World in producing with appropriate setting a play and pageant."[128] Rather than reproduce Gloucester's local history or even America's national history, as most other community pageants would later do, Gloucester's enormous pageant allowed the city to create a new cultural history by producing the first large-scale civic pageant in the United States and to assert its place in the American cultural avant garde.

The Gloucester Pageant had large ambitions, and it seemed to everyone's advantage to let it keep growing. The larger the affair, the more necessary the pageant-masters for coordinating the volunteer energies of the community, and the more attention the affair would attract to the community. Initially, Pape and MacKaye had limited their transformation of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* into an English folk pageant by planning a Coburn Players performance filled out with local extras and a few well-chosen rustic elements: providing colorful costumes for the extras, incorporating local amateur folk music for the folk dance performances, finding an ass for the Wife of Bath, buying bagpipes for the Miller, placing a goat on stage, and hanging from the eaves of the Tabard Inn a large cluster of bananas, a fruit known in 1909 as the poor man's fruit and distributed to immigrants passing through Ellis Island.

Soon, however, the production escalated well beyond the bounds of either an extended presentation of a ninety-five-minute play or a simple folk pageant. By late March, Pape and MacKaye had convinced the Gloucester Day Committee to hire composer Walter Damrosch to write a musical setting, and music professor Charles A. Stafford to direct the choirs.[129] Then, rather than relying on local church or school choruses, the pageant-masters began rehearsing eight hundred adults and children for the choral groups that would be accompanied by a sixty-five-member military band. And they started training as "pageant-actors" thousands of men, women, and children: Knights of Pythias, Improved Order of Red Men, Sons of Veterans, Knights of the Pageant, Daughters of the Twentieth Century, Women's Relief Corps, Pythian Sisters, International Order of Odd Fellows, Acoriana Society, the Holy Name Society of the Portuguese Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage, Harry Barber and His Dancing Girls, and Mrs. Nathan Richardson and Her Seventy-Eight Ladies. All these participants became, in the hands of MacKaye and Pape, "Canterbury Pilgrims (in costumes authentic to Chaucerian characters), Fourteenth-Century Pilgrims (costumed with no reference to Chaucer's characters), Ecclesiasts (monks, bishops, nuns, choirboys), Courtiers and Ladies, and Guildsmen (in costumes symbolic of trades and professions)."[130] Though these costumed throngs had

little function in *The Canterbury Pilgrims* pageant other than to populate (if not overpopulate) the crowd scenes at the beginning and the end of the play, they served to symbolize the flame of communal unity that the pageant was supposed to transport from medieval England and ignite in the American seaport. They also indicated that Gloucester's pageant had moved well beyond a fancy fund-raising event.

By the end of July, MacKaye, Pape, and the Gloucester Day Committee had amassed other features to make the Gloucester Pageant a noteworthy accomplishment that would place the city on the cultural map. Between the acts of the play they added a joust featuring armored and mounted medieval knights.[131] They also coaxed William F. Kenney, a summer resident associated with the *Boston Globe* and a trustee of the Boston Public Library, to arrange for a loan from both the Boston library and Harvard College Library to create a free, week-long exhibit of 199 books and "relics" associated with Chaucer: editions and manuscript facsimiles of his works, editions of Chaucer's contemporaries, late-medieval manuscripts of Chaucer's sources, and over 150 pictures of Chaucer portraits, illustrations of the Canterbury pilgrims, and depictions of medieval England, including costumes, tournaments, and Canterbury Cathedral.[132]

To make the Gloucester Pageant a national event, MacKaye and the Gloucester Day Committee blanketed the print media with announcements of the unique celebration. Besides press releases to the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*, MacKaye wrote an article for *Scribner's Magazine*, the national monthly, announcing Gloucester's "outdoor fête unique in the annals of New England" and featuring Pape's fanciful illustrations anticipating the pageant's appearance.[133] The Gloucester Day Committee extended invitations to notable men and women from around the world, and committee leader Fred Tibbets himself issued personal invitations to numerous dignitaries. Some he invited to emphasize the England-America connection, such as the Bishop of Gloucester, England; Whitelaw Reid, American ambassador to London; and former president Theodore Roosevelt.[134] Others, like William Winter, William Dean Howells, and Samuel Clemens, Tibbets invited "to decide who shall receive the trophies offered by the committee for the participants in the pageant."[135] Tibbets and MacKaye tried to legitimize the pageant as a theatrical event by inviting drama critics from the newspapers in Boston, New York, Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.[136] Most invitees on these ambitious lists declined, but orchestrated news accounts featured their "beautiful letters commending the committee and wishing success."[137] The many dignitaries who did plan to attend found their names prominently foregrounded in press releases. First Lady, Helen Taft (and her son Charles), Massachusetts Governor Draper, Congressman Longworth's wife and mother, the Siamese

ambassador, the commanders of the naval ships in the harbor, and several prominent Bostonians were duly noted in attendance.[138] And to replace some of the recognized absentees, MacKaye and Pape invited friends from their art circles to judge the costume contests and reconceived these invitees as notable professionals in the visual and dramatic arts.[139]

The Gloucester Pageant was fully transformed into a national event when President Taft committed in May to attend while vacationing in the vicinity that summer.[140] With Taft's commitment to attend, the Gloucester Pageant became an extravaganza "in Honor of. . .[the] President of the United States."[141] According to an account in the *New York Times*, "an unusually elaborate programme was arranged, and. . .citizens vied with each other to assist in the plans and make the affair eclipse all previous efforts."[142] All news accounts and the official program were splashed with information about the president's presence: "This year Gloucester Day comes early, August Fourth [rather than 15th], and the President of the United States, William Howard Taft, early accepted the invitation of the Committee to be the guest of the people of Gloucester, and it is in his honor that this mid-summer festival and pageant will be given."[143]

However, President Taft did not appear. His summer-long vacation, scheduled to begin by the middle of June in the North Shore area, was delayed when deliberation and voting on the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act extended his stay in Washington, DC.[144] On the afternoon of the pageant, he sent the following telegram:

> I am greatly distressed in not being able to fulfill my engagement to be present at the Gloucester Day celebration on Aug. 4 with the Canterbury Pilgrims. I have been looking forward to the visit with much pleasure. My enforced absence is a deep personal disappointment to me, but the vote on the Tariff bill on the 5th of August makes it absolutely impossible for me to be absent from Washington that day. I am sure all present will have a delightful time, and I envy them their opportunity.[145]

But his missing the pageant did not stop the Gloucester Day Committee from honoring the president anyway. As the Gloucester paper reported the next day,

> [t]he box which had been built especially for the president, was brilliantly illuminated and held a most brilliant company.
>
> The president did not come, it is true, but he sent a most pleasing telegram, conveying his regrets in no uncertain tones, and expressing his disappointment at not being able to attend, the tariff, alone preventing him. This telegram was megaphoned to all parts of the enclosure by P.M. Longan, chairman of the reception committee.[146]

The pageant still grandly spelled out a welcome to Taft in dazzling electric lights. On the official program, the serendipitous choice of the phrase "in Honor of" to refer to Taft made his failure to attend a moot issue; his name could still be broadcast, making Taft's endorsement of the pageant a given.

Achieving Goals

Though obviously not by themselves, Percy MacKaye and *The Canterbury Pilgrims* helped the Gloucester Day Committee raise the desired funds and gain the attention of the Boston Brahmins who vacationed on the North Shore each summer. The next day, the *Gloucester Daily Times*, as much subject to boosterism as the Committee, reported that

> Stage Fort Park was the magnet which attracted thousands of people at the close of the grand afternoon parade, yesterday, the procession in that direction, commencing early and continuing all through the evening, until between the hours of 7 and 8 o'clock, there was a continuous mass of moving color along both sides of the boulevard, with the middle of the street almost covered with the swifter moving carriages and automobiles. This scene was most inspiring, giving one something upon which to build an imagination for the greater display to come, when the play and pageant were presented for their consideration. The vast amphitheater, with its great stage, were soon filled, the former by nearly 20,000 spectators, in the boxes, on the seats and in the automobiles, while the wings of the latter were filled with players.[147]

Just as the Gloucester Day Committee desired, visitors from all around the area attended the pageant, and the event merited mention in the *New York Times* and the *Boston Globe*. Indeed, the committee cleared $20,000—a substantial step toward the $30,000 needed to reconstruct the Conant House.[148] Moreover, their hopes that Bostonians would be so impressed with Gloucester Day that "the summer residents will vie with each other in gifts of values" also proved true.[149] For example, in 1922 when Gloucester prepared to celebrate its tercentennial, three summer residents pledged "a total of $15,000, for the preliminary needs of the committee, with assurances that, at the proper time, the summer residents could be depended upon for as much more, if required."[150] The Gloucester Pageant achieved the city's immediate goals: attracting money and prestige.

Less clear is whether MacKaye's private goals were achieved. In the course of the elaborate preparations, MacKaye had become concerned that the growing dimensions of the framing pageantry might dwarf the presentation of his play. By July, he was importuning Coburn to have a full and well-rehearsed cast so the play would show well to all the distinguished guests in attendance; he thought that neither he nor Coburn could afford

for the play to blend in with the amateur performances.[151] MacKaye was beginning to fear that all the attention he and Pape helped Gloucester heap upon itself was threatening to backfire on him and *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.

As it turned out, MacKaye's fears were well founded. The Gloucester Day celebration's magnitude emphasized the spectacle—not the pageant, not the play, not even the place Gloucester's citizens so wanted to celebrate. Though staged at the fortuitously named Stage Fort Park, "the finest seashore park in the United States," the production did not take advantage of the park's grand vista, the sea with its "splendid harbor and eastern point" being entirely ignored; only the dressing rooms, "right on the beach, with the waves coming up with their quiet swish," made any use of the seashore.[152] Instead, a large amphitheater was built adjacent to an enormous boulder, and any view of the harbor was blocked.[153] The night performance of the play further diminished the sense of place and magnified the role of the modern, electrical gaze. The open-air stage, 175 feet long and 680 feet deep, kept the audience far away from the actors, so the acoustics were terrible and the crowds were more susceptible to being awed by the visual grandiosity than drawn into the delicate verse romance between the Prioress and Sir Geoffrey.[154] For the entre-acts, MacKaye tried to overcome the topological difficulties with singing voices, but for the play, with no singing parts, there was little to be done. Consequently, few viewers could follow the complex antics of the medieval characters, despite MacKaye's having the play's book for sale ahead of time, both for information purposes and for financial gain.[155] *The Canterbury Pilgrims* ended up being a very unimportant sideshow to the grander Gloucester Day production.[156]

The biggest culprit that overshadowed MacKaye's play was the organizers' fascination with technological spectacle. The Gloucester Day celebration may have been inspired by Old World pageants and ancient medievalism, but modern Yankee ingenuity dominated the event. The festivities began the night before, on Tuesday, with a "fine search-light exhibition from the warships" docked in the harbor. Then at sunrise on Wednesday, ringing bells opened the day's festivities and continued in the afternoon with a "Military, Naval, and Civic Parade."[157] By the end of the day, the pageant grounds looked like an "armed camp," with a vast audience gathered for the promised spectacle.[158] The pageant itself opened in the evening with "The Star-Spangled Banner" performed by a nine-hundred voice chorus, a sixty-five-player military band, and a large pipe organ "built expressly for out-of-door work."[159] The Gloucester newspaper reported more of the scene:

> That great chorus, perhaps not all in tune or rhythm, swelling out er [*sic*] the park and ocean, with great carrying power on that still air, sounding the fine

> music and more inspiring words of that thrilling song, quickened the blood and sent a thrill through all present, like the sharp twitch of an electric shock, gradually fading from the senses which the shock had momentarily dulled, until they quickened again with more even pulsations, which thrilled and thrilled again and again, until every one was carried away with the patriotic fervor inspired by the words and music.[160]

The music was followed by a twenty-one-gun presidential salute with artillery from warships, and the words "Gloucester Welcomes President Taft. . .on a shield 54 feet long, in letters which could be read for miles" chased around a network of electrical wiring and circuitry.[161]

After the introductory salute to the President and a musical overture, the Coburn Players began their nighttime performance of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, with songs and dances added to each act, plus dances, choral songs, musical interludes, a "joust. . .accompanied by battle music," and more Yankee technology accenting the interval between each act.[162] Arc and electric lights made the night performance visible to all in the amphitheater, and an arrangement of calcium lights made the scenes, all set in daytime, appear as though a sun were in the sky.[163] In place of standard curtains, one-hundred-foot long curtains were planned to be set ablaze at the opening of each act.[164] This innovation provided perhaps the most memorable moments of the evening when two curtains, which were intended to blaze at the beginning of Acts Three and Four respectively, both ignited at once at the end of Act Two; though quickly controlled, the conflagration nevertheless heightened the audience's sense of amazement at the pageant's spectacle.[165] After the play, all participants sang the final chorus while "the bells of the city churches, connected electrically with the specifically-built outdoor organ, sounded their chimes."[166] Finally, as all the pageant participants ceremoniously processed from the amphitheater, the final pyrotechnic display, purposefully filling the grounds with smoke, created a haze for the dignified recessional to move through, while aerial fireworks arising from behind the boulder filled the sky: "25 doz. Red Owl Lights, 24 12-inch Shells, 6 15-inch Jap Shells, 6 15-inch Red Shells, 3 18-inch Red Shells, 2 18-inch Jap Shells, 3 3-inch Burst Shells, 12 oz. Roman Candles, 1 5-inch Burst Shell, 1 8-inch Burst Shell."[167] Overshadowed by all this technological wizardry, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* failed to demonstrate how serious drama could be successfully incorporated into a community project.

Retheorizing Poet and Patron: *Civic Theatre*

The Gloucester Pageant's relative success and extensive publicity launched the next phase of MacKaye's career as a pageant-master organizing civic spectacles; at the same time, he modified his advocacy of publicly endowed

theatres to include pageantry's participatory culture.[168] In addition to the *Scribner's* article, his newer essays, collected and published in his influential 1913 book entitled *Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure*, described new ways for the civic community to support theatre and for the supported theatre to benefit the community in return.[169] Not surprisingly, MacKaye's book advocates for community-supported pageants; it also suggests that factory owners and civic leaders engage "a company of excellent players. . .to enact significant plays, modern and classic," for "audiences of workers."[170] Having attended free professional performances that "educate and uplift" the public, the working class would no longer succumb to the "baneful influences" of saloons and beer-gardens.[171] Rather, as participants in a pageant's creation, the working-class amateurs become active agents, creating a better community and becoming better citizens because of their investment in a communal, artistic endeavor. Through this sustained exposure to civic drama, the lower classes would eventually abandon their misspent leisure by "substituting for languor, social decay, alcoholism, morbidity, and joyless individualism, the cooperative joys of festival, and pageantry—the imaginative ritual of play."[172]

Despite MacKaye's subsequent claims, the Gloucester Day celebration had shown no sign of these benefits. There is no evidence that the local people became active creators of inspirational art, for they had little say about the artistic development of the pageant: they had no spoken roles in it because they were all taken by the professional actors in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, and no encouragement to wear costumes signifying their Old World ethnicity. Unacknowledged in his essays but always present in his pageants are the top-down organization and tight discipline inherent in these large-scale productions.[173] In the Gloucester Pageant, MacKaye and Pape ignored what the community, either native or immigrant, could provide them and imagined the local population instead as "passive and malleable under the uplifting influence of an anglicized American culture."[174] In fact, the most rustic, most charming sign of community involvement occurred when Reverend Francis Vieira De Bem, pastor of the Church of Our Lady of Good Voyage, represented the Portuguese community and resisted the pageant's scripted vision by presenting a "handsome" dual portrait of President Taft and "the sacred codfish" mounted in a gold frame.[175] Considering the lack of input from the larger community, we should not be surprised that the 1909 pageant and its lofty goals are missing from both formal and informal histories of the city.

MacKaye also saw community-based theatre as a way for the dramatist to escape the invidious connection between artistic production and financial profit. But as the Gloucester Pageant showed, neither the community patrons nor the commissioned artists could escape commercial issues.

While the Gloucester Day Committee was expressly driven by a commercial agenda, MacKaye and Pape also needed to consider commercial concerns, for they had to produce a spectacle expensive and complex enough to require the aesthetically and managerially deft control of a paid artistic director; the result was a production that obliged them to focus on the cash nexus as much as, or perhaps more than, if they had stooped to the commercial stage. So, although MacKaye sought to disconnect literary production and lucre, he found himself having to become the huckster he so disdained. As realized by the Gloucester Pageant, the pageant-masters' paid professional roles became less about rising above the commercial trap as MacKaye had envisioned through the character of Sir Geoffrey and more about enlarging the gesture Sir Geoffrey makes at the end of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*: he claims to advocate for the people, but actually uses his royal influence to avoid an undesirable marriage to the lower-class Wife of Bath. The pageant-master is like Sir Geoffrey, not simply observing but rather shaping people's interactions and creating a society that conforms to his ideals. Sir Geoffrey and the pageant-master both purport to create a vernacular art serving the status quo, when in fact the patron and commoners are being manipulated to serve the artist's own desires.

Third Reincarnation: *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, Comic Opera

In its printed form, *The Canterbury Pilgrims*' presentation of the poet/patron exchange emphasizes Sir Geoffrey's civic role: he provides King Richard a necessary perspective regarding the commoners' concerns and furnishes the commoners a soothing vernacular message allaying these concerns. Even though Sir Geoffrey's loyalties lie with the elite class, he supplies a service presented as benefiting the commoners, for he shows them how to integrate with the social order. The two modes in which the play was produced, the traveling troupe and community pageant, replicate this civic role, for they allow the dramatist to reconceive a canonical text in a way that affirms the status quo and presents that message to a somewhat varied demographic sweep of the American public.

MacKaye's representation of Sir Geoffrey and his pilgrims changes significantly, however, when he transforms *The Canterbury Pilgrims* into an opera libretto for American composer Reginald de Koven in 1914, eleven years after first writing the play.[176] As in the other incarnations, Sir Geoffrey is King Richard's poet laureate, indicating a civic poet/patron exchange (see figure 2). In this case, however, Sir Geoffrey neither ventriloquizes the cloddish pilgrims' concerns nor speaks words that calm the crowd, for this crowd has been turned into a choric unity singing jolly drinking songs and having no problems it needs to bring to the king's

Figure 2 Johannes Sembach as Chaucer in de Koven and MacKaye's opera, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1917). By permission of the Metropolitan Opera Archives, New York, NY.

attention. The groundlings thus minimized, the libretto erases any discontent and celebrates instead the loves and concerns of the privileged classes. No longer mingling with the masses, correcting the King, or unifying the people with his verse, Sir Geoffrey is reduced to a love poet articulating the romantic desires of the upper classes, with the comic story line emphasizing only the two competing romances involving Sir Geoffrey: his attempts to woo Lady Eglantine and the Wife of Bath's attempts to snag Sir Geoffrey. As a result of his truncated role, the libretto does not pretend to represent the literary artist as one who articulates the concerns of the masses and provides a message unifying the civic body.

This presentation of Sir Geoffrey uncannily doubles MacKaye's role in creating the libretto.[177] Reducing the script by ten thousand words (according to de Koven's specifications) and receiving a fee for the work, MacKaye considered himself a hired pen. Beyond finding a publisher for the libretto and the score, preparing a publicity statement, and attending the premiere performance, MacKaye contributed little to the shape and development of the opera. He consistently deferred to de Koven throughout the process, saying that the composer was "so completely in sympathy with [MacKaye's] own point of view. . .that there [was] really no necessity of [his] being present."[178] Just as Sir Geoffrey's role changed from mediating between the rulers and commoners to writing love verses exclusively for the play's elite characters, so did MacKaye's when writing a libretto for a grand opera to be performed at the Metropolitan: he no longer wrote for the usual civic venues bringing serious art to the masses. It is easy to imagine that de Koven had MacKaye excise those elements because they were superfluous to the composer's goals of creating a vernacular entertainment that would receive the approval of the Metropolitan's elite audience.

While Sir Geoffrey's civic role in the libretto is gone, the opera continues the centuries-old tradition of associating Chaucer with elevating the vernacular to serious art. Besides using an English libretto, the opera also sought to use America's vernacular music, the operetta. Twenty years earlier, de Koven had achieved popular success as a composer of operettas performed at opera houses across the country.[179] Now he sought to breach what he considered to be the Metropolitan's arbitrary barriers keeping American operettas off its stage by deploying the vernacular idioms of American operetta in ways that resembled a grand opera and that might be accepted for performance at the Metropolitan.

To understand the implications of de Koven's ambitions, it is necessary to understand the state of opera in pre–World War I America. Ever since the 1850s, opera's musical and visual glamour had captivated a wide range of Americans. On the eve of World War I, New York City opera houses produced as many as three hundred performances of grand opera and

operetta a year, and traveling companies thrilled cities across the nation with opera's spectacle and song.[180] For my purposes, I will divide the opera performed by American houses into two sorts. First, there is the European operatic tradition, both grand opera and operetta. European grand opera, technically a dramatic work "having all the words of the text set to music," was considered during the nineteenth century the most sumptuous musical genre.[181] European operetta, written by the likes of Strauss and Offenbach and distinguished by its spoken parts and light lyrical frameworks, was deemed sufficiently sophisticated to be performed in the same houses as grand opera. Second, there is the American tradition, dominated by operetta.[182] While few American composers attempted grand opera, Americans after the Civil War composed many operettas in the French and English styles, with soulful lyrics, tuneful and jaunty melodies, and a harmonic palate less complex than German and Italian operetta.[183] Soon, American operetta became less like its European counterpart and more akin to Broadway-style musical revues. This hybrid operetta was more intelligible to American audiences than European opera because it used spoken English to convey the plot, reserving arias, duets, and choruses for the story's emotional core. American composers responded to popular demand by spilling out ever more sophisticated operettas with spectacular scenery and lighting. By the turn of the twentieth century, operetta could be considered America's musical vernacular, and de Koven had established himself as one of its noteworthy masters.[184]

In the United States, most opera house repertories freely mixed European and American works, but the elegant Metropolitan Opera, American's premier opera company, accommodated its elite audience by producing almost exclusively European operas.[185] While the Metropolitan was reluctant to endorse American operetta, its manager, Giulio Gatti-Casazza, did support new American opera in the European style and instituted a program in 1911 to encourage American composers by offering the winning composer "a Metropolitan production of his work and a prize of $10,000."[186] Through this program, the Metropolitan had staged four American operas by 1914; though none ever achieved any popular or critical success, their presentations signaled that the Metropolitan was opening its doors to American works.[187] In order to take advantage of the Metropolitan's prestige (for he did not need the money), de Koven decided to shed the cloak associated with American operetta and wear the mantle of grand opera.[188] Because the Metropolitan already included European operetta in its repertory, de Koven saw no reason why American operetta could not also be remade to satisfy the Metropolitan and its audience.[189]

Believing the American operetta tradition possessed a vibrant vernacular ready to be spun into grand opera, de Koven resisted composing a grand

opera fashioned from what he considered the fossilized remains of the European tradition.[190] He dismissed the concern that English was less euphonious than Italian or German by claiming that an American opera's English lyric had the advantage of being intelligible to the audience.[191] He refused to mimic leftover Wagner or dissonant Debussy because a grand opera based on American operetta idioms could draw on whistleable melodies and boisterous choruses.[192] Indeed, the American grand opera de Koven proposed would sound like the numerous comic operas he had already written for the popular stage; he imagined that this new grand opera would simply need to be written on a majestic scale and with no spoken parts.[193] De Koven had no doubt that he could write an American grand opera of "epochal distinction" that would "serve as the foundation for others that shall come after."[194]

In many ways, de Koven seemed to be the right man for closing the gap between popular American operetta and European opera. Not only had he written many popular operettas, but he had important social bona fides. The son of an affluent Connecticut family and son-in-law of a Chicago senator, de Koven was no provincial, having been schooled in Germany, Vienna, and Paris, where he was "thoroughly indoctrinated in the style and technique" of European operetta.[195] His earlier operettas had never totally succumbed to popular tastes and were shaped by his "patrician temperament."[196] Traveling in the same circles as those who supported the Metropolitan, he lived in a very grand style, with summers at Massachusetts's North Shore, long residencies abroad, and a lavish home at 1025 Park Avenue decorated as a sixteenth-century mansion.[197] He even composed *The Canterbury Pilgrims* while on a extended sojourn to Vevey, Switzerland, the birthplace of more than one literary and musical masterpiece.[198] He had also established a reputation for promoting American opera; as a music critic for the *New York World*, he regularly railed against the Metropolitan for boycotting operas most Americans enjoyed because that practice perpetuated a bifurcation that deemed only European operas (whether grand or light) suitable for elite audiences and consigned American operas to popular venues. De Koven was "intent on cultivating audiences capable of appreciating the sophisticated [operettas] he envisioned" and his insider status provided an unusual opportunity to overcome elite assumptions about grand opera.[199]

Faced with the task of making a popular art form acceptable to an audience that saw itself distinctively not popular, de Koven began by choosing *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, a play that seemed to bridge a similar gap between the elite and popular audiences.[200] Not only did Chaucer provide a model for the artist who dared write in the vernacular in order to appeal to a wider audience, but his solid Anglo-Saxon credentials made him

acceptable to a highbrow audience accustomed to having Shakespeare's plays transformed into grand opera. Moreover, if de Koven wanted to prove the suitability of English for grand opera, then the play's verse form made its English amenable to being set to music and sung, a point slyly driven home when the Squire frets over his love's unpoetical Italian name, Johanna.[201] In addition, Sir Geoffrey's successful romance with Lady Eglantine and the antics of the Wife of Bath, colored by intrigue and disguise, resembled the elements of many de Koven operettas.[202] We should not, therefore, be surprised that the composer identified MacKaye's play as the prompt for the grand opera, going so far as to claim that

> the musical world owes a debt of gratitude of Percy MacKaye that is incalculable. . . .For poetry of thought, clarity of expression, unity of idea and rapidity of action, this dramatic poem is better than anything that's been done in the last twenty-five years. . . .His work is distinctive, forceful, magnificent—and how it does lend itself to musical expression.[203]

In MacKaye's play, de Koven found an American source that mingled European artistic values with familiar American elements.

He next had to make operetta conventions fit grand opera conventions. He kept much of the musical rhetoric of his own operettas—tuneful melodies and rousing choruses—and imported techniques from art music that linked the elements together.[204] In much of the publicity leading up to the first performance, de Koven reassures his elite audience that he has adopted conventions associated with European opera. To demonstrate the opera's European heritage, de Koven contrasts his linking elements to Wagnerian *leit motifs*, comparing his method to Massenet's method in *Manon*. Telling his audience that he calls these elements "recurrent melody," he carefully distinguishes them from the "tunes" that made his operettas so popular.[205] In these interviews, he attempts to walk a line between asserting his opera's European heritage and distancing it from European works that seemed too alienating for most American audiences.

We see this combination of European and American elements in *The Canterbury Pilgrims*' boisterous opening chorus, "Good Ale under the Gable," which follows Italian grand opera tradition of an initial rousing chorus but is also reminiscent of "Brown October Ale," a chorus from de Koven's most popular operetta, *Robin Hood*. Sung by the Miller and his rambunctious companions, the drinking song's bouncy melody presents the thematic material associated with these coarser pilgrims. This "Good Ale" tune is repeated as the melody for the Wife of Bath's song when she first enters on a white ass. Sir Geoffrey and the Prioress Lady Eglantine, on the other hand, are identified by their introspective love songs sung at a

slower tempo with hymn-like harmonies. Using these musical techniques drawn from European opera, de Koven's musical motifs sketch clear class lines within a few minutes of the opening curtain, associating Sir Geoffrey and the noble characters with lyrical songs and duets, and segregating the rougher pilgrims into choruses or assigning them melodic fragments borrowed from the chorus.[206] Yet, though he paid closer attention to the linking elements and through-composed singing, de Koven's music in *The Canterbury Pilgrims* does not sound much different from the operettas he wrote twenty years earlier.

Once the Metropolitan accepted *The Canterbury Tales* for production, the next step toward making a de Koven operetta appear grand was in the hands of the Metropolitan's director, Gatti-Casazza. Based on Gatti's initial and persistent refusal to accept the opera for "cogent" and "explicit reasons" (left unspecified in any extant records), the opera probably seemed to him too much like American operetta.[207] Nevertheless, in keeping with his productions of other American works, Gatti provided an excellent cast, conductors, and staging.[208] To give the opera a visual grandeur, Gatti hired James Fox and Homer Emens, leading designers known for realistic sets on Broadway, and Livingston Platt to design costumes closely corresponding to fourteenth-century clothing.[209] The scenery and costumes were lavish, particularly the life-sized west entrance of Canterbury Cathedral that filled the stage for Act Four. To ensure that the opera's stage movement conveyed the narrative's essence, Richard Ordynski was brought in to direct the stage action, a first for the Metropolitan.[210] These men created a high-caliber production, in no way betraying that de Koven's opera might be considered substandard.

The one aspect of the production that caused some consternation for de Koven and MacKaye was Gatti's decision to hire German singers for the leading roles, a disappointment for both MacKaye and de Koven that also proved to be the production's Achilles heel. The one leading role, Sir Geoffrey, reserved for a native English speaker, baritone Clarence Whitehill, was eventually given to a German tenor, Johannes Sembach, because Whitehill found Sir Geoffrey's part too high, and rather than make the sweeping changes Whitehill demanded, de Koven settled on the German.[211] In the end, only three major roles were sung by native English speakers. Consequently, the Metropolitan publicity began to reverse itself and prepare audiences for the possibility of not understanding all the words:

> As Mr. Gatti says, given that a typical operatic audience in Italy, knowing their own language and generally familiar with both text and story of their operas, only expect to understand about half of the words sung, owing to the very conditions of opera itself, may it not be fairly said that American audiences

> who go to hear opera in English, expecting to hear every word, expect the impossible, and should be more reasonable in their demands?[212]

Other press releases included exhaustive plot summaries and reminded readers that Ordynski had been specially brought in to direct the stage action so that the story would be told to the eye, not just through the ear.

Although *The Canterbury Pilgrims* was outfitted to please the Metropolitan audiences, de Koven did not succeed in convincing many opera-goers that he had closed the cleft between operetta and grand opera. Assessments of the opera generally damn with faint praise: "To tell the truth, the work did not have great originality. . . .[but the] public received it well."[213] Some friendly reviews mention that the libretto and music worked well together, but by far most reviewers detected an uneasy fit between de Koven's music and MacKaye's libretto, with most of the fault for unoriginality blamed on de Koven's music. Whatever their assessment of the music—whether "exceedingly banal," "tepid and tame," "neither new nor important," or "wholly light and gay"—reviewers generally agreed that, while it avoided a foreign orchestration and the "harmonic contamination of modernism," the music indulged in many operetta idioms familiar to American audiences: closing cadence tricks, few solo arias, boisterous choruses, a finale full of brass and energy, and tunes that backstage hands and cheap-seat patrons could whistle.[214] Though these familiar sounds meant that the music could immediately be accepted by popular audiences, it was disdained by the serious aficionado.

The libretto received a similar mixture of reviews, heralded as ingenious and poetic as well as branded prim and pedantic. The *New York Sun's* review, under a headline praising the libretto as "One of Literary Merit," reported that "MacKaye has most excellently discharged his task and has honored the domain of American opera" by writing a "good comedy" with "dramatic values."[215] At *The Evening Sun*, the critic's initial enthusiasm for the printed libretto disappeared when he saw it put into action; he argued that the complicated plot devices more appropriately belonged to "Viennese comic operetta" or "musical comedy." Pierre Key suggested a few days later that the opera suffered because no one experiences loss: "from the first act to the close [it] breathes optimism."[216] As such, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* did not embody the emotional depth associated with grand opera and differed greatly from what Metropolitan patrons expected from their operas. The most biting reviews noted that Sir Geoffrey appeared to be a poetic wannabe who shuffled inept verse on the unwary. Ironically, de Koven probably erred when he had MacKaye cut out the raucous parts of the play: in the words of one reviewer, hopes were established for a "merry, licentious, melodious work, freed from the shackles of

conventional opera."[217] By reducing *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to a comic love triangle, the libretto felt vulgar without being racy and Chaucer's verse seemed third rate, thereby turning the plot into an operetta storyline while losing the benefits of associating the opera with Chaucer.

In 1917, the opera's clear affiliations with populist operetta did not endear *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to the Metropolitan's staid audience. Grand opera stalwarts exhibited little interest in admitting either a more vernacular opera or a more populist audience into the Metropolitan's precincts. The gatekeepers of grand opera were concerned with maintaining the Metropolitan as a preserve of the elite classes, defined by either wealth or education, who wanted their entertainment to carry a certain gravitas. For them, the Metropolitan's repertory served as much to dissuade certain categories of audiences as to attract others. Adhering to the technical definition of "grand opera" was not sufficient; to be welcomed onto the Metropolitan's stage, an opera had to be more than all sung to qualify as grand.[218] It needed to have no whiff of the common man, and importing a libretto featuring a canonical author reciting love poetry was not enough to salvage de Koven's music from seeming too common, too popular.[219] As far as most were concerned, *The Canterbury Pilgrims*' operettic qualities misunderstood the audience because the Metropolitan's current audience was not yet prepared to listen to the opera's vernacular message.[220]

Despite the disapproval of serious Metropolitan patrons, Gatti extended de Koven's contract and agreed in May 1917 to perform it again the next season.[221] The seven performances of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* had sold enough tickets and the reviews (for an American opera) had been good enough to warrant another season.[222] According to Anna de Koven, the Metropolitan management, as late as November 1917, "had been so satisfied by the approbation of the public, so encouraged by the financial success of the *Canterbury Pilgrims*" that it had decided the 1917–18 season would include five performances of it.[223] If that had happened, MacKaye and de Koven's opera would have been the first American work to have entered into the Metropolitan's repertory.

The next season's production of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* was canceled, however, when the Metropolitan directors reacted to the nation's anti-German war hysteria and demanded that Gatti dismiss all German singers, which included most of the principals in de Koven's opera.[224] Incensed, or perhaps recognizing an excuse to be rid of an opera too much like an American operetta, Gatti refused to assemble and rehearse another cast.[225] The opera was never performed again.[226]

In retrospect, we probably should not be surprised that Gatti so easily dropped de Koven's American opera. From the beginning Gatti had

resisted producing the opera, and one report suggested that he stayed in his office during the entire first performance of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* reading "The Lamentations of Jeremiah."[227] Despite Gatti's support of American opera, he did not see himself creating an American institution stocked with American works in a vernacular (rather than European) mode. Gatti conducted the Metropolitan as though it were an Italian institution and had little investment in advancing American works that might tarnish his otherwise European institution.[228] Gatti never felt comfortable with English and was firmly biased against American operetta, euphemistically labeling de Koven's opera "native music drama," and so de Koven's reputation as a composer of popular operettas was a large obstacle for him to overcome, not to mention any resentment the manager might have felt for de Koven's years of roundly criticizing the Metropolitan's exclusion of American composers.[229]

The opera's conspicuous ties with a revered canonical British author were not enough to overcome its prevailing American vernacularity. By the time grand opera devotees in the United States were more receptive to such middlebrow elements as an English libretto and non-European musical rhetoric, modernism dominated the arts, and *The Canterbury Pilgrims* appeared very regressive. Its libretto ignored pressing issues of the time and showed no sign of the anxiety associated with modernist poetics. Its music, too, stuck with tried and true tunes and orchestration, ignoring both modernism and the "fearful noise yclept jazz," as a sentimental fan of de Koven recalled.[230] Written at the edge of cataclysmic changes in music and literature, *The Canterbury Pilgrims* incorporated the wrong musical vernacular and the wrong poetic vernacular. The "coon song" and jazz that de Koven thought operetta had displaced were ascendant and, after World War I, they were the vernacular resources shaping American music.[231]

American musical and poetic trends were not the only forces dooming *The Canterbury Pilgrims* to the footnotes of musical and literary history. American drama, on the cusp of finding a new voice, would soon renounce the quaint utopianism represented by MacKaye's theories of civic drama. Just months before the final, operatic reincarnation of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, Susan Glaspell, George Cram Cook, and the Provincetown Players brought Greenwich Village their production of Eugene O'Neill's *Bound East for Cardiff* on November 3, 1916, a moment acknowledged as marking the beginning of twentieth-century American drama.[232] And even though MacKaye imagined at least two more justifications for civic theatre—first, as an effective "substitute for war" and, second, an as effective instrument in the service of eugenics, a program he viewed as benevolently applying scientific methods to social improvement—Americans

were quite happy to let dramatists and the theatre find other ways to sustain themselves.[233]

Poet Laureate

Percy MacKaye never achieved the public role of civic dramatist. He did, however, achieve a national presence writing and delivering public verse "seeking to interpret the permanent significance of passing moments."[234] In this informal role as the nation's unofficial poet laureate, he was called upon to present the ballad "Ticonderoga" (1909) and "Ode on the Centenary of Abraham Lincoln" (1909), and when the New Theatre laid its cornerstone, he wrote the lyrics for "Choral Song" (1908) performed by the Metropolitan Opera chorus. To memorialize invention and exploration, he penned such poems as "The Automobile: A First Ride" (1906), "The Air-Voyage up the Hudson" (1909), "Pearcy at the Pole" (1910), and "Edison" (1915). MacKaye wrote political verse—"Hymn for Equal Suffrage" (1914), "America in Arms" (1917), "Russia, 1917" (1917), and "The Three Guardsmen in Atlanta (regarding Eugene Debs)" (1920)—and tributes to other writers—"Tennyson," (1909), "To William Dean Howells" (1917), and "Amy Lowell over the Radio" (1922). Unlike his modernist counterparts, MacKaye always sought to be relevant with mellifluous verse encasing noble thoughts.

MacKaye was not able fully to mimic the poet laureateship he imagined for Chaucer, however, until he was appointed to the first American fellowship in poetry, a chair of creative literature at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio with no formal teaching duties, from October 1920 to June 1924.[235] Here, supported with a home, an office, and a salary, he further built on his previous role of writing commemorative verse and, turning away from classical sources, sought out the native material of the region, becoming, again as he imagined Chaucer, a poet able to express communal concerns and accomplishments.[236] But also true to form, much of his energy was spent institutionalizing similar positions, and though his role in establishing the association between universities and creative writers is generally unknown, it remains one of his most lasting contributions to the arts in America.[237] Unlike the role he imagined for Chaucer, MacKaye's recognition was limited, short lived, and seldom enough to live comfortably, for he was "dogged by poverty and the world's obtuseness."[238]

Coda

MacKaye's American Chaucer was a complex creation: he recast Chaucer to fit his idea of the serious vernacular poet urgently needed to unify the

increasingly diverse American culture. At the same time, MacKaye fashioned himself to fit the model of the civic poet he imagined Geoffrey Chaucer to be in Ricardian England. He used the American vernacular to retell ancient myths and reanimate antique characters. In both instances, MacKaye's American Chaucers earnestly attempted to address both the public and private concerns impinging upon the American poet-dramatist's ability to be a professional in the first decades of twentieth-century America.

CHAPTER 3

FLYING WITH THE POET

I turned again to my Chaucer; but he, dead and "nayled in his cheste" long since, could not compete with the picture of the Cynical Sophomore, appareled in the bright colors of youth, beginning his pilgrimage to some doubtful, unknown shrine far down the years—and I close the book.

—"The Contributors' Club," *The Atlantic Monthly* March 1926, 424

On November 13, 1918, Captain James Norman Hall, United States Air Service pilot, stole a copy of *The Canterbury Tales* from a makeshift prison library as he and three other American officers were escaping a detention facility in Landshut, Germany.[1] No other prisoners had shown an inclination for the Middle English work and the German officer in charge had professed little proprietorship, so Hall, as the prison's unofficial librarian, had already felt himself the volume's rightful owner and expressed no remorse for leaving Germany one Chaucer volume shorter than it was when the Armistice was declared two days earlier on November 11. Hall carried the *Tales* with him as he and the three other prisoners boarded a train to Munich, bedded overnight at a small hotel, rode to Lindau, crossed Lake Constance to Switzerland, evaded detainment in Romanshorn, and finally reached Paris. Later, Hall's Landshut Chaucer traveled with him when he made a final melancholy flight over the Western Front. Afterward, the volume also accompanied Hall when he went to Iowa, crossed the continent to California, sailed to Tahiti, traveled to Iceland, and finally returned to Tahiti, where he made his home at Papeete and remained until his death in 1951.[2]

In those years following the war, while Hall was busy exploring the tundra and the tropics, American policymakers were trying to forge a role for the United States in the new world order. A decade after the end of the war, no consensus had yet been reached about the place of American involvement in foreign affairs. Wilsonians advocating America's moral

rectitude as reason for its leadership in world affairs, peace progressives insisting that Americans avoid foreign entanglements, and business internationalists envisioning a world kept in order by the power of the American dollar—all agreed that the United States' entry into World War I had earned the nation a formidable, yet uncertain, role in international affairs.

During the 1920s, Hall had engaged this debate through *The Atlantic Monthly*; he was both a steady reader and a frequent contributor to the venerable magazine, which professed no political agenda yet saw itself as providing an intelligent conversation with gentility and good taste.[3] Close friends with Ellery Sedgwick, the magazine's editor, Hall regularly contributed to the debate with articles focusing on the affairs of an expatriate in foreign lands. In them Hall presented himself as a metonymy for the United States as it poked its nose into new corners of the world and often unwittingly upset the careful balance in local concerns. At the same time the *Atlantic* published subdued accounts of Hall's doubts about American foreign policy, it also published articles that expressed a politically progressive stance for American involvement by insisting that the United States' democratic and capitalist ideals could be the guiding light for nations ready to abandon war, as well as articles that warned against turning American foreign policy over to the captains of industry who would substitute one form of imperial tyranny for another. By no means were the *Atlantic* articles adopting populist positions: they came from an educated, progressive elite ready to promote an assertive U.S. foreign policy yet unable to explain how that participation would most effectively appear.

In 1930, *Atlantic*'s press published Hall's *Flying with Chaucer*, an eccentric memoir that reconceives events just before and after the end of the war. The book makes his pilfered Landshut Chaucer, which "chanced to be associated with a series of memorable events" at the close of World War I, the focal point for expressing Hall's doubts about the efficacy of any foreign policy spawned by the war, a world Hall left but never abandoned when he made his permanent home in the South Seas.[4] Although classified as a World War I prisoner-of-war memoir, *Flying with Chaucer* both conspicuously lacks important elements associated with that genre and idiosyncratically incorporates Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*—as a literary text to be quoted and as a physical object to be carried—into a central trope difficult to imagine appearing in other war literature. Furthermore, and most curiously, by perpetrating the fiction that he is inscribing *Flying with Chaucer* in the blank back pages of his volume of the Landshut Chaucer, Hall makes his memoir a metafictional continuation of *The Canterbury Tales*, a "Prisoner's Tale," as it were, that provides the reader with both "sentence" and "solaas," education and entertainment, the characteristics by which Harry Bailey suggests the pilgrims' tales should be judged (1.798).[5] The

"solaas" is the refreshingly understated story of Hall's unusual imprisonment and peculiar escape. The "sentence" records his disenchantment with the rhetoric that fueled the war and targeted the wrong enemy.[6] The "solaas" and "sentence" work together in Hall's innovative re-creation of his curious wartime experience to reflect his intellectual misgivings in postwar America about the purposes and consequences of the United States' entry into the Great War. When he pens *Flying with Chaucer*, Hall articulates two overriding concerns of observers of American foreign policy: a recognition of the failure of the Great War to end all wars and a longing for what the war really did destroy, the mirage of a transnational, aristocratic sensibility that united high-minded European men of goodwill and learning. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* becomes a vehicle for exploring that sensibility and recording its loss. Rather than underwriting the imperial policy—as we saw family anthologies do in Chapter 1—Hall's rewriting of *The Canterbury Tales* mourns the loss of an aristocratic sensibility ripped away by those who profitted from the war and its unstable peace.

Flying with Chaucer: Rising above the Rhetoric of War

James Hall's Experience in World War I

James Hall's renunciation of the postwar order was an unpredictable outcome of his unconventional wartime experience and enthusiastic Allied support in his early writings.[7] Hall's war experiences distinguished him not only from American civilians but also from almost all his American military counterparts who served in Europe.[8] Unlike the majority of American soldiers, who fought for the last six months of the war and were shipped back home within a few months after its end, Hall trained and served in Europe for forty-three months between August 1914 and March 1918 in the British, French, and American militaries. Unlike the many American intellectuals who volunteered for the Ambulance Corps in order to join a cause outside provincial America, Hall enlisted with troops in the trenches, convinced he could do nothing less.[9] Unlike the handful of Americans who did fight in the trenches with the French, British, or Canadian forces, Hall also trained with France's fledgling aerial forces. And unlike enlisted men who suffered deprivation during their German captivity, Hall's relatively comfortable detention at the officers' prison camp provided him a refuge from the tribulations of war. All this wartime service, whether as an idealistic volunteer or as a privileged officer, was recorded in his several accounts published by 1920; they all reflexively justify the United States' support of the Allied cause and its claim to preserve the "bulwarks of civilization" and "the honor and glory of democratic institutions" against German barbarity.[10]

Hall began his World War I odyssey when sympathy for the British against their German aggressors compelled him to enlist in a London regiment, the Royal Fusiliers, on August 18, 1914.[11] He posed as a Canadian and joined the two million volunteers Lord Kitchener easily rallied, rapidly trained, and readily shipped to the trenches of France in less than twelve months.[12] Hall served in the British army for just over fifteen months as one of the millions whom the British were willing to waste through their strategy of attrition. After surviving the horrors of the trench alongside the battle-weary enlistees of Kitchener's army, he was discharged in November 1915 in order to see his dying father in Iowa. He left France with plans to re-enlist in the British battalion as soon as he fulfilled his family obligations.[13]

While in the states, Hall changed his plans when he accepted a commission from Ellery Sedgwick to write a series of articles for the *Atlantic Monthly*, a magazine dedicated to "Literature, Science, Art, and Politics."[14] Appearing in the spring of 1916—and immediately compiled in May 1916 as a book, *Kitchener's Mob*: *The Adventures of an American in the British Army*—Hall's early accounts are infused with a sympathy initially engendered by the Allied cause and further refined by his loyalty to the soldiers fighting and dying in the trenches.[15] His unabashed pieces of propaganda recount his experiences as a Tommy in the British infantry in order to encourage America to support the British troops and abandon its aloof neutrality.[16] The articles and the book emphasize the cultural, historical, and linguistic ties that naturally bind Americans to the English. For example, he describes initially expressing his sense of solidarity with the British commoners by trying to imitate Cockney and melt in unnoticed; despite his immediate failure at this linguistic subterfuge, the other soldiers quickly accepted him as a welcomed token of American support: "the boys gave me a warm and hearty welcome when they learned that I was a sure-enough American. They called me 'Jamie the Yank.' I was a piece of tangible evidence of the bond of sympathy existing between the two great English-speaking nations."[17] He then builds on the natural ties between Yank and Brit with intimate accounts of his months spent on the front lines where, with the British foot soldiers, he lived through the worst of trench warfare: "By the end of the month we had seen more of suffering and death than it is good for men to see in a lifetime. There were attacks and counter-attacks, hand-to-hand fights in communication trenches with bombs and bayonets, heavy bombardments, nightly burial parties" (198). He records the difficulty of being stuck next to pieces of bodies and corpses of comrades; even worse were "the groans and entreaties of those lying wounded in the trenches waiting to be taken back to the dressing stations" (168–69).[18]

An effort to stop the damage and destruction he witnessed, Hall's first book deploys the dominant popular responses to the war: naive jingoism,

stirring deeds of heroic transformations, comforting visions of war's genteel conduct, and belief in war, despite its gruesomeness, as ennobling and purifying the human spirit.[19] These stratagems all work together to create an action-packed, highly personalized, and pro-Allied version of events in Europe that seeks to dispel the passivity of Americans west of the Eastern seaboard. A "hymn to volunteerism" comparable to Ian Hay's fictionalized account of Kitchener's Army entitled *The First Hundred Thousand* (1916), *Kitchener's Mob* tried to ignite grassroots support for the United States' entry into the war.[20]

His sympathy undiminished, but knowing that the British troops he hoped to rejoin were probably already dead, Hall returned to Europe in the summer of 1916.[21] Rather than re-enlist in the British army, Hall went to France and began researching another Sedgwick commission: a story on the French air corps' American volunteers, a group known as Lafayette's Flying Corps. Choosing not merely to observe, Hall became the ultimate embedded reporter when he joined the corps on October 11, 1916, trained for several weeks at École Biériot near Versailles, and flew his first mission in June 1917.[22] Though the Americans had entered the war in April 1917, he was not made a member of the United States Air Service until February 1918, when he was transferred to the 103rd Aero Squadron, later reorganized as the 94th Pursuit Squadron.[23] As one of the few Americans with combat flying experience, he was immediately promoted to captain and soon made flight commander. After flying many successful missions, crashing a couple of planes, and receiving severe injuries, Hall was shot down behind German lines near Pagny-sur-Moselle on May 7, 1918 when the fabric tore from the wing of his untried Nieuport 28, preventing his returning to Allied territory and making him an easy target for German anti-aircraft fire.[24] Taken prisoner by the Germans and treated for a broken nose and broken ankle at the Jarny-Conflans hospital for six weeks, he then spent the rest of the war in an officers' detention facility at Trausnitz Castle, a twelfth-century stone fortification in Landshut, a picturesque medieval city on the Isar River in Bavaria. After the Armistice was announced in November 1918, he and the three other American prisoners left the facility and made their journey to Paris to receive further orders.

Finally a free man in Paris, Hall was assigned by the United States Air Service to write the official history of the Lafayette Flying Corps with Charles Nordhoff, another American airman.[25] While the Americans awaited being shipped back to the states, the two airmen collected the personal histories of the other men affiliated with the Lafayette Flying Corps.[26] Consisting of minimally edited letters, diaries, and interviews, the illustrated book develops around tropes of accidental bravery and understated hardship in order to celebrate the men, machines, and organization that inaugurated the United States into aerial warfare.

Characteristics of Flying with Chaucer

Twelve years after walking away from Landshut with *The Canterbury Tales* in his pocket, Hall returned to writing about the war in a fifty-six-page memoir, *Flying with Chaucer*. Unlike his previous war accounts, *Flying with Chaucer* is both retrospective and introspective: it was written years after the events rather than in the midst of them, and it meditates on men's inability to understand the implications of their actions, in particular war's obvious but often forgotten consequence of destroying what its proponents claim to preserve. In this way, Hall's memoir succinctly echoes the growing disenchantment among American intellectuals with policies that used American wealth to influence the course of nations disrupted by both the Great War and its calamitous peace.

At the same time it works against the jingoism of his accounts written during the war, Hall's memoir contains many recognizable elements associated with World War I literature, whether written during the war or after the war. Employing a genteel, conservative style, and seemingly unaffected by the new energies at work in American literature by the end of the 1920s, *Flying with Chaucer* relies on the laconic discourse associated with many accounts written early in the war: an understatement of trauma and deprivation, accented with a deep sense of duty to comrades (if not to country).[27] It also registers a soldier's ultimate disillusionment with the war, a theme it holds in common with most postwar literature. And yet, unlike the typical early war literature, *Flying with Chaucer* does not glorify war, and unlike the typical postwar account, Hall's little book does not express bitter cynicism.[28]

Indeed, few images or episodes standard for World War I literature appear in *Flying with Chaucer*, a signal of Hall's different purpose. No chapters recap individual heroism in battle; no episodes recount waiting for the faceless enemy to hurl artillery across a no-man's land into an infinite stretch of stinking trenches, killing the unlucky soul who chanced to be huddled in the wrong spot. Nothing in the text resembles the slang terms commonly used in other war memoirs to derogate the Germans—Jerry, Boche, Hun.[29] Nor is there any sign of the German war prisons that, according to other prisoner accounts, set a new standard for mistreating prisoners through torture, forced labor, inadequate clothing, and insufficient sustenance.[30] Absent, too, are strong bonds of camaraderie that saturated Hall's earlier contemporaneous accounts and most other war literature from that period. Nowhere does the text present any celebration of Allied soldiers who together "endured great hardships and dangers with simplicity. . .by developing a comradeship among themselves."[31] Even its peculiar title, *Flying with Chaucer*, by referencing no war, no combat, and

no famous battles, refuses to identify the book as part of the vogue for such personal war narratives as E.E. Dwinger's *Prisoner of War*, H.G.E. Durnford's *Tunneler of Holzmindon*, or Bert Hall's *One Man's War*, all published coevally with Hall's in 1929 or 1930.[32] In fact, an emblem on the title page, a book with wings literalizing the memoir's title, suggests something like "books give us wings to fly" rather than "I was a prisoner-of-war in Germany." Hall also leaves out the perilous events that preceded his capture, and the only narrative clue to his broken ankle and nose is his casual mention of "some men in coal-scuttle helmets [who] sorted [him] out of the wreckage" and sent him to a hospital where he spent six weeks "gazing dully at the fly-specked ceiling" (7).[33] For a war memoir set in the middle of enemy territory, there is a surprising absence of battlefield confrontation, evil adversaries, suffering prisoners, and gritty camaraderie.

Most noticeably for a book about a World War I aviator, there is also a startling lack of chivalric imagery. Anyone familiar with the few memoirs written by the earliest fighter pilots might be ready to see Hall's conjunction of Chaucer and flying as obliquely metaphorical for a squadron of aerial fighters as knights in armed combat, for the fliers understood themselves as recuperating the glory of knightly battle, a conceit that developed soon after they began to supplement their duty as agents for reconnaissance by becoming one-on-one combatants in the sky.[34] Not stuck behind the machine guns in the trenches, where soldiers facing weeks of stationary drudgery fought a faceless and anonymous enemy, but rather flying mechanical marvels in the sky, far above the mud and misery of the ground-war trenches, the pilots could reimagine themselves as mounted knights who fought with honor and bravery. For example, C.E. Montague's *Disenchanted* claims that among those who fought in the war, only the fighter pilots retained the time-honored chivalric traditions because of what he calls the "clean element": "it always looked a clean job from below, where your airy notions got mixed with trench mud."[35] And back at the Royal Flying Corps headquarters, daily columns romanticized the fighting aces as "Knights-Errant of the Air."[36] Perhaps Cecil Lewis's 1936 memoir best captured the medieval trope, each pilot bearing personal responsibility for his own survival and for the death of his enemy, thereby imparting honor and glory to victor and vanquished alike:

> It was like the lists of the Middle Ages, the only sphere in modern warfare where a man saw his adversary and faced him in mortal combat, the only sphere where there was still chivalry and honor. If you won, it was your own bravery and skill; if you lost, it was because you had met a better man.[37]

Hall himself tapped into this imagery when he lectured about aerial fighting for the Pond Lyceum Bureau after the war for two and a half months in

venues between the east coast and Iowa. Titled "The Azure Lists," Hall's lecture opened with a paragraph borrowed from a House of Commons speech by Prime Minister David Lloyd George:

> Far above the squalor and the mud, so high in the firmament as to be invisible from earth, they fight out the eternal issues of right and wrong. . . .They are the knighthood of this war, without fear and without reproach; and they recall the legendary days of chivalry, not merely by the daring of their exploits, but by the nobility of their spirit.[38]

None of this medievalizing glory of knights flying into battle, however, appears in *Flying with Chaucer*. In fact, Hall alludes to knights only in the final section where, as we will see, he cites the funeral elegy from *The Knight's Tale* as he records his final flight over the Western Front.[39]

Besides forgoing both the chivalric glory of the aerial warriors and the honorable suffering of the mistreated prisoners of war, Hall's memoir also points to other purposes by oddly keeping the war at bay. Here and there he offers spectral reminders of irreparable losses—the third owner of the Chaucer volume who probably "had been killed back of the German lines" (35); a reargunner who, in desperation, "climbed out of his cockpit and threw himself off into space" from his burning plane (54); and the "war-devastated areas" of the abandoned Western Front itself (52)—but these rare moments are only faint glimpses of the war that reshuffled geopolitical lines and depopulated Europe by as many as twenty million soldiers and civilians. Though World War I circumscribes the events in *Flying with Chaucer*, its relative absence as an immediate factor suggests that it would be somewhat wrongheaded to see Hall's book as a typical war memoir.

Finally, while presenting no suffering, no chivalry, and no war, *Flying with Chaucer* has the persistent presence of the medieval poet throughout. Besides the mention of Chaucer's name in the curious title, the book's opening and closing images feature Hall handling a volume of *The Canterbury Tales*: the memoir begins in 1929 with Hall in his Tahiti home wiping from his Landshut Chaucer "the film of mould that collects so quickly [in the] humid tropic climate" (1), and the memoir ends with him reading years earlier the same volume "by candlelight during long winter nights under the Arctic Circle" or where "the shadows of cocoanut [*sic*] palms have fallen on its pages on lonely islands of the South Seas" (56). Furthermore, during the months of his captivity and across the miles of his escape, time and distance are marked by his retreat to reading his volume of *The Canterbury Tales*; for example, Hall takes comfort in "basking in the wan sunshine, reading uninterruptedly, looking up now and then at the moss-grown walls of the castle whose stones had been set in place when

Chaucer himself was walking the earth" (18). Finally, *The Canterbury Tales* is most noticeably present in *Flying with Chaucer* through six Middle English citations included at crucial moments. When we accept Hall's cue and read *Flying with Chaucer* through the lens of *The Canterbury Tales*, we see that the infiltration of Chaucer into an apparent war memoir transforms the narrative into a skeptical reexamination of war rhetoric and a lament for the displacement of older values by modern business interests.

Flying with Chaucer begins this transformation by imagining itself as the twenty-sixth Canterbury tale; though Hall never labels it as such, I am calling it "The Prisoner's Tale." But the memoir does establish this identity, to some extent, by positioning itself within Chaucer's collection through the fictional conceit of Hall's having inscribed it inside his Landshut Chaucer. This conceit comes about in several ways, all in a quite roundabout process. It begins in his prefatory material when Hall suggests that publishers provide a way for readers to record their thoughts and experiences in reading a given book:

> I think it would be an excellent thing if publishers were to provide means for the transmission of [how the volume chanced to come into a reader's possession, and what its earlier adventures may have been] from reader to reader. When they print an edition of time-defying book, such as "The Canterbury Tales," or "The Faërie Queene," or "Montaigne's Essays," or "The Story of Burnt Njál," they might bind into each copy some fifty blank pages, say, to be used for this purpose. Or perhaps better than this would be a strong envelope pasted in the back cover, like those made to contain maps in books of travels. Into this each successive owner could put a commentary on his tenure of the volume, when, for one reason or another, the time came for him to part with it. (3)

Wistfully wishing that his Landshut Chaucer volume had "such provision" (3), he claims he would use it to tell not only how he came to possess the volume, but also how it connects to memorable events in his life—the very stuff of *Flying with Chaucer*. And indeed he says as much when he claims that his desire "brings me stealthily to my purpose here: I see no reason why I should not relate the story even though it may not be handed down to posterity. . ." (4).

After this first foray into the conceit that *Flying with Chaucer* is written in the pages of his Landshut Chaucer, Hall pushes the conceit a little further. A letter from Hall to his unborn grandchildren included in the memoir's text claims that Hall first wrote an incomplete version of the epistle to them in the empty pages at the back of his Chaucer volume while in the German prison; it was his first attempt to write "a story of [his] war-time experiences which was to be passed on to [his] grandchildren" (19). Then he tells

us he erased this letter from his Landshut Chaucer volume's end pages after making a transcription of it: "You will observe, my fellow Chaucerians, that a blank page at the end of this volume had been covered with scribbling in pencil, since carefully erased. It was the above promising narrative, of which I made a transcript before erasing it. . ." (21).[40] Here, Hall imaginatively slips into the reader's hands the handsome Landshut Chaucer, fancifully replacing the slender *Flying with Chaucer*. With this bit of whimsy, Hall has his audience holding and reading *The Canterbury Tales*, thereby establishing the fiction that his memoir appears within the page of the Landshut Chaucer.

Hall also identifies his readers as "owners to be of this Copy of his Tales," and then petitions the reader to note the volume's value: ". . .I pray you handle it with care when you read. . ." (3 and 5). With these paradoxical addresses, Hall in effect thrusts into the reader's hands the moldy volume of *The Canterbury Tales* that had been sitting on his bookshelves in Tahiti. Additional evidence that Hall has given the reader his Landshut Chaucer occurs when he tells the reader to "observe" the "two parallel penciled lines" he has placed in the margin of that volume to mark a passage in *The Tale of Melibee* (23), an injunction similar to his instructions to note the erased markings in the back pages (21). Finally, he ends *Flying with Chaucer* by finishing off the conceit that its narrative appears within the covers of *The Canterbury Tales*:

> But, before I close, it may interest you to know that the volume you now hold, among its many unknown journeys and adventures, traveled with me almost the entire length of the old battle-fields of the Western Front. . . .I wish each one of you such joy of it as I have had. (55–56)

By identifying the "volume you now hold" with *The Canterbury Tales* (the material text he carried on his travels across the globe) and not with his own *Flying with Chaucer* that the reader actually holds, Hall has in effect reinscribed and completed the erased letter he penciled to future generations, making his memoir an additional tale, which we can title "The Prisoner's Tale."

As "The Prisoner's Tale," *Flying with Chaucer* invites being read with the same care as one of Chaucer's tales. It begins this instructional phase in the metafictional elements that precede the narrative proper.[41] These prefatory remarks function in the same manner as the prologues and framing elements in *The Canterbury Tales* in that they instruct the reader how to read the subsequent tale. For example, Hall assumes the reader of his "Prisoner's Tale" shares his love for and familiarity with *The Canterbury Tales*: he prefaces the narrative proper of *Flying with Chaucer* by identifying his imagined

audience as "Lovers of Chaucer" (5) and twice addresses his readers as "fellow Chaucerians" (21 and 55). He also tells his readers that if they find his narrative "tedious, [they] have only to turn from it to the book itself, for such refreshment as Chaucer only can furnish" (6), apparently imagining that his audience knows the *Tales* well enough to appreciate his reference to Chaucer's warning about the indelicate *Miller's Tale*: "And therfore, whoso list it nay yhere, / Turne over the leef and chese another tale" (1.3176–77). Later, he reminds his readers of the number of tales, a fact he is sure they already possess: "As you know, there are twenty-five tales in all" (17). This memoir does not seek to convert medieval literature agnostics to book-thumping Chaucer devotees; instead, it expects its readers to have a prior familiarity with *The Canterbury Tales* in order to apprehend fully both the memoir's "sentence and. . .solaas" (1.798), the qualities Chaucer's pilgrims expect of their tales.

"The Prisoner's Tale" offers "solaas" in that it entertains readers by recounting Hall's unusual imprisonment and peculiar escape; it offers "sentence" in that it instructs by registering the irreparable losses that war rhetoric would otherwise hide. If we have not already understood that *Flying with Chaucer* merits reading for both entertainment and instruction, the book's final passage claims that reading *The Canterbury Tales* provides "solace and delight" (55). At first, Hall's phrase seems to be simply an amplification of Chaucer's "solaas," identifying the process of reading *Flying with Chaucer* with only the second half of Harry Bailey's formula, "sentence and. . .solaas" (1.798). If, however, we consider that by the twentieth century "solace" means less an entertainment and more a consolation in times of wretchedness, then Hall's "solace" here becomes more akin to Chaucer's "sentence," making "solace and delight" a modernization of "sentence and. . .solaas." This final remark about Hall's reading habits thus provides a reason for reading his memoir, to find both "sentence and. . .solaas." In contrast to other tales told about war, "The Prisoner's Tale" does not merely divert. If its readers give it the same care required when reading Chaucer's other tales, it also educates, by articulating the American intellectuals' ambivalent relationship to the old world order that the war was supposed to usher out and replace with a new world order, with America at its helm.

In requiring careful reading, Hall's memoir sets itself in opposition to that brand of war literature whose characteristic elements are conspicuously absent in *Flying with Chaucer*. For example, Hall's reading *The Canterbury Tales* is contrasted with his listening to the stories of "old combats" told by the prisoners (9), the only way they know to fill time once they are "far beyond the tumult and clamor or war" (10). Such stories, like the typical early war literature, served to reinforce received truths like the notion that honor and glory accrue to soldiers in exchange for sacrificing their lives. In

retrospect, Hall indicates that both listening to those stories and fighting the war itself were misguided distractions from the ennui suffered by adventuresome young men who readily answer the alarum of war without recognizing beneath it the siren call of irreversible destruction. Hall's reading *The Canterbury Tales*, on the other hand, invites a slow, meditative experience that awakens him from the seductive opiates of war rhetoric so he can understand the larger consequences of misspent language. As any student of medieval literature knows, reading and fully appreciating Chaucer's tales requires the kind of time Hall has as a prisoner of war, and they repay his quiet reflection and study. While listening to the stories foregrounding the excitement and danger of aerial combat ultimately fails to relieve the tedium of prison life, reading *The Canterbury Tales* does relieve a deeper malaise Hall once sought to efface by taking up arms.

"Solaas"

The "solaas" of "The Prisoner's Tale" is the pleasure that comes from reading a quirky recounting of unexpected events. For example, before the narrative proper of *Flying with Chaucer* begins, an enigmatic book dedication suggests this story will be an unusual depiction of an American's imprisonment in a German prisoner-of-war camp:

> To Lieutenants
> Robert Browning, Charles Codman
> and
> Henry Lewis
> Formerly of the United States Air Service
> in memory of Landshut Days
> and the Escape de Luxe

The dedication's reference to the United States Air Service clearly links it to World War I (for by 1926 the aerial division of the military had become the United States Air Corps), but its cryptic references—one to the holiday-like "Landshut Days" and the other to the getaway-sounding "Escape de Luxe"—create a sense of pampered repose. Until we know differently, we might think Landshut was a favorite R & R destination for American pilots during World War I.

Hall then opens his memoir not by recounting his exploits in Europe, but by languidly recalling how a few weeks earlier he had come across the Landshut Chaucer while cleaning the mold from his books in Tahiti. He explains how just holding and examining the volume gives him great pleasure because its fine workmanship and the inscriptions of previous owners

allow his imagination to wander back to an earlier time. It also triggers memories of his final months in wartime Europe.

Thus framed, the narrative proper about Hall's end-of-war exploits begins weeks after his recovery from injuries and subsequent transfer to the prisoner-of-war facility at Landshut. There, the prison's sense of refuge from the war starts to build with the description of the prisoner-of-war camp as situated inside a twelfth-century castle, an undisturbed relic from a premechanized era, far removed from the trenches, the gassings, the rotting bodies, and the hostile enemy. The castle comes to represent a safe haven so completely that even the unpredictable influenza epidemic "then ravaging Germany as it was other countries" does not harm the American prisoners at Landshut (29). In this somewhat benign, almost bucolic world, under circumstances not "particularly unpleasant," he is "well housed, decently fed, and, on the whole, treated more generously than [he] had reason to expect as [a prisoner] of war" (6–8).[42]

In prison, the American officers' main complaint is the oppressive weight of boredom. They unsuccessfully try to vanquish the tedium by regaling each other with stories of their old aerial battles, and by wheedling news of the war from their only outside guest, the friendly German prison camp inspector aptly named Herr Pastor: "or Pastour, or Pasteur, I have forgotten how his named was spelled," Hall playfully remarks (11). Although Herr Pastor cannot reveal the progress of the war, he does manage to supply the prisoners with a crated assortment of nearly two hundred books in English from a used bookstore in Munich.[43] As the most bookish of the prisoners, Hall is charged with the unpacking and organizing them. When he uncovers a worn nineteenth-century volume of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, he realizes he has found "a sovereign remedy for prison-camp ennui" (15). Because no other prisoner expresses interest in the volume, he savors his reading and allows himself to indulge in only one tale per week.

By the end of October 1918, only four prisoners, all Americans, remain at the Landshut prison; they pass their time by settling into a form of quaint domesticity, mending their clothes, cooking their meals with the provisions supplied by the Red Cross, and reading books from their impromptu library. Although Hall scarcely mentions any sympathetic bonds among the prisoners, he expounds on the empathy between the German captors and the prisoners, who eventually regard one sergeant, Feldwebel Capp, "as a friend rather than a jailor" (31). Frequently using their names, Hall pointedly remarks that his captors do not steal the Red Cross parcels that supply the prisoners with tinned meats and vegetables, "soap, tobacco, coffee and tea, sugar, and the like" (22), goods in short supply for the Germans. He stands surprised "that so many of our parcels reached us intact. Nine out of ten of them, to make a conservative estimate, made the journey without

having been tampered with on the way, which speaks well for German honesty" (22). Here we briefly see the Germans as fellow sufferers whose sacrifices build a conduit to a more normal routine for the prisoners.

On November 8, the American prisoners notice the guards seem less vigilant than usual. (They later learned that news of the revolution in Bavaria had thrown the usual lines of command into chaos.) Four days later, the attentive Herr Pastor casually announces the Armistice but warns the four of them not to expect an immediate release, for the camp officers will first have to receive instructions for handling the prisoners' discharge.[44]

Despite his caveat, within twenty-four hours Herr Pastor is shepherding their escape by carefully mapping out the four prisoners' route to Switzerland, even providing them with train tickets and anonymous couriers, at which point Hall decides to take the Chaucer volume:

> We rushed off at once to get ready. We had little baggage, of course, and were in full marching order within three minutes. I paused briefly before our prison-camp library.
>
> "How about taking some books along?" I suggested.
>
> "O, to hell with books!" said Browning.
>
> "Leave them for Feldwebel Capp; he's fond of English literature; I wish him joy of Mrs. Oliphant's novels," said Codman.
>
> Nevertheless, I was not willing to part with "The Canterbury Tales," so I slipped the volume into my pocket, and I took also the little copy of Dryden's "Poems," thinking that I might like to read them, as well, sometime. (31)[45]

Before the end of the day, they have caught the train to Munich. Wearing their "American army uniforms, with the pilot's insignia of the Air Service on [their] tunics" (33), the men worry about being recognized and stopped; Germany, however, is so "topsy-turvy" that the four Americans travel unhindered to Munich where they stay overnight at a hotel (34). Then taking the train to Lindau, they are met by a contact and escorted to a boat crossing Lake Constance to Romanshorn, Switzerland.

There, the four American officers meet their first impediments to freedom when they are arrested by a Swiss officer for arriving "from Germany in a very irregular manner" (41). They are soon delivered to American authorities at Berne, however, and the Swiss officer is "given a receipt, officially signed and sealed" for them (42). That evening, they dine at Hôtel Bellevue, where "the various agents of the Central and Allied Powers, who had made their headquarters in Switzerland since the outbreak of the war," remain unable to "lay aside their enmities" even at the end of the war (42). Picayune authorities continue to trouble the four when, the next morning, they are scolded for not "extending the customary military courtesies to the other officers" at the hotel dining room, and Hall is sent to apologize to the

commander-in-chief of the Swiss forces for not properly saluting him (43). Hall is able to shrug off the commander's pettiness when the receiving officer confirms the foolishness of the affair.

Two days later, they arrive in Paris, and soon thereafter Hall reports to Aviation Headquarters, which assigns him to gather historical data. Having already resolved not to accept an officer's commission, he decides "to say good-bye forever" to the fledging United States Air Service (48). While he completes his final military obligations in Paris, he requests a plane to make "a last flight over the old front" (48). After waiting several weeks for favorable conditions but fearing they will not arrive before he receives his orders returning him to the States, he goes to Orly and is given a 180-hp Spad to trace the Western Front. Carrying his volume of *The Canterbury Tales* to occupy the evenings of his short trip, he flies over the "inconceivable desolation" (52), all the while meditating on the waste of war; he then lands his plane and ends his tour.

Along the way, *Flying with Chaucer* has taken its reader on a seldom-seen journey into a German prisoner-of-war camp, a "little world. . .lapped round by an ocean of silence and slow time," where leisure was "abundant" and a palpable absence of "the tumult and clamor of war" prevailed (10–11). Once Hall is released, we are made privy to sights of war-weary Europeans unsure of what happens next: "a round-faced, shaggy-haired youth, in wooden-soled shoes, stooping to pick up a very short cigarette-butt," "an elderly man with a snow-white beard" perplexed by the presence of four unescorted American officers on the train, a Swiss officer (with a moustache like Kaiser Wilhelm's and a beard in the French fashion) who excitedly expressed his neutrality, and the Parisian children playing on the now "silent and harmless" German cannons (32–33, 38–39, and 47). A tale unlike other war memoirs, it entertains not by exposing us to the worst behavior of humanity but by sadly reminding us of a lost time and vanishing ethos.

"Sentence"

The "sentence" of "The Prisoner's Tale" is an understated critique of the war rhetoric that lured millions of young men to heroic causes that neither the larger conduct of the war nor its aftermath sustained. The inhumanity of the war erased a larger, nobler sensibility. Yet Hall's laconic account of the war avoids overt criticism of the Allies and their war efforts, reserving it for a brief comment about their handling of the peace: commenting on the faceless politicians who ruined the peace the soldiers died to ensure, Hall says "[t]hen came the gathering of the vultures at Versailles, and what happened there we know" (47). Not at all didactic, Hall's critique of war rhetoric is conveyed subtly. Six Middle English citations from Chaucer's

The Canterbury Tales at crucial points in the narrative proper help convey the "sentence" of "The Prisoner's Tale." Reading the one text against the other, mixing the medieval with the modern, yields an understanding that neither *The Canterbury Tales* nor *Flying with Chaucer* directly states because the citations from Chaucer often seem irrelevant, and Hall's own words generally replace the horrors of warfare with innocuous images of men living just outside the reach of the war. This juxtaposition of canonical text and prisoner-of-war narrative creates an indirect comment on the slippery danger of war rhetoric. Requiring the same reading techniques demanded by *The Canterbury Tales*—a slower pace and a mindfulness of a broader context—each of these six passages marks in the narrative a breach between personal experience and received truths about the honor in war, the nobility in neutrality, or the veracity of speech. When the gap between personal experience and received truths becomes great enough, the Chaucer passages become a catalyst for transforming Hall's narrative into a skeptical appraisal of the seduction of war rhetoric.

The first citation of *The Canterbury Tales* establishes that *Flying with Chaucer* will not conform to generic expectations generated by other World War I literature: "Whereas a man may have noon audience, / Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence" (4, citing 7.2801–2).[46] In isolation, the two lines spoken by Harry Bailey say it does no good to tell a lesson if there is no one to hear it, and thus imply that Hall's imagined audience needs to be receptive to his "sentence," so he will not have to resort to didactic measures. Read with their original context in mind, however, the lines tell a different story. Coming after the Knight has interrupted the Monk's series of grim portraits of tyrants, the lines form part of Bailey's scolding of the Monk for telling his merrymaking audience tales that "anoyeth al this compaignye" (7.2780). *The Canterbury Tales* passage then continues with Bailey's request that Monk "sey somwhat of huntyng," that is, something more in keeping with the Monk's obvious interests and more entertaining than the heaviness of his quasi-Boethian tragedies. The Monk refuses: "Nay. . .I have no lust to pleye" (7.2806). Thus, in the context of the Monk's tragic litany that the Knight and Host have just interrupted and of the Monk's refusal to substitute a jollier picture of unrestrained power, the lines suggest that *Flying with Chaucer* will not adjust its message to further the Great War's enchantment of the masses. The lines from Chaucer become a statement that *Flying with Chaucer* will acknowledge the audience but will not shape its "sentence" to suit the current market for war memoirs.

A moment of strife between competing points of view marks the next cited passage, where the Friar and Summoner bicker after the Wife of Bath's prologue. The passage questions whether there is only one way to understand a subject, thereby alerting the reader to expect a new perspective from

Flying with Chaucer; this memoir will differ from those other prisoner-of-war accounts that claim to provide the only way to understand the interactions between the Germans and Allied forces during the war. The Chaucerian quotation occurs when Hall, "eagerly" unpacking the crate of books generously provided the prisoners and examining each title with interest, picks up the Chaucer volume, which "opened itself to page 368":

> The Frere lough whan he hadde herd al this,
> "Now, dame," quod he, "so have I joye or blis,
> This is a long preamble of a tale!"
> And whan the Somnour herde the Frere gale,
> "Lo!" quod the Somnour, "goddes armes two!
> A frere wol entremette him evere-mo.
> Lo, gode men, a flye and eke a frere
> Wol falle in every dyssh and eke matere.
> What spekestow of preambulacioun?
> What! amble, or trotte, or pees, or go sit doun!
> Thou lettest our disport in this manere."
> (14–15 from 3.829–39)

In this short passage, the Friar interrupts the Wife; then the Summoner interrupts the Friar and chastises him for not only falling "in everye dyssh and eke matere" (that is, for interfering and speaking out of turn), but also for speaking what he knows little about. Of course, Chaucer's dramatic irony has the Summoner's scolding reveal his own ignorance more than he realizes, for he seems to be unfamiliar with the Friar's fairly novel term, "preamble," confusing it with terms describing the horses' movements, "amble" and "trot."[47] Though ostensibly a sign of the *Tales'* promising entertainment value, this farrago of confusion also complicates the argument about how an audience's prejudices can shape a book, acknowledging that ignorance contributes to interpretation as much as knowledge does. By recording a moment in which the pilgrims dispute who will speak and who possesses the clearest understanding of language, the lines raise doubts about a community's ability to make effective decisions, becoming the memoir's strongest allusion regarding the postwar debate on the best way to realign martial, political, and economic power around the world.

Another Chaucer citation appears as Hall describes the long, languid days spent in prison, where reading *The Canterbury Tales* is his primary way of spending time. In both Hall and Chaucer, the passage from "the tale, in prose, of Melibeus [and] 'his wyf, that was called Prudence'" (23 from 7.967) establishes the foolish underpinnings of war. Hall's citation is part of a lengthy debate in the tale regarding the wisdom of going to war, the

point when a wise counselor calls for patience, knowing that it is much easier to start a war than to end it:

> Up roos tho oon of thise olde wys, and with his hand made contenaunce that men sholde holden hem stille and yeven him audience. "Lordinges," quod he, "ther is full many a man that creyeth 'Werre! werre!' that woot ful litel what werre amounteth. Werre at his biginning hath so greet an entree and so large, that every wight may entre whan him lyketh, and lightly finde werre. But, certes, what ende that shal ther-of bifalle, it is nat light to knowe. For sothly, whan that werre is ones bigonne, ther is ful many a child unborn of his moder, that shal sterve yong by-cause of that ilke werre, or elles live in sorwe and dye in wrecchednesse." (23 from 7.1037–41)

In Chaucer's tale, a prowar faction of young men scorn the wise man's call for greater deliberation about the decision to go to war, saying in terms that presciently foreshadow early accounts of World War I (such as Hall's *Kitchener's Mob* and *High Adventure*) that "right so as while that iren is hoot men sholden smyte, right so men shold wreken hir wronges while that they been fresshe and newe" (7.1036), and they cry for "'Werre! Werre!'" (7.1036). Possibly recognizing the congruities with his own experience in this passage questioning the wisdom of those who advocate war, Hall expresses concern that this passage containing "such a deal of prudent advice" is unmarked in his Chaucer volume, "an oversight. . .worth correcting" (23). He then marks it so "that some future reader might not pass over it without a moment of reflection" (23). Here reading *The Canterbury Tales* is no longer simply a panacea for his boredom, a "remedy for prison-camp ennui" (15); rather reading the volume reminds Hall that until they have fought on the battlefield, adventuresome young men "woot ful litel what werre amounteth" (23).

Later in *Flying with Chaucer*, a quote from the Miller becomes a warning about the danger of being lulled by those who disingenuously disavow their ill motives. Because the lines appear when Hall is describing the immediate revelry felt by everyone at the end of the war, it provides an ominous note to the celebration. The lines are taken from *The Canterbury Tales* where the Miller, after having promised a story about a carpenter whose wife cuckolds him, rebukes the Reeve (who is a carpenter) for thinking the Miller was demeaning the Reeve's manhood:

> This dronke miller spak ful sone ageyn,
> And seyde, "Leve brother Osewold,
> Who hath no wyf he is no cokewold,
> But I sey nat therfore that thou art oon."
> (46 from 1.3150–3153)

By pretending to deny his belief in what he has already implied as true, the Miller sounds like a liar or a hypocrite, and readers have reason to view his motives with skepticism. In *Flying with Chaucer*, this quotation darkens the celebration brought by the recent end of the war: old friends found, new friendships formed, and German cannons now "fantastically camouflaged" by children playing on them (47). Hall depicts happy faces everywhere; but from his vantage point of ten years on, he knows that the happiness has been an illusion, dispelled by the destructive terms of the peace. By the time he writes the book in 1929, Hall recognizes that he and his companions—along with the masses of people dragged through the war—have been purposely misled by hypocrites who, like the Miller, say one thing but believe another: they sue for peace while they simultaneously try to gain an advantage over their adversaries.

A citation from *The Monk's Tale* suggests the ignobility of the recent war by implicitly criticizing the bureaucrats who wage war from the safety of a neutral office. Ironically for a war memoir, *Flying with Chaucer* is almost void of any of Hall's physical discomforts due to war or imprisonment, but it does mention a debilitating headache that afflicts Hall after he arrives in Switzerland, his only physical suffering recorded in the memoir. His associations between the severe headache and his reading *The Monk's Tale* are so strong that, eleven years later, his head begins "to throb reminiscently, [with] a ghostly ache" when he transcribes the words he read earlier in 1918 Germany describing Nero's evil subjection of the entire world:

> Al-though that Nero was as vicious
> As any feend that lyth ful lowe adoun,
> Yet he, as telleth us Swetonius,
> This wyde world hadde in subjeccioun,
> Both Est and West, South and Septemtrioun.
> (40 from 7.2463–67)

In the stanza immediately following the one Hall quotes, the Monk continues his characterization of Nero by claiming "Moore delicaat, moore pompous of array, / Moore proud was nevere emperour than he" (7.2471–72). The severe headache and the tale of a proud tyrant are linked to the only impediments Hall describes the four men encountering in their escape: being "put under arrest by the [Swiss] military authorities" and later being humiliated for not following proper military courtesies (40). Thus the escapees ironically encounter as freed men in Switzerland the bureaucratic inhumanity that they did not encounter as prisoners in Germany. Placed in the context of the Monk's tales of tyrants, the Swiss officer appears to be a mini-Nero giving Hall a bigger headache than he already

has. By juxtaposing the citations with these mishaps in Switzerland, Hall condemns the Swiss dependence on formalities rather than humane understanding. The famously neutral Swiss become, in Hall's handling, not high-minded interlocutors between two warring forces but pompous lovers of preciosity who tyrannize the innocent.

Flying with Chaucer's last quotation, from *The Knight's Tale*, questions most pointedly the value of sending young men to war. As he flies over the now peaceful but still ravaged Western Front at the end of the memoir, Hall is unable to forget the war. As his pilot's instincts push him to prepare for attack, he remembers having seen a French rear gunner, whose plane was going down in flames, "[climb] out of his cockpit and [throw] himself off into space." The horror of the gunner's calm desperation, however, has left no trace in the peaceful sky, and "[it] seemed strange that the air above those desolate battle-fields should not be scarred as they were, giving evidence of the events that had taken place there" (54). As he remembers the losses, Hall initially attempts to justify the unnecessary deaths of young men by appropriating Theseus' consoling words at the end of *The Knight's Tale*:

> "And certeinly a man hath most honour
> To dyen in his excellence and flour,
> Whan he is siker of his gode name;
> Thanne hath he doon his freend ne him no shame.
> And gladder oghte his freend ben of his deeth,
> Whan with honour up-yolden is his breeth,
> Than whan his name apalled is for age."
> (53 from 1.3047–50)

In 1929, however, Hall now finds this passage "cold comfort to recall" when he ponders the loss of hundreds of "young men, high-spirited, loving life, of reckless courage whatever their nationality" (53). In the context of the grave losses of World War I, Chaucer's words like "excellence" and "honour" sound loaded, as if Hall lets Theseus speak the war propaganda that now seems discredited, using words that Hall's own earlier writings about the war had perhaps employed a bit too carelessly. Closing the book with a return to the destruction of the war resituates Hall within the dreadful calamity of the war, and Theseus's lines sound too much like the speeches and books that had compelled thousands of young men to die for a worthless cause.

All told, the friction of these six quotations from the Middle Ages rubbing up against Hall's all-too-contemporary narrative about airplanes and war ignites a skepticism about the modern nation-state's appropriation of such medieval martial values as honor, sacrifice, and truth. Taken together, these passages question the ability of men—whether of goodwill or ill intent—to make decisions good for the long term when they are

blinded by their own ignorance and have little understanding of the consequences of their behavior, when the action, and every decision, can be justified from a limited perspective. Hall's earlier works trumpet a commitment to wartime sacrifices as an efficacious antidote to modernity's emptiness, material obsession, and self-indulgence, but *Flying with Chaucer* questions the war rhetoric that instigates and sustains modern martial behavior.[48]

Flying with Chaucer further develops its "sentence" by trying to preserve a lost or greatly diminished aristocratic sensibility. What I am calling an "aristocratic sensibility" is a byproduct of what T.J. Jackson Lears identifies as the antimodern impulse in America to search for "'authentic' alternatives to the apparent unreality of modern existence."[49] By using the term "aristocratic," I am not suggesting that Hall promotes a European model of a hierarchical society that parcels out privilege to a small minority of politically progressive New England intellectuals. I am pointing, instead, to a sensibility, vestiges of which Hall located in areas of aristocratic disengagement from modernity. Hall's aristocratic sensibility looks to medieval forms of transnational associations to counter the destructive impulses of contemporary nationalism and individualism. Paradoxically, *Flying with Chaucer* recaptures this diminished sensibility in the least likely location, the Landshut prisoner-of-war camp, a place he depicts not as a house of pain but as a refuge from the chaos of war, just as he paints his captors not as evil belligerents but as fellow sufferers.

Hall presents the prison as a sort of men's club, an enclave overseen by gentleman captors safe from the ravages of war, and fit for quiet reflection. Hall thereby links the prison to a vanishing ethos. As painted by Hall, his prison camp conditions were the result of an old, informal code that humanely united captor and captive.[50] It was the same ethos that carried a paradoxical mandate: Germans should kill a pilot as long as his plane was in the sky or even in his own territory, but once he was on the ground in German territory, the Germans must become compassionate custodians of their erstwhile enemy. Thus the Germans safeguarded the officers' welfare by allowing their provisions to arrive unmolested and extended their generosity to ensure the prisoners were able to keep themselves entertained.

During this time, the Chaucer volume becomes metonymically linked to the prison and the aristocratic sensibility located there. In addition to being the result of the German's unrequired generosity, the Chaucer volume's linkage to the prison is reinforced with a series of parallels. Both the volume and the prison provide him an antique refuge from war; the prison is a medieval castle ("whose stones were already laid when Chaucer walked the earth") that locates him in a place from a distant era, and the volume is a medieval text that locates him in a mental construction from a distant time (18).

Furthermore, Hall's association with both the camp and the Chaucer volume comes about by happenstance: Hall's account skips the circumstances of his capture and begins at the point he "found [himself] one midsummer afternoon" at the camp. Similarly, because he "chanced to be the librarian" appointed to unpack the crate of books, Hall comes across the Chaucer volume without looking for it, and he suspects it "found its [own] way to a second-hand shop in Munich" before being brought to the camp (6, 14, and 36). The Landshut Chaucer also "chanced to be associated with a series of memorable events" in his life (3). By using the language of chance and fortune, Hall picks up on the language that permeates the accounts of World War I veterans; they survived the war not through pluck or strength, but through the random convergence of events.[51] This language of chance means that neither the book nor the prison is the willful escape of a person avoiding the imperatives of war, but a happenstance illustrating an essential aspect of that aristocratic sensibility: accepting with forbearance whatever comes one's way.

The Landshut Chaucer volume is also a reliquary. Although Chaucer's literary text might seem to be the most obvious means for making the connection to the lost past, the volume's physicality, evidenced by its workmanship and marginalia, also becomes Hall's conduit to the past. The "honest workmanship" of the nearly century-old green-leather octavo provides him comfort amid the horrors of technological proliferation of war (1). The Landshut Chaucer becomes a metonymy for the prison that provides a small enclosure safe from the vagaries of modernization and change, and thereby becomes the protective container of a threatened civility, of a brotherhood that knows no boundaries or eras or geography.

The aristocratic sensibility located in the Landshut prison and metonymically associated with the Landshut Chaucer resonates with Hall, for it extends across lines of enmity the warm bonds of camaraderie he experienced in the trenches of France. Once he leaves the refuge of the German prison with the pocketed volume, the volume not only is a reliquary for preserving that aristocratic sensibility, but also becomes a talisman for transporting Hall to the past and for transmitting that otherwise lost sensibility to the future.

Although the narrative proper fits within a nine-month time frame, Hall uses his volume of Chaucer to navigate outside those chronological and geographic boundaries, creating a circuitous and quirky traversal of time and space that lets *The Canterbury Tales* link the past and present, with the war's notable absence in between. As noted above, though the narrative proper of *Flying with Chaucer* is set mostly in Europe in 1918, the book opens in Tahiti in the late 1920s with Hall telling us about his task a few weeks earlier: rearranging his library and cleaning his books of the mold that plagued his

collection.[52] In that process, he rediscovered his leather-bound Landshut Chaucer, and it triggered memories of his final wartime months in Europe. Then, reading its inscriptions takes Hall further back into history: the volume began as a gift to Philip Sharp as he left on a journey from Portsmouth, June 10, 1843; another owner, Robert Spurgeon, is made clear by a "bookplate pasted on the cover, bearing a coat-of-arms and the legend, *Abuent Studia in Mores*"; and the third person noting his ownership was Lieutenant John Powell, 2nd Battalion K.O.S.B., a regiment Hall supposes is the King's Own Scottish Borderers. These readers' glosses, inked in red or lightly penciled, record delight in Chaucer's lines: "'Well hit, Sir Summoner!' 'What delightful foolery!' 'Truer thing was never said!' and the like" (2). Together, these vestiges of the book's prior owners provide Hall a consoling link to the past, bridging the chasm that the war seemed to gouge in history, a chasm Hall himself replicates by omitting references to the war. And each time Hall mentions reading a tale—*The Nun's Priest's Tale*, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, *The Friar's Tale*, *The Summoner's Tale*, *The Monk's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*—he associates it with a past event that happened at the time he was reading his particular volume.

In addition to reaching into the past, Hall uses his Chaucer volume to reach into the future. He claims he wrote the start of *Flying with Chaucer* as a history of his tenure owning his Landshut Chaucer during the final weeks in Germany, initially penciling it in the volume's blank back pages as a letter to his future grandchildren. The letter explained his expectation that this volume of Chaucer would be passed to the next generation, and then on to the next. In this letter, he dreams his Landshut Chaucer will form the core of a family library, housed for hundreds of years in an "old house, high walled and secret from the outside world" (not unlike the prison), that will give his descendants "five centuries hence" a sense of their family history (21).

These traversals reaching backward and forward into time—musings on the fates of past owners of the book, addresses to future owners, letters to his (at that time) unborn grandchildren, and metacommentary on war from a perspective provided by the distance of ten years and ten thousand miles—punctuate the otherwise straightforward end-of-war chronology. By bringing together past and future readers (even when, as with Hall, the past and future readers are the same person) Hall's volume of *The Canterbury Tales* bridges the abyss between the past and future created by the war.

He carries this talisman with him on his last, lonely flight over the Western Front, a place that has no signs of life and no sounds of war machinery now. This flight becomes a second literalization of the memoir's title, the first being the title page's emblematic drawing of a book that has sprouted wings. In this final chapter, Hall combines both the literal and the

figurative interpretations of "flying with Chaucer." During his airplane flight with the Landshut Chaucer next to him and the lines of Chaucer in his head, he shows himself grasping, perhaps for the first time, the losses of the war. Chaucer provides the lens for remembering, the ritual obligation he owes to the next generation that enables him to learn from the mistakes of the past.

Hall's readers receive a little book published by an expatriated war hero—a *vox clamatis in deserto*, (or rather *paradisio*)—which registers the author's evolving ambivalence about the war and his uncertainty about the identity of the enemy. At the the same time, it reflects from afar the American intelligentsia's growing awareness that the war had vanquished the wrong tribe and opened the door for a global corporatism that overwhelmed the values that many thought the war had been fought to save. Hall's Landshut Chaucer, however, vanishes after *Flying with Chaucer*. Despite his desire to build a library around it—and despite his children and grandchildren's restoring his library after they read *Flying with Chaucer*—the volume disappears from record. The consternation that the memoir expresses also disappears. Soon the atrocities of the Axis powers would make Hall and the rest of American citizens confident of the need to engage once again in a good war.

CHAPTER 4

GEOFFREY AND THE AMERICAN FLAPPER

Queen: What does a woman really want?
Knight: To control her own destiny.

—*G-Spots?*

Until the past fifty years it has been easy to ignore women's roles disseminating Chaucer in America. To recognize women's invisibility, consider the mural depicting the development of the written word on the portico outside the New York Public Library's third floor reading rooms. As the floor sign tells curious observers, the four panels begin with Moses, continue to the medieval scribe, move to Gutenberg, and end with the linotypographer. The mural tells a story in which the written word is a work of labor that rightly belongs in the hands of men. It tells a story, too, of how writing and learning have filtered down from the highest orders, from the ruling and priestly class, to the merchant class, and then to the laborers, leaving women out of the equation. For Chaucerians accustomed to thinking of men and male scholars as the primary distributors of Chaucer until the middle of the twentieth century, the four large panels easily metamorphose into a familiar history: Chaucer was the inspired conduit of "good English verse," scribes (such as Hoccleve) preserved his texts, Caxton first printed his text, and twentieth-century printers provided scholars with abundant, relatively inexpensive authoritative texts.

But appended to these murals is another part of the story. Two more tableaus perch above the doorway arches to the Rose Reading Room and to the Special Collections: one features a young man leisurely reading under a tree; the other shows a woman reading to a child. Shifting from the producers of the written word to the consumers of the written word, the muralist introduces women and youths into the equation. Besides reminding us to include readers in the history of the written word, the murals remind

us also that women have long been instrumental in disseminating the written word to the next generation.

These tableaus of readers, however, are ignored by the floor sign interpreting the larger mural, and consequently the library sign ignores the history of nonprofessional readers and women. When we apply these smaller panels to Chaucer's reception history, they remind us how easy it is to forget women's role in disseminating Chaucer. While we can imagine the young man reading the *Tales*, we realize how unfamiliar it is to consider a woman outside the American academy introducing Chaucer to others. Chaucer does not seem to fit our conception of women's popular reading material. And yet as we will see in this chapter, women both read Chaucer and introduced Chaucer to other women, but this exchange did not happen in venues we have grown to expect.

Let me offer you another example of American women's invisibility in the transfer of Chaucer. I have a small framed lithograph of a Chaucer portrait on my office wall. I purchased it through e-Bay from an antique store in Missouri that could tell me nothing about the artifact. The lithograph is a commonly reproduced image of Chaucer, initially taken from Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* and attached to Chaucer's work throughout the nineteenth century.[1] This version is only a bust vignette, from just below the three buttons of Chaucer's gown and excludes the familiar rosary beads; similarly, his iconic hand gesture, extending outside the background's margin and pointing to Hoccleve's lines, has been blotted out, erasing any sign of its original role authorizing Hoccleve's verse. Pasted onto a heavier piece of paper, the image has a handwritten dedication underneath: "To 'Hattie' from Mary 1868 Christmas." I am not sure why "Hattie" is enclosed by quotation marks; I assume it indicates a pet name connoting a level of affection between Mary and a woman named Harriet. Because the giver uses only her first name, with no family name, courtesy title, or other form of address, I also assume a level of informality that would eliminate a mother-daughter, aunt-niece, or teacher-student relationship. Instead, this token seems to indicate a friendship or love shared by two women of equivalent status, and the gift of the token represents this relationship.

At the time Mary gave him to Hattie, Chaucer was still associated with masculine intellectualism in America.[2] Biographical accounts of Chaucer and explications of his verse presented him as a man's man.[3] Even given these associations, Chaucer was not a household figure in 1868 America. It is only my speculation, but this portrait seems to represent an exchange of cultural capital that, usually between men, was beginning to happen more frequently and efficiently between woman. This token gently records the phenomenon of Chaucer being shared by women with other women, an intimate transfer that continues, as we will see, for at least another seventy-five years.

In fact, when Mary shared Chaucer's image with Hattie, American women's roles in receiving Chaucer outside the academy had been visible for almost seventy years.[4] Later, as adapters, women started to reshape Chaucer for Americans near the end of the nineteenth century.[5] The various experiences of all these women have long been overlooked, however, because women were generally marginalized in the academic study of Chaucer until the second half of the twentieth century. Thus, there has been no consideration of the small number of formally educated women who shared Chaucer with other women by taking advantage of the less formal avenues flourishing in cities, towns, and rural whistle stops across the country.

Chaucer at a Women's College: Wheaton's *May Day in Canterbury*

In 1925 and 1926, the students at Wheaton College, a women's liberal arts school in Norton, Massachusetts, adapted Chaucer to declare their emancipation from Victorian social norms and to announce their modern orientation. At that time, the college was about to bring to a close a twenty-five-year conversion from a seminary to a college where eastern Massachusetts businessmen sent their daughters. Requiring a complete rebuilding of the campus plant, an upgrading of faculty, and an increase in student enrollment, the project had been overseen by Dr. Samuel Cole, the college's autocratic president handpicked in 1897 by Eliza Wheaton.[6] Indicative of Cole's Victorian paternalism were the reams of rules and regulations generated by the dean's office prescribing the minutiae of student life, including student bathing schedules. But in 1926, restless and ready to join the world of young metropolitan women who dared to cut their hair and raise their hems, the Wheaton students transfigured the annual May Day pageant from a festival celebrating maidenly virtues to an energetic assertion of their independence from traditional femininity; they appropriated roles and behaviors generally reserved for men by drawing from a culturally sanctioned text, *The Canterbury Tales*.

For the previous forty-five years, Wheaton's May Day celebrations had developed around a seasonal coronation of traditional feminine virtues. Starting in 1880, May Day began as a rather haphazard excuse for an outdoor exercise, and by the early 1920s the celebrations had evolved into extravaganzas allowing the young women to display the fruits of their academic studies in the history and production of pageants.[7] In 1880, the senior class sponsored a fair featuring refreshments and the sale of "fancy articles." Nine years later, May Day entertainment included a concert and cantata, "Queen Aimee or the Choice of a May Queen." A "flower drama" with costumes and music was presented in 1898, and the first

mention of attendants for a May Queen appeared in 1902. Flowers continued to be a standard element, with students beginning the festivities by picking blossoms "in nearby fields to fashion a daisy chain long enough to be carried by all the class members in a procession."[8] A constant feature from at least 1903 was the ceremonial crowning of the May Day Queen escorted by her court. Entertainment provided for her and her court, however, varied from year to year, and the elaborateness increased incrementally, at least up through the early 1930s when the Depression seems to have dampened such activities. Nevertheless, the May Day celebrations continued, with varied levels of enthusiasm, until 1960. When they peaked in the mid-1920s, the pageant fever that had taken hold of the nation was reflected in Wheaton's May Day festivities, particularly 1924's *The Evolution of the English May Day*, written and produced by Eleanor Lane Peabody, a Wheaton graduating senior.[9]

In 1926, when the students produced another pageant, one loosely based on *The Canterbury Tales*, they deftly combined college traditions, academic studies, and a popular performance genre into *May Day in Canterbury: A Chaucerian Festival*.[10] Written by Anne Maury, the pageant imagines the pilgrims' arrival at the cathedral city, reconceived and reconstructed on the eastern Massachusetts sylvan campus.[11] The year before, in choosing a Chaucerian theme for the 1925 May Day, Maury maintained the ambitious standards established by the 1924 celebration. She was able not only to incorporate costumes and props from that year's *Evolution of May Day*, but also to follow Peabody's precedent by publishing the pageant's text with Walter H. Baker, the Boston publishers of dramatic texts. Judging from both the published book and her extensive handwritten charts, notes, and diagrams for planning *May Day in Canterbury*, Maury's ambitions were grand. The elaborate pageant scheduled for May 23, 1925 had to be postponed, however, when the college president died in early May; the women crowned the May queen and her court in a scaled-back ceremony, saving the plans and costumes for the next year. Though she had already graduated, Anne Maury returned to help oversee the production, and her *May Day in Canterbury* took place on May 22, 1926.

As printed, the pageant is divided into five episodes, all taking place on a large open lawn lined on three sides with elements from Canterbury's marketplace and on the fourth side with a large gate representing the city's west gate. Episode 1, "Procession of the Canterbury Pilgrims," features the Chaucerian characters entering on horseback through the gate and milling about the market area. Each of the pilgrims is given distinguishing dress or behavior taken from the *General Prologue* portraits. After circling the grounds, the pilgrims dismount and mingle with the crowd. Episode 2 is a "Procession in Honor of Our Lady," with Latin hymns sung by monks,

bedesmen, and guild members processing into the marketplace. Episode 3, "The Crowning of the May Queen," presents the coronation of the queen and her attendant court (the allegorical virtues Honor, Kindness, Beauty, Loyalty, Simplicity, and Wisdom) with due pomp and ceremony accorded by Wheaton tradition. Episode 4, "Presentation of Mummers Play," features three performances, each produced simultaneously on movable stages: The Chester *Noah's Play*, *Robin Hode and the Friar*, and *Revesby Sword Play*. This episode closes with a metatheatrical performance by the Pardoner, merely "an interested spectator [until he] steps out in front of the audience" and introduces himself:

> Good people, herken unto me, for I am a humble Pardoner, *(holds up his wares)* whom you saw journeying in Chaucer's company.
>
> Now, sirs, I will tell on my tale.[12]

From there, the actor begins the Pardoner's tale of the three rioters, using Tatlock and MacKaye's 1912 modernization.[13] Episode V, labeled "Sports and Pastimes," includes small performances, carnivalesque antics, peddlers selling wares, and a maypole dance involving pageant participants and audience alike. For the recession, the pilgrims remount their horses and file back through the gates.

As scripted and produced, Maury's pageant allows women to move away from the feminine roles that dominated earlier Wheaton celebrations and use the Chaucerian theme to practice the roles of modern women. First, they adopted entrepreneurial and creative roles by imaginatively locating the pageant in Canterbury, England, thereby necessitating the pageant's being more elaborate, more expensive, and more aggressively marketed to the Norton township. Then, because most of Chaucer's pilgrims are men, women in the pageant's leading roles had the chance to impersonate men publicly. Although playing male roles would have been normal for students at a women's college, the Chaucerian pageant offered unique opportunities that extended beyond wearing men's costuming. By drawing on a text strongly associated with masculine behavior, the women had a legitimate reason to naturalize that masculine behavior for themselves.

Even more than the 1924 pageant, the 1925/26 pageant became an entrepreneurial enterprise because this senior class could not foot the bill for its elaborate production using only funds from the class treasury. With the administration's consent, the class of 1925 decided to charge a small admission fee, fifty cents for general admission and a dollar for reserved seats in the bleachers; this admission had the dual benefit of helping to defray production costs and to discourage the "noisy element," who had previously attended the pageants just because they were free. Besides,

Maury notes, "People are more apt to appreciate things they have to pay for."[14] In her carefully laid out business plans, she estimated selling one thousand general admission tickets and two hundred reserved seats, primarily to families and local residents, for faculty and students were admitted free. She thus anticipated raising $700 in ticket sales to augment the $250 netted by selling programs (printed by Boston's Baker Company).

Most of the expenses went to properties, costume, and materials. The most expensive scenery was probably the large, elaborate "West Gate" built of wood. Another large portion of the outlay seems to have been related to photography, postage, paid labor, and printing (invitations, tickets, and posters). Most costume expenses probably went to creating the skirts and draperies for the horses the Chaucerian characters rode. Otherwise, costume expenses were kept low by reusing other costumes and props from the 1924 pageant. Furthermore, though Maury's notes imagined creating many new, elaborate costumes, the photographs reveal that much of the women's creativity went into ways to recycle items they already had. Thus the "sports class hats" used to restrain the women's hair during physical education classes became merchants' hats, and the hoops from the traditional senior hoop roll became the village children's props in the procession.[15] The "light-weight wagon with frame" required for producing the plays seems to have been donated and cost them nothing except for the fabric to make the pennants that decorated it. In achieving her big plans, Maury demonstrated her business acumen by keeping the expenses low.

Not apparent in the published script but very obvious in Maury's notes is the overwhelming percentage of entrepreneurial energy and financial expenditure devoted to arranging for the horses that the pilgrims rode into the Canterbury square.[16] Whereas some aspects of the pageant were allowed to diminish from the original conception, the use of the horses grew in importance. Getting the horses required an elaborate set of logistics.[17] The women first had to promise the university president that the horses would be allowed "only on the driveways and not on the grass."[18] Then, not only did they arrange for Mr. Briggs, from the House-in-the-Pines School, to loan fifteen horses in exchange for recognition in the May Day program, but they also convinced him to provide grooms to "bring the horses up to the college, to have them hold the horses during pageant, and to return them to the stable."[19] Furthermore they arranged for Mr. Briggs' horses and grooms for two rehearsals in addition to the performance, thereby allowing the horses to become accustomed to their unfamiliar skirts and draperies, as well as to the school grounds. So essential to Maury's conception of the pageant were extensive details about the horses that she records her expectation "to work out with Mr. Briggs the *type of horse*

required for the various types of characters. This will make a vast amount of difference in the carrying out of the general idea."[20]

Although there were surely other reasons for this expenditure of energy arranging for the horses, the opportunity to impersonate Chaucerian male roles by indulging in the daring behavior of riding their horses astride rather than side-saddle seems key. While only the first and fourth episodes include Chaucerian characters, these aspects of the pageant focus on the men rather than emphasizing either the Wife of Bath or the Prioress. For example, Episode I opens with the entrance of seventeen to nineteen of Chaucer's pilgrims, yet assigns speaking lines to only the Knight, the Friar, and the Pardoner. A similar pattern emerges with the three plays of Episode IV; of the nearly twenty speaking roles, only two are women's parts. To ensure that the students portraying Canterbury pilgrims properly entered on horseback, those roles were distributed according to riding rather than acting ability. Many were members of the college's equestrian team, and the Oxford Clerk was played by the team's captain, Miss Proctor.[21]

Thus the novelty of the horses and the daring choice to ride astride in a public exhibit allowed the women to assert their independence from past conventions, a pattern that was certainly in the air in postwar America.[22] Even the pageant's most feminine aspect, the May Queen, broke from the conventional image of an innocent maiden. For the first time, the students selected a May Queen with bobbed hair rather than the long flowing tresses of previous queens, a fact that stuck in the women's memories sixty years later.[23] By reconceiving their rural campus as Canterbury and guising themselves as Chaucer's medieval pilgrims, Maury's Chaucerian gift to the Wheaton students allowed them to present themselves as educated, athletic, and modern women ready to grab the new roles opening up to American women.

This exchange of Chaucer from woman to woman, student to student, and college to community straddles the lines between popular and academic. In other, more numerous examples, the exchange of Chaucer from woman to woman continued to be identified as education, but it occurred outside institutionalized venues, an indication of women's marginalization in mainstream academia until the second half of the twentieth century.

Chaucer in Adult Education

Outside academia, American women were also instrumental, both as redactors and as target audiences, in disseminating Chaucer through an energized adult education movement that took hold in the nineteenth century, continued into the twentieth century, and dwindled after World War II, all the while blurring the border between education and entertainment.

When we now think of adult education, we think of literacy education, basic skills training, and GED preparation. At its best, current adult education supplies missing minimal skills. For over a hundred years, however, adult education in the United States promoted liberal learning, what we now associate with college-level general studies.[24] Premised on the notion of the perfectability of the individual through education, adult education appealed to the ambitious middle class by promising to satisfy intellectual curiosity, cure boredom, and impart a valued cultural commodity. For women, adult education had an additional appeal: it allowed American women, who were traditionally denied the education provided for men and yet were charged with the supervision of their children's education, to acquire and transfer the cultural capital associated with formal higher education. As part of this cultural capital, Chaucer and other noted British poets were sold to women by the adult education movement as a way to better themselves and their children.

From the beginning, adult education operated outside the purview of colleges and universities, and often morphed into a commercial venture. The earliest attempts distributed annotated texts to individuals wanting to supplement their vocational or cultural knowledge. The oldest of these, Boston's Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge, issued "in a cheap form a series of works, partly original and partly selected, in all the most important branches of learning."[25] The weakness of this approach was that most working adults needed more help, more guidance, and more incentive than reading a textbook could provide. They needed the guidance of a teacher, a luxury few communities could afford to provide their citizens.

In response to this need, the Lyceum movement organized communities to host a large cadre of lecturers who traveled from town to town, delivering liberal learning to urban areas in the eastern United States.[26] Lyceum lectures, which were billed as performing "a more important. . .part in establishing individual and national character, than the school, academy, or university," immediately appealed to middle-class women, who by the second half of the nineteenth century had unheard of leisure time, afforded by cooks, laundresses, and maids.[27] Women who attended Lyceum lectures were promised not only the opportunity to converse with one another and their books, but also the edification to improve their families and community by turning from the "tavern with its decanters, glasses, ninepins, and alcohol" to the library, with its books, poets, paper, and philosophy.[28] In the guise of selfless community improvement, women attending the Lyceum lectures could guiltlessly broaden their intellectual and cultural horizons. Because formal access to higher education was not universally available to nineteenth-century American women, lyceums became an important means by which the women in the eastern United States fed

their curiosity on "all manner of educational and uplifting subjects: on philosophy and temperance, on history and music and science," making them, according to Henry Adams, "much better company than the American man."[29]

In the American Midwest and South, similar functions were performed by the Chautauqua Circuit, a traveling forum of speakers who brought a week's worth of cultural stimulation and political debate to rural communities during the summer months. Although Chautauqua began as an efficient way to train Episcopal Sunday School teachers, it always included secular literature as illustrations of spiritual matters and as a means to quicken the intellect.[30] Chautauqua soon ignored its focus on religious training and evolved into a profitable endeavor, all the while maintaining its identification with the "finer things in life."[31] To women in rural America, Chautauqua presented itself as "a way to better their children's lives."[32] Chautauqua so ably addressed the need for continuing education that women squirreled away money from the household budget in order to afford Chautauqua's seven days of culture.[33]

Chautauqua's few days of culture included lecturers and performers. Important among these were the dramatic readers, who were accepted in conservative, rural communities where full-blown dramatic offerings of real plays were condemned. These readings allowed women to collect fees for public performances in such communities without being labeled a harlot.[34] So Chautauqua proved not only that a market for dramatic readings and lectures existed, but also that educated women could support themselves by delivering their knowledge to other women hungry for cultural and intellectual nourishment.[35]

Inspired by the financial and cultural successes of the Lyceum and Chautauqua lecturers, other networks of speakers developed at the beginning of the twentieth century. Particularly profitable were those sponsored by a loose coalition of women's clubs that sprang up in communities across America. Though these clubs often devolved into coffee klatches, many were initially formed by women wanting to expand their cultural horizons. Prompted by an ambitious agenda, the clubs brought in speakers (nearly half the programs were delivered by outsiders) to talk about every branch of liberal study: politics, international relations, history, literature, art, and advances in the sciences, particularly those sciences that could be translated into running a more progressive and modern household.[36] These clubs often suffered under charges of catering to popular tastes, and it cannot be denied that "hokum" was often the staple for these commercial ventures.[37] Nevertheless, these forms of adult education were sustained by women eager to provide for themselves and their families the cultural currency foreclosed by family obligations or geographical isolation.[38]

These women's clubs were particularly amenable to supporting female lecturers. In small library auditoriums and church parlors across the nation, women taught other women, initiating them into such arcane realms of study as Chaucer and early English verse. The careers of most of these women are now reduced to small pieces of ephemera. For instance, we know that Mrs. Demarchus Brown of Indianapolis, Indiana provided what she called Travel Talks, Illustrated by Lantern Slides. Clubs hiring her could choose from such lecture titles as "Socrates, Master Thinker of Greece" and "Chaucer and Canterbury."[39] Another lecturer, Elisabeth Case Lind of Kenilworth, Illinois, was a "product of Smith College and two Kindergarten Schools," and endorsed by three ex-presidents of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs. Her primary series category was Talks on Gardens and Other Worth While Things, which included two lectures on Chaucer: "'Geffrey' Chaucer and His Merrie England of the Canterbury Prologue—Its Sparkling Wit and Satire" and "The Charm of His Minor Poems—'The Book of the Duchess.'" Both of Miss Lind's Chaucer lectures promised to bring an antidote to the "not only jazz-ridden, but jazz-weary," and to rise above the "cheap and meretricious" in order "to ask and answer for ourselves the Age-old question of 'Whither' and 'Why?'"[40] A third speaker, Miss Mary Humphreys Myers, offered storytelling rather than lectures. Clubs hiring her could choose from such luminous sources as the Bible, Shakespeare, Greek myths, and Chaucer, or from such folk sources as Pioneer Stories of Tennessee and Uncle Remus or Folk Tales of the South. She appeared in costume, and advertised her presentations as appropriate for both women and children.[41]

Kathrine Gordon Sanger Brinley

Among the many overlooked women who accepted the charge of educating others outside the institutional setting of higher education is Kathrine Gordon Sanger Brinley, a writer of little note who took her ability to recite Chaucer's verse in Middle English on the road. Between 1922 and 1934, she crisscrossed the nation, reciting Chaucer's poetry and presenting on medieval England. Where other women included Chaucer in their wide-ranging traversal of Britain's literary heritage, Brinley focused on Chaucer. Where others lectured on Chaucer, including only snippets of his verse in modern English, Brinley created a performance piece, appearing in costume and reciting long passages of Chaucer's verse in Middle English. Where others possessed only the most rudimentary knowledge of Chaucer and medieval England, Brinley worked to stay current with scholarship. In many ways, her presentations resembled lectures given by professors at elite universities, except in three ways: she wore a costume, she spoke primarily to women,

and she was herself a woman. These differences were irregular enough for her to be barely humored by university medievalists. Paradoxically, because the scholars ignored her claims and her audiences did not know better, she created within women's popular culture a space in which she heralded herself as a leading authority on Chaucer.

My reconstruction of her career depends on two sets of mementos of performance, what D.F. McKenzie refers to as "pre-texts for the theatrical occasion," preserved in eighteen clam boxes.[42] The first set includes primary records—itineraries, lecture notes, correspondence with her agents, invitations from program committees, and polite deflections from scholars—that more or less objectively document her work and from which we can assemble a picture of a busy career presenting Chaucer to numerous women's groups throughout America.[43] The other set of pre-texts comprises her publicity brochures and her drafts for a book, seemingly always in progress, labeled at various times either an autobiography or a novel. From this second source, we see how this nonacademic reconceived her career in ways reminiscent of male scholars' careers at elite institutions. Lacking the credentials to lecture behind the same podiums as male professors, Brinley circumvented the academic barriers by claiming that her knowledge came from a sudden infusion of Chaucer's spirit and by taking her knowledge directly to women.[44] She did not, however, abandon the invention that she was accepted by the male academy. A self-promoter, she presented herself as the leading interpreter of Chaucer rather than as simply a speaker at women's garden clubs. In this way, she created the fiction that her speaking outside the gates of academia did not matter because, as she insisted, she provided her audiences with direct access to Chaucer. In this way, she trumped the dusty footnotes of male scholars, who regularly evaded her appeals for recognition, and established the terms of her own legitimacy.

Performing Chaucer

Brinley's Chaucerian career began in 1919 when, in her early forties, she discovered her knack for reading Middle English verse aloud. Until this point, her life had been neither deprived nor extraordinary. As a girl, she attended exclusive girls' schools, Low-Heywood School in Stamford, Connecticut, and St. Mary's of Valhalla in Peekskill, New York; she then studied for four years in Paris before marrying D. Putnam Brinley, an artist with ties to American modernism. While living in New York communities connected with the arts, the Brinleys helped organize several progressive art associations and the notorious 1913 Armory Show. During this time she published a few magazine articles and wrote verse, but seems not to have found a creative or professional identity distinct from her husband's.[45]

Until August 1919. At that time, about a hundred people attended her first recital of Chaucer's verse at the Village Room, an informal meeting place near New Canaan, Connecticut, where local artists and literati gathered for various kinds of entertainment.[46] Brinley had been invited by the collective's organizer, Harold Paget, a New York literary agent originally from England. In order to make this reading more authentic, she wore a costume, a signature feature of all her future performances. For this first appearance, she rescued a costume ball dress and topped it with a wimple and headdress. She records in an account written for the Guild Year Book that the "magic of Chaucer got through to everyone in spite of [her] lack of training in stage technique."[47]

Before the end of the summer, she attended a house party at Oak Knoll, the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Edward Newton in Daylesford, Pennsylvania.[48] Newton, a noted book collector (now remembered for his efforts to revive interest in eighteenth-century English literature, especially Johnson and Boswell), asked her to read something from Chaucer, and she acceded by choosing the first lines of the dream passage in *Book of the Duchess*. Based on the bookish crowd's enthusiastic reception, she decided to embark on a new career that would deliver Chaucer from stale, musty books and resuscitate his verse through unadulterated, though dramatic, recitals. By the end of that year, she was making good on her resolution. Though collecting no fees, she was reading Chaucer's verse in Middle English at New York City libraries, women's groups, and informal gatherings of the Brinleys' arts circles. The positive response to her readings is best articulated by a letter to her from the noted folklorist, Parker Fillmore:

> You are doing a beautiful thing with your Chaucer readings and I want to tell you so. I was expecting something interesting, but interesting in a sense more or less academic. What you did was the one thing I was unprepared for. When you read us Chaucer in his own tongue, we listening with modern ears, and without recourse to scholarly aids of any sort, actually caught something of the fresh loveliness of the old poet. I've studied Chaucer in the class room, and I've listened to him as read by a great scholar of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, but never till I heard you did I feel the thrill which lovers of poetry in his own day must have felt at the mere sound of his sweet syllables. The sense, too, was infinitely easier of comprehension than I had supposed possible.
>
> You looked like a figure from a fourteenth century tapestry, and throughout the reading the illusion persisted, until you yourself might actually have been one of the gentle ladies of whom Chaucer sang.
>
> Your performance was a thing of loveliness, and I hope you will be forced to repeat it many times.[49]

When Brinley first conceived her new career, Fillmore seems to be the kind of audience she imagined she would find: familiar enough with Chaucer to enjoy an evening listening to his verse in Middle English, but not so fussy as to be annoyed by an amateur.[50]

Brinley had no professional performances, though, until after her father's death in February 1921.[51] No longer obligated to care for him, she evidently found the time to establish her new career. She presented her first professional recital in December 1921 for the MacDowell Club, a group of New York society women who raised money for the arts. Dressed in another rescued ball gown costume, reading "from a scarlet satin book which matched her slippers," and using the stage name Gordon Brinley, she prefaced her reading with a talk that had "the dual virtues of brevity and illumination" in which she

> gave her listeners the clews to English as it was spoken in the poet's day. With these clews it was easily possible to follow [her] quaint speech as she repeated that ever-vernal prologue, and then proceeded dramatically to recite those perfect portraits limned by Chaucer. . . .[52]

The response to this reading was twofold: many who attended sent notes commending her performance and proclaiming it an auspicious start to an exciting and important career. A short review from the *New York Telegram* compared it to "Ellen Terry's remembered performance of 'Portia.'"[53] A note from Herbert Knox, however, provided a perspective on the kind of audience she was likely to encounter. He addressed the problem of finding an audience with "people capable of appreciating [her] work." He warned her that she "must realize that [her] appeal is to a very limited number and it is useless to expect others to derive any pleasure in hearing something read that to them might just as well be in a foreign language they know nothing of." He then related an encounter he had had after her recital:

> I have rarely seen a more pathetic figure than a business acquaintance who attended your reading and who was simply dazed and frankly indignant at his wife or whoever it was that had induced him to come. I tried to explain as kindly as I could that he could not expect to enjoy such a treat without some preparation, such as he would make if going to a new opera, but he rebuffed me and said he thanked God he was born after Shakespeare's time.[54]

Despite Brinley's brief opening remarks, Knox's businessman was obviously frustrated by her attempt to present Chaucer's verse to the public in the same manner one would present the verse to an audience attuned to Middle English. Furthermore, unlike his purported wife, the businessman

had no need for the cultural capital the recital provided.[55] Recognizing the limitations to her approach, Knox suggested that she rethink her project, perhaps focusing on schools and colleges "anxious to have your help to breathe life into the usually dry and dusty study of English."

Brinley listened to Knox. Evidently convinced that her attempt to read Chaucer authentically for a twentieth-century audience—never mind all the obstacles now racing through your mind—would prove financially unfeasible, she understood that nonacademic audiences needed more than a phonetically correct reading of Chaucer's verse; they needed a reason to pay attention to an hour-long presentation in medieval English. So to make her recitals economically viable, Brinley almost immediately instituted two important changes: first, she marketed herself almost exclusively to women who needed or wanted what she offered; next, she retreated from primarily reading Chaucer's Middle English verse by enlarging her discussion of fourteenth-century English culture and reciting his poetry from memory.

From then on, Brinley targeted women's clubs, from those filled with women in the upper reaches of New York society to those attended by housewives in the hinterlands, any group eager to mine the riches in the "father of English poetry" but "at a loss to know definitely just what phase of it they wish[ed] to study."[56] Her stage was in the club houses and private homes of women who belonged to book clubs, garden clubs, library auxiliaries, poetry circles, the New York YWCA Needlework Shop, the MacDowell Club, the Wednesday Afternoon Club, the New York State Federation of Music Clubs, or the Guild of the Needle and Bobbin Crafts. She also performed at women's colleges and girls' schools—Vassar College, Russell Sage College, St. Stephen's College, the Spence School, the Westover School, Rosemary Hall, and the Mary C. Wheeler School; her entrée to these schools was oftentimes through the alumni association's fund-raising efforts, not as a guest lecturer in the classroom. In 1922, she signed with a manager, William B. Feakins, Inc., an agency representing speakers and performers and serving the needs of Chautauquas, lyceums, and women's clubs. Thus sponsored, she broadened her reach and brought Chaucer to audiences of enthusiastic women, whether in the rural Midwest or in New York City, who were otherwise denied access to Chaucer. When the scholar Percy Van Dyke Shelley noted in 1940 that Chaucer "has come to be read by hundreds where tens read him before," he certainly had no idea that hundreds if not thousands of women had *heard* Chaucer's lines recited by Brinley.[57]

At the same time she targeted this different audience, Brinley framed Chaucer's poetry with short prefatory remarks that ensconced each set piece into its narrative and cultural setting. She shifted her emphasis from her ability to speak "the mellifluent language of England of 1350" and

"recapture the old sweet sounds of our mother tongue" to her ability to create a program suited for those "thousands who would never open a volume of Chaucer."[58] She also designed a red brocade silk dress based on a Metropolitan Museum tapestry, "The Battle of the Roses," and eventually hired Liberty of London to sew a costume drawn from an illustration in an edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. A promotional letter describes her typical program:

> Programs last an hour. The first ten minutes are given to a talk on the English of 1350. Then short selections from Chaucer's early period are recited, being always first sketched in modern English. In the same manner parts of the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales are presented. Finally scenes from certain of the Tales are enacted: such as Emily in the garden, from the Knight's Tale; or the climax of the Tale of the Cock and The Fox.
>
> A beautiful and historically correct costume, together with an appropriate stage setting give delight to the eyes; while the ear is charmed with the matchless music and rhythm of Chaucer's verdant poetry.[59]

What began as an attempt to impersonate an authentic Chaucerian reading became akin to a performance *cum* lecture that made Chaucer's verse accessible and enjoyable to a modern audience.

With her audience's needs in mind, Brinley further tempered education with enthusiastic entertainment by developing several programs on the women and flora in Chaucer's verse. For example, in her very extensive—but fading—handwritten notes, we find lectures weaving short passages of Chaucer's floral imagery with brief explications of the language:

> . . . .Let us begin with a picture, which will evoke for us the spirit of the past. Two cousins; Palamon and Arcite, as they gazed from the high barred window of their Athenian prison tower, down into an adjoining garden very early of a morning in May behold Emily, the fair, the shining. She sang like an angel, as she roamed up and down, gathering flowers to make a subtly-woven garland for her head. This is the way Chaucer tells it: [Skeat, 432]
>
> Now let us gather our flowers; and shall we not begin with the daisy which our poet calls the "flower of flowers". In his Legend of Good Women he describes his joy when May brings back the birds (fowls) and blossoms. Then he says good-by to his books, and the sun being risen he goes walking in the meadow, to see those daisies for which he has so great affection! [Skeat, 350]
>
> Next to the daisies let us place roses in our garland, full-blown and in the bud. The [Middle English] word "rosen" which you will hear in this next selection, means rose bush; and the word knoppe means bud. A brode rose was an open one. So we read in the "Romaunt of the Rose" of: A rosen [Skeat, 18]

Here, as elsewhere, her notes give a sense of her two primary concerns about what to provide for her audiences: a conceit structuring Chaucer's ideas plus lexical keys for understanding Chaucer's Middle English. Not concerned with promoting new or revolutionary ideas about Chaucer, her explications were at the service of making the verse accessible.

By the end of her active period, in the late 1920s, Brinley had developed two lectures: "Geoffrey Chaucer's England" and "Geoffrey Chaucer, Our Great Contemporary." She had also refined three costume programs. The first, *The Canterbury Tales*, contained two portraits from the *General Prologue*, two scenes from *The Knight's Tale*, and the entire *Nun's Priest's Tale* (which she always refers to as "The Cock and the Fox"). The second, *Troilus and Criseyde*, included two scenes from *Troilus*, one scene from *Book of the Duchess*, and "Ballad to Truth." The third costume program, "Women in Chaucer's Poetry," comprised dramatic portraits of "Enchanting Criseyde, Practical Mme. Pertelote, The Gentle Prioresse, and The Witty Wife of Bath."[60] The copious undated notes and scripts written on hotel stationery from around the nation suggest that she revised these basic scripts often, keeping in mind the suitability for each audience. But whoever her audience, all her various presentation notes exuded a similar breezy tone meant to reassure her listeners that they too could comprehend the "father of English poetry."[61]

In these performances, Brinley took advantage of the post–World War I sense of cultural uncertainty. On the one hand, she exploited contemporary enthusiasm for the new and modern, an excitement she and her husband helped create with the staging of New York's 1913 Armory Show, an exhibit responsible for introducing European Modernism to American audiences.[62] She probably knew first-hand how the Armory Show had jolted "America out of its own esthetic complacency" and ushered modernism into America.[63] She also displays one of the hallmarks of modernism, embodying old values in new forms, by promoting an old value—knowledge of Chaucer—with her innovative performing art. She might have worn the garb of ancient identities, but in fact her performances and her career sought to liberate her and her audience from the stifling sameness of middle-class housewifery. She thus tapped into the mood of most Americans, who were not ready to throw away traditional values and knowledge, yet she still found a way to carve a fresh identity for herself.

Thus Brinley infused her promotional material with references to flappers and her audience's desire for modernity. By claiming that women who pursue "the Antique" are "[m]odern in the smart sense," she allowed the audiences coming to her medieval performances to be modern without abandoning either aesthetic or epistemological certainty.[64] By turning to the old but promoting it as the hitherto unfound new, she represented a strain

of learning that could be embraced by middle America without toppling or even disrupting any of its cherished ideas.[65] The disillusionment often associated with American modernist writers, such as Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Mencken, were apparently not part of her highly popular shows.

While Brinley prepared her lectures and recitals to lead American women genially through the "Antique" world of Chaucer, she herself had no such amiable guide. She gained her knowledge of Chaucer, fourteenth-century England, and Middle English verse in the old-fashioned way: through solitary study. Though she repeatedly sought the guidance of scholars in the New York City area, their help seems to have been minimal.[66] Perhaps Columbia English professor John Erskine—his wife was Brinley's good friend—steered her to the study of phonetics. And if her 1934 radio interview is accurate, Columbia's Chaucerian A.J. Barnouw listened to her Middle English pronunciation. In a personal note, professor Charles Sears Baldwin rather begrudgingly acceded to her request to attend his class in 1922; later, he helped arrange a meeting with Chaucer scholar John Manly while she was performing in Chicago. Despite these interventions, she seems to be exaggerating only slightly when she claims in a letter dated June 6, 1923 that she had "had no instruction from anyone. . .[in] Middle English."

Despite her difficulties dealing with scholars, Brinley attempted to turn her extensive study of Chaucer into published works, pursuing many ideas and projects. In 1927, she contacted Yale University Press about her translation of *Troilus and Criseyde* and Oxford University Press about a book of children's plays based on Chaucer.[67] The same year, a letter from Macmillan offered her a contract for her book on Chaucer once she presented a table of contents and a specimen chapter. Though she seems never to have submitted that manuscript, in 1928 she submitted a different manuscript, a set of children's plays, to Macmillan; it was not accepted for publication. A 1938 Who's Who of New York shows her still "writing bk on Chaucer for publication in 1939."[68] No book on Chaucer ever appeared; as far as I can tell, of all these projects only the children's plays were completed, but they were never published.[69]

Brinley's doggedness helped her avocation flourish until the stock market crash of 1929, when the number of her bookings immediately dropped and never recovered. She continued performing until the mid-1930s, but all the engagements were within a short radius of her home in New Canaan, Connecticut—many without pay. In 1933 her booking agency dropped her because its promotional costs were not recuperated by the dwindling commissions.[70] Her ill fortune was no worse than that of other one-person shows; the genre dissolved and disappeared from the stages for the next fifty years.[71] With no bookings, she began in 1934 to write travel books illustrated by her husband.[72] Though she attempted twice to resuscitate her Chaucerian career, she did not succeed.[73] Her final

performance was in 1954 at the State Teachers College in Willimantic, Connecticut; she died twelve years later at the age of eighty-seven.

So far we have seen the bare bones of a livelihood that introduced Chaucer to women across the nation. Even if this straightforward account, with its tinge of pecuniary ambitions, were the full story of Brinley's career, hers would be an important story about one of the alternate routes women took to disseminate Chaucer. But in the second set of sources I mentioned earlier—her publicity brochures and her book drafts—we find a shrewder, more eccentric appropriation of Chaucer than we have seen so far. In my second account of her career, we see her curiously re-imagining her profession in a way that diminishes her contributions to bringing Chaucer to women and illustrates her unusual spiritualist strategy for being taken seriously as an interpreter of Chaucer.[74] Though this second account is hinted at in her brochures, it is more explicitly articulated in her twelve (at least) very different typewritten reconstructions of her career's genesis, all of which describe an infusion of Chaucer's spirit and a call to spread his verse.[75] In keeping with their tenor I will not try to determine the authenticity of this calling. Nor will I try to distinguish some versions as more truthful than others. Instead, I will briefly outline a chronology suggested by the twelve different versions to show how she exploits the tension between the rigor of positivist medieval philology and the flexibility of supernatural inspiration in order to create a gray area where she tries to assert herself as an authority on Chaucer.

As we will see, Brinley's account of mystical inspiration—with its cessation of time, auditory hallucination, infusion of new skills, and newfound happiness—provides a spiritual origin for her new career and a justification for her rather unusual path. It incorporates motifs William James had amassed in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* and provides her with a rhetoric of spirituality unassailable by those who acknowledge they lack access to the nonmaterial sphere.[76] This rhetoric allows her to present her narrative as "genuine perceptions of truth, as revelations of a kind of reality which no adverse arguments, however unanswerable by [her] in words," can counter. Thus, I am not concerned with whether these sequences of events happened, or even whether *she* believed they did; I am most concerned with how she availed herself of the rhetoric of spirituality and how it created a way for her to begin, establish, and sustain her career as a Chaucerian.

Before looking to the dozen narratives, we can see traces of this motif of sacred election in Brinley's promotional brochures. Her first brochure, printed in 1921, features a photograph of her in costume, framed by the words "Chaucer *lives again* in the Unique Dramatic Interpretations of Gordon Brinley."[77] As seen in figure 3, the layout can yield several interpretations. The bold, red type immediately equates Chaucer and Gordon Brinley. Or because the eye has to cross past the photograph, the copy readily

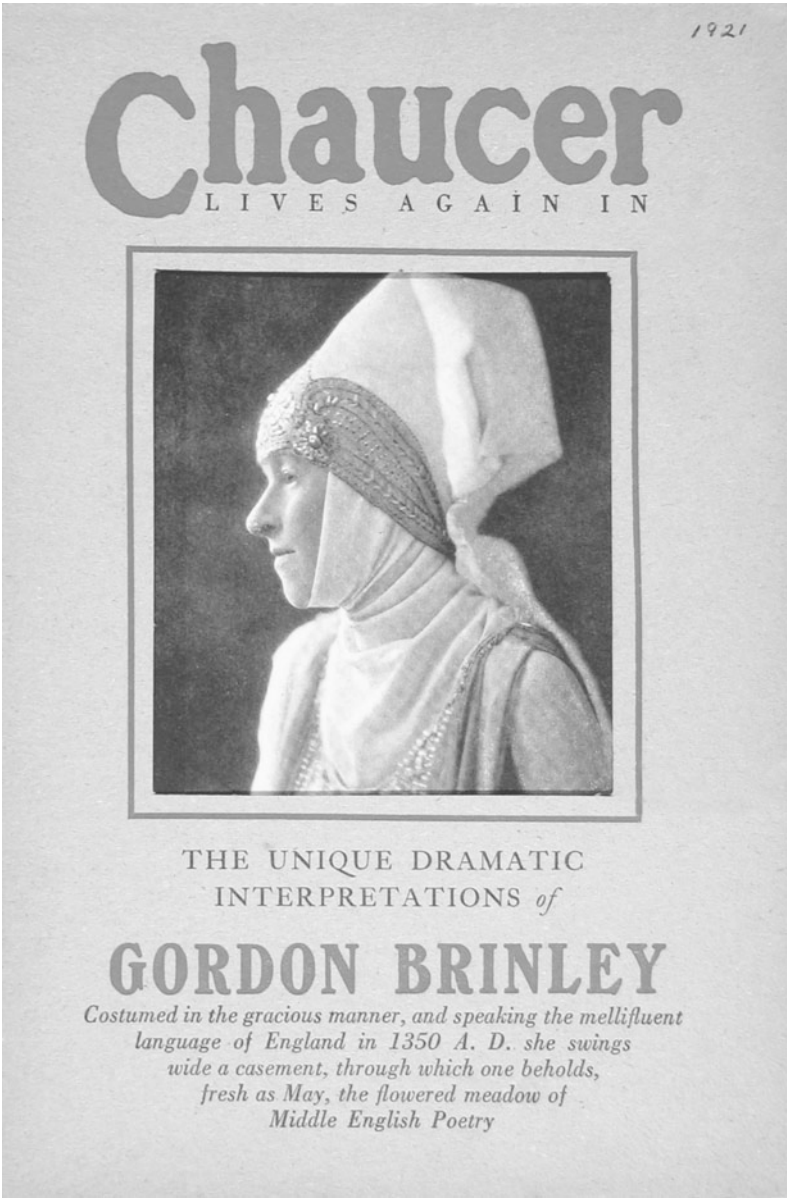

Figure 3 Kathrine Gordon Brinley Brochure (1921). By permission of Watkinson Library, Trinity College, Hartford, CT.

appears: "Chaucer lives again in Gordon Brinley." Inside, the copy proclaims that "by the Grace of God. . .her hearers everywhere experience something of the ancient rapture that glowed in the hearts of English poets five hundred and fifty years ago." Subsequent brochures continue to emphasize her sacred gift. The 1927 brochure may have a toned-down cover—"The Chaucerian Programs of Gordon Brinley"—but its inside copy continues to claim that her "success in this difficult field is due first of all to the grace of God, or, if you prefer, to a special endowment."

Picking up on this paranormal theme in her numerous versions of the genesis of her career, Brinley often begins the narrations by describing a disembodied voice that directed her to Chaucer's works. The setting and characters establish a sense of personal crisis, her versions often beginning in a liminal area—the spiritual space of the Episcopal rectory in New Canaan, Connecticut—that has temporarily turned from a home to a meeting room for a group establishing the Women's Auxiliary in St. Mark's Parish (4 and 5). She also emphasizes that this place was set aside from modern realities by sometimes allegorizing the attendees into Wives: Businessman's Wife, Professor's Wife, Merchant's Wife, Editor's Wife, Financier's Wife, and Artist's Wife (8 and 9). By depicting her younger self, Kathrine, in one version as the dutiful daughter caring for a dying father, in another as the patient wife waiting for her husband's return from war in France in the Verdun sector (5), she establishes her readiness for a spiritual intervention.[78]

In addition to setting and characters, Brinley's depiction of time also reinforces the liminal nature of her narrative. Each version is precisely dated and the passage of time in each is carefully noted, yet we suspect these dates have little correlation with actual events because the versions are not consistent with each other. For example, usually the date for Kathrine's aural hallucination is February 25, 1919, but one is backdated to 1918, possibly to account for the detail that "the war was not yet ended and [Kathrine's] husband was with the French army" (8).[79] In most cases, Brinley tells us that just before noon, Kathrine felt a "change in the atmosphere of the room" (4). Exactly at noon, "a faint trembling" seized her, the air seemed "charged with electricity," and a sensation of "vividness of life" flooded her body (4). Kathrine felt a physical pressure welling up inside her, "as though a hand were pushing [a word] through the flesh" (5). She simultaneously heard a loud voice calling, "Chaucer, Chaucer, Chaucer" (4, 5, 11), a voice no one else in the room heard. In most versions, this private voice spoke at four minutes past noon (4), though in one at seven minutes past (8). Then time resumed, and Kathrine rejoined the material realm of rectors and wives.

As everyone departed at the close of the Women's Auxiliary meeting, Kathrine requested a copy of Chaucer from the rector, Reverend Charles

Adams: "Have you a copy of Chaucer's works that you could lend me? I have a desire to know his poetry, I know nothing of him, and have no copy with me in this rented house Father and I are occupying for a few months" (4). He prophetically replied, "Take this up the hill and be happy" (4, 8, and 10).

The narration of Kathrine's mystical inspiration picks up again later that evening—though three versions begin at this point. In those versions that include her father, Kathrine was unable to indulge her "urgent desire" to read Chaucer until her every errand was completed and her father settled in for the night; she was like one "going to meet a beloved" (4). Then, either "without eating" (4) or "after dinner" (8), she took up Pollard's green edition of Chaucer, opened to a random page, and began reading the Monk's description of "herculese" aloud (8). Although one version claims that Kathrine had at that time been "preoccupied with the medieaval [*sic*] mind" (2) for fifteen years, Brinley otherwise attests to being "entirely ignorant" of Chaucer (4, 10), a poet whose name aroused no schoolbook memories for Kathrine (5) and whose "poetry had left no mark upon [Kathrine's] memory" (8). Whatever the case, Kathrine immediately apprehended and spoke Middle English, which she had "never heard and knew nothing about" (4); miraculously, the language was "familiar," and the "knowledge came as suddenly as white lightning"(2), an unseen guide pointing "accent, metre, and sound" (8). "Tingling from head to foot with the sensation of experiencing a new kind of life /moved to laughter that broke into tears," Kathrine was overwhelmed with feeling: "it was *my* language, I was talking with *my* people, I had after a long pilgrimage come home" (8).[80] For three—or four (8)—hours that evening Kathrine read on, entranced and unconscious of the time, becoming aware of the late hour only when the church bells awoke her from her trance. Returning to the chill of that twentieth-century winter, Kathrine realized that among Chaucer's merry men and women she had found her home and people. Brinley claims Chaucer's characters were more immediate to Kathrine than her Connecticut neighbors. Similarly, Kathrine's auditory hallucination carried an intensity that made distant fourteenth-century England more familiar than contemporary New England, whose material elements—ticking clocks, snow-laden roofs, green-covered book—disappear from the narrative. From that night on and for the next two years, Kathrine devoted every spare minute to practicing and memorizing Chaucer's verse, claiming "it was necessary for me but to say a Middle English phrase, or to see it printed to remember it" (4).

Brinley's longer versions close with Kathrine's first informal performances, which cemented her sense that Kathrine embodied the spirit of antique

England. Brinley's account addressed directly to Geoffrey Chaucer tightly draws the connection:

> After the first half dozen performances I never again used books while on the stage. The result of being able to look into the eyes of the audience while saying words, winged them with a hundred times more significance. How did you give *Canterbury Tales* to your courtly friends? I have a picture of you. . .that shows you standing before a lectern, and surrounded by sitting persons. Probably you needed but a glance at the vellum, now and again to keep your recital going smoothly and otherwise you watched those faces react to your words. (4)[81]

Here Brinley reveals that in her performances Kathrine did not just read Chaucer's poetry, but like him spoke the words directly to her audience. Kathrine even surpassed him, for she did not require "a glance at the vellum." Though she at first denied the temporal and cultural differences between medieval London and postwar Connecticut, Kathrine constantly renegotiated and recalibrated the distance by her recognition that her audiences needed her to supply cultural background and translate a strange tongue. Brinley presents the climax of Kathrine's career as the moment when she stood "in garments of medieval beauty upon the stage of the New Theatre, London, England, speaking the words of great poetry to an audience of seven hundred men and women" (12), outdoing the poet himself.

By blurring the distinction between subject and object, Brinley is never clear in her memoirs about who acts upon whom. Not only does Brinley have Kathrine appropriate Chaucer, but she also lets Chaucer appropriate Kathrine:

> Then the extraordinary accident for which no one is ever prepared/upon which no one ever counted, happened, and I found myself a speaker, telling the words of a great poet to the world of ordinary men and women; interpreter of Chaucer to the common man. Taking the works of the best loved poet in the English language off the library shelf and making him a living, loving person. It was then that I knew fully what the secret of creation can mean and the joy that others experience other ways. (6)

Furthermore, when Brinley echoes Chaucer by labeling Kathrine's pre-Chaucer life as a "pilgrimage" and identifying those at the Rector's house as types that repeat Chaucer's pilgrims, she reinforces her claim that Kathrine was chosen to embody Chaucer's spirit.

In these versions, the etiology crediting Kathrine's mastery of Chaucer's verse to a spiritual infusion repeatedly minimizes the study evidenced in

her notes and books. For instance, Brinley claims that Kathrine immediately apprehended and spoke Middle English as though it were her own. Notes and marked books, however, point to months of study. In addition to the note from Charles Baldwin acceding to her request to attend his Columbia University class, her records include marked up and well-worn typescripts of study material written by Baldwin: "Introduction to Middle English Grammar" and "Medieval Verse Forms in Latin, French, and Italian."[82] Nevertheless, Brinley's self-promotion privileges a mastery granted by a near-sacral anointment. Even when she acknowledges hard work, it is overshadowed by the trope of spiritual empowerment, as in this one version that Brinley dates "at the end of my life":

> I can tell abroad for the first time how I was empowered to do the created work I have accomplished in giving the beauty and gaiety of our great English poet back to the ordinary man in the street, the man for whom Geoffrey Chaucer wrote. If I had told this secret abroad in the beginning, no one would have believed. But now I can point to twenty years of accomplishment at home and abroad/in the USA, Canada, and England. The hard facts of management, and travel, and fees compel the world's acceptance of the reality of the spirit by which I accomplished my destiny. (7)

Though she mentions the "hard facts" behind her career in a paragraph revealing the secret of her intellectual empowerment, she ignores diligent study and focuses instead on spirituality and destiny.

Brinley's regular insistence that her knowledge of Chaucer came via a spiritual infusion put her in direct opposition to the rationalism on which university faculty members established their public careers. And yet much of her self-promotion also appropriated the attributes associated with the then-male academy. Thus, her life as a wife and daughter vanishes from her accounts. In addition, she transforms her gender position by amputating her Christian name, Kathrine, and adopting the masculine stage name, Gordon Brinley.[83] Most significantly, she minimizes the nonmale, nonacademic identity of her audiences—the legions of women, "the newly married stenographers living in out-lying towns of the Middle West" who formed her bread-and-butter audience and who supported her career with bookings.[84] Even though women's clubs sustained her and women were her most enthusiastic audiences, her publicity and her versions of her genesis barely register the encounters with women from across the country whose warm handwritten notes of adulation, praise, and gratitude are stuffed into her archives. And when she does mention her audiences of women, Brinley's twelve versions of her career narrative minimize the fact that women's clubs, not women's schools and colleges, were her primary

audience. While her brochures list her appearances at such women's academic institutions, her versions never mention the nonacademic groups sponsoring her appearance.

Rather than advertise her affiliations with audiences of women, her publicity announces that "men eminent in the world of letters and of the theatre find in her work value, power, and charm." The tempered endorsements of men she knew before 1919 who were affiliated with learning, such as John Erskine and Edward Newton, lace her versions and fill her brochures.[85] One version, "Heavenly Accident," presents Edward Newton as having a "nose. . .for literary values" and anointing her with the messianic words, "This is for the world" (12). Her brochures, of course, do not mention the scholars and academics who politely refused to endorse her performances publicly.[86] If scholars were reluctant to endorse her performances, they were equally hesitant to invite her into their classroom. Among the archive's letters is Barnouw's gracious refusal of her offer to read to his Chaucer class. His course had so few students, he wrote, and the drab classroom did not merit her trouble. We should not be surprised to learn that he redirected her to the Graduate Women's Club.[87]

The brochures as well as many of her twelve versions also advertise her performances as contributing to academic scholarship, claiming she imparted "to a great company of scholars [the] imperishable delights. . .found only in Geoffrey Chaucer" (1926). A later brochure boldly claims "Gordon Brinley is one of the foremost Chaucerian scholars" (1934). This desire to be affiliated with university scholars is further supported in two versions when she reports that a guest connected with Cornell University at the Newton's 1919 estate party exclaimed, "If Hiram Corson (a great Chaucer scholar) had heard you read tonight he would have wept for joy."[88] Corson, the long-dead master of Middle English elocution, of course never attended, much less wept at, one of her performances, yet this outburst remained in her narrative.[89] She may have circumvented the university and its cohorts of professors, but their criteria and judgments shaped her public self-promotion.

In her rhetoric of spiritualism, Brinley presents Kathrine with the same tropes of personal contact through which Walter W. Skeat and Frederick J. Furnivall, eminent nineteenth-century Chaucerians, expressed a personal connection to Chaucer: that ability "to look at Chaucer over the heads of such hapless intermediaries as the scribes, in order to commune with the poet himself."[90] In the same way that Skeat described Middle English as having "long been as familiar to me (as far as such a result is possible) as the language of the present day," and that Furnivall was described by J.J. Jusserand one time as having "the voice of a man who had, it seemed, personally known Chaucer" and another time as a man who lived with

Chaucer "on terms of personal friendship," Brinley claimed an authentic pronunciation and embraced the same discourse of desire.[91] In fact, throughout Brinley's versions, Kathrine becomes almost a paramour of Chaucer: "I have been borne on the wings of butterflies," she swoons in relating the origins of her affair with the poet:

> miles and miles over dreaming meadows, to many a turreted city of delight. And all because I fell in love! How many[,] desirous one, think [they have] plunged full length into the heart's firmament, before their experience crystallized three words of our English language into *that* phrase,—falling in love. Now let me assure you it is quite possible to fall in love with the unseen. (8)

Whereas most medievalists would now accuse Brinley of being unaware of the past's complete alterity, she seems to have taken pleasure in her ability to identify with the historical Chaucer.[92] She proudly declares her intimacy with the past, affirming that the present is built in the image of the past, and that the past is built in the image of the present. The power of this intimacy is expressed in a draft entitled "Dear Geoffrey":

> Where you are at this moment I do not know, yet this my only letter will reach you. An envelope addressed: Geoffrey Chaucer Esq., The Universe will be forwarded from one who loves you to another who loves you, and another, until, garlanded with rememberance [*sic*] my thought will come to you.
>
> For years I have wanted to write you, yet, whenever until now I have taken pen in hand, sitting at my desk near a window with a view, and have inscribed upon a fair sheet of paper: "Dear Geoffrey," the hand has staid upon the name, and heart, roaming my distant landscape sees instead the fields and forests of England in 1372 that you gazed upon from your tower house of Aldgate, London.
>
> How true it is that time is a convention of speech used by immortals. You and I, in common parlance, are separated by six hundred years, yet no experience in my life here, and now, has ever matched the vivid reality which swept me up to your acquaintance. . .on the twenty-fifth of February, 1919. (4)

Brinley's peculiar intimacy with Chaucer enlivens his work by replacing the dead Chaucer with a living presence. Although we can deplore that her new Chaucer might be unrecognizable, we cannot ignore that she actually *enjoys* Chaucer, a fact that her audiences found irresistible.[93] Despite these similarities, however, Brinley's intimacy with Chaucer differs significantly from Furnivall's and Skeat's because the male scholars had the credentials and institutional connections that made their claims of intimacy recognizable by all as metaphors for the extent of their expertise, not as an explanation for their expertise.

In these important and very significant ways, then, the wide gap between the reality of Brinley's career and her depiction of it allowed her to imitate and therefore subvert the institutions that would keep her out. Rather than dismissing her self-fashioning as the projections of a third-rate, middle-aged writer, we should see it as a piece of shrewd marketing that took advantage of the imbalance within academic Chaucer. Just as scholars used Chaucer's alterity to create a walled fortress in which they could seclude themselves to keep the barbaric masses at bay, Kathrine Gordon Brinley used Chaucer's alterity to create a persona in which she embodied the spirit of Chaucer to invite the masses in. She could label herself an authority and no one would protest, for the scholars would not stoop to bother and her audience would not know otherwise. When she claimed that she acquired her authority by a spiritual infusion rather than by study, she turned the tables on the scholars: they could use their erudition to limit admission to their academic club, yet she insinuated herself into a more exclusive spiritual club. But at least she used her membership in her club to display Chaucer for a large group of women who otherwise might have been denied any glimpse of the master.

CHAPTER 5

FIGHTIN' AND ROCKIN' WITH GEOFF

A good thing Chaucer's dead, or we'd be sued.

—*The Miller's Tale*, rendered new by Lieuen Adkins

A Knight's Tale, the first portrayal of Chaucer in a twenty-first-century American film, uses the poet to validate a distinctly American ethos: risk-taking for personal gain.[1] The movie imagines Chaucer as a ne'er-do-well versifier overwhelmed with gambling debt (and debt collectors) who hitches up with William Thatcher, a young peasant making his mark in the world by impersonating a knight. Though William and his entire entourage risk their lives with the impersonation, as a good American hero William overcomes the odds, wins the championships, and gets the girl. Inspired by this success, Chaucer renounces gambling—a form of unmanageable risk-taking—and engages in a form of deliberative risk-taking. Rather than to play it safe with courtly poetry, he chooses to write about a broad range of human interests, ultimately producing *The Canterbury Tales*.

A Knight's Tale looks to Chaucer as a role model for embracing the instability in postmodern American culture. The movie projects back onto Chaucer and late-medieval Europe a contemporary American sensibility that abandons conservative sureties in class and instead encourages individuals to stake a claim whose achievement requires a risky maneuver. Once that maneuver is successfully executed by a highstakes venturer, society sanctions that one success, and then reverts back to conservative formulations by keeping that maneuver still risky for others.

Written, produced, and directed by Brian Helgeland, the film transforms late-medieval tournament culture into the setting for an American tale of a young man's rise from poverty and anonymity to riches and glory. It opens with the young hero, William Thatcher, a commoner's son long apprenticed to a knight named Sir Ector, facing a dilemma. Sir Ector, needing only

to complete a final tilt in order to win a tournament, has just died of dysentery. His death is unknown to anyone but William. Though familiar with tournaments as a result of ten years with Sir Ector on the tournament circuit, William is not allowed to take his place because, according to the film's basic premise, one must be of noble blood to fight in tournaments. Nevertheless, desperate for the immediate need of food and driven by the long-term desire to escape his station in life, William dons the dead knight's armor and masquerades as Sir Ector. He wins the tournament and ends up with fifteen gold coins to divide with Sir Ector's two other squires, Wat and Roland. Not content with his windfall, William persuades Wat and Roland to invest their winnings into his training for the Rouen tournament, the season's next match where he will compete as the fictitious Sir Ulrich von Lichtenstein. On the road to Rouen a month later, the three encounter a naked man who quickly sees through William's ruse. The stranger introduces himself as Geoffrey Chaucer—called "Geoff" throughout—and offers his services as a forger of documents in exchange for clothes, shoes, and food.

In Rouen, William not only passes as Sir Ulrich but wins the sword competition. In the process he identifies the object of his affections, the elusive Jocelyn, and the object of his enmity, Count Adhemar, the tournament circuit's premier jouster and William's rival for Jocelyn's affections. Meanwhile, William mangles his armor and must rely on Kate, a woman blacksmith, who eventually designs him a superior suit of armor. Along the way, Jocelyn tells him to prove his love by losing his matches. He obeys until, at last, she releases him to win. Spurred by a new love, protected by superior armor, supported by loyal sidekicks, and boosted by Geoff Chaucer's rhetorical skills in crowd management, William (as Sir Ulrich) wins several tournaments and eventually returns to his native London for the season's culminating tournament. There, William leaves the tournament area, sneaks to the working-class tenements, and seeks out his long-separated father. By stepping outside his fictitious role, William risks exposing his ruse and jeopardizes his hard-won status and the beautiful girl. His non-noble background is discovered when Adhemar trails William to his father's Cheapside room. Arrested, placed in the stocks, and taunted by the commoners, William is eventually rescued and knighted by the Black Prince who, as Sir Ulrich's frequent opponent in the lists, has recognized the poseur's essential nobility.[2] Finally able to compete as Sir William Thatcher, he defeats Adhemar and wins Jocelyn.

An American Knight

As reviewers frequently remarked, the film is loaded with signs that label it an American tale. A story of upward social mobility, the film features

1970s' stadium rock anthems, corporate branding on sports uniforms, Geoff's "Vegas-style crowd warmup," costumes suggesting "the Rolling Stones in their 70s pre-Raphaelite period," and "a crowd dance number [to David Bowie's "Golden Years"] out of Saturday Night Fever via John Hughes."[3] Helgeland explains these anachronisms as a way to illustrate what he sees as the deep down similarities between the fourteenth-century world and our own, claiming "[t]hey danced to the music the same way we do. They laughed, loved, and lived the same way we do."[4] His explanation masquerades as a facile justification for remaking a familiar story as a movie sure to please his targeted audience with surface elements exploiting the "neo-medieval wave" that washed across American culture during the final third of the twentieth century.[5] Yet Helgeland's account of postmodern relevance does not address how essentially American the film is.

The core of this Americanization is the narrative arc shaped like that of a 1980s teenage film.[6] A young man set loose from the restrictions of a supervising adult goes out into the world to prove his worth and to defy expectations. An outsider to a very closed system that he desperately wants to join, the young man is beset with obstacles that his friends—including a smart aleck who both causes problems and displays intense loyalty—find impossible to overcome, and he is humiliated by the taunts of the handsome and wealthy bully for not having cool friends, cool clothes, or cool parents. The girl proves her love by scorning the bully and saving the young hero from persecutions. In the end, the hero rallies the support of his friends, wins the girl, reconciles with his parent(s), and lives happily ever after. *A Knight's Tale*'s strict adherence to this narrative arc redefines the film as an American story even if it is set in a different time and place.

Further Americanizing his movie, Helgeland inserts scenes into this familiar narrative that allude to famous moments in quintessential American films. For instance, he stages Will, Roland, and Wat's initial frustration with Sir Ector's untimely and smelly death, as well as their efforts to transform William into Sir Ulrich, as a Three Stooges routine. Although Wat and Rowland remain dependable comic sources throughout the film, the Three Stooges antics do not return, an absence that marks William's transformation from a churl to a knight. Another echo occurs when Roland, knowing that Will needs a tunic for the Rouen feast, stitches a new outfit from the fabric of their tent, a solution similar to Scarlett O'Hara's in *Gone with the Wind* when she makes herself a new gown from Tara's velvet drapes and to Maria's in *The Sound of Music* when she makes play clothes for the seven von Trapp children using her bedroom drapes. For William, Scarlett, and Maria, the solution to the problem at hand is finding the right costume. Underlying each character's solution is the irony that using tent or drapery fabric is less compromising than appearing in the wrong attire.

Besides making William and his sidekicks seem familiarly American, these scenes provide visual cues about adolescent dreams of transcending class limitations by wearing the right outfit.

The hero's practical attitude toward clothing stands in contrast to that of Jocelyn, the hero's love interest; her hyperconsumption mimics late-modern Americans' tendency to define themselves through their possession and display of consumer goods, and Americanizes the medieval aristocratic tendency for visual display. Rather than wearing unarguably medieval clothes, she wears edgy, punkish ones. This medieval princess' portrait as a Cosmo-girl is completed by her near manic obsession with dress, sporting new and elaborate outfits and hair styles with each appearance. Her costumes do not allow her to transcend her class, but they establish her dominance in a contemporary American social class peopled by adolescents and defined by the credit limit on an absent father's charge card.

Probably the most conspicuous Americanization is Helgeland's interpolation of 1970s stadium rock anthems. Not only does he incorporate them into the film's soundtrack—such as Thin Lizzy's "The Boys Are Back in Town" when William enters London for the World Championships—but Helgeland has them occupy an audio neverland, neither soundtrack nor ambient music. For example, in the opening credits scene, Queen's "We Will Rock You" seems to play off-screen. Even though the characters in the film move and clap and stomp in rhythm with the song's distinctive pound-pound-clap beat, the crowd's medieval garb and the tournament grandstand make the 1970s American rock'n'roll anachronistic. Our first tendency is to explain the dissonance of what we see and hear as a comic coincidence; the peasants and nobility instinctively move and stomp to the same rhythms as Americans do at baseball and football games. We soon realize, however, that the on-screen crowd actually hears the music, feels the beat, and understands the lyrics when we first see a man mouthing the words and then hear a group singing the words. And yet the music is not truly ambient, for we are given no time-traveling explanation for the presence of the song's electric guitars or amplified keyboards in fourteenth-century Flanders. The only attempt to translate the music to medieval musicians and instruments is a comic one—when the music stops, the horn player puts down his instrument. A similar example of the film characters' hearing what we hear occurs at the feast that follows the tournament in Paris. Though the dance music begins with medieval-sounding tunes and instrumentation, it gradually transforms into David Bowie's "Golden Years" while the dancers never miss a medieval beat. Again, we receive no visual explanation for how these fourteenth-century characters can hear these twentieth-century sounds. The result is a remarkably American soundtrack that in most other contexts would be quite unremarkable.[7]

In a tale with such shallow roots in the Middle Ages, neither Chaucer's name nor his appearance on screen seems necessary. The film takes its title from the first of *The Canterbury Tales*, though nothing else about the film borrows, or even hints at borrowing, from *The Knight's Tale*.[8] Moreover, as the only academic article about the film demonstrates, Helgeland has stripped his Chaucer of all historical fact: in 1372, "Chaucer was not an itinerant ne'er-do-well but was married, an esquire in the royal household with a stable annuity, perhaps studying the law at the Inner Temple, and dispatched, in the king's service, on frequent trips abroad."[9] As Forni observes, it is difficult to see why Helgeland included Geoff Chaucer in this film.

To address this question, I want to consider another aspect of the film's appropriation of the late-twentieth-century American culture: the celebration of voluntary risk-taking. Sociologists have termed this voluntary risk-taking in business and leisure "edgework." Some studies have seen edgework as a way for Americans to escape the mundane; others have seen it as the manifestation of a male trait central to the American corporate ideology, where the winner takes all and the loser is left empty-handed.[10] *A Knight's Tale* unites both these aspects to show edgework's centrality to the dominant American ideology at the turn of the millennium: it is the most effective way to escape the oppressive ranks of the underclass. Of course, risk-taking was not a new phenomenon in the 1990s, and it was certainly not the exclusive provenance of the United States. But in the final years of the twentieth century, risk was "increasingly directed from organizations and collectivities and displaced on to individuals," and Americans replaced the comfort they once took in job security with dreams of hitting it big through entrepreneurial ventures, high-stakes day-trading, and outright gambling.[11] In the midst of the 1990s dot-com boom, risk-taking was the business standard. In fact, risk-taking became so common that it ceased to be perceived as risk; instead, risk was redefined from doing the unexpected to being "captive to obsolete assumptions and codes of behavior"—it was now risky not to take risks.[12] Leisure, too, became associated with risk-taking. Whether as participants or as spectators, Americans poured their money, time, and energy into activities that appeared increasingly more challenging and hazardous. Extreme sports and adventure vacations were marketed to middle-aged couch potatoes and teenage boys running on testosterone and caffeine.[13] In both business and leisure, risk-taking in the 1990s was accompanied by wave after wave of hype, excessive posturing, and downright lies.[14] *A Knight's Tale* speaks to and valorizes this American culture of risk-taking.

In this context, Chaucer's appearance in the film takes focus. It relies on the fourteenth-century poet's reputation as the preeminent risk-taker in English literature. At a time when everyone else wrote literature in Latin or

French about the noble classes, Chaucer made the daring decision, so the master narrative goes, to write in English and to take the common people as his subject.[15] After introducing Geoff as a failed gambler and then exposing him to the calculated risk-taking of William Thatcher, the film closes with the poet making the decision to take the hitherto unheard risk of writing about the "common people as well as knights and nobles," allowing "all human activity" to be a source of his work.[16] In this way, the film uses Geoff to perform and validate the consolidation of controlled risk-taking with the arts. It argues that the merger does not prostitute the arts; instead, risk-taking liberates the arts from old, worn-out, restrictive paradigms. Allied with risk-taking innovators in business and sports, the artist learns the value of risk-taking and is able to funnel energies to create edgy art. Sometimes this newfangled art is initially misunderstood, even labeled vulgar. But if we remember Geoff's example, the film asserts, then we will more readily accept other art that takes risks, including Helgeland's film, which risks brazenly foregrounding its Americanness in a film ostensibly set in the Middle Ages.

The film promotes the American risk-taking ethos with an irreverently anachronistic reconception of the medieval tournament circuit as comparable to American sports leagues. The script's stage directions compare the tournaments and participants to American events and athletes: the busy town square of Rouen is compared to a city hosting "the NCAA tournament" (19) and each unit of knight, squire, and varlets wears a "team uniform" (4). Vendors hawk food in the stands while shirtless fans with U-L-R-I-C-H painted on their chests do "the wave"; the sword fight is staged like a WWF match: a roped-off ring with a grandstanding announcer, a circling referee, and trainers in the corner. The film emphasizes jousting's riskiness by presenting it as an extreme sport in which competitors risk fatal injury.[17] Because most Americans experience extreme sport by watching it on television, the film does not recreate the whole joust from the perspective of a viewer in the stands with a single, steady camera shot. Instead, it represents the tournament in the mode of a highlights program on ESPN2, with only the familiar voice-over missing.

Clearly, jousting and the risk-taking it entails are a means for William to achieve social mobility, a way to escape "social conditions that produce stunted identities," an aspect the film makes clear in the opening scenes and in the two flashbacks depicting young William's dreams of becoming a knight and his father's encouraging him to ignore his peasant birth.[18] Being a winning jouster allows William to join a small coterie of extreme athletes for whom the normal boundaries of behavior are permeable. In the context of contemporary extreme sports, William's competition is no longer about simply social mobility, but about transgression and crossing boundaries.

There is an aura of criminality to William's risk-taking—enough to land him in the stocks when he is discovered; yet William and the other jousters do not completely abandon the civilized imperatives of rational calculation and emotional control, for the film's ubiquitous close-ups of contestants emphasize how both are required of jousters in order to survive each match. The film thus embraces both dimensions of postmodern risk-taking, "the twin imperatives of abandon and restraint," a form of "controlled excess" that has allowed risk-taking to signify the postmodern hero.[19]

The film's editing captures the excitement rather than the worry of risk-taking. Without the luxury of establishing shots, the viewer is given little chance to fret. Even the opening shot begins in the middle of a joust. Not until the initial titles appear, when William replaces Ector and the joust begins, do we get a tracking shot, which then immediately seduces—and disorients—us by showing the crowd clapping, dancing, and stomping to Queen's stadium anthem. By thus cutting to the middle of action, the film places the audience in a position parallel to the risk-taker: we, too, must make quick decisions about what we see and hear without consultation or reflection.

In this context, the movie validates an American icon, the risk-taker whose audacity and determination transform him from a penniless member of the underclass to a hero successful in the upper class. Seeking more money, greater glory, and a higher rung on the social and economic ladder, William crosses class lines, an act others fear will cost him his life but which the film shows as the secret to his eventual success. He is not content to take his first winnings and return to England for "tansy cakes with peppermint cream" (10). And he goads his sidekicks to invest their winnings into his training and attempt to change his destiny. Adhemar, his arch enemy, identifies boldness as William's greatest asset, more important than skill. In his first encounter with Adhemar, William takes a "gamble" when he "twists his right shoulder" to make Adhemar's blow glance off his armor and leave Adhemar's lance unbroken, thereby preventing points (47). William refuses to compete in the tournament event he is best at, the sword; instead he decides to "concentrate on the joust," declaring that he "will be tournament champion or nothing at all!" (51). Furthermore, William is rewarded for not respecting the protocol that insists the knights not fight the Black Prince: William's brash behavior earns the respect of the Black Prince and is the mechanism through which William is permanently hoisted out of his ignoble state. This all-or-nothing attitude is further endorsed when William's sidekicks bet all their money on him at the Paris tournament, a move that begins to look like a foolhardy gamble when William purposefully loses each match out of love for Jocelyn, but becomes a rewarded show of faith when William eventually wins the tournament.

William's victory has immediate consequences for everyone and marks the beginning of a new order, for the old regime has been "found wanting" and the stars have been realigned (126). William gets the girl, and his true identity is recognized. Kate-the-blacksmith proves the value of her technological innovation. Even Adhemar's herald, described originally as a "toady," becomes by the end of the film more daring and aggressive in his heraldry. And Geoff Chaucer gets his inspiration: he learns that his fortune no longer need be tied to either the old paradigms or the vicissitudes of chance.

Until Geoff achieves this self-knowledge, William's calculated risk-taking has contrasted to Geoff's uncontrolled gambling. Instead of helping improve his lot, Geoff's gambling reduced him to penury. William's culturally sanctioned risk-taking becomes a training ground for Geoff, however, leading to the poet's decision to write less about princesses and knights and to turn instead to the common people, seeing that "[a]ll human activity lies within the artist's scope" (217). What would have been either invisible or risky before has now turned into an opportunity.

The film depicts Geoff's transformation visually. Geoff's initial degraded state contrasts with the new, fresh, hopeful state of William. The first time we see Geoff, he is naked and impecunious, a result (we soon learn) of his uncontrolled gambling—an ill-informed variety of risk-taking. This forlorn appearance occurs within seconds after we first see the newly transformed William: having made the decision to enter the Rouen tournament, he has trained for one month, shorn his dreadlocks, shaved his beard, and now rides the horse with his two squires walking by his side. As William and his chums walk away from the audience's point of view, Geoff enters the mise-en-scene behind them from the bottom right of the frame, and we see him only from the rear. When William asks, "What are you doing?" Geoff's buttocks appear in close-up, on the right half of the screen. As the scene progresses, his physical vulnerability is the most noticeable visual feature, reinforced by frequent, lengthy shots of his naked, dirty, and scratched body, often displaying only his arse.[20] In addition, he is usually lower than William in the shots, at first walking while William remains mounted on his horse; later in the scene, Geoff falls to the ground as William hovers above him with a dagger at the poet's throat. This scene clearly indicates that Geoff is in a much more vulnerable position than William and his friends. All Geoff asks from William is food, shoes, and clothes; in exchange he will forge the patents of nobility that William requires to enter the tournament at Rouen.

This first appearance, however, indicates that Geoff needs more than food and clothing. He also needs new source material. His answer to

William's initial question about what he is doing confuses rather than enlightens or entertains:

> *William:* What are you doing?
> *Nude Man:* Trudging. The slow, weary, yet determined walk of one who has no other choice but to soldier on.
> *William:* Were you robbed?
> *Nude Man:* Yes, a sort of involuntary vow of poverty. But to trudge represents pride. Pride, resolve and a trust in God to deliver me from my current tribulations. (17)

Already we see that Geoff's verbal word play has a limited effect. When asked who he is, Geoff gives his name, identifies his profession, and announces one of his works:

> *Roland:* Who are you?
> *Nude Man: Lilium inter spinas*. The lily among the thorns. Geoff Chaucer is the name, writing's the game.
> [off their blank looks]
> Chaucer. . .? I'm a writer.
> [Indeed, we're looking at the 29-year-old GEOFFREY CHAUCER. The first rainbow of English writers. Buck solid naked.]
> *Wat:* A what?
> *Nude Man/Chaucer:* Writer. With ink and parchment? For a penny, I'll scribble all you want: summonses, warrants, decrees, edicts, patents of nobility. Even a poem or two. Perhaps you read my Book of the Duchess? It was allegorical.
> *Roland:* We won't hold that against you. That's something each man has to decide for himself. (17–18)

Not only have they never heard of him, but the close-ups of their facial gestures tell us and Geoff that the notion of a writer is well outside their conceptual sphere, making him a convenient representative of the artist whose work is incomprehensible to the average guy. Nor are examples of his verse of interest to them, though he proudly advertises his *Book of the Duchess* as an "allegorical" poem. They have not heard of this, and one sidekick forgives him, as though "allegorical" were synonymous with either "pornographic" or "unsuccessful."

William and his entourage, however, are interested in the one aspect of Geoff's trade that has the most immediate utility: forging patents of nobility. Though this kind of scribal hack-work is of little interest to Geoff, once he begins to see that his literary skills can glorify a commoner as easily as a

knight, he begins to enjoy success. In the next scene, we see that his transaction with William has been successfully concluded: Geoff is dressed, and the officials at the tournament accept "Ulrich's" papers. With his knack for verbal hyperbole, Geoff transforms the mundane ceremonial herald role into that of a boxing ring announcer like a "medieval Jimmy Lennon" (40). He hypes the crowd and gets them excited with his bravado. He has found a new message, a new medium, and a new audience.

Geoff is not the amorously inclined Chaucer we saw early in the twentieth century. Completely desexed in the film, he engages in no flirtations with pretty chambermaids or highborn ladies.[21] Nor is he the Romantic poet driven to write by his muse. At most, Helgeland's unlucky wayfarer resembles the bohemian outcasts that have populated the twentieth-century imaginative landscape, the Lost Generation, John Steinbeck, the Beats, or Bob Dylan. The film places Geoff on the margins of fourteenth-century society and emphasizes his lower impulses, gambling and deception. Primarily Geoff sees words as a tool and writing as a means to get coins in his pocket. Presented as an accouterment as necessary to the successful jouster as a good armorer or a trusty squire, Geoff is a pen for hire (17–21). Geoff's workmanlike and practical attitude to words and verse is contrasted to William's purple prose when he speaks or writes to Jocelyn—though we are often made to think that Geoff has fed the lines to William. The woman who has plunged Cupid's arrow deep into his heart (22) inspires such lines as

> *J:* I am not your missing rib, sir.
> *W:* If you were, then my ribs are made of gold. Wrapped in samite. (23)

Disclosing his lovesickness to a trusted sidekick, William sighs, "I can't explain it. She makes me feel like a poet" (25). In contrast, poetry in Geoff's hands is a means to make a living—or, as in a scene where Geoff takes dictation from William about his love for Jocelyn, poetry is a way to express the experiences of all men, for all are endowed with fine feelings (76–78). Thus simple Wat's simple simile—"I missed her like the sun misses the flower"—becomes the basis for "[l]ike the sun misses the flower in the depths of winter. / Instead of beauty to direct its light to, the heart hardens like the frozen world your absence has banished me to" (77). The verse's usefulness is demonstrated when the lines have the intended effect on their recipient, Jocelyn, and she joins William in Paris two scenes later (81).

Along the way, Geoff learns to abandon gambling, an uncalculated, unleveraged, unmanageable, unanalyzed risk-taking, and to accept the form of risk-taking marked by thinking outside the usual paradigms. Thus the two scoundrels who once thrived on Geoff's susceptibility to gambling,

Peter the Pardoner and Simon the Summoner, become the eternal victims of Geoff's new form of risk-taking—choosing new sources for his literary works: "I'll eviscerate you in fiction," he tells them. "Every last pimple, every last character flaw. I was naked for a day. You will be 'naked' for eternity" (51). By aligning his loyalties and his ambitions with the upwardly mobile classes, Geoff is able to learn enough to write *The Canterbury Tales*. He has been exposed to a new stratum of men and has been inspired by William to recognize the necessity of taking new risks—and this includes confronting his demons and conquering them with his pen. By the end of the film, Geoff has recognized the social and demographic change; the movie shows Geoff able to adjust his artistic strategy to meet the changing landscape at a moment in history when it was uncertain what the future would look like. In the film, risk-taking is presented as "an especially pure expression of the central institutional and cultural imperatives of the emerging social order," whether in medieval England or postmodern America.[22]

POSTSCRIPT: CHOOSING CHAUCERS

If you don't like my lyrics you can press fast forward.

—Jay-Z, *The Black Album*, "99 Problems"

Chaucer's cultural capital outside the academy remains high. I make this statement based on the astonishing number of people who begin reciting the first eighteen lines of the *General Prologue* when I tell them I teach Chaucer. My reciters come from all walks of life—doctors and engineers, sales reps and farmers, students and cashiers; and I encounter them in all sorts of ways—as neighbors, as the parents of my children's friends, as the woman in front of me in line, or as the man next to me on the plane. Some of my new acquaintances memorized these lines for a high school English class less than five years ago, and others still remember those vernal lines after forty years. Their impromptu (and unprompted, I might add) renditions, with varying degrees of textual accuracy and a wide range of pronunciations, inevitably exhibit a certain glee, though the recitations are seldom backed with a clear understanding of what the lines mean. All sorts of people in all sorts of places remain proud of this accomplishment. Despite a relative uncertainty about Chaucer and his poetry, they believe that reciting those lines entitles them a bit of high-priced cultural real estate.

Because the worth of those lines is often measured by the degree of Chaucer's alterity from contemporary American experience, this valuation can ossify Chaucer's texts into arbitrary obstacles that must be hurdled. I see this attitude when I encounter the few disgruntled classroom veterans who cannot wait to tell me they hated Chaucer. To my dismay, this pronouncement usually comes from other academics, even from colleagues in literary studies. (I think those outside academia are too intimidated by Chaucer's cultural value to display an apparent breach of their cultural knowledge with a negative response.) Based on a bad encounter with a dead poet, they are ready to jettison Chaucer from the requirements for English majors, claiming his lack of relevancy to a curriculum more and

more concerned with cultural diversity. Such attitudes are squeezing Chaucer out of some English departments, with the Chaucerian going the way of the Anglo-Saxonist.

I need not detail here the ways that Chaucerians at colleges and universities have resisted the charge of irrelevancy. In myriad ways, professors have introduced students to an important fourteenth-century poet while also using that distance to facilitate a Weberian "'intellectual integrity' and 'independence of mind.'"[1] Even a quick scan of such websites as the Geoffrey Chaucer Website, the Chaucer Pedagogy Page, and the Chaucer Metapage reveals a commitment to helping students both develop skills to understand Chaucer's alterity and use those skills to see those same processes at work in early-twenty-first century American culture.[2] At the same time, Chaucerians have enriched their engaging pedagogy with a florescence of scholarship on Chaucer and the wide field of late-medieval studies. The Annotated Bibliography compiled each year for *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* has steadily grown, with over 350 entries most years of the past decade, twice exceeding 400. These innovations provide plenty of evidence that a new generation of American graduates reading Chaucer will have a more sophisticated reaction to him than either reciting the opening lines or rejecting him categorically.

In the midst of pedagogical and scholarly practices bent on recovering a historically accurate Chaucer, it might be easy to dismiss American Chaucers—both those sampled in this study and those yet to receive detailed consideration—as bastard children begotten by ignorant lowbrows who misunderstood and misappropriated a source text out of their league. If we do so, then we might fail to hear what they can tell us about our work as Chaucerians and teachers. Rather than judge these productions as either successful or failed translations, we can examine them as arenas of cultural struggle and sites of multiple and conflicting meaning. By examining the processes informing their creation—the political forces, the shifting personal conditions, the cultural dynamics, and the material and core values—we can see the ways these popularizations used Chaucer to legitimate a larger purpose. These American reproductions do not fully exhibit Chaucer's alterity, but that absence of antiquarian interest does not make their encounters any less interesting; it simply tells us a great deal more about postmedieval encounters with Chaucer's texts than we are normally comfortable learning. Because the multiple grammars—including medieval and modern, British and American, academic and popular—underwriting the productions may be inconsistent or may not mesh, the resulting interstices provide fresh perspectives on the postmedieval reception of Chaucer.

These American Chaucers also can tell us about Chaucer's largest popular audience in contemporary America: our students. Rather than consider them "doubly unfit to read Chaucer" because they appear both unwilling to grapple with Chaucer's Middle English and yet willing to accept "the rags and patches" of adaptations, we might consider how these productions grab and sustain interests, especially since audiences are often introduced by these productions and turn to more academic versions as a result.[3] Judging from the enthusiasm MacKaye's and Brinley's performances engendered—and even the upswing in interest my Chaucer class got after the release of *A Knight's Tale*—these works can effectively introduce audiences to an otherwise seemingly impenetrable text. And as long as Chaucer and his works convey a modicum of cultural capital, we can expect ambitious readers (whether for intellectual, social, or economic reasons), who are not trained in the hard-won ease of reading Chaucer's Middle English with a full awareness of his multivalent language, to turn to productions that make sense of an otherwise obscure text. So why have we not listened to these American Chaucers?

As far as I can tell, these popular Chaucers have been ignored by Americanists, and I can only guess why they have ignored these works. Perhaps because many Americanists define their field "specifically against the oppressive weight of British cultural hegemony," they are most interested in ways American writers "alluding to Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, or Milton. . .challenge [the British] writer's vision."[4] Because redactors, like MacKaye and Brinley, promoted their works as suitable substitutes for Chaucer's Middle English works, they might easily be seen as overly beholden to the original. As we have seen, however, their appropriations of Chaucer simultaneously embrace and reject the British heritage with an agenda that would have been unrecognizable to "the father of English letters." And whether Maury's Canterbury pageant or Helgeland's film, Hall's memoir or deKoven's opera, the productions examined in this collection were ultimately more determined by their local American concerns than their indebtedness to the distant British author.

While Americanists may have ignored these Chaucerian appropriations because they seem to be sycophants to British literary culture, Chaucerians have ignored the same American works for another set of reasons, including the fear that giving them our attention will legitimize them and contaminate our true focus. Every Chaucerian has nightmares about the unintended consequences of a popularization. An inadvertently humorous exchange from the customer reviews at www.bn.com for A.C. Spearing's 1996 edition of *The Knight's Tale* distills the pitfalls of reconfigurations for and by

popular audiences:

Erin, A reviewer, May 29, 2001 ★ ★ ★ ★

Not the classic knight in shining armor love story

This is a story about a peasant who takes over for a knight when the knight dies. The man can't reveal his identity or he faces being arrested. The book takes knighthood and glamorizes it but at the same time talks about the differences in social status. It is a great historical novel as well as a love story.

Also recommended: This book is the same story as the movie A Knight's Tale which i recommend as well. The movie is told as Jeffrey[5] Chaucer himself meets the knight in the story.

sean r., i write for new york times, November 28, 2001 ★ ★★ ★★

the best book every read by me

this book is about a squire who takes the place of his master when he dies. He must not review his identity or he will be thrown in jail. Other characters: Lord Ahdemar, kate, joyclen, roland, wat and williams (main character) father.

Also recommended: a millers tale, the outsiders, jurassic park, rumble fish, the once and future king (very good)

A reviewer, a lover of the canaberry tale, September 18, 2002 ★ ★★ ★★

this was great

i loved this book. it deserves a 2 thumbs up

A reviewer, an English professor, October 31, 2002 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Not the Movie

Regardless of what certain other ignorant reviewers believe, Chaucer's tale has no relation whatsoever to the popular film "A Knight's Tale." Chaucer tells the story of two cousins who feud over a woman with whom they are both in love. The ending is ironic and heartbreaking, as any good literature should be. Turn off your DVD player and read the tale!

Also recommended: Thebaid, Seven Against Thebes[6]

The sudden appearance of customer reviews for Spearing's edition was not prompted by a groundswell of excitement for his text; instead these reviews followed the release of Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale*. Familiar with the poet's name, "Geoffrey Chaucer," and the title of his first Canterbury tale, Erin, sean r, and "a lover of the canabery tale," deemed themselves competent reviewers. Their recommended reading reflects their limited knowledge of books dealing with the past, extending no further than T.H. White's *Once and Future King* and Michael Crichton's *Jurassic Park*. Though sean r's recommendation of "a miller's tale" seems to draw on recollections

of a British literature survey, none of these reviews shows an inkling of their reviewers' confusion. "An English professor," however, vehemently scorns the near-heresy of the other reviewers' ignorance. Not only does "An English professor" tell the other three to turn off the DVD player and read the tale—for which Spearing's 246-page edition might not be the best introduction—but the professor also recommends ironically Statius' *Thebiad* and Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*. I suspect the professor's tongue-in-cheek response was lost on sean r and Erin. Besides raising the question about which reviews actually helped sales of Spearing's edition (just how many copies of *The Knight's Tale* were sold to accidental readers?), this exchange provides a good example of how these popular versions provide audiences with unwarranted knowledge. With minimal previous exposure to Chaucer, these viewers easily supplanted academic Chaucer with a popular version. Having Chaucer's name attached to the film was enough to convince them they possessed sufficient knowledge to pass judgment on a well-respected piece of scholarship. The whole exchange is enough to make medievalists shun popular Chaucer forever.

If, however, we pause a bit and reflect on the popularizations examined in this study, we see in these American Chaucers the contingencies of Chaucerians' own program of scholarship. In the nineteenth-century anthologies, we recognize the fragmentation, mobility, and interchangeability of medieval codices and manuscripts. Anthologies demonstrate that each time we read Chaucer we have merely one among all the possible representations of his writing. MacKaye's three versions of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* remind us that there is no authoritative Chaucer, no definitive text. Hall's memoir reminds us how deeply our current circumstances inflect any reader's engagement of any text, so that even Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* can become a vehicle for meditating on the uncertainties of war and class in the twentieth century. Brinley's performances remind us, too, how much extra-textual apparatus—notes, glosses, translations—is now required to make any Chaucerian text moderately intelligible to audiences in the twenty-first century; even those modern editions that scholars deem credible are buttressed with supplementary matter that guides readers toward interpretations that frequently mirror postmodern ideologies. And, as we saw in Maury's pageant and Helgeland's film, each attempt at authentic detail, whether merchants' caps or tournament lists, gets co-opted and compromised by viewing the past through the lens of contemporary America.

These American Chaucers can also illuminate the ways popular cultural forces color the interpretive understanding of scholarly studies, even those most loyal to representing and reconstructing Chaucer consistent with fourteenth-century ideas. Percy MacKaye and his play are an intriguing example where a popular representation possibly prefigures scholars'

readings of Chaucer. MacKaye's 1903 play seems to uncannily anticipate and disseminate aspects of George Kittredge's influential theories on the Marriage Group and *The Canterbury Tales* as a roadside drama. Although MacKaye perhaps picked up on these ideas while studying at Harvard University, it is more likely that both MacKaye and Kittredge breathed Americans' new enthusiasm for vernacular drama. In other words, juxtaposed to one another, MacKaye's and Kittredge's works reveal the cross-fertilization between Chaucerians and American popular culture.

All these American Chaucers, working outside the shadow cast by medieval studies, show no obligation to the master narrative that both guides and hampers academic imaginations. This study, therefore, should broaden the notion of what constitutes primary material for Chaucer studies. It is difficult to understand completely how Chaucerians and our academic forebears have reacted to and comprehended Chaucer if we are unaware of how Chaucer has circulated in popular culture. No matter how much we want to claim that we are both separate from and unconcerned with popular culture, popular Chaucer provides a picture painted in very broad strokes of some ways contemporary culture acts as a prism in our reception and understanding of Chaucer.[7] Because of his great distance from America, no text of Chaucer, whether Chapman's "Mercy" or MacKaye's civic pageant or Benson's *Riverside Chaucer*, can escape doing the invisible work of ideological mirroring and formation. These American Chaucers carry on the long tradition of normalizing and altering Chaucer to meet changing social praxis. They demonstrate that when a contemporary American voice engages in a dialogue with Chaucer's text, we can expect an interesting conversation from the two texts so temporally distant from each other.[8] My project has begun the process of listening to the conversations instigated by some of the more fascinating American adaptations. Many more remain unexplored, and they have much to tell us about the Chaucers we choose.

APPENDIX

Mary Fanton Roberts. "The Value of Outdoor Plays to America: Through the Pageant Shall We Develop a Drama of Democracy?" *The Craftsman* 16 (August 1909): 491–506.

I shall never forget the thrill and joy of my first outdoor play, Percy Mackaye's [sic] "Canterbury Pilgrims," as it was presented up on the campus of the Barnard Club of New York City. Fortunately, it was given after dark so that the noisy city was shut away by theater walls of cool dark blue night, and, as I reached the "theater" by following a pathway shrouded in gloom, the illusion of romance was begun at once. I discovered afterward that this was not the correct way to the parquet, but it was my good fortune to have missed the right way. Thus I came quietly to my seat, the lights not yet on, and the "stage" but a dim vista of green glades, bushes and low trees casting bosky shadows. Swinging from a branch of one of the higher trees was the weatherbeaten sign of the "Tabard Inn," which swayed just so in the wood near London Town in the year thirteen hundred and eighty-seven. Suddenly out of the shadows back of the fluttering foliage came the sound of bells, and with the pleasant chime I ceased for those hours to be a part of any company but that goodly one of Chaucer and his pilgrim friends. Again the sound of bells and the murmur of voices far back of the bushes, and the people who belonged in the green depths came forth, and peered about and laughed and were content as though they had lived their lives in these same "imperishable woods" on Riverside Drive and One Hundred and Tenth Street. But why this mention of city streets! That night I lived on the greensward with the laughing wife of Bath and her lovers, with the gentle Prioress, the merry Friar, and I think I have never known pleasanter, more entertaining friends.

Two tremendous spotlights back of the audience, raised high, threw the tree-bowered stage into fine relief and the audience into obscurity, as it should be. There was only the play and the players, and the romance of old worlds in poetry of the new. There were songs and ballads and gaily tripped measures and lines of rare art and delight. And the joy was not wholly for the audience, the players, too, were making merry for their own pleasaunce. They laughed and tricked each other, joked and loved as real people, not actors, with a radiant spirit as of a light-hearted world. The illusive remoteness of the great Chaucer in the midst of these joyous children was admirably

shown by Mr. Coburn himself, and the Friar, the worldly, kindly, humorous, mischievous, fat old Friar, what better character work of this kind has the American stage seen than the acting of Augustus Duncan? Mr. Duncan is also stage manager of the Coburn Players, and one of rare skill, if one may judge from his management of a natural *mise en scène*, so that in the same woods we felt ourselves successively in the courtyard of the Tabard Inn, in the garden of the Nine Pin Inn and in a Public Place in the neighborhood of Canterbury cathedral. And what artistic and practical understanding to accomplish this at the end of the Barnard Campus!

I am told that before this season is over the Coburn Players will have presented the "Canterbury Pilgrims" at no less than thirty universities and colleges. They will also appear in the great Pageant at Gloucester, August the fourth. And yet the first season of these valiant outdoor players lasted but two weeks. They had not enough money for a longer season. But back to the stage they went to earn more money and try again, from summer to summer, uniting their winter earnings to equip the company for the road, until at last they have attained somewhat their ideal, of presenting plays without overcrowding of gorgeous scenes, without bitter rivalry of stars; but with sincerity, with joy, and for the people. This is the conception of outdoor artistic drama.

NOTES

Introduction

1. C. David Benson, "Chaucer's Unfinished Pilgrimage," *Christianity and Literature* 37 (1988):12.
2. Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 17–31.
3. The common epithet associated with Chaucer, "father of English letters," can be traced to Thomas Hoccleve's reference to him as "[t]he firste fyndere of our faire langage,. . .my fadir" (*The Regement of Princes* in *Hoccleve's Works*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, Early English Text Society, extra series 72 [London: Kegan Paul, 1897; rept. 1988], lines 4978 and 4982). Recent scholarship, however, has interrogated that attribution. (See Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998] and Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004]). For this reason, I place the epithet in quotation marks throughout my study.
4. Jonathan Rose, "Rereading the English Common Reader: A Preface to a History of Audiences," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 53 (1992): 51. Those who read books for a living include academics, teachers, scholars, students, librarians, journalists, reviewers, and essayists.

   When I refer to popular Chaucer, I am referring to versions of Chaucer that target an audience of nonprofessional readers (or viewers, as the case may be). Sometimes this popular Chaucer presents itself as an ephemeral amusement, but often popular reference to Chaucer is an attempt to capture the orthodoxy of high culture while still appealing to a larger audience.
5. Thus I do not write about the musical, *Canterbury Tales*, based on British academician Nevill Coghill's translation and featuring music by Richard Hill and John Hawkins. After playing at London's Phoenix Theatre in 1968, it played on Broadway in 1969, with a cast that included the American performer Sandy Duncan (Nevill Coghill, John Hawkins, Richard Hill, and Martin Starkie, *Canterbury Tales* [Hollywood, California: Capital Records, 1969]). I also do not include Canadian Baba Dickerson's "The Rap Canterbury Tales," http://www.babasword.com/index/store.html, which finds an easy fit between Chaucer's bawdy and hip-hop argot.

6. This category includes illustrations by Walter Appleton Clark (1876–1906) and Rockwell Kent (1882–1971) included in various editions of Chaucer, as well as the extensive etchings of Eunice Young Smith.

   And except for this brief mention, 2984 Chaucer, a small main-belt asteroid discovered by Edward L.G. Bowell in 1981, will have to remain undiscussed ("2984 Chaucer" www.wikipedia.org).
7. Parodies of *The Canterbury Tales* include Arthur Guiterman's "Messaire Geoffrey Chaucer to His Editor" (1938), R.V. Lindsay's Yale-inspired "The Chapelbury Tales" (1946), Aubry Walker's "Fragment from Moscow" (1947), and the more recent "The Sacramento Tales" that skewered California's 2003 gubernatorial recall election (John Derbyshire, "The Sacramento Tales," National Review Online, 3 September 2003, www.nationalreview.com). Vance Nye Bourjaily's *Now Playing at Canterbury* (1976) imitates *The Canterbury Tale*'s structure without relying on his tales or characters.

   For more "literary Chauceriana" between 1900 and 1949, see Olena S. Bunn, "A Bibliography of Chaucer in English and American Belles-Lettres Since 1900," *Bulletin of Bibliography and Dramatic Index* 19 (December 1946): 205–8.
8. *Spenser's Poem, entitled Colin Clouts Come Home Againe, explained; with remarks upon The Amoretti Sonnets, and also upon A Few of the Minor Poems of Other Early English Poets* (New York: James Miller, 1865).
9. See, for instance, Lieuen Adkins, *The Miller's Tale*, illust. Gilbert Shelton (San Francisco: Bellerophon Books, 1973).

   Bagelfish's short film stars Sandy Duncan (her second appearance in a popular production based on *The Canterbury Tales*; see note 5 above) and Keith David. For information on the film, see www.bagelfish.com.
10. Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Chaucer as Children's Literature: Retellings from the Victorian and Edwardian Eras* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004); Seymour Barab and M.C. Richards, *Chanticleer* (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1964); Don Bluth, *Rock-a-Doodle* (1990).
11. For a sense of the lavish floats, see three of Jennie Wilde's sketches in Henri Schindler, *Mardi Gras Treasures: Float Designs of the Golden Age* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 2001), 109–10.
12. Lavin Lambert, *Natalie Wood, A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 116. The Internet Movie Database (imdb.com), an unusually reliable source for film factoids, does not include this (or any film resembling it) in Natalie Wood's filmography.
13. Within these parameters, however, are a host of texts I either could not locate or logistically fit into this study. For instance, I do not include Dolores L. Cullen, a scholar working outside academia who promotes her interpretations that entrenched professors would not "touch with a hundred foot pole" (http://www.celebratechaucer.com/bio.html). Though she advertises her books as being "found in many academic libraries," her writings and her website "Celebrate Chaucer" target precollegiate teachers and

students, as well as what I have identified as a more popular audience. In addition to links to sites for ordering her books, her website also provides a "Chaucer riddle," a guide for studying Chaucer, verse addressing Chaucer, hints for hosting Chaucerian celebrations, and opportunities to purchase six styles of T-shirts celebrating Chaucer.

14. Steve Ellis, "Popular Chaucer and the Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Kathleen Verduin, Leslie J. Workman, and David D. Metzger (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 28.
15. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American printers did not publish editions of Chaucer because booksellers initially saw no sufficient demand from readers, for in order to justify a run, an eighteenth-century printer needed to anticipate selling around forty copies a year. Consequently, of the British poets, only Shakespeare and Milton were printed in America before the latter third of the eighteenth-century. Following the Revolutionary War, Americans showed more curiosity and a greater appetite for literature of all sorts, and Chaucer began to appear on more American bookshelves (Hugh Amory, "Reinventing the Colonial Book," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall, A History of the Book in America Series [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], 40).
16. David D. Hall, "Introduction," in *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Hugh Amory and Hall, 3–5.
17. John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments* (1563), cited in and discussed by Hall, "Introduction," in *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Amory and D. Hall, 3.
18. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Intellectual Life of Colonial New England* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 134–36.
19. *A CATALOGUE of curious and valuable BOOKS, (which mostly belonged to the Reverend Mr. George Curwin, Late of Salem, Deceased) Consisting of Divinity, Philosophy, History, Poetry, &c. Generally well Bound*. KD 1718 (Curwin), MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
20. *A Catalogue of Curious and Valuable Books, Being the greatest part of the Libraries of the Reverend and Learned Mr. Rowland Cotton, Late Pastor of the Church in Sandwich, and Mr. Nathanael Rogers, Late Pastor of a Church in Portsmouth, in New-Hampshire, Deceas'd*. KD 1725 (Cotton), MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
21. David D. Hall, "Readers and Writers in Early New England," in *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Amory and Hall, 142.
22. Morison, *Intellectual Life*, 138.
23. Unable to stay within Skipwith's "30.lib.sterl" budget, Jefferson compiled a list of books worth £107 and included among a large amount of current fiction, a volume of Chaucer for ten pence (Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950], 76–81). Jefferson was not familiar with Shakespeare, and nonclassical literature formed a minor part of the curriculum he proposed for the University of Virginia in 1824 (Lorraine Smith Pangle and Thomas L. Pangle,

The Learning of Liberty: The Educational Ideas of the American Founders [Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993], 176–78).

24. *A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Library Company of Philadelphia*, (Philadelphia: Zacaharia Poulson, 1789), 298. MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
25. Marcus A. McCorison, ed., *The 1764 Catalogue of the Redwood Library Company at Newport*, Rhode Island (New Haven: Yale UP, 1965), #759.
26. James Raven, "The Atlantic World: The Importation of Books in the Eighteenth Century," in *Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, ed. Amory and Hall, 196.

    The Catalogue for Thomas, Son, and Thomas, Bookstore in Worcester, Massachusetts, advises:

    > Gentlemen, who wish to be furnished with Libraries, May be supplied on the best Terms, by applying to Thomas, Son & Thomas, Who will engage to furnish any that are not in their Catalogue, if to be had, without any extra credit. (KD 1796 [Thomas], MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library)

27. I make this claim after surveying all the catalogues at New York Public Library listed in Robert B. Winans, *A Descriptive Checklist of Book Catalogues Separately Printed in America, 1693–1800* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1981).
28. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1815–1865* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1936), 316.
29. Charles Edmund Stedman, "Ye Tombe of Ye Poet Chaucer," *The Atlantic Monthly* 47 (January 1881): line 60.
30. William Wheeler, *Letters of William Wheeler of the Class of 1855, Y.C.* (Privately published, 1875), August 17, 1860, *The American Civil War: Letters and Diaries*, www.alexanderst.com.
31. William C. Spengemann, *A New World of Words: Redefining Early American Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 37.
32. Derek Brewer, "Modernising the Medieval: Eighteenth-Century Translations of Chaucer," ed. Marie-Francoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), 103–20; and John and Bernard Bailyn Clive, "England's Cultural Provinces: Scotland and America," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 11, no. 2 (1954): 203, http://www.jstor.org/.
33. Betsy Bowden, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations from the Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Studies (Rochester, New York: D.S. Brewer, 1991), xviii.
34. *Explanatory Catalogue of H. Caritat's Circulating Library*, MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
35. John M. Coggeshall, "Chaucer in the Ozarks: A New Look at the Sources," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 45 (1981): 41–60. This is not Coggeshall's thesis; he sees these tales as twentieth-century remnants of fourteenth-century oral sources for Chaucer. For possible composite sources, see Bowden, *Eighteenth-Century Modernizations*, Appendix B, 285–300.

36. These anthologies are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 1.
37. John Dryden, *Fables: Ancient and Modern* (London: 1721). Besides their linguistic reworkings, some editions of Dryden's *Fables* made Chaucer more contemporary by printing an appendix with some of his Middle English texts in roman type (Joseph A. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?: Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book* [East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998], 161).
38. *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 18, 1756, MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
39. Catalogue of Redwood #659; Library Company, 1789, #35 and #435; and 1794 and 1801 catalogues for John Dabney's Salem Bookstore and Circulating Library, MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
40. Glenn Wright has drawn attention to an interesting paradox regarding Chaucer's association with Dryden: "Chaucer, who for several decades rode a wave of popularity initiated by Dryden's *Fables*, [went] into a bit of a popular decline just as the Middle Ages in general were experiencing an unaccustomed vogue" during the nineteenth century (201). Wright argues the reason is that Chaucer had been vaunted as a poet not of his barbarous times; because he was disassociated from the Middle Ages, he did not benefit from the increased popularity of the medieval period ("Geoffrey the Unbarbarous: Chaucerian 'Genius' and Eighteenth-Century Antimedievalism," *English Studies* 82, no. 3 [June 2001]: 193–202).
41. See for example, the 1818 catalogue for Wm. P. Blake & Co's Library, Book and Stationary Store in New York City, MSS & Archives section, New York Public Library.
42. *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1917. I found the following titles: *Select Works of the British Poets, in a Chronological Series, from Ben Jonson to Beattie* (1840 and 1845); *Select Works of the British Poets, in a Chronological Series, from Falconer to Sir Walter Scott* (1838, 1843, and 1845); *Select Works of the British Poets, in a Chronological Series, from Southey to Croly* (1843 and 1845); and simply *Select Works of the British Poets* (1820, 1831, and 1839), or *Works of the British Poets*, 3 vols. (1854).
43. John Aikin, *Letters to a Young Lady, on a Course of English Poetry* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1806), 25; D.S. Brewer, "Images of Chaucer 1386–1900," in *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature*, ed. D.S. Brewer (Tuscaloosa AL: University of Alabama Press, 1967), 262–63.
44. Aikin, *Letters to a Young Lady*, 25–26.
45. Jeffrey Plank, "John Aikin on Science and Poetry," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 18 (1977): 189.
46. Such piggybacking continues well into the nineteenth century. See, for example, James Pycroft's *A Course of English Reading* that dismisses Chaucer with a brief assessment—"few read more than one or two tales as a specimen"—yet sends readers to Dryden's *Fables*, in particular "The Cock and the Fox," Dryden's title for *The Nun's Priest's Tale* (*A Course in English*

Reading, Adapted to Every Taste and Capacity: With Anecdotes of Men of Genius [Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1845], 57–58).

47. For more on Wordsworth's modernizations, see Bruce E. Graver, ed. and comp., *Translations of Chaucer and Virgil by William Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1–29.
48. Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, 50.
49. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Portable Emerson*, new edition, edited by Carl Bode (New York: Penguin, 1946), 57; emphasis in original. From the essay "The American Scholar." Although this lecture was initially delivered to Harvard's Phi Beta Kappa Society, it resonates with other lectures he gave in lyceum venues across New England, the Mid-Atlantic, and the Midwest. See, for example, comparable remarks in his essays "English Traits" and "Books."
50. See Emerson's rant against European and British models in his essay, "Culture."
51. Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xv.
52. "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America," in *The Columbia Granger's World of Poetry*, http://0-www.columbiagrangers.org. csulib.ctstateu.edu/grangers/poemtext.do?poemSelectionId=00000057462&poemTextId=4402. According to Stephen Fender, this poem was used in "countless speeches, promotional tracts and popular illustrations to popularize the doctrine of the Manifest Destiny of American western settlement" ("Introduction," in *American and European National Identities: Faces in the Mirror*, ed. Stephen Fender [Staffordshire, UK: Keele University Press, 1996], 14).
53. See Laura Kendrick's analysis of American Anglo-Saxonism and the sense that Americans were able to turn the clock back to a preconquest period: "The American Middle Ages: Eighteenth-Century Saxonist Myth-Making," in *The Middle Ages after the Middle Ages in the English-Speaking World*, ed. Marie-Françoise Alamichel and Derek Brewer (Woodbridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 121–36.
54. John Carlos Rowe, *At Emerson's Tomb: The Politics of Classic American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 1–41, esp. 19–21.
55. John M. Murrin, "Beneficiaries of Catastrophe: The English Colonies in America," in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3–15.
56. Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt: The Years of Preparation, 1868–98* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 275–76. The single angle brackets enclosing three words in the fourth sentence indicate that they are crossed out but decipherable. See also Thomas A. Kirby, "Theodore Roosevelt on Chaucer and a Chaucerian," *Modern Language Notes* 68, no. 1 (1953): 34–37.
57. Roosevelt remained unmoved regarding Chaucer's scatology, labeling the *Tales* "altogether needlessly filthy" in a letter to a British diplomat the next week (Kirby, "Roosevelt on Chaucer," 35–36).
58. "Lounsbury's Studies in Chaucer. A Review," *The Atlantic Monthly* 69 (April 1892): 554.

59. Ambrose Bierce, "An Unreformable Reformer," *Collected Works* (1909; reprint, New York: Gordian Press, 1966), lines 21–30.
60. Nathaniel Willis and George P. Morris, cited in Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross*, 5. See, too, Willard Hunting Wright's later tirade against the "intellectual colonization of America by patronizing and contemptuous provincial English critics" (Willard Huntington Wright, "English's Intellectual Colonization of America," *The Seven Arts* [February 1917]: 395).
61. Michael G. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory*: *The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 34).
62. Charles Farrar Brown, *Artemus Ward In London and Other Papers*. (New York: G.W. Carleton and Co., 1867), 44.
63. This vein of American academic study continued until the 1950s. See Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 9–26; and Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?* 159–60.
64. J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Mind and Art of Chaucer* (1950; reprint, New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966), 20.
65. George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946).
66. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?* 159; John Matthews Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer* (New York: Henry Holt, 1926), 43.
67. "In the pronunciation of his last name, Percy MacKaye and his family retain the original Scotch pronouncing of the final vowel sound, rhyming with high. . . . Since, however, the name of the old Highland clan has taken on varied forms and accents in America, the author. . .responded to the inquiry of a Normal School teacher, in regard to his name, with the following terse couplets:

    Dear Madam: I
    Am named MacKaye.
    While one man's lackey
    Calls me Macky,
    Another's may
    Call me McKay.
    But they—they lie:
    My name's MacKaye."

    Edwin Osgood Grover, ed., *Annals of an Era: Percy MacKaye and the MacKaye Family 1826–1932, a Record of Biography and History* (Washington, DC: Pioneer, 1932), xxxviii.
68. To view out-of-copyright American Chauceriana, including works examined in this study, see http://www.english.ccsu.edu/faculty/Barrington/default.htm.

1 In the Parlor with Esq. Geoffrey Chaucer

1. Not a true poetry anthology, William Bennett's collection primarily reproduces prose (or prose translations of verse) narratives, hence his inclusion of

Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale*, ironically about gambling roisters (William J. Bennett, ed., *The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995], 233–35). See also "Chanticleer and Partlet," in Bennett's *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 458–60. Bennett's taxonomic gathering of retold tales and didactic moralizing more closely resembles the compositional techniques of Chaucer's contemporary, John Gower.

2. Rachel Hadas, "Poetry Anthologies: One of the Moister Areas of Literature," *The Writer's Chronicle* 34, no. 6 (2002): 31.
3. Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 176. Although the anthologies contributed to a noble cause, they did not escape scorn of learned men, as anticipated by the anonymous editor of *The American Poetical Miscellany*, who prefaces his 1809 volume with this apology:

   > . . .the editor's only solicitude is that [the publication] may contribute to the amusement and instruction of the young, and at least afford no just cause of offense to those whose years and reading have placed them on too proud a pedestal to stoop for literary repasts to such volumes as the miscellany.

4. Josiah Quincy, *The History of the Boston Atheneum, with biographical notices of its deceased founders* (Boston: Metcalf, 1851), 1–22.
5. Lewis P. Simpson, ed., *The Federalist Literary Mind; Selections from the* Monthly Anthology, *and* Boston Review, *1803–1811, Including Documents Relating to the Boston Athenaeum* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1962), xx.
6. Simpson, *Federalist Literary Mind*, 187–88.
7. Haynes McMullen, *American Libraries before 1876* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 89.
8. MSS and Archives section, New York Public Library.
9. John Carlos Rowe, *Literary Culture and U. S. Imperialism: From the Revolution to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
10. Peter Hulme, "Including America," *Ariel* 26 (1995): 122.
11. Richard W. Van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 7.
12. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4–6 and 272–97.
13. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), xxiii.
14. Hadas, "Poetry Anthologies," 31.
15. When folklorist F.J. Child inquired about the best edition of Chaucer to use for scholarly purposes, Frederic Madden replied that "at present I despair of seeing an Edition of Chaucer given by a scholar who is sufficiently versed in MSS to give the text strictly as it is written" (David O. Matthews, "Speaking to Chaucer: The Poet and the Nineteenth-Century Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Leslie Workman, Kathleen Verduin, and David D. Metzger [Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997], 10, citing letter from Madden to Child, November 16, 1855, Houghton Library bMS Am 1922 [185]).

The situation had not improved twenty years later, even after the Chaucer Society had published a parallel edition. For this, see William Minto's note following his entry on "Chaucer" in the 1875 *Encyclopedia Britannica* (9e), vol. 5, 449–54:

> There is no good edition of Chaucer, not even a good text. The only text or rather collection of texts that the Chaucerian scholar would think of using is the valuable parallel six-text edition, published by the Chaucer Society. For the general reader one text is about as good as another; there is little choose between Tyrwhitt's, Bell's, and Dr. Morris's text in the Aldine edition. (454)

16. Thus, I do not include such school anthologies as John S. Hart, *Class Book of Poetry* (Philadelphia: Butler & Williams, 1845); S.O. and W.M. Rossetti Beeton, ed., *Encyclopaedia of English and American Poetry from Caedmon and King Alfred's Boethius to Browning and Tennyson* (London and Philadelphia: Ward, Lock, & Tyler and George Gebbie, 1873); and Thomas Marc and Augustus White Long Parrott, ed., *English Poems from Chaucer to Kipling Edited for Use in Schools* (Boston: Ginn & Company, 1903).

    By bracketing school anthologies and curricular issues, I am not addressing many of the issues taken up by John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3–82.

17. Joseph A. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?: Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 159–60.

18. My list surely does not accurately account for all the American anthologies of British poetry published. Textual ephemera, these anthologies were often cheaply printed and bound. If saved, they are gradually crumbling away on the back shelves of American research libraries, the leftover legacies of benefactors' private libraries bestowed *in toto*. When faced with an array of codicological emergencies, librarians consider them less worthy of preservation or restoration. As a consequence, my resources are limited, and my survey of American anthologies makes no claim for covering the whole field.

    The difficulty researching these specimens is further acerbated by the little scholarly attention anthologies as a genre receive. To be sure, anthologies are often subjected to intensive critical scrutiny at the time of publication, yet, until recently, they were otherwise consigned to the dustbin of literary history. Since 1990, several important studies have begun to examine anthologies more systematically, in particular Barbara Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader: Cultural Mediation in Early Modern Literary Anthologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). Smaller investigations include Hadas, "Poetry Anthologies"; Helen Goethals, "Les Anthologies de Poesie en Angleterre Au XXesiecle 1912–1999," summarized in English in "Whither Poetry? Anthologies in Search of the Common Reader," http://nte.univ-lyon2.fr/*goethals/reception/reception_common reader.html; and several

essays by Benedict (including "The 'Beauties' of Literature, 1750–1820: Tasteful Repose and Fine Rhyme for Private Consumption," *1650–1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 1 [1994]: 317–46; and "The Eighteenth-Century Anthology and the Construction of the Expert Reader," *Poetics* 28 [2001]: 377–97).

For a vigorous censure of the genre, see Robert Graves Riding and Laura Riding, *Pamphlet against Anthologies* (London: Longmans, 1928).

19. Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion*, 1357–1900 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), xcii.
20. Spurgeon xcii, citing Edward Bysshe's introduction to his *Art of English Poetry* (1702).
21. John Bell, ed., *British Library* (London, 1782).
22. Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983; reprint 1957), 53–54. For a cogent discussion of the consequences of unauthorized publications for American literature, see Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 1–44.
23. In turning to the rhetoric of authority, late-nineteenth-century British anthologies were undoing much of the work begun by eighteenth-century anthologies that reconstructed their readers "from participants into judges of the literary enterprise" (Benedict, *Making the Modern Reader*, 370).
24. Edwin O. Chapman, ed., *A Thousand and One Gems of English and American Poetry* (New York: Hurst and Company, 1884).
25. Altick, *English Common Reader*, 275–77.
26. George Croly, ed., *The Beauties of the British Poets, with a Few Introductory Observations* (Philadelphia: C. Wells, 1831).
27. This shift in emphasis can also be traced in the development of literary studies. See Robert Scholes, *The Rise and Fall of English: Reconstructing English as a Discipline* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 12–20.
28. When I am quoting from an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century edition, the citation uses the spelling and punctuation in the anthologies and my parenthetical citations include both the page in the anthology and the corresponding lines in Larry Benson, ed., *Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985). When I am not quoting specifically from earlier edition, my citations from Chaucer's works are from *Riverside Chaucer.*
29. James T. Fields and Edwin P. Whipple, ed., *The Family Library of British Poetry, from Chaucer to the Present Time (1350–1878)* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1878); and Altick, *English Common Reader*, 308.
30. Peter Faulkner, "'The Paths of Virtue and Early English': F.J. Furnivall and Victorian Medievalism," in *From Medieval to Medievalism*, ed. John Simons (London: Macmillan, 1992), 144–58.
31. John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York: R.R. Bowker, 1972), 373–74; and F.W. Farrar, ed., *With the Poets: A Selection*

of English Poetry (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883). As archdeacon of Westminster Abbey, Farrar wrote an article for *Harper's Monthly* exerting Americans to remember that they "enjoy, no less than [the British,] the benefits of British cultural heritage" ("The Share of America in Westminster Abbey," *Harper's Monthly* 76 [January 1888]: 298).

32. This poem, titled "Truth: *Balade de Bon Conseyl*" in *Riverside*, appears in anthologies under such variations as "Fly from the Press," "Flee from the Press," and "Good Counseil of Chaucer" by anthologies discussed in this chapter. This favorite of anthologizers, probably an ephemeral or occasional piece when penned by Chaucer, permanently became an exemplar of Chaucer's corpus in the nineteenth-century anthologies (Ralph Hanna III, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996], 37–51, n37). In the twentieth century, it remained one of the more frequently anthologized medieval lyrics (Jeorg O. Fichte, "Medieval Lyrics in Twentieth-Century General Anthologies Defining the Canon," in *Anthologies of British Poetry: Critical Perspectives from Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider, and Stefanie Lethbridge, [Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994], 251–64).
33. Thomas Humphry Ward, ed., *The English Poets, Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers and a General Introduction by Matthew Arnold* (New York: Macmillan, 1889).
34. Lines 291–343 in *Riverside*.
35. Ezekiel Sanford, ed., *The Works of the British Poets* (Philadelphia: Mitchell, Ames, and White, 1819). Spurgeon lists Sanford's Chaucer volumes without mentioning their affiliation with the larger project.
36. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, ed., *Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: Appleton, 1888), 390. For example, both Sanford's Preface and the Publisher's Advertisement emphasize the entrepreneurial spirit that prompted this and previous collections.
37. James D. Hart, *The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 79.
38. Dane, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb?* 216.
39. *A Library of Poetry and Song, Being Choice Selections from the Best Poets*, introduction by William Cullen Bryant (New York: J.B. Ford and Company, 1870), iii.
40. Charles A. Dana, ed., *The Household Book of Poetry*, 10th edn. (New York: Appleton, 1865).
41. Wilson and Fiske, *Appleton's Cyclopedia*, 2.64–65.
42. Raoul Granqvist, *Imitation as Resistance: Appropriations of English Literature in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), 34.
43. Though now labeled as non-Chaucerian, these poems remained in editions of Chaucer until the second half of the nineteenth century (Kathleen Forni,

The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Counterfeit Canon [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001], 138).

44. Hart, *Popular Book*, 88–89.
45. *Library of Poetry*.
46. Hart, *Popular Book*, 136.
47. Hart, *Popular Book*, 151.
48. Henry T. Coates, ed., *The Fireside Encyclopaedia of Poetry, Comprising the Best Poems of the Most Famous Writers, English and American* (Philadelphia: Porter and Coates, 1878), v.
49. Other anthologized versions of this favorite chestnut either maintained or modernized the Middle English spelling.
50. Chapman, *Thousand and One Gems*; and John Dryden, *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, in *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker, H.T. Swedenberg, Jr., and Vinton A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956–2000).
51. The fourteen-line selection has a complex textual history. Its two stanzas are lines 365–78 of *The Courte of Sapyence*, an anonymous work dating from the middle third of the fifteenth century. The lines first appear as part of the larger poem in Harleian MS 2251, a miscellany compiled from two Shirley manuscripts (E. Ruth Harvey, ed., *The Court of Sapience* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984], xxiv). According to the 1809 transcription of the Harleian Manuscript Catalogue,

    > Here seems to be some notable Confusion; for at fol. 318. &c. the first four Stanzas of Chaucers Ballad beginning with "O Merciful, & oo merciable," are inserted properly, as part of the Poem; which may be Chaucers for ought I now know to the contrary. (*Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 582)

    In Trinity MS R.3.19, the two stanzas are cobbled together with ten other stanzas from the *Courte* and a stanza from "The Craft of Lovers" (another poem appearing in the same manuscript and attributed to Chaucer). The resulting thirteen-stanza, rhyme-royal patchwork poem begins "O Merciful, and o merciable" and is also attributed to Chaucer (Bradford Y. Fletcher, *Manuscript Trinity R.3.19: A Facsimile* [Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987], xvi–xvii, 156r, 161r–v).

    In 1561, John Stow included the poem, now only twelve stanzas long and labeled "A Ballade," at folio 343v. In the Table of Contents to the volume, he placed it under the heading "Divers other woorkes of Chaucers, never before imprinted, as hereafter foloweth" (Beinecke Idz + 532e, Yale University Library). (Compare my description to Anne Hudson's in "John Stow [1525?–1605]," in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers [Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984], 61–66). It remains in the Chaucerian canon with Speght's 1602 edition, *The Workes of Our Ancient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer*, as "A Ballade" at folio 324v. Though attributing it to Chaucer, Speght admits: "Others I have seene without any Authours name, in the hands of M. Stow that painfull Antiquarie, which for the invention I would verily judge to be Chaucers,

were it not that words and phrases carry not every where Chaucers Antiquitie" (Beinecke 1742, Yale University Library). See also Kathleen Forni's discussion in *Chaucerian Apocrypha*, 37–38 and 75.

Tyrwhitt, on the other hand, rejects the lines as illegitimate, along with many of the works long attributed to Chaucer that he also rejects in his edition of *Chaucer's Poetical Works*. After reminding his readers that he has previously at least explained in print his suspicions about *Assembly of Ladies*, *A Praise of Women*, and *Remedie of Love*, he is less decorous in his rejection of other inauthentic works: "It would be a waste of time to sift accurately the heap of rubbish, which was added, by J. Stowe [sic], to the Edit. of 1561." As proof of his case about wasting time, he directs his reader to his prime specimen of spuriousness, "O merciful and o merciable," the poem from which Chapman extracts "Mercy" (Thomas Tyrwhitt, ed., *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* [London: Routledge, 1868], 450).

2 Sir Geoffrey, Percy Mackaye, and Civic Art

1. The opera had its world premiere at the Metropolitan Opera on March 8, 1917.
2. Irving Kolodin, *The Metropolitan Opera, 1883–1966: A Candid History* (New York: Knopf, 1966), 309–13.
3. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Evening Journal*, March 9, 1917, MacKaye Family Archives, Percy MacKaye Papers, Collection housed at Dartmouth College Library, Hanover, New Hampshire, ML 5.
4. Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492–Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 352–54. Though the war was a boon to commercial interests, the majority of Americans did not support entering the war (T.J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 [June 1985]: 586, n46).
5. Woodrow Wilson, "War Message," in *War Messages*, Senate Doc. No. 5 (Washington, DC: 65th Congress, 1st Session, 1917), http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1917/wilswarm.html.
6. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Herald*, April 8, 1917, PMacKPapers.
7. Correspondence, PM to RdK, July 19, 1915, PMacKPapers.
8. Quaintance Eaton, *The Miracle of the Met: An Informal History of the Metropolitan Opera, 1883–1967* (New York: Meredith Press, 1968), 194–95.
9. Percy MacKaye, lyricist, and Reginald de Koven, composer, *The Canterbury Pilgrims, An Opera in Four Acts* (Cincinnati and New York: John Church Company, 1916), 54.
10. Percy MacKaye, *The Canterbury Pilgrims: An Opera (Libretto)* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 54; and Scrapbook clipping, unknown source, April 3, 1917, PMacKPapers. Compare this with Metropolitan manager, Giulio Gatti-Casazza's version: "There was an immense stir in the house. Backstage, in the wings, Mme. Margarete Ober, who was a patriotic

German, was so affected by the news that she fainted away, and we had to go through the last act without her" (*Memories of the Opera* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941], 179–80). According to all sources, Mme. Ober did sing the season's remaining two performances.

Already, the opera was associated with entering the war: the second performance had been attended by Ambassador James Gerard (had he nothing better to do?), and the *New York City Times* duly noted that he "listened with evident interest to a language which he and his official staff had been hissed for using when attending theatres in Berlin" (Scrapbook clipping, March 17, 1917, PMacKPapers).

11. Eaton, *Miracle of the Met*, 193–95.
12. T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 142–81.

    On Chaucer's emerging middle-class readership in the United States, see my chapters 1 and 4.
13. During the fifteen-year period MacKaye wrote and reconfigured *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, his theoretical work split American culture into two venues: legitimate art embraced by the genteel tradition and popular entertainment indulged by the masses, what Van Wyck Brooks would sardonically classify as "highbrow" and "lowbrow." There was no spot in MacKaye's conceptualization for Brooks' third category, "middlebrow." Instead, he sought to create a genial middle ground between serious art and vulgar entertainment, a place where subsidized artists could provide a homogenous, unified culture for all Americans. This middle ground, however, would not borrow the lower entertainments to be refashioned as high art; instead it would make elite culture accessible to the inadequately educated lower classes. MacKaye's vision was not an anomaly, for it shared assumptions with the self-help movement propelled by educated progressives. For a discussion of the split MacKaye sought to bridge, see Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 69–78.
14. I use Jack Poggi's term "noncommercial theater" to identify organizations whose "motive was usually (though not always) to gain artistic freedom by reducing financial obligations" (Jack Poggi, *Theater in America: The Impact of Economic Forces, 1870–1967* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968], 99–100).
15. For his final interview, see *Saturday Review*, September 3, 1955, PMacKPapers, 149:1.
16. MacKaye's books advocating the theatre's social pragmatism are *The Playhouse and the Play and Other Addresses Concerning the Theatre and Democracy in America* (1909; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure: A Book of Suggestions* (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, per title page 1912 [s.b. 1913]), and *A Substitute for War* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).

17. To understand how the American theatre appeared to wary observers and thus differed from the theatre after 1920, I have turned to MacKaye's contemporaries, such early critics and literary historians as Walter Eaton, Arthur Hornblower, Montrose Moses, William Phelps, and William Winter, who blamed the Syndicate and the Shuberts for all of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American theatre's perceived ills, from bad writing to insipid acting. Together, these multiple voices registered the common explanation for the dreariness of the theatre, and for nearly a century, the opinions of these sources were taken at face value and repeated unreflectively. Now, however, evaluation of the duopoly is perceived as less apocalyptic: the nineteenth century is no longer seen as "the total wasteland it was taken to be," and contempt for the American theatre before World War I is now seen as a reaction against the tastes of the "new mass public" (Christopher Bigsby and Don B. Wilmeth, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 2: 1870–1945*, ed. Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999], 1–3). For my purposes, however, I am interested in the biases that colored MacKaye's perception of the theatre. Therefore, I continue to rely on his contemporaries' subjective, even unfounded, impressions. For these, see Walter Prichard Eaton, *The American Stage of To-Day* (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1908), 23–26 and 58–69; Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America: From Its Beginnings to the Present Time* (1919; reprint, New York: Benjamin Bloom, 1965), 138–332; Montrose J. Moses, "The Drama, 1860–1918," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. William Peterfield Trent, John Erskine, Stuart P. Sherman, and Carl Van Doren., Later National Literature: Part II, Vol. 3 (1921; reissued, New York: Macmillan, 1931); Montrose J. Moses, *The American Dramatist* (1925; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964); William Winter, *Vagrant Memories, Being Further Recollections of Other Days* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1915); and William Lyon Phelps, *The Twentieth Century Theatre: Observations on the Contemporary English and American Stage* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), 1–41.
18. Russell Lynes, *The Lively Audience: A Social History of the Visual and Performing Arts in America, 1890–1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 174.
19. Douglas McDermott, "The Theatre and Its Audience: Changing Modes of Social Organization in the American Theatre," in *The American Stage: Social and Economic Issues from the Colonial Period to the Present*, ed. Ron Engle and Tice L. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12–13.
20. Poggi, *Theater in America*, 35.
21. John Frick, "A Changing Theatre: New York and Beyond," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 2*, ed. Wilmeth and Bigsby, 215.
22. Lynes, *Lively Audience*, 24.
23. Bigsby and Wilmeth, "Introduction," 2–6; and Thomas Postlewait, "The Hieroglyphic Stage: American Theatre and Society, Post–Civil War to

1945," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 2*, ed. Wilmeth and Bigsby, 113–15.

24. Lynes, *Lively Audience*, 18; and Frick, "Changing Theatre," 212.
25. Ronald Wainscott, "Plays and Playwrights: 1896–1915," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume 2*, ed. Wilmeth and Bigsby, 263; and Moses, *American Dramatist*, 346, citing MacKaye's preface to "A Garland to Silvia" (1899).
26. Van Wyck Brooks, *An Autobiography* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1965), 111.
27. Thomas Dickinson, typescript of speech, March 16, 1945, PMacKPapers, 51:2.
28. Arvia MacKaye Ege, *The Power of the Impossible: The Life Story of Percy and Marion MacKaye* (Falmouth, ME: The Keenebec River Press, 1992), 20–35.

    The eldest daughter of Percy and Marion MacKaye, Ege relies primarily on her mother's extensive diaries and often reproduces entries from them. Because of the difficulty deciphering Marion's hastily penned entries, I rely on Ege whenever possible.
29. Gerald Bordman, *The Concise Oxford Companion to American Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), q.v. "Steele MacKaye."
30. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 29.
31. Percy MacKaye, *A Sketch of His Life, with Bibliograpy of His Works. Reprinted from the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Report of the Class of 1897, Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard College, 1922).
32. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 55–56.
33. Ronald H. Wainscott, *The Emergence of the Modern American Theater, 1914–1929* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 262; and Thomas H. Dickinson, *Playwrights of the New American Theater* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 2–5.
34. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 70. While in Europe, MacKaye matriculated at University of Leipzig, imitating the model set by Harvard's esteemed philologists under whom he had studied, Francis James Child, who studied at Göttingen and Berlin, and George Lyman Kittredge, who studied at Leipzig and Tübingen (Jo McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature: The Creation of an Academic Discipline* [Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1985], 17).
35. Besides MacKaye, the group included William Vaughn Moody, E.A. Robinson, Josephine Peabody, and Ridgely Torrence. Their early works often dealt with medieval themes and employed British authors as main characters. The creative potential of this "young, inspired phalanx of American poets" was recognized by Edmund Stedman, an essayist responsible for promoting American poetry in the nineteenth century (Edwin Osgood Grover, ed., *Annals of an Era: Percy MacKaye and the MacKaye Family 1826–1932, a Record of Biography and History* [Washington, DC: Pioneer, 1932], 416). An advocate of literary romanticism, Stedman regularly decried modern writers for telling the stories of common men (Carole Klein, *Gramercy Park* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987],

162–63). According to MacKaye, Stedman's death prevented a sequel to his influential *The Poets of America* (1885) and *An American Anthology* (1900), thereby thwarting an early and accurate accounting of the importance of MacKaye and his cohort, as well as allowing them to be ignored and overshadowed by Amy Lowell's survey, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry* (1917). See MacKaye's introductory notes to William Vaughn Moody and Percy MacKaye, "Introduction," in *Letters to Harriet* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935).

36. Deborah Elizabeth Van Buren, "The Cornish Colony: Expressions of Attachment to Place, 1885–1915" (Ph.D. diss., The George Washington University, 1987), 3–5. See also Homer Saint-Gaudens, "Lesser Literary Centres of America: Cornish, NH," February 1906, PMacKPapers.
37. Virginia Reed Colby and James B. Atkinson, *Footprints of the Past: Images of Cornish, New Hampshire and the Cornish Colony* (Concord, NH: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1996), 259–66, 280–85, and 428–39. MacKaye and his family moved to Cornish in 1904, and MacKaye maintained a home there until his death in 1956.
38. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 136.
39. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 161.
40. William Pratt, *Miami Poets: Percy MacKaye and Ridgely Torrence* (Oxford, OH: Friends of the Library Society, Miami University, 1988), 4.
41. Moody and MacKaye, "Introduction," 40.
42. By the time he gathered Moody's letters in a posthumous volume in 1935, MacKaye's nearly irrational antagonism toward the commercial theatre led him to blame his friend's lethal brain tumor on having to battle "against cruelly adverse conditions of the theatre to save the integrity of his second play's production" (Moody and MacKaye, "Introduction," 30).
43. Moody and MacKaye, "Introduction," 231.
44. Board, *Oxford Companion to American Theatre*, q.v. "Percy MacKaye."
45. For the sake of clarity, my discussion calls the character in MacKaye's play "Sir Geoffrey," reserving the name "Chaucer" for the historical poet.
46. "The Tabard" (I.20), "Bobbe-up-and-doun" (IX.2), and "Caunterbury" (I.16 and 793) are locations found in Chaucer; the One Nine-pin Inn is MacKaye's addition.
47. In the play's appendix, MacKaye notes that Wycliffe died in 1384, but "for dramatic purposes" the writer chose to ignore the anachronism (Percy MacKaye, *The Canterbury Pilgrims, A Comedy* [New York: Macmillan, 1903], 210).
48. In his explication of *The Canterbury Tales*, Kittredge extends the metaphor of the tale-telling pilgrimage's dramatic action by identifying "[t]wo acts in Chaucer's Human Comedy. . .so completely wrought that we may study their dramatic structure with confidence"(George Lyman Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946], 167–68). One, the Marriage Group, roughly corresponds in MacKaye's

play to the Wife of Bath's stunts to marry a sixth time; the second, to the dramatic unfolding of the Prioress's and Chaucer's personalities.

49. MacKaye's Lady Eglantine resembles Kittredge's view of Madame Eglantine, as the most "sympathetically conceived" and "delicately portrayed" of the pilgrims (175). Kittredge emphasizes her noble birth, her "gentleness and sweet dignity." In his estimation nothing about her is comical or deserving of our scorn or derision—she is not precious but precise (175–77).
50. The 1381 Uprising is also known as the Peasant's Revolt and the Great Revolt. For a succinct discussion of Richard's role in the events, see Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1997), 56–82.
51. The historical King Richard appeased those who had stormed London by promising to nullify their serfdom (Saul, *Richard II*, 68).
52. Saul, *Richard II*, 74.
53. Ironically, during the 1381 Uprising millers were ambiguously situated, both as targets representing manorial greed and as participants in the violence against seigneurial authority (Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* [Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991], 254–58).
54. Henry Bradley, "Slang," in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910–11), 209.

    MacKaye's infusion of slang was noted by a British reviewer at the *Manchester Guardian* (June 16 and September 8, 1903) who takes affront at the sordid use of American slang (Scrapbook clippings, PMacKPapers).
55. J.E. Lighter, ed., *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang* (New York: Random House, 1994), q.v. "gravy."
56. Eric Partridge, *Macmillan Dictionary of Historical Slang* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), q.v. "shirt in the wind," "flap."
57. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), 76.
58. MacKaye, with his frequent stays at gentlemen's clubs not far from the working class districts while his family was back in Massachusetts or New Hampshire, was probably exposed to this street life.
59. Lynes, *Lively Audience*, 173.
60. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 67. Male fairies were referred to as lisping, an attribute Chaucer gives to the Friar (1.264) and which MacKaye continues to emphasize.

    Before World War I, "fairy" had other meanings also. It was slang for a prostitute, a pejorative label that even the most misogynistic commentators would be loath to foist on the Wife of Bath. It could also refer to a "debauched, hideous old woman, especially when drunk" (Partridge, *Macmillan Dictionary of Historical Slang*, q.v. "fairy").
61. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 65.
62. Hegeman, *Patterns for America*, 217, n16.

    I take the term "Brain Workers" from a Coca Cola ad advising "Students and all Brain Workers" to take "one glass of Coca-Cola at eight to keep the brain clear and mind active until eleven" (*Scribner's*, May 1905, 135).

63. Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 56–81.
64. Correspondence, PM to MM, May 23, 1902, PMacKPapers, 56:1; and Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 98.

MacKaye's fascination with Chaucer seems to stem from his studies with Francis Child, experiences he recounts in a short dedicatory poem:

> How fain we conjure back his smile! How fain
> As, bow'd with musings long on elvish lore,
> He clutched his satchel at the class-room door
> And shot the quick "Good morning, gentlemen!"
> From under the bronze curls, and entered. Then
> For us that hour of quaint illusion wore
> Such spell as when, beside the Breton shore,
> The wizard Clerk astounded Dorigen.
> For we beheld the Nine-and-Twenty ride
> Through those dim aisles their deathless pilgrimage,
> Lady and monk and rascal laugh and chide,
> Living and loving on the enchanted page,
> Whilst, half apart, there murmured side by side
> The master-poet and the scholar-mage.
> (Grover, *Annals of an Era*, 474)

Studying with Child at Harvard provided MacKay a way to understand Chaucer as a worthy member of the English poetic pantheon: though Chaucer's versification had previously been perceived as rather rough and primitive, Child's careful philological studies discerned which final "e"s were be pronounced, which were not (McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature*, 102).

65. Garff B. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre: From* Ye Bear and Ye Cubb *to* Hair (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 280.
66. Based on the letters and documents in the MacKaye archives, my chronology of MacKaye's collaboration with Sothern differs from the one provided in Moses, *American Dramatist*, 345–46.

In his memoirs, drama critic William Winter (1836–1917) assesses Sothern's career:

> But while it cannot justly be said that this actor has provided any splendid, inspiring example, or made upon the Theatre and the public mind an impression destined to endure, it can justly be declared that he exhibited energy and zeal, a high order of talent, much force of character, and that, as a whole, he has exerted a beneficient influence. He now [1915] largely dominates the dramatic field in America, partly because of his abilities, and partly because of the dearth, which seems to increase, of dramatic genius and artistic competition. The sum-total of his achievement is substantial and admirable, and he has richly deserved the public gratitude and esteem. (Winter, *Vagrant Memories*, 445–46)

67. Correspondence PM to ES, July 7, 1902, PMacKPapers, 53:5.
68. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 113 and 116, citing Marion's diary entries dated June 19, 1902 and January 10, 1903.
69. Correspondence, PM to ES, July 7, 1902, PMacKPapers, 53:5.
70. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Times*, May 3, 1903, PMacKPapers.
71. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 116, citing Marion's diary entry dated October 21, 1902.
72. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 116.

    In later accounts, the play gets commissioned by Sothern and Julia Marlowe, who by 1905 had become the most famous pair of Shakespearean actors in the United States. Of course, this account of the play's origins is inaccurate. Not only was Cecilia Loftus originally tabbed to be the female lead (not Julia Marlowe), but Marlowe did not join Sothern until September 1904, well after Sothern had dropped the rights to *The Canterbury Pilgrims*. See Charles Edward Russell, *Julia Marlowe, Her Life and Art* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1926), 310–11.
73. MacKaye's emphasis. Correspondence, PM to MM, May 23, 1902, PMacKPapers, 56:1.
74. Early publicity simply calls it a play "written by Percy MacKaye and accepted for production by E.H. Sothern" (Scrapbook clippings, February and March 1903, PMacKPapers).
75. Scrapbook clipping, "A New Mackaye [*sic*] Star Is Rising," *Buffalo Courier*, December 7, 1902, PMacKPapers. One news reports speculated the play's title to be *An Idyl of Canterbury* (Scrapbook clipping, undated, unaffiliated, PMacKPapers).
76. Grover, *Annals of an Era*, 114.
77. Publishing new plays was a fairly recent innovation (Phelps, *Twentieth Century Theatre*, 6–7).
78. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, March 12, 1903, PMacKPapers.
79. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Telegraph*, March 13, 1903, PMacKPapers. Other factors leaked through the press were Sothern's fear that the play would not have a popular appeal, and without that, it would not have a long run, a cause for concern considering the size of the cast and the elaborate sets. His costar, Cecilia Loftus, on the other hand, was concerned about parading around in man's attire and full beard (Scrapbook clipping, *New York Commercial Advertiser*, March 12, 1903, PMacKPapers).
80. Later, Sothern bought the rights for and produced MacKaye's *Jeanne d'Arc*, in which Julia Marlowe starred. This collaboration led to friction between MacKaye and Sothern, and their relations remained so strained that in 1913, Sothern resisted releasing his rights to this second play so that MacKaye's collaborator after 1909, Charles Coburn, could produce it (Correspondence, EC to PM, October 15, 1913, PMacKPapers, 54:2).
81. Scrapbook clipping, John Corbin, *New York Times*, May 3, 1903, PMacKPapers.

82. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 118.
83. Fast on its heels, and perhaps capitalizing on the flurry of press surrounding the play's continued publicity, another publisher released in 1904 MacKaye's second Chaucerian work, Percy MacKaye, trans., Walter Appleton Clark, illus., *The Canterbury Tales of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Modern Rendering into Prose of the Prologue and Nine Tales* (New York: Fox, Duffield, 1904).
84. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 118. This similarity was promoted by MacKaye, and he boasted that the play "in book form is used by many Chaucer classes" (Scrapbook clipping, PMacKPapers).

    Using the Ellesmere image of Chaucer anticipates the twentieth-century trend away from the nineteenth-century's favored image of Chaucer based on the one in Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* (David R. Carlson, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portraits," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 [1991]: 283–300).
85. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Mirror*, May 30, 1903, PMacKPapers.
86. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Herald*, September 27, 1903, PMacKPapers.
87. Correspondence, PM to VA, June 7, 1907, PMacKPapers, 53:7.
88. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Mirror*, PMacKPapers. Correspondence indicates MacKaye received requests for more amateur performances, but the records are inconclusive on the number of performances that occurred.
89. MacKaye, *Playhouse and the Play*. These lectures were delivered from 1907 to 1908 at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, the University of Chicago, the University of Michigan, and several California universities, as well as literary associations and leagues in New York and Chicago. MacKaye's early lectures, essays, and books anticipate the steady flow of pre–World War I critical studies focusing on the social impact of drama in the United States (Ira A. Levine, *Left-Wing Dramatic Theory in the American Theatre* [Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1985], 20).
90. Michael J. Mendelsohn, "Percy MacKaye's Dramatic Theories," *Bulletin of the Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association* 24 (1970): 89.
91. MacKaye's conception of the viability of endowed theatre seemed undermined by the colossal failure of New York City's New Theatre (1909–11), a theatre subsidized by wealthy patrons that was supposed to provide innovative drama in repertory. They built a palatial theatre and hired "a full design, technical, and business staff and, as the centerpiece of the repertory idea, twenty-eight actors." It failed, as MacKaye had predicted in 1910, because it was not truly endowed (MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 145–47). Moreover, the New Theatre failed to be truly innovative because it did not produce new dramatic works and stuck to old principles by paying its stars, Sothern and Marlowe, eight times more than any other actors (Mark Fearnow, "Theatre Groups and Their Playwrights," in *Cambridge History of American Theatre*, Volume 2, ed. Wilmeth and Bigsby, 346).
92. MacKaye, *Playhouse and the Play*, 145.
93. MacKaye, *Playhouse and the Play*, 142. It should be noted that MacKaye's salary proposal is buried in a hypothetical news clipping from the future (134–43).

94. D. Heyward Brock and James M. Welsh, "Percy MacKaye: Community Drama and the Masque Tradition," *Comparative Drama* 6 (1972): 71–76.
95. MacKaye later addresses the question of integrating immigrants and newly naturalized citizens in his opera libretto, *The Immigrants*, and in his pageant, *The New Citizenship*, where "manifold cultures, languages, arts and crafts of all peoples in the persons of our new citizens" gather at the "altar of our English-speaking tradition" (*The Immigrants: A Lyric Drama* [New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1915]; and *The New Citizenship: A Civic Ritual Devised for Places of Public Meeting in America* [New York: Macmillan, 1915], 14).
96. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, 154–55. These ideas first appeared in print by 1911, when Kittredge identifies *The General Prologue* as "'the first act of the play,' not a 'place to predict the future'" (Clyde Kenneth Hyder, *George Lyman Kittredge: Teacher and Scholar* [Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1962], 136, citing Kittredge's "The Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, second series, 30 (1910/1911): 87–95; the paper was first read October 26, 1910). This assessment gained greater circulation in 1915 with six lectures Kittredge delivered at Johns Hopkins more than a decade after MacKaye first published his play. Rather than claim I have uncovered the source of Kittredge's ideas, I wonder if Kittredge had been playing around with these ideas as far back as his earliest years on the Harvard faculty, a time when MacKaye was an undergraduate studying English literature. (I have not determined what class, if any at all, MacKaye studied with Kittredge who joined the Harvard faculty in the 1880s but did not teach the Chaucer seminar until after Child's death in September 1896.) Another probable explanation is that Baker's class at Harvard signaled that an enthusiasm for drama was in the air, and Kittredge's lectures developed in an atmosphere where drama was being studied with fresh vigor.

    In addition, Kittredge was not the first to articulate the dramatic qualities inherent in the *General Prologue*. Adolphus William Ward, a British academician, claimed that Chaucer "pointed the way" for the Elizabethan dramatic poets. Chaucer's assembly of personages in the *General Prologue*, Ward claimed, were "real human beings" in a "strong dramatic situation" expressed in "the right words," elements "which have determined the success of many plays, and the absence of which materially detracts from the completeness of the effect of others," cited in Derek Brewer, ed., *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1978), 215.

    MacKaye's play also adumbrates David Wallace's argument that Chaucer figures himself "as a putative husband for the Wife of Bath" by positioning "himself as a sixth of six [among the *General Prologue* rogues]" and thus identifying "himself as just the man that the Wife is looking for: "Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he shal' (3.45)" (*Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997], 66 and 82).
97. Correspondence, PM to George Brett, January 30, 1903, PMacKPapers, 53:3.

98. MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 47.
99. Poggi, *Theater in America*, 35.
100. Coburn Promotional Material, PMacKPapers, 53:9; Poggi, *Theater in America*, 101; and Bordman, *Concise Oxford Companion to American Theatre*, q.v. "Coburn, Charles." One of the troop's actors, August Duncan, brother of the pioneering American dancer Isadora Duncan, also functioned as the group's artistic director.

    After the death of his wife, Ivah Wilis, in 1937, Coburn left the stage and became a character actor in films, winning an Oscar for best supporting actor in 1941. His papers are stored at the University of Georgia's Hagrett Library; nothing from his touring company appears in the collection's inventory.
101. Correspondence, CC to PM, October 27, 1908, PMacKPapers, 53:9; and correspondence, PM to RdeK, February 18, 1914, PMacKPapers, 54:12.
102. Correspondence, L.M. Goodstadt (Coburn's business manager) to PM, June 18, 1910, PMacKPapers, 53:35.
103. Announcement, PMacKPapers, 152:2.

    The only extant description of a Coburn production of the play was published by Mary Fanton Roberts ("The Value of Outdoor Plays to America: Through the Pageant Shall We Develop a Drama of Democracy?" *The Craftsman* 16 [August 1909]: 491–506). It is reproduced in this book's Appendix, pages 161–2.
104. Coburn's pamphlet, "University Players," laid out a plan for presenting to schools drama too difficult for amateur groups to perform (MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 48).

    Whereas Yale, Harvard, and the University of Chicago were slow to commit to sponsoring performances, women's colleges and schools in the south, midwest, and west were eager to book the Players (Correspondence, PM to CC, February 23, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:16). These performances help account for *Canterbury Pilgrims*'s reputation at colleges and universities. In addition to its being used in some college Chaucer classes (per MacKaye), many of these schools presented the play. Records include Willemette University in Salem, Oregon; University of Denver; and Mount Holyoke College. Some requests for permission to perform were not granted because Coburn continued to hold the rights even after he ceased to perform it.
105. Having now changed the group's name to Coburn Players, Coburn primarily chose classic plays from the Greeks and Shakespeare. MacKaye's plays, which had titles connecting them to canonical works of literature, were the first American plays he added to the group's repertoire.
106. Lynes, *Lively Audience*, 183–84.
107. George Baker began teaching at Harvard in 1905 and created his playwriting class, 47 Workshop, in 1913 (Frick, "Changing Theatre," 223–25).

    MacKaye and Coburn actively worked to broker this development to their advantage. In the pamphlet circulated to universities and reproduced

in MacKaye's book, they urged colleges and universities to join forces by forming "a coöperative organization, to give a consecutive route of at least ten weeks" to a company of professional players (MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 48). The two were also very active in forming the University Theatre Movement (Correspondence, CC to PM, April 29, 1910, PMacKPapers, 53:35).

108. Mina Carson, *Settlement Folk: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885–1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), 27–50; Constance D'Arcy MacKay, *The Little Theatre in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917); Clarence Arthur Perry, *The Work of the Little Theatres: The Groups They Include, the Plays They Produce, Their Tournaments, and the Handbooks They Use* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1933); Ann Larabee, "'The Drama of Transformation': Settlement House Idealism and the Neighborhood Playhouse," in *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 123–36; and Lillian D. Wald, *Windows on Henry Street* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1941), 132–74.
109. Correspondence, PM to CC, June 5, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:16.
110. MacKaye, *Sketch of His Life*, 7. In hindsight, Coburn's insistence that MacKaye not give permission for amateur groups to produce the play probably meant that it did not enter the repertoire of college and school drama clubs starting to burgeon on the eve of World War I. On the few occasions MacKaye gave permission, such as to Swarthmore's Senior class (June 10, 1912) or to Chicago College Club (May 14, 1912), Coburn reprimanded MacKaye because such productions interfered with the business of the Coburn Players. Moreover, Coburn insisted, a good production of the play is "practically impossible for <u>amateurs</u> and they therefore <u>spoil</u> the effect and kill it for us" (Coburn's emphasis, Correspondence, CC to PM, July 19, 1912, PMacKPapers, 155:11).

    Dickinson, *Playwrights of the New American Theater*, 10–14.
111. Although Coburn's strategy of touring colleges and universities with the play provided the primary means by which the play was produced, MacKaye's accounts and that of his daughter Arvia practically ignore the strategy's success, limited though it was. They are both more intent on how the philistines in commercial theatre ruined him and his plays. See Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 160–68; and Moody and MacKaye, "Introduction," 50–53.
112. At the same time Coburn took Chaucer on the road and MacKaye began fitting the play for a pageant (see next section), MacKaye and John S.P. Tatlock, professor of medieval literature at University of Michigan, modernized the entire Chaucer oeuvre (Percy MacKaye and John S.P. Tatlock, trans., *The Complete Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Now First Put into Modern English* [New York: Macmillan Company, 1912]). The two were Harvard friends (Grover, *Annals of an Era*, 283). Although Tatlock's name does not appear anywhere in the earlier 1904 *Rendering* (see n83), the two friends' correspondence reveals Tatlock's contribution to the earlier project: this larger, later project was an extension of the first one.

The larger project came about when George Brett at Macmillan approached MacKaye about a "complete rendering into prose of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, to be published as 'Chaucer for Modern Readers'. . . .[Brett] thought it would be very successful and remunerative" (Correspondence, GB to PM, March 26, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:32; and MacKaye and Tatlock, *Complete Poetical Works*, viii). MacKaye asked Tatlock to be his collaborator. MacKaye wanted the contract and title-page to reflect a fifty-fifty partnership, and if Tatlock ended up with a disproportionate amount of work, the additional financial exchange would be private. Tatlock, however, was also overworked and proposed that his wife Marjorie do his share, assuring MacKaye that due to her "training and her style" plus his supervision there would be nothing objectional about her work (Correspondence, JT to PM, March 30, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:32). Though Tatlock had second thoughts about leaving Marjorie off the contract and title page, she appears in neither and is relegated to a brief appreciation: "grateful thanks to Marjorie Fenton Tatlock for her ever-obliging, painstaking, and tasteful work in collaborating" (Correspondence, JT to PM, July 9, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:32) and "Preface," MacKaye and Tatlock, *Complete Poetical Works*, viii.

Later when Duffield and Fox objected to the Macmillan publication, claiming that it too closely ressembled the 1904 *Rendering*, Marjorie's contributions were acknowledged, though her work was labeled "the subordinate assistance of some Chaucerian students" (Correspondence, PM to Pitts Duffield, October 17, 1912, PMacKPapers, 155:11), and MacKaye's share changed to one-third, Tatlock's to two-thirds (Correspondence, PM to Macmillan, December 2, 1912, PMacKPapers, 155:13). Eventually, Tatlock is given (or accepts) primary, if not exclusive, responsibility for the translation. In the posthumous collection of his essays, Tatlock is informally given sole credit for the translation in the collection's introduction, and formally given primary credit in the list of his writings (J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Mind and Art of Chaucer* [1950; reprint, New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966], v and 107).

Macmillan offered 15 percent royalties for the expensive edition and 10 percent for the cheap one, much less than the 30 percent MacKaye and Tatlock hoped for. The percentage, Brett admitted, was "not very satisfactory from the standpoint of immediate return from the work," but he hoped the book would "find a continued sale for many years to come" and provide "in the course of time. . .a fair return" (Correspondence, GB to PM, April 13, 1909).

The next issues were the bawdy passages. What about "a perfectly incorrigible tale as The Sumner's?" Tatlock asked. "Are we to consider the babes and sucklings at all?" (Correspondence, JT to PM, April 17, 1909). They decided there "must be no actually bawdy passages included" (Correspondence, JT to PM, June 24, 1909). Tasteless passages were silently elided with "***."

Released on October 9, 1912 as part of Macmillan's Modern Reader's Series, Tatlock and MacKaye's translation was touted by advertisements as both faithful to the original and sensitive to modern propriety:

> The editors have kept as much of Chaucer's raciness and archaic savor as is consistent with the reader's ease and have been strictly faithful to the original, paraphrasing as little as possible, and never misrepresenting.
>
> It is believed, therefore, that the present volume will be welcomed by a great number of cultured people everywhere, who, desirous of becoming fully acquainted with this classic English poet, but unversed in old English, have experienced difficulty in reading Chaucer in the original. (Scrapbook advertisement, PMacKPapers)

For a recent assessment of the complete translation, see Steve Ellis, "Popular Chaucer and the Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Leslie J. Workman, Kathleen Verduin, and David D. Metzger (Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 103–5. Still sitting on the shelves of many school, university, and public libraries in the United States, it long remained the only complete translation of Chaucer's works.

113. In 1905, MacKaye wrote the poetic prologue to and performed in one of the first American instances of "community. . .dramatic art," *The Masque of the Golden Bowl*, written by Louis Shipman and produced by the residents of the Cornish, New Hampshire artists colony to honor Homer Saint-Gaudens (Van Buren, "Cornish Colony," 202–9; and Percy MacKaye, "American Pageants and Their Promise," illus. Eric Pape, *Scribner's* [1909]: 31).
114. David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 43. By World War I, American pageantry had been thoroughly professionalized. It had its own association, archivists, professors of pageantry, and numerous books detailing "the organization and effective administration of a pageant" in terms that parallel those of large business (Linwood Taft, *The Technique of Pageantry* [1921; reprint, New York: A.S. Barnes and Company, 1930], 1). For a sense of American pageantry's sudden florescence, see "Inventory of William Chauncy Langdon Papers (1898–1940)," MS.82.1 (John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI).
115. "Inventory of William Chauncy Langdon Papers (1898–1940)," MS.82.1, xxxiii.
116. MacKaye, *Substitute for War*, 40.
117. Carson, *Settlement Folk*, 11–13; and Richard L. McCormick, "Public Life in Industrial America, 1877–1917," in *The New American History*, ed. Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 106–11.
118. Correspondence, PM to EP, PMacKPapers, 63:2 and 152:12.

Pape's artistic affiliation with Gloucester began in 1907 when he designed a colossal bronze tablet for Gloucester's commemoration of the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

According to the program, Pape was the pageant-master and MacKaye was the playwright, but based on their correspondence the duties did not divide so simply. Pape spent more time than MacKaye in Gloucester rehearsing the various groups, but MacKaye developed and shaped the framing pageant and the publicity.

119. Of the fifty-four men on the Gloucester Day Committee, at least forty were local businessmen or mid-level city managers. The rest were teachers, summer residents, and outside consultants, such as MacKaye and Pape (*The Gloucester Directory* [Boston: Sampson and Murdock, 1909]).
120. The pageant was not sponsored by local taxes, for the records show that the city's only expenditure for the event was $42.75 for "ringing bells" that occurred at sunrise, noon, and sunset and $8.75 for advertisement in the *Gloucester Daily Times* listing locations ("Inaugural Address of the Mayor with the Annual Reports of the City of Gloucester for the Year 1909," City Documents No. 36 [Gloucester, MA: Press of the Gloucester Times, 1910], line 54 under "Recreation" in inserted 1909 Financial Report, and page 123, Cape Ann Historical Society).
121. Joseph Garland, *Boston's Gold Coast: The North Shore, 1890–1929* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1981), 6.
122. Garland, *Boston's Gold Coast*, 7.
123. Taft, *Technique of Pageantry*, 1.
124. MacKaye, "American Pageants and Their Promise," 28; and Anna de Koven, *A Musician and His Wife* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1926), 233–35.
125. *Gloucester Pageant: Official Program*, (1909), 1. From the Cape Ann Historical Association Library.
126. When William Chauncy Langdon, American pageantry's first chronicler and working under the auspices of the Russell Sage Foundation, inquired into the Gloucester Day records, he noticed the same incongruity:

    I do not understand what relation the play had to the rest of the Gloucester festival, whether the play was simply a part of the pageant or whether the pageant came in as a part of the play in the fourth act." (Correspondence, WCL to Hazel MacKaye, August 1, 1910, William Chauncy Langdon Papers, Box 120 #13, John Hay Library, Brown University, Providence, RI).
127. MacKaye, "American Pageants and Their Promise," 28.
128. *Gloucester Pageant*, 1.
129. Grover, *Annals of an Era*, 104.
130. *Gloucester Pageant*, 9.

    We can imagine a motley collection of costumes put together by the participants, using remnant pieces of clothing, much as the one foisted on Booth Tarkington's eponymous young hero, Penrod, whose mother and sister dress him for his role in the community pageant as Sir Lancelot—following the pageant mistress' instructions that the costumes be "'as medieval and artistic as possible'"—in his sister's pale blue silk stockings,

the bodice of the dress his mother had worn at her coming out, his father's red flannel underwear ("[r]eversed, fore to aft, with the great part of the legs cut off"), slippers decorated with rosettes, powdered hair, a mantel ornamented with a red cross, and a sword borrowed from a Knight of Pythias (Booth Tarkington, *Penrod* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1914], 21–29).

131. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," *New York Times*, August 5, 1909, 7.
132. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 4, 1909, supplement. From the Cape Ann Historical Association Library.
133. MacKaye, "American Pageants and Their Promise," 28–35. Pape's two colored illustrations painted well in advance of the pageant, imagine the pilgrims entering an open staging area on horseback and the Prioress beholding "in vision the spirit of [her and Sir Geoffrey's] love fulfilled." The drawings seem to have little correlation to the actual pageant.
134. *Gloucester Daily Times*, 4 August 1909, supplement.
135. *Gloucester Daily Times*, 4 August 1909, supplement.
136. Correspondence, PM to FWT, June 29, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:32.
137. Correspondence, FWT to PM, July 2, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:29.
138. Correspondence, FWT to PM, July 2, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:29.
139. Correspondence, PM to EP, May 16, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:29.
140. "President Taft Will Attend *Canterbury Pilgrims* Production," *Gloucester Daily Times*, May 11, 1909. np. cited in Grover, *Annals of an Era*, 221. See also, correspondence, EP to PM, April 28, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:29.

    In summers prior to his presidency, the Tafts escaped the oppressive heat and humidity of Washington, DC by withdrawing to a home on the St. Lawrence River in Canada. Now, needing to find an American location for the summer White House, the Tafts chose a fourteen-room cottage near Gloucester on Woodbury Point (Garland, *Boston's Gold Coast*, 148). Taft's decision to vacation in the Gloucester area was abetted by his long-time friendship with area booster, John Hays Hammond (John Hays Hammond, *The Autobiography of John Hays Hammond* [New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1935], 764).
141. *Gloucester Pageant*, cover.
142. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," *The New York Times*, August 5, 1909, 7.
143. *Gloucester Pageant*, 1.
144. Herbert S. Duffy, *William Howard Taft* (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1930), 238; "President Greets Family at Beverly," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1909, 1.
145. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," *The New York Times*, August 5, 1909, 7.
146. "Pageant Was Wonderful Beyond All Expectations," *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 1, Historical files, Sawyer Free Library, Gloucester, Massachusetts.
147. The *New York Times* reported much different numbers: "5,000 persons witnessed the production by a cast of 2,000 players" (August 5, 1909, 7).

148. Correspondence, Fred Tibbets to WCL, September 10, 1910, William Chauncy Langdon Papers.
149. *Gloucester Pageant*, 3.
150. *Three Hundredth Anniversary of Gloucester, Massachusetts*, 6.
151. Correspondence, PM to CDC, July 5, 1909. Financial problems had already caused Coburn to drop the Shipman and the Franklin; see his letter to PM, July 10, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:16.
152. Letter from Susan E. Tracey to Caroline Crawford, undated, William Chaucey Langdon Papers, Box 120, #18; also reproduced in Barry B. Witham, *Theatre in the United States: A Documentary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 305–6; and Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 198.
153. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 1, photo.
154. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," *New York Times*, 5 August 1909, 7.
155. Prior sales of the book in Gloucester ended up causing him more trouble than any benefit it provided. The Wife's line that "this pan shall warm our wedding sheets" (174) provoked "sharp criticism" from locals. It must be expurgated, Pape warned, "Too many children and young people; their parents would not like it" (Correspondence, EP to PM, July 21, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:29).

    Further trouble ensued after the big performance when the Gloucester Day Committee's attorney determined that the Coburn Player's private performance on August 6, 1909 at the Saint-Gauden's Estate in Cornish, New Hampshire, had violated Gloucester's exclusive contract. The disagreement was settled only when Coburn was able to convince the committee that they had not been damaged by the small, local performance (Correspondence, August 25 to September 8, 1909, PMacKPapers, 53:16).
156. A year later, Fred Tibbets summed up the Gloucester Pageant with no mention of MacKaye's play: "Those of use who were privileged to see it will never see again the wonderful pictures, the beautiful lighting effects, the gorgeous aerial fireworks, the music, the singing" (Correspondence, FT to WCL, September 10, 1910, William Chauncy Langdon).
157. *Gloucester Pageant*, 5.
158. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 198.
159. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," 7.
160. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 1.
161. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, unnumbered.
162. *Gloucester Pageant*, 11 and 13. Details are more explicitly stated in MacKaye's typescript scenario, PMacKPapers, 53:39.
163. Despite the extensive and expensive lighting, no photographs were taken of the evening performance. Photographs were taken only during the day. A few appear in *the Gloucester Times*, but even those originals were lost by the next year when Langdon began inquiring (Correspondence, Fred Smith [editor of the *Gloucester Daily Times*] to WCL, October 11, 1910, William Chauncy Langdon papers, Box 120 #16).

164. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant," 7.
165. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 1.
166. "Gloucester Gives Big Stage Pageant."
167. *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 1.
168. Some of the most outstanding pageants and masques in the United States were conceived and directed by MacKaye: *Sanctuary, A Bird Masque* (1914), *Saint Louis, A Civic Masque* (1914), *The Evergreen Tree, A Masque of Christmas Time for Community Singing and Acting* (1917), *The Roll Call, A Masque of the Red Cross for Community Acting and Singing* (1918), *The Will of Song, A Dramatic Service of Community Singing* (1919), and *The Pilgrim and the Book, a Dramatic Service of the Bible, Designed to be Used in Churches* (1920). The most ambitious was *Caliban by the Yellow Sands: A Community Masque of the Art of Theatre* (1916) for New York's celebration of the Shakespeare tercentennial. For studies of this pageant, see Coppelia Kahn, "Caliban at the Stadium: Shakespeare and the Making of Americans," *Massachusetts Review* 41, no. 2 (2000): 256–84, Academic Search Elite Database Item #3408521; Libby Smigel, "Sophocles and Shakespeare in the Nation's Service: Percy MacKaye's Theory of an American Popular Theatre," *The Mid-Atlantic Almanack* 8 (1999): 35–56; John Graziano, "Community Theater, *Caliban by the Yellow Sands*, and Arthur Farwell," in *Vistas of American Music, Essays and Compositions in Honor of William K. Kearns*, ed. Susan L. Porter and John Graziano (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1999), 293–308; Jane P. Franck, "*Caliban* at Lewisohn Stadium," in *Shakespeare Encomium 1564–1964*, ed, Anne Paolucci (New York: City College, 1964); and Mel Gordon, "Masque of *Caliban* (1916)," *The Drama Review* 20, no. 2 (1976): 93–107.
169. Wilson, *Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre*, 314–15.
170. MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 42 and 126.
171. MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 66–70.
172. MacKaye, *Civic Theatre*, 42. At the same time Percy MacKaye was attempting to redeem misspent leisure by prescribing theatrical activities, his brother, Benton MacKaye, was developing the Appalachian Trail as an outdoor experience for converting that same wasted leisure time (Kevin Dann, *Across the Great Border Fault* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000], 36).
173. This organizational structure is reflected in the dramatis personae from the Gloucester Pageant, which changes the order the characters are listed in the play text. Instead of presenting characters in order of dramatic importance and beginning with Chaucer, the program, reinforces the social hierarchy the pageant supposedly levels by listing Richard II, John of Gaunt, and the Archbishop of Canterbury before Geoffrey Chaucer. From there it lists the Host, on down to the Dyer, then to women, also in hierarchical order: Johanna, the Prioress, down to the Serving maid (*Gloucester Pageant*, 17).
174. Kahn, "Caliban at the Stadium," 6.
175. "Picture for President," *Gloucester Daily Times*, August 5, 1909, 8.

176. Most famous for his 1891 operetta, *Robin Hood*, the composer had already managed three successful careers: as a Chicago businessman (aided by marriage into a wealthy and prominent family); as a prodigious composer of comic operas for the popular stage; and as a music critic and editor for *Chicago Evening Post* (1889–90), the *New York World* (1891–97 and 1907–12), and the *New York Journal* (1898–1900) (John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1954, 3rd edn.], 655).
177. From their correspondence, it is clear that the poet conceded all artistic direction to de Koven. From the beginning of their collaboration, de Koven was the one determining "the incision and curtailment of the piece," which he calculated to be equivalent to eliminating 10,000 words. As late as the winter of 1915, MacKaye continued to send revisions, each time telling de Koven to let him know "what further work you would like to do on it" (Correspondence, RdK to PM, February 11, 1914 and February 16, 1914; and PM to RdK, June 30, 1915, PMacKPapers, 54:12).
178. Scrapbook correspondence, PM to RdK, August 3, 1916, PMacKPapers.

When de Koven contacted MacKaye in December 1913 and again in January 1914 requesting an appointment to discuss "intelligently" the transformation of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* into an opera libretto, MacKaye finally replied that he was occupied with overseeing an immense civic production, *Saint Louis, a Civic Masque*, to be staged in May 1914, as well as smaller projects like his "Bird Masque." Later, when production plans were being made for the opera, MacKaye was occupied producing New York's Shakespeare Tercenntenial, *Caliban on the Yellow Sands*, in late spring of 1916 (Correspondence, RdK to PM, December 9, 1913; and PM to RdK, January 22, 1914, PMacKPapers, 54:12).

Further distracting him from the opera's production was "the very wretched condition" of his health (Scrapbook correspondence, PM to RdK, dated October 27, 1916, PMacKPapers). Except for a quick appearance on opening night, he was completely out of the picture, recovering at sewing machine scion Paris Singer's beachside bungalow in Palm Beach, Florida, during the final rehearsals and six weeks of performance.

MacKaye was not a novice librettist. He had already written two opera librettos for Frederick Shepherd Converse, the first American composer to have an opera, *The Pipe of Dreams* (1910), staged by the Metropolitan. (Converse's rather conventional second opera, *The Sacrifice*, played only at the short-lived Boston Opera Company.) His two other operas, *Beauty and the Beast, or, Sinbad the Saileor, His Adventures with Beauty and Peacock Lady in the Castle of the Forty Thieves* and (the more concisely titled) *The Immigrants*, had librettos by MacKaye and were ready for the Boston Opera's aborted sixth season; they were never produced (Quaintance Eaton, *The Boston Opera Company* [New York: Appleton-Century, 1965], 91–93).

The growing cry for American operas portended good things for MacKaye, and he considered American opera not only the next frontier in

theatrical artistry but also a good way to supplement his income. Later, he helped initiate the "all-American Opera movement" with the intention of bringing together American composers and poet-dramatists (Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 292).

179. But for some carefully controlled exceptions, American operas were not performed at the Met, for they were considered operetta and not grand opera, strictly defined as "a composition in which no word is spoken—all is sung" (J. Walker McSpadden, *Operas and Musical Comedies* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1951], 366). If this definition is strictly adhered to, then any composition with spoken lines is not grand opera; thus, many operas regularly performed at the Metropolitan Opera, including works by Mozart and Wagner, were not grand opera. Conversely a less serious work with no spoken lines can still qualify as a grand opera, a technicality de Koven takes advantage of.

    Further confusing the issue are multiple and overlapping terms to convey distinctions within the nongrand opera category: operetta, light opera, light operatic entertainment, opéra comique, musical comedy, and opera buffa. Without denying the differences, I will use the term "operetta" to designate nongrand opera works discussed in this chapter.
180. Eaton, *Boston Opera Company*, 3.
181. Geoffrey Hindley, ed., *The Larousse Encyclopedia of Music* (London: Hamlyn Publishing, 1971), 541.
182. Elise K. Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 99–117.

    From the antebellum period through the twentieth century, the various species of operetta (not grand opera) were associated with such American composers as Willard Spenser, William Wallace Furst, John Philip Sousa, and Victor Herbert.

    Yet grand opera's fainter presence can be traced through the same period. The first American opera was William Henry Fry's *Leonora* (1845), followed a decade later by George Frederick Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle* (1855). The attempt to develop a native grand opera began anew with Walter Damrosch's *The Scarlet Letter* (1896), but the first successful American grand opera was Deems Taylor's *The King's Henchman* (1927) (McSpadden, *Operas and Musical Comedies*, 329–30, 352, 523–53).
183. Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955), 617–19.
184. Kirk, *American Opera*, 99–101.
185. Richard Crawford, *America's Musical Life: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 524–29; and Patrick J. Smith, *Toward an American Opera, 1911–1954*, Recorded Anthology of American Music (New York: New World Records, 1978), 2, www.newworldrecords.org.
186. Gatti-Casazza, *Memories of the Opera*, 237.
187. The winners of the competitions were Frederick Converse's *The Pipe of Desire* (1910), Horatio Parker's *Mona* (1912), Walter Damrosch's *de*

Bergerac (1913), and Victor Herbert's *Madeleine* (1914) (Kirk, *American Opera*, 164–66).

188. Smith, *Toward an American Opera*, 2.
189. See, for example, Moody's comments in a November 12, 1905 letter (Moody and MacKaye, "Introduction," 240) and the *New York Sun* article explaining the difference between opera and operetta.
190. De Koven anticipates Gilbert Seldes' 1924 manifesto declaring his intention to "establish a lyric theatre in America devoted to all the forms of light musical entertainment and nothing else" (Gilbert Vivian Seldes, *The 7 Lively Arts* [New York: Harper and Row, 1924], 153).
191. "An Interview with Reginald de Koven," clipping, "The Canterbury Pilgrims," Vertical Files (Metropolitan Opera, Lincoln Center, New York).
192. Kirk, *American Opera*, 99–101.
193. Scrapbook clipping, *Town and Country*, April 20, 1917, PMacKPapers.
194. Scrapbook clipping, Pierre V.R. Key, *The World*, April 8, 1917. PMacKPapers.
195. Emile H. Serposs, "*The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1917)," 37, unpublished working manuscript; and Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 1–3.

    Studying at European conservatories was the norm until World War I for American musicians, especially those with financial means (David Nicholls, *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990], 1).
196. Orly Leah Krasner, "Reginald de Koven (1859–1920) and American Comic Opera at the Turn of the Century" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1995), 145.
197. De Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 216.
198. De Koven often emphasized in the opera's publicity that Vevey was "in one of the most historic spots bordering Lake Geneva, close to where Massenet composed his 'Manon,' and in an atmosphere which [de Koven] himself declares to have been genuinely inspiring"—the same place that inspired Rousseau, Voltaire and Ruskin, where *Faust* was conceived, and where Thackeray wrote "Newcombs" (Scrapbook clipping, Key, *The World*, PMacKPapers).
199. Krasner, "Reginald de Koven," 240.
200. De Koven learned about *The Canterbury Pilgrims* when his wife, Anna, read it while volunteering for a New York east-side settlement house project producing plays and suggested that the play might fit her husband's need (de Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 221).

    As far as I can tell, none of the settlement houses ever produced *The Canterbury Pilgrims*. For more on settlement house theatrical productions see Carson, *Settlement Folk*.
201. Scrapbook clipping, *New York Sun*, 19 March 1917, PMacKPapers; and MacKaye, *Canterbury Pilgrims: An Opera (Libretto)*, 19.

202. John Corbin had noted in his 1903 review of the play that it had "less a plot for poetic comedy than for comic opera" (*New York Times*, Scrapbook clipping, PMacKPapers).
203. Scrapbook clipping, PMacKPapers.
204. Crawford, *America's Musical Life*, 526.
205. Key, *The World*.
206. I appreciate Mike Moss for pointing out these musical affiliations.

    Throughout the opera, de Koven uses a conservative, even clichèd, musical vocabulary, presenting nothing innovative in his harmonic or thematic development. In fact, many of his techniques had long been employed by European operetta composers, and even by serious American composers who also wrote operetta, such as Victor Herbert, whose *Naughty Marietta* (1910) was able to "bring musical richness from the classical sphere into [operetta] without sacrificing immediate appeal" (Crawford, *America's Musical Life*, 428). What made de Koven's opera significant is that he convinced the Metropolitan to stage it.
207. From the beginning, Gatti resisted producing a de Koven opera. In 1914, a report in the *Morning Telegraft* that the Met had commissioned the opera from de Koven was immediately denied by Gatti as "just a trifle too much. [Not] only is there no word of truth in the story," the *New York Review* reported, "but there is absolutely no basis for it. It seems to have been manufactured out of whole cloth" (Scrapbook clippings, "Metropolitan to Produce English Opera by de Koven," *New York City Telegraft*, November 16, 1914; and "Telegraph's Story about a De Koven [*sic*] Grand Opera Is False," *New York City Review*, November 21, 1914, PMacKPapers).

    However, according to de Koven's wife, Anna, the chairman of the Metropolitan's board of directors, Otto Kahn "had not only commissioned the writing of the opera, but had, by letter, promised its production" (de Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 229). I wonder, however, if she has confused this otherwise unverified commission with a later letter, from September 1915, which de Koven likens to a contract. (See next paragraph.) Perhaps Kahn had merely encouraged de Koven to provide the Metropolitan with another American opera, for the first extant record of Kahn's interest occurs when he lunched with MacKaye and "expressed himself as being very much pleased with [the] text of [their] Opera and genuinely interested in having it produced next season at the Metropolitan Opera House" (Correspondence, PM to RdK, June 8, 1915, PMacKPapers, 54:12). Though Kahn left the final decision to to Gatti, he certainly left MacKaye with the impression that "the prospects look very encouraging indeed." In fact, MacKaye was so convinced that Kahn would approve the opera that he began contacting publishers regarding its publication (Correspondence, PM to RdK, July 19, 1915, PMacKPapers, 54:12).

    By the end of August 1915, the Met's acceptance of the opera was no longer so certain. Per Otto Kahn's instructions, Gatti made a detour during his European trip in order to meet with de Koven in Switzerland and listen to the music (de Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 229). After

hearing it, Gatti initially said he would produce it (Gatti-Casazza, *Memories of the Opera*, 239). By August 23, 1915, however, Kahn notified MacKaye that Gatti had given "explicit reasons" for not producing *The Canterbury Pilgrims* the coming season (Correspondence, PM to RdK, August 23, 1915, 54:12). The correspondence between MacKaye and de Koven over the next month reveals de Koven's shrewd strategy to let Gatti and Kahn battle it out. By September 1915, de Koven heard from Kahn that Gatti was "impressed with what he had heard and that the opera would be produced next season." The letter, de Koven claimed, "practically amounted to a contract" (Correspondence, RdK to PM, September 26, 1915, 54:12).

After de Koven returned to Boston with the manuscript, Gatti reconsidered the opera one more time, sitting "silent on the sofa" while his advisers reviewed the piano score with the composer. Despite Kahn's unexplained reticence and Gatti's obstinate resistance, de Koven and the Met signed a contract the next day (de Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 229).

I never discovered an adequate explanation for Gatti's change of mind. At the time, however, there were rumors that de Koven's wife, Anna, struck a deal with Otto Kahn. She was in her own right a wealthy and socially prominent woman, "most anxious to see her husband made a success" (Scrapbook clipping, "Mephisto's Musings," *Musical America*, March 17, 1917, PMacKPapers).

208. Kirk, *American Opera*, 166.
209. To give an indication of the quality of the production, thirty-six of Platt's framed sketches for *The Canterbury Pilgrims* costumes currently hang in six of the Metropolitan's dressing rooms.
210. See, for example, *Musical America*'s front-page story, March 17, 1917 (Scrapbook clipping, PMacKPapers).
211. MacKaye, chagrined at the prospect of a foreigner singing Chaucer's part, predicted the change would "utterly spoil the illusion, and badly hurt the production" (Scrapbook correspondence, September 7 and 11, 1916, PMacKPapers).
212. Scrapbook clipping, *Philadelphia Telegram*, March 16, 1917, PMacKPapers.
213. Gatti-Casazza, *Memories of the Opera*, 239–40.
214. Scrapbook clippings, *Musical America*, March 17, 1917; *New York America R*? March 9, 1917, and *Philadelphia Evening Ledger*, March 21, 1917, PMacKPapers.
215. Scrapbook clipping, unattributed, March 9, 1917, PMacKPapers, 54:12.
216. Even MacKaye had sensed that it might better be produced "on a more popular scale like that of. . .'Robin Hood'" (Correspondence, PM to RdK, dated August 23, 1915, PMacKPapers, 54:12).
217. Scrapbook clipping, *Philadeliphia Evening Ledger*, March 21, 1917, PMacKPapers.
218. Some reviews accepted the movement toward light opera as a natural evolution in American opera, that the American public, not professionals, would determine the direction of American grand opera. Despite the

concession, most could agree that *The Canterbury Pilgrims* did not fit the European ideal of a grand opera.

219. Scrapbook clipping, "A Vain Pilgrimage with Mr. Chaucer," PMacKPapers.
220. Scrapbook clipping, *Town and Country*, April 20, 1917, PMacKPapers.
221. Correspondence, GG to RdK, May 15, 1917, "The Canterbury Pilgrims."
222. According to the Met's records, the seven performances of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* averaged $8211 in ticket sales, the lowest average of that season's five "novelties," "works never before played in New York," which ranged from old, forgotten works to new, "harmonically daring" works, from exotic bits to conservative oldies (Martin Mayer and Gerald Fitzgerald, picture editor, *The Met: One Hundred Years of Grand Opera* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983], 124); and Financial Records, "The Canterbury Pilgrims," Metropolitan Opera Archives, New York.
223. De Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 232–33.
224. Edward Ellsworth Hipsher, *American Opera and Its Composers* (Philadelphia, PA: Theodore Presser Co., 1927), 154; Johanna Fiedler, Molto Agitato: *The Mayhem Behind the Music at the Metropolitan Opera* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 22–23.
225. Perhaps this premature (and unexpected) cancellation explains the dearth of memorabilia associated with the opera. Neither the Met archives, the New York Performing Arts Library, nor the otherwise comprehensive MacKaye archives has a copy of a program.

    Gatti did not risk "the money and time to produce a full-length American opera" for another ten years, when the Metropolitan produced Deems Taylor's *The King's Henchman* (Kolodin, *Metropolitan Opera, 1883–1966*, 309–15, 391).

    The American works produced during the Metropolitan's 1918–19 season were short works making no claim to being grand opera: Henry Gilbert's "The Dance in Place Congo" and Charles Cadman's "The Robin Woman: Shanewis."
226. Anna de Koven claims that "many of the personnel of the Metropolitan Company and of some of the conductors" protested Gatti's decision not to develop a new production (de Koven, *Musician and His Wife*, 245).

    With de Koven's death only three years later, his reputation solidified around his earlier light opera, *Robin Hood*, and the few performances of his work usually consisted of excerpts from *Robin Hood*. The only subsequent performance of any part of *The Canterbury Pilgrims* I could verify was the Atwater Kent Radio Hour's "de Koven Night" on July 6, 1930. Headlining the selections was "The Crusader's March" from *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (Krasner, "Reginald de Koven," 362).
227. Scrapbook clipping, *Musical America*, March 24, 1917, PMacKPapers.

Gatti's dissatisfaction with de Koven's operetta-like grand opera is further indicated by the Metropolitan's failure to offer to produce his next grand opera, *Rip van Winkle* (also with a MacKaye libretto).

228. John Erskine, *The Memory of Certain Persons* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1947), 388.
229. Correspondence, PM to RdK, August 23, 1914, PMacKPapers, 54:12; Gatti-Casazza, *Memories of the Opera*, 239–40; and Erskine, *Memory of Certain Persons*, 387.
230. Irving Sablosky, *American Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 135; and Charles Pike Sawyer, *New York Evening?* November 16, 1929; and Krasner, "Reginald de Koven," 361.
231. Crawford, *America's Musical Life*, 533–56.
232. Bigsby and Wilmeth, "Introduction," 12.
233. MacKaye, *Substitute for War*, 31.
234. Grover, *Annals of an Era*, xxxix.
235. Ege, *Power of the Impossible*, 300; Grover, *Annals of an Era*, xxxvi.

The next to hold a similar post was Robert Frost, at the University of Michigan, who credited MacKaye for conceiving of the idea and blazing the way for all poets to hold similar positions (*Percy MacKaye: A Symposium on His Fiftieth Birthday, 1925* [Hanover, NH: Dartmouth Press, 1928], 21).

236. Vilma Raskin Potter, "Percy MacKaye's Caliban for a Democracy," *Journal of American Culture* 19, no. 4 (1996): 1–2, Academic Search Elite, Item #9710253829; and George W. Angell, "Theatre, History, and Myth on the New England Coast," *New England Theatre Journal* 1, no. 1 (1990): 79–91.
237. Philip K. Jason, "Percy MacKaye," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography* (1987), 9 of 14, Gale Literary Database.
238. For these persistent facts of his career, see toasts included in *Percy MacKaye: A Symposium on His Fiftieth Birthday, 1925*, especially those of Mary Austin, Thomas Dickinson, Walter Prichard Eaton, Hamlin Garland, and most poignantly, Hendrik Willem Van Loon, where MacKaye is heralded the "leader of 'The Lost Battalion'. . .who led a forlorn hope, when most of the rest of us were beaten" (52).

3 Flying with the Poet

1. Grinnell College Library's electronic finding aid for the James Norman Hall papers, http://web.grinnell.edu/individuals/rod/manuscriptaids/hall1.html, includes a biographical chronology that dates his escape from prison on November 16, 1918. Internal evidence from his memoir indicates his escape to be on November 13. Unless I note otherwise (as in this particular case), I have used Grinnell's chronology to provide dates left vague in Hall's writings.
2. The term "Landshut Chaucer" refers to the volume of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* that Hall claims he found in the German prison camp and kept until the end of his life.

The Landshut Chaucer was likely an inexpensive 1843 octavo edition based on Tyrwhitt printed by London publisher E. Moxon and Company. It would have been one of the many inexpensive octavos that appeared in the literary marketplace in the nineteenth century (David O. Matthews, "Speaking to Chaucer: The Poet and the Nineteenth-Century Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Leslie Workman, Kathleen Verduin, and David D. Metzger [Cambridge, UK: D.S. Brewer, 1997], 11–12).

3. Thus, before World War I, the *Atlantic* had published alongside Hall's own efforts to goad the United States into joining the Allied cause Randolph Bourne's warnings "that all the Wilsonian cant about a holy war for democracy meant Americans would neglect their own democracy while fussing ineffectively over the affairs of others" (Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* [New Haven, CO: Yale University Press, 1987], 135).

   In his memoirs of his editorship, Sedgwick notes that Hall first met his eventual writing collaborator, Charles Nordhoff, when the "two young men were wandering about the [French aviation training] camp, each with an *Atlantic Monthly* in his hand. The old yellow cover was their introduction. . ." (Ellery Sedgwick, comp., *Atlantic Harvest: Memoirs of* The Atlantic, *Wherein Are to Be Found Stories, Anecdotes, and Opinions, Controversial and Otherwise; Together with a Variety of Matter, Relevant and Irrelevant, Accompanied by Certain Obdurate Convictions* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1947], 4). See the introduction to the same volume for Sedgwick's editorial policy.
4. James Norman Hall, *Flying with Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 3. This is only one of many books and articles Hall published under the aegis of the *Atlantic Monthly* and its book press, including the popular historical fiction, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, coauthored with Charles Nordhoff in 1932, and his posthumously published autobiography, *My Island Home: An Autobiography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952).
5. All citations from Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* not appearing in *Flying with Chaucer* are taken from Larry Benson, ed., *Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985).
6. Hall's *Flying with Chaucer*, as well as his earlier *Kitchener's Mob* and *High Adventure*, are not classified as fiction, though they share many of the characteristics of World War I fiction. See Chris Hopkins, "Beyond Fiction? The Example of *Winged Warfare* (1918)," in *The Literature of the Great War Reconsidered: Beyond Modern Memory*, ed. Patrick J. Quinn and Steven Trout (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 9–23.

   In claiming that *Flying with Chaucer* uses Chaucer to criticize war rhetoric, I am not assuming that Hall chose Chaucer because *The Canterbury Tales* articulates an antiwar stand; in fact there is evidence that Chaucer was more sympathetic to war than his contemporary, John Gower (R.F. Yeager, "*Pax Poetica*: On the Pacifism of Chaucer and Gower," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 [1987]: 97–121). I am suggesting, instead, that Chaucer provides an alterity that requires a slow, conscientious reading.

That alterity also circumscribes Chaucer's serious readership to a circle of cognescenti who can fill in the gaps that Hall's memoir leaves open. Hall builds on Chaucer's reputation as a middle-class upstart, a questioner of the status quo, to explore his own doubts about the sustainability of national programs that sacrifice young men for ignoble goals.

7. Unless indicated otherwise, my account of Hall's World War I service is collated from his accounts in *Kitchener's Mob: The Adventures of an American in the British Army* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1916); *High Adventure: A Narrative of Air Fighting in France* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1918); *My Island Home*; and with Charles Nordhoff, *The Lafayette Flying Corps* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1920).
8. Hall must have been one of the few Americans to fight under multiple commands and for most of the war. Many Americans, especially young men of privilege, volunteered for the Ambulance Corps (M.A. DeWolfe Howe, ed., *The Harvard Volunteers in Europe: Personal Records and Experience in Military, Ambulance, and Hospital Service* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916]). Others, like the American poet Alan Seeger, who joined the Foreign Legion of France with almost fifty other young Americans, served under the flag of one nation or the other (William Archer, "Introduction," in *Poems of Alan Seeger* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917], xxiv; and John Keegan, *The First World War* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999], 373–74). The Lafayette Escadrille, later the Lafayette Flying Corps, was formed entirely of American volunteers organized by Dr. Edmund Gros.
9. Jeffrey Walsh, *American War Literature, 1914 to Vietnam* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 13.
10. Hall, *High Adventure*, 232.
11. Indicative of Hall's search for adventure and meaning, he was bicycling in Wales in August 1914 while taking a break from his job as a social worker for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in Boston, where he had worked since his graduation from Grinnell College in 1910.
12. Colin Nicolson, *The Longman Companion to the First World War, Europe, 1914–1918* (London: Longman, 2001), 269.
13. Hall, *My Island Home*, 165.
14. See the *Atlantic Monthly* masthead during Sedgwick's editorship.
15. James Norman Hall, "Kitchener's Mob," *Atlantic Monthly* 117 (March–May 1916): 397–407, 565–73, 695–702.

    Though I could not determine why Sedgwick encouraged Hall's prowar bent, it is clear that by the late 1920s, the *Atlantic* editor was on good terms with Arnold Bennett, who during the war worked covertly as a literary propagandist vilifying the Germans in order to win the American public's sympathy for the British cause (Ellery Sedgwick, *The Happy Profession* [Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946], 194; Peter Buitenhuis, *The Great War of Words: British, American, and Canadian Propaganda and Fiction, 1914–1933* [Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1987],

280–83; and M.L. and Philip M. Taylor Sanders, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–18* [London: Macmillan, 1982], 167–71).

16. In this effort, Hall joined a host of British literary luminaries who extolled the historical and linguistic ties between Great Britain and the United States in works addressed to Americans (Wayne A. Wiegand, *"An Active Instrument for Propaganda": The American Public Library during World War I* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1989], 20–21).
17. Hall, *Kitchener's Mob*, 13.
18. Years later, his sympathy for these men had not diminished when he identified his friendships with his fellow fusiliers as "one of the finest things that had ever come to [him]" (Hall, *My Island Home*, 159).
19. For this list see Walsh, *American War Literature*, 13–16.
20. Buitenhuis, *Great War of Words*, 113–15.

    In his autobiography, Hall claims Sedgwick gave him a copy of Ian Hay's account to read before he began his first article (Hall, *My Island Home*, 163). Ian Hay was the pseudonym of Ian Hay Beith, who was not an infantryman but a regimental officer. See publisher's note in Ian Hay, pseud., *The First Hundred Thousand, Being the Unofficial Chronicle of a Unit of the "K(I)"* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1914).
21. Hall, *My Island Home*, 170.
22. Hall, *My Island Home*, 172–79; Hall and Nordhoff, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, 324.

    Hall's first book on the Lafayette Flying Corps ended up being a series of dispatches sent to Sedgwick retelling his experiences as a pilot with first the corps and then the U.S. Air Service; after his capture, the dispatches were collected and published as a book, *High Adventure*. It closes with an editor's note about the news of Hall's capture. Hall's zeal for the war cause was modified only slightly in this account.
23. The time lag was caused by bureaucratic snafus (Michael Carr, "United States Air Service," in *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Cipriano Venzon [New York: Garland, 1995], 604).
24. Per an editor's note in his autobiography: "In all, Hall was accredited with five German planes, and for his service in the air he was decorated with the Croix de Guerre, with five Palms, the *Médaille Militaire*, the *Légion d'Honneur*, and the Distinguished Service Cross" (*My Island Home*, 195).
25. Hall's project with Nordhoff produced not only a book, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, but also a thirty-year collaboration. Back in the United States, Hall and Nordhoff arranged for an advance to write a travel article on Tahiti for *Harper's* and sailed to the South Seas. After a trip to Iceland, Hall decided in 1920 to make Tahiti his home, as did Nordhoff. Sometimes together and sometimes independently, they began writing books of little note until they transformed the history of Captain Bligh and Fletcher Christian into a mythic morality tale that captured Americans' imaginations during the Depression. Royalties from the trilogy—*Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932), *Men against the Sea* (1933), and *Pitcairn's Island* (1934)—and the rights to the 1935

movie allowed them to live comfortably. They continued writing as a team until Nordhoff died in 1947.

26. How to keep the soldiers distracted while they awaited being shipped back to the states was a major logistical concern (now largely forgotten) for the military. Kathrine Gordon Brinley's husband, Daniel, and their neighbor, Columbia professor John Erskine, were two of the many volunteers who served during World War I by operating USO-like stations and pseudo-universities. (See chapter 4 for more about Kathrine Brinley). For a personal account of these quickly mobilized and quickly forgotten efforts, see John Erskine, *The Memory of Certain Persons* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1947), 261–84, and *My Life as a Teacher* (Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1948).
27. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 314; Robert Wohl, "Introduction," in *The Lost Voices of World War I*, ed. and comp. Tim Cross (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 8–10; and Robert Wohl, "Conclusion," in *Lost Voices of World War I*, ed. and comp. Cross, 380–86.
28. Buitenhuis, *Great War of Words*, 291–92.
29. These terms do appear, however, in his autobiography written after World War II. After recording an anecdote told by a French airman blaming the Germans for commencing "la guerre aèrienne," Halls adds his own stupefaction at German atrocity:

    > Little could either of us know, then, what the Boches would do in a little more than a generation from that day. Among other "bêtises" they murdered six million Jews in cold blood, two thirds of the total number of men killed in World War I. (*My Island Home*, 189)

    Hall's coupling of genial beneficence with a targeted antipathy toward misuse of power is confirmed by his *Atlantic* editor and friend, Ellery Sedgwick who mentions never having heard Hall "speak evil of mortal (Herr Hitler excepted and perhaps a President or two)" (Ellery Sedgwick, *Happy Profession*, 221).
30. Although many former prisoners of war reported appalling conditions at German camps, the camps were significantly better than the German prisoner of war facilities during World War II (Richard B. Speed, "Prisoners of War," in *United States in the First World War*, ed. Venzon, 47).
31. Richard Aldington, *Death of a Hero* (1929) cited by Wohl, "Conclusion," 381. The phrase replaced by the ellipses—"because they had parried their handicaps and dangers not by hating the men who were supposed to be their enemies but"—also reminds us that not only does Hall not hate the Germans, but he depicts them as benign, as we see throughout *Flying with Chaucer*.
32. Lest we assume that Americans had tired of war memoirs by the end of the Roaring 1920s, we can find under the heading of "European War, 1914–18, Personal Narratives" in the *Book Review Digest* twenty-three books listed in 1930 (vol. 26) and fifty-seven in 1931 (vol. 27). Hall's *Flying with Chaucer* received little attention, only short notices in *Booklist* and *Wisconsin Library Bulletin*, and no mention in the periodicals where we find

reviews for the more obviously war-related narratives. According to *Booklist*, the "book is slight, but of interest as a war memoir that is different" (*Booklist* 26 [July 1930]: 389).

33. From Hall's two other accounts of his internment, we learn that the Germans tended his wounds moments after shooting at him as enemy aircraft. Initially very suspicious, he soon learns that whether or not he divulged any information, they continued to treat him better than he had expected, based on the "widespread belief" in German atrocities that became part of the mythology of war (Hall and Nordhoff, *The Lafayette Flying Corps*, 281–82; *My Island Home*, 200–205; and Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* [New York: Basic Books, 1998], 379–84).
34. Carr, "United States Air Service," 604–5.
35. Charles Edward Montague, *Disenchantment* (New York: Bretano's, 1922), 176; and Bernard Bergonzi, *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1965), 168.
36. John H. Morrow, "The War in the Air," in *Researching World War I: A Handbook*, ed. Robin Higham and Dennis E. Showalter (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2003), 352.
37. Cecil Lewis, *Sagittarius Rising* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), 39 and 152. Lewis's title is as equally cryptic as Hall's, but his purposes are made clear by his declaration in the second paragraph of his foreword: "For to me, and thousands like me, that easy developing pattern [of life from education to career to comfortable old age] was completely thrown out of symmetry by the first World War" (n.p.).
38. Hall, *My Island Home*, 239.
39. Hall remains grounded for all but the end of *Flying with Chaucer*, downplaying his war service as a pilot.
40. The "volume" Hall refers to is the Landshut Chaucer.
41. The narration of Hall's final months in Europe, which I will call the narrative proper, begins on page 6 and continues to the end of his book. It is preceded by some brief prefatory material on pages 1–6, and is periodically interrupted by metanarrative elements.
42. A photo taken by the Germans of Hall waiting in a staff car after his capture indicates the gentility officers on both sides were seen to share. The photo not only features his carefully bandaged nose, but shows Hall with a dauchshund nonchalantly sitting on his lap (Hall, *My Island Home*, facing 230).
43. As readers of Hall's earlier accounts would realize, the Germans' producing the box of books contrasts with the way the American command failed to provide adequate reading material for pilots grounded during bad weather. In *High Adventure*, the pilots blame their lack of reading material on the essential incompatibility between democracy's personal freedom and autocracy's efficiency. Although the pilots are ostensibly fighting to preserve democracy, they momentarily envy the German military's efficient disposal of their men's needs (228–30). Whereas Hall had previously attributed the

Germans' ability to send "parcels [of books] to the front" to the efficiency of the autocratic government, Hall here allows the books to be an example of the Germans' generosity.

44. The confusion on how to handle prisoners after the Armistice was not unusual, though Hall's quick and abetted return to neutral territory was (Speed, "Prisoners of War," 475; and Robert Jackson, *The Prisoners, 1914–1918* [New York: Routledge, 1989], 117–33).
45. This combination of Chaucer and Dryden should not surprise us, knowing what we do about the close ties the two authors had had up to that time in the United States. (See my Introduction.)
46. All quotations from Chaucer use the spelling and punctuation reproduced in Hall's book, while my parenthetical citations include both the page in Hall where the passage is produced and the corresponding lines in Benson, *Riverside*.
47. See *Riverside* notes for discussion of Chaucer's import of "preamble" from French (Benson, *Riverside*, 873).
48. T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 97–139.
49. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 5.
50. Of course, Hall's presentation is artificially benevolent, for the conditions of the camps and treatment of prisoners was governed by a set of rules, the Hague Convention, which required that officers not be forced to work, and be provided spacious quarters, a degree of privacy, a steady supply of cash, and decent food and water. By allowing for different treatment of officers and enlistees, the Hague Convention perpetrated the inequalities of the old aristocratic ethos.

    Hall's depiction of the camp has its own set of paradoxes for him. In *Kitchener's Mob*, he decried the class distinction that his British comrades took for granted: "It made little difference to them. . .that some of our officers were recruits as raw as were we ourselves. They had money enough and education enough and influence enough to secure the king's commission; and that fact was proof enough for Tommy that they were gentlemen, and therefore, too good for the likes of him to associate with" (Hall, *Kitchener's Mob*, 15). In *Flying with Chaucer*, however, he occludes the difference between the way officers and enlisted men were treated by the Convention. Hall profited from that difference as the result of his promotion to an officer only a few months earlier, and it insulated him from the forced labor and deprivation facing foot soldiers. Rather than condemn this undemocratic distinction, Hall uses his privileged position to resist another, much stronger, more urgent distinction—the divide between friends and enemies, between comrade and foe; in resisting that distinction, he hearkens to an older ethos insisting on the fraternity of noble warriors whatever their nationality. Privileging this aristocratic ethos would seem to contravene his obvious avoidance of chivalric imagery. But as he develops that broader

ethos, he diminishes the individual heroism associated with the chivalric imagery and replaces it with communal bonds that recall those he more narrowly celebrated in *Kitchener's Mob*. In *Flying with Chaucer*, Hall moves beyond national or cultural boundaries and shows how that old aristocratic sensibility could permit a harmonious alliance of interests.

As a captain, Hall would have received sixty marks a month (Daniel J. McCarthy, *The Prisoner of War in Germany* [New York: Moffatt, Yard and Company, 1918], 191–204). McCarthy, a professor of medical jurisprudence at University of Pennsylvania, inspected the prisoner of war camps after the United States' entry into the war. His sanguine account of his findings sought to alleviate the worries of families and staunch the rampant anti-Teutonic sentiments that threatened many German-Americans. Though routinely contradicted in the sensational accounts that flooded the book market after the war, McCarthy's observations concerning officers are quietly upheld in Hall's depiction.

The ordinariness of Dr. McCarthy's account probably stems from the United States's prior status as a "protecting power." Until its entry into the war, the United States had served as a neutral nation through which information was exchanged about the treatment of prisoners. Thus, American embassies and consulates in Britain, France, Russia, and Germany "served as bases from which American diplomats fanned out to visit and inspect prison camps" (Speed, "Prisoners of War," 472).

51. According to Hall, survival is the cord tying the prisoners together: ". . .and we had met a common fate, or, more accurately, perhaps, an uncommon one, for we were still living" (10).
52. The current whereabouts of the Landshut Chaucer is unclear. It is not part of his archives at Grinnell College, nor does it appear in the online inventory of the library maintained by his family in his restored home in Tahiti (see http://www.jamesnormanhallhome.pf/indexen.html). The website does credit *Flying with Chaucer* with inspiring the family to restore the home and library. I have been unable to gather any other information on the fate of the Landshut volume.

4 Geoffrey and the American Flapper

1. David R. Carlson, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portraits," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 (1991): 283–300; and David O. Matthews, "Speaking to Chaucer: The Poet and the Nineteenth-Century Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Leslie Workman, Kathleen Verduin, and David D. Metzger (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 7, 15.
2. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Flowering of New England, 1815–1865* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1936), 316.
3. Steve Ellis, "Popular Chaucer and the Academy," in *Medievalism and the Academy I*, ed. Workman, Verduin, and Metzger, 20–21.
4. Note discussion in my Introduction on John Aikin, *Letters to a Young Lady, on a Course of English Poetry* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1806).

5. See Velma Bourgeois Richmond, *Chaucer as Children's Literature: Retellings from the Victorian and Edwardian Eras* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland Publishers, 2004), 175–78, for a discussion of the edition by Katherine Lee Bates (best known for "America the Beautiful"), *The Story of Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims Retold for Children* (1909).
6. Paul C. Helmreich, *Wheaton College, 1834–1957: A Massachusetts Family Affair* (New York: Cornwall Books, 2002), 104–5, 173–202, 222, and 262–71. Eliza Wheaton was the daughter-in-law of Judge Laban Wheaton, the school's founder in 1934.
7. Unless otherwise noted, all accounts of the Wheaton May Day festivities are from the "May Day Celebrations" Collection housed at Wheaton College (Norton, Massachusetts).
8. Letter from Dorris Libbey, part of a 1985 Wheaton student survey of alumnae's May Day memories, "May Day Celebrations."
9. In less than a generation after MacKaye's *The Canterbury Pilgrims* and his pageant in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the pageant movement had captured the public imagination in the United States and become a recognized academic field; annual pageants were a fixture at many colleges.
10. Anne Fontaine Maury, arranger, *May Day in Canterbury: A Chaucerian Festival* (Boston: Walter H. Baker Company, 1925).
11. "Anne Maury was the president of her senior class and very active in a variety of student activities, especially dramatics. After graduation, Miss Maury attended a school of social work, did some editing, and later wrote a history of the Maury family titled *Intimate Virginia*, before becoming a real estate agent" (Correspondence with Zephorene Stickney, archivist Wheaton College, dated July 28, 2003).

    The 1925 *Nike*, the college yearbook, records that she "hopes to go to Professor Baker's School of Dramatics at Yale to study costume design [and] wants to see all the new plays in New York" (45), Wheaton College Archives.
12. Maury, *May Day*, 41–42; emphasis in original.
13. John S.P. Tatlock and Percy MacKaye, modernized by, *The Complete Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 145–56.
14. Maury's Notebook, "May Day Celebrations."
15. These details can be seen by comparing photos of the 1926 May Day to photos in Zephorene Stickney and Sandra Dickinson, *Of All Our Immemorial Past: One Hundred Fifty Years at Wheaton* (Norton, MA: Wheaton College, 1985), 33.
16. Ellis notes that the pageant's "congeries of medieval incidents. . .has little to do with [Chaucer]" (Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000], 173).
17. "With regard to the HORSES," "May Day Celebrations."
18. Maury's emphasis.
19. House in the Pines, Norton, Massachusetts' college preparatory school adjacent to Wheaton College, had its own stables (Helmreich, *Wheaton College*, 287).
20. Maury's emphasis. "With regard to the HORSES," "May Day Celebrations."

21. To coordinate with the number of horses available from the local stable, the 1926 production had to eliminate the Shipman and the Manciple, 1926 cast, "May Day Celebrations."
22. H.L. Mencken, "The Flapper," *The Smart Set* 45 (February 1915): 1–2. Without belaboring the point, horses were also associated with women's sexual initiation (Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence, *Hoofbeats and Society: Studies in Human-Horse Interactions* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985], 183–85). Probably not coincidentally, the students were more frequently demanding freedom of movement off the campus, which the administration saw as giving them opportunities for too much license with young men (Helmreich, *Wheaton College*, 280–83).
23. Letter from Marion E. Carpenter, "May Day Celebrations."
24. For a sense of what adult education looked like at the height of the Progressivist movement, see the City of New York Department of Education, *Bulletin of Public Lectures* and People's Institute Collection, MSS & Archives Section, New York Public Library.
25. C. Hartley Gratton, *In Quest of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Adult Education* (New York: Associated Press, 1955), 149–50.
26. *American Lyceum, with the Proceedings of the Convention Held in New York, May 4, 1831* (Boston: Hiram Tupper, 1831), 3.
27. *American Lyceum*, 5.
28. *American Lyceum*, 12–13.
29. Russell Lynes, *The Lively Audience: A Social History of the Visual and Performing Arts in America, 1890–1950* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985), 4; and Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams, an Autobiography* (Boston: Hougton Mifflin, 1961).
30. Gratton, *In Quest of Knowledge*, 168–69.
31. The shows were sold to the communities as morally uplifting rather than as commercial entertainment, all the while blurring the distinction between culture and morality (Charlotte Canning, "'The Most American Thing in America': Producing National Identities in Chautauqua, 1904–1923," in *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater*, ed. Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999], 95).
32. Canning, "Most American Thing," 96.
33. Canning, "Most American Thing," 96.
34. Victoria Case and Robert Ormond Case, *We Called It Culture: The Story of Chautauqua* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 52; and John S. Gentile, *Cast of One: One-Person Shows from the Chautauqua Platform to the Broadway Stage* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 26–28.
35. The hunger for culture had grown enough that by the late 1800s the Chautauqua Institute, a correspondence school, was formed. Unlike other correspondence schools that taught trades, the Chautauqua Institute provided culture. It sold special editions of textbooks "accompanied by a handbook of sixty-four pages giving study hints. There [was] also a question-and-answer service issued monthly to serve as a basis for discussion

by groups, and a current topics outline. Examinations [were] given to those who desire[d] them" (John S. Noffsinger, *Correspondence Schools, Lyceums, Chautauquas* [New York: Macmillan, 1926], 125). In this way, the Institute provided four years of linked work, with four or five books a year assigned. Over 60 percent of the registrants were women, as were three quarters of the graduates, who would receive a certificate upon completion of the entire sequence. As opposed to the public lectures and summer sessions, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (C.L.S.C.) seems to have been more serious, even if it lacked intellectual rigor (Gratton, *In Quest of Knowledge*, 172–77).

In one of these Institute texts, from the Chautauqua Reading Circle series, Yale professor Henry Beers provides an introduction to English literature. The page facing the first chapter, "From the Conquest to Chaucer," contains the caveat and disclaimer: "The required books of the C.L.S.C. are recommended by a Council of six. It must, however, be understood that recommendation does not involve approval by the Council, or by any member of it, of every principle or doctrine contained in the book recommended" (*From Chaucer to Tennyson, with Twenty-Nine Portraits and Selections from Thirty Authors*, Chautauqua Reading Circle Literature [Meadville, PA: The Chautauqua-Century Press, 1894], 6). This ambiguously worded disclaimer could be distancing the Council either from Beers' interpretations and presentations or from every poet, Chaucer to Tennyson. In his lively and detailed discussion of Anglo-Norman literature and late-medieval English literature, Beers ranges from the chroniclers to the anonymous lyrics, combining linguistic development with literary appreciation. His discussion of Chaucer is ample, and he closes his explanation with this encouragement:

> Chaucer's English is nearly as easy for a modern reader as Shakspere's [*sic*], and few of his words have become obsolete. His verse, when rightly read, is correct and melodious. The early English was, in some respects, "more sweet upon the tongue" than the modern language. The vowels had their broad Italian sounds, and the speech was full of soft gutterals and vocalic syllables, like the endings ën, ës, ë, which made feminine rhymes and kept the consonants from coming harshly together. (28–29)

Though these were supposed to be reassuring words, I can hardly imagine they were so. Not only do they not provide any real guidance for reading Chaucer's English, but they establish differences that would have been difficult for Beers' readers to place within their conceptual universe. Readers are then directed to two editions of Chaucer: Tyrwhitt's edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, reprinted in 1883 by D. Appleton & Co, and Richard Morris's six-volume edition of *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer.*

Without sounding like a snob, it is hard for me to imagine how the average correspondence student would be able to read either of these editions with any enjoyment. Such presentations did little more for Chaucer than we saw happening with the anthologies. (See chapter 1.) Chaucer's name remains a

commodified vessel that can be filled with factual tidbits, sprinkled about in conversation, perhaps, but not really studied (or even enjoyed).

36. Olive Thorne Miller, *The Woman's Club: A Practical Guide and Hand-Book* (Boston: United States Book Company, 1891), 29–32.
37. Noffsinger, *Correspondence Schools, Lyceums, Chautauquas*, 118.
38. Kate Louise Roberts, *The Club Woman's Handybook of Programs and Club Management* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1914), 8–9.
39. "Flyer Images," in *Traveling Culture: Circuit Chautauqua in the Twentieth Century*, http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/libsdrc/details.jsp?id=/brownd/1&page=3.
40. "Flyer Images."
41. "Flyer Images."
42. D.F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 50.
43. Unless otherwise noted, references to Brinley's career are from the unpublished "Papers of Kathrine Sanger Gordon Brinley" (Watkinson Library, Trinity University, Hartford, Connecticut).
44. Jo McMurtry, *English Language, English Literature: The Creation of an Academic Discipline* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1985), 13.
45. See her articles appearing in Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman*: "Ornamental Needlework: as Exemplified in Certain Pictures of the Italian Renaissance" (May 1909), 236–40; "Needlework Design from Da Vinci's Painting of the Last Supper" (June 1909), 350–55; "Art Needlework from the Sixteenth Century" (July 1909), 472–77; "Antique Needlework copied from a fifteenth-century Italian Painting" (September 1909), 702–6; and "Revival of Needlecraft" (October 1909), 94–96.

    Money seems not to have been at issue in the early days of her career. A small notice in *The Hartford Courant* reports that D. Putnam Brinley was scheduled to receive a $112,678 distribution from the estate of his uncle, Putnam Brinley (April 19, 1914, 11).
46. This would eventually become the home of the Silvermine Guild of Artists.
47. Notes, KGSBPapers.
48. For a colorful short portrait of A. Edward Newton, see Ellery Sedgwick, *The Happy Profession* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946), 216–20.
49. Correspondence, PF to KGB, KGSBPapers, Box 8.
50. Fillmore's letter also anticipates her attempt to outdo Chaucerian scholarship, an aspect emphasized in the account of her career devised from the second set of sources.
51. In the intervening months, she seems to have been making plans, designing a brochure, and securing a management agency. See correspondence, AEN to KGB, February 3, 1921, KGSBPapers, Box 1. Folder 6.
52. Clipping, *New York Telegram*, January 6, 1922, KGSBPapers, Box 2, Folder 2.

    The MacDowell idea demonstrated, according to Percy MacKaye, a "rare understanding of the artist's needs as a creative individual in relation to his public service" (Percy MacKaye, *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure: A Book of Suggestions* [New York: Mitchell Kennerley, per title page 1912, s.b. 1913], 52).

53. Clipping, January 6, 1922, KGSBPapers, Box 2, Folder 2.
54. Correspondence, HK to KGB, January 1922, KGSBPapers, Box 2, Folder 2.
55. Knox's assumption that a wife probably pressured the businessman to attend the recital indicates the association with women that such performances as Brinley's had.
56. Alice Hazen Cass, *Practical Programs for Women's Clubs: A Compilation of Study Subjects for Use of Women's Clubs and Similar Organizations* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Company, 1915), 81.
57. Percy Van Dyke Shelly, *The Living Chaucer* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1940).
58. The first two remarks appear in her 1921 brochure; the third appears in her 1926 brochure.
59. Undated form letter. KGSBPapers, Box 2 Folder 3.
60. See her 1934 brochure for these wordings.
61. KGSBPapers, Box 1, Folder 24.
62. Five of Putnam Brinley's works were included in the Armory show, and one, "A walled garden" (#842) was issued as a postcard for the show. Once it was clear the show was a success, Putnam was noted as leading an "impromptu snake dance. . .through each of the galleries in turn amid songs, shouts, and bouyant laughter" (Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* [New York: Joseph H. Hirshhorn Foundation, 1963], 30–37 and 161–62).
63. Brown, *Story of the Armory Show*, 26.
64. See her 1926 brochure capturing her embrace of both the old and new: "Today everyone recognizes the delightsomeness of things that are old. Everyone who is really Modern in the smart sense, is pursuing the Antique."
65. Roderick Nash, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917–1930* (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1970), 16, quoting Malcolm Cowley.
66. See her files for correspondence with A.J. Barnouw, Charles Sears Baldwin, and John Manly. KGSBPapers.
67. KGSBPapers, File 4, Box 6 (1927–1928).
68. KGSBPapers, File 1, Box 1.
69. She also completed a translation of Books 1, 2, 3, and 4 of *Troilus and Criseyde*.
70. Letter dated April 15, 1933, KGSBPapers, Box 8, 1933–34. After she was dropped by Feakins, she purposely kept the name on her brochures. Feakins, who "was rather surprised to see [his] name on [her] circular," met her bluff when she claimed that other agents were eager to book her. She would be wise, he suggests "to sign up with the persons who think they can book [her]" and "of course. . .[to] omit the Feakins' name" on her next brochure.

    She briefly signed with the Philadelphia Lecture and Concert Bureau, but they arranged only a few engagements. She signed with W. Colston Leigh, Inc. on June 7, 1934 and remained with them until 1936. For a while, she acted as her own agent, but in 1938, she was under management with Shearwood-Smith, Inc., New York.
71. Gentile, *Cast of One*, 94–95.

72. The travel books, published by Dodd Mead, include *Away to the Gaspe* (1935), *Away to Cape Breton* (1936), *Away to Province of Quebec* (1937), and *Away to the Canadian Rockies and British Columbia* (1938).
73. In March 1941, the Chaucer Group of the MLA announced plans to collect a war relief fund for the town of Canterbury. On March 19, Brinley wrote Beatrice Brown, chair of the group and wife of Carleton Brown, offering to present the poetry of Chaucer and "turn over the sum of admission charges to the Relief Fund" if Brown could arrange for an auditorium at Hunter College (where Brinley addressed the letter to Brown). Brown responded that another Chaucerian had already been arranged to lecture at Hunter and suggested, instead, the High School in Montclair, New Jersey, where Beatrice Brown taught. Though Brinley okayed Plan B, her files do not record any performances in 1941.

    This episode provides an example of the small indignities Brinley endured.
74. Brinley's spiritualism was unusual only as a strategy for establishing her authority as a Chaucerian. Spiritualism was rife in this period, with such notables as W.B. Yeats adhering to practices that connected them to the spirit world.
75. The archives include five printed brochures dating from 1921, 1922, 1926, 1927, and 1934.

    The only published version of her genesis of her career appeared as "Heavenly Accident" in the March 1940 *Nutmeg*, the publication of the Connecticut Pioneer Branch of the National League of American Pen Women (cited as 1). I also found prepared notes for a talk before the Historical Society of New Canaan that introduced a second version (2). Possibly this second version was part of either an NBC radio broadcast on January 12, 1934 or a radio interview in October 1938. A third, untitled version in typescript indicates that it was written for the Guild Year Book (3); I found no record of its being published. Three other versions are titled "Dear Geoffrey" (4), "Tuning In" (5), and "Heavenly Accident" (12), each an unfinished draft. The final six versions are undated, untitled typewritten notes that seem to be drafts of a novel and/or autobiography; two are found in Box 1, file 3, Series II, Chaucer 1919 (6 and 7), one is found in Box 3, Chaucer 1923–24 (8), and three are found in Box 10 (9, 10, and 11). Parenthetical citations indicate in which version the different material appears.
76. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature*, Centenary Edition (New York: Routledge, 2002), 46–65. For an extensive taxonomy of spiritual experiences, some of which provide apt models for classifying Brinley's claims, see Frederic W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1903).
77. My italics.
78. To distinguish between the writer and the character in Brinley's narratives, I will refer to the author as Brinley, the character as Kathrine.

79. Her husband, D. Putnam Brinley, had been too old to be drafted for World War I, so he volunteered with the YMCA, which financed and operated the *foyer du soldat*, retreats attempting to provide "wholesome entertainment alternatives for the sex and alcohol" the U.S. government feared European communities would make too easily available to naive American soldiers (*Service with Fighting Men: An Account of the Work of the American Young Men's Christian Association in the World War* [New York: Association Press, 1922], 115–18). He sailed to France in early 1918, sharing a cabin with John Erskine, his New Canaan, Connecticut neighbor. Brinley left Paris on February 1, 1918 and served at Sommedieu, just a mile or two from the front, until the Armistice (John Erskine, *The Memory of Certain Persons* [Philadelphia and New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1947], 261–84).

    For a descriptive and lengthy discussion of his work with the *foyer du soldats*, see "Connecticut Artist Helped to Paint Joy into French Polus' War Days," *The Hartford Courtant* January 18, 1920, 1X.
80. Brinley's emphasis.
81. Stephanie Trigg identifies "sympathetic identification with the poet" as "one of the dominant features of traditional Chaucer Studies [where] critical response to Chaucer often seems structured as a form of conversation with the author" (Stephanie Trigg, "Discourses of Affinity in the Reading Communities of Geoffrey Chaucer," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400–1602*, ed. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline [Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999], 270).
82. KGSBPapers, Box 2.
83. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 143. As early as 1922, she was signing her name "Gordon Brinley (Mrs. D. Putnam)" (Correspondence, KBG to AL, June 3, 1922, Gordon Brinley, "Seven Letters to Amy Lowell; 1922–1925," MSS Lowell 19[140], Amy Lowell [The Hougton Library, Harvard University]).

    Her brochures feature photos of her medieval costume with her masculine name underneath, making her appear to be a man in drag. And the brochure claiming "Chaucer lives again" with her photo even queers Chaucer.
84. Letter from Gertrude Whiting, vice-president of the Guild of the Needle and Bobbin Crafts, Box 2, Folder 1. KGSBPapers.
85. The tepid nature of the academics' endorsements is registered in Charles Sears Baldwin's letter to John Manly. Apparently, when her request to read at University of Chicago was resisted, she asked Baldwin to support her. In a letter dated March 19, 1923, Baldwin wrote:

    > My friend, Mrs. Brinley, has let me know that in some consideration of her reading Chaucer aloud before students of the University of Chicago there has arisen the question of her command of Middle English pronunciation. I have heard Mrs. Brinley read Chaucer. Though I should take exception to one or two details of her phonetic [?], her Middle English is very careful, substantially accurate, and

> better than that which we get generally in University classes. Since I value the acquaintance of the Brinleys, I confess that as a Chaucerian I went to Mrs. Brinley's reading with some trepidation, wishing to like it, but fearing that I should not. I was not only relieved, but found the evening altogether delightful, and think that a recommendation of Mrs. Brinley is really a privilege to me.

Though the letter ends on a note of endorsement, the intervening lines record Baldwin's hesitancy to imagine that a novice could read Chaucer as accurately as an university-trained student.

86. See for example, "Correspondence, Milton J. Davies to KGB, January 22, 1925, KGSBPapers," Box 4, 1925–26.
87. A letter from Barnouw, dated June 9, 1959, confirms Barnouw's graciousness. He notes, "You miss, I am sure, your Chaucer programmes, which must have given you as much enjoyment as they did your audiences throughout country." Her inability to continue performing contrasts with his own continuing efforts:

> My interest in Chaucer is just as unflagging as yours. Once a month I give a reading (in medieval pronunciation, of course) to a group of fellow members of the Century Club, physicians, lawyers, artists, architects. I have been doing this for the past five years, and when I concluded the series on the eve of my departure for Santa Fe [New Mexico], they asked me to resume them in the Fall. Each has the text in front of him so that he can follow me easily. Those evenings are a real treat to me and, if I interpret their request for a resumption in the Fall correctly, to them as well.

88. Hiram Corson had died in 1911. Prior to his death, William Vaughn Moody reported in a letter that Corson was "deep in spiritualism, talks daily with Tennyson, Browning and Milton, and lives on the most intimate terms of familiarity with his dead wife" (William Vaughn Moody and Percy MacKaye, "Introduction," in *Letters to Harriet* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1935], 285). If whoever spoke these words to Brinley mentioned Corson's spiritualism, then the idea of channeling the spirit of Chaucer might have started here.
89. Hiram Corson, *A Primer of English Verse, Chiefly in Its Aesthetic and Organic Character* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1892).
90. Matthews, "Speaking to Chaucer," 7–19.
91. Walter W. Skeat, *A Student's Pastime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), xxvii; and Frederick J. Furnivall, *A Volume of Personal Record* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1919), 11 and 92.
92. Brinley describes here and elsewhere a form of retrocognition, "direct paranormal access to events that occurred in the past" (H.J. Irwin, *An Introduction to Parapsychology* [Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1999], 127). See Louise Fradenburg, "'So That We May Speak of Them': Enjoying the Middle Ages," *New Literary History* 28, no. 2 (1997): 205–30, *Http://muse.jhu.edu/j..y_history/v028/28.2fradenburg.html*, for a discussion of the pleasure derived from identification with historical figures.

93. For a sample of this effusive enthusiasm, note her professional letter inviting Amy Lowell to her "presentation of Middle English poetry." Brinley adds: "I take for granted that you are a Chaucer lover. You could scarcely be so gifted a poet and a Lowell without loving him. Mr. A. Edward Newton, three years ago, turned my love for him into a profession; that is to say, my love for Chaucer! I find the world is full of his lovers" (LGB to AL, November 17, 1922, Brinley, "Seven Letters to Amy Lowell").

5 Fightin' and Rockin' with Geoff

1. Perhaps because Chaucer's reputation offered such a rich source for "codpiece comedies [in which] all women wish to be deflowered or raped and all husbands deserve to be cuckolded," his *Tales* have been avoided by the rather priggish American film industry but adapted—or referred to in the case of Guerrini—by Italian film makers: Paolo Pasolini's *The Canterbury Tales* (1971), Mino Guerrine's *Gli Altri Raconti de Canterbury* (1972), and Lucio Dandolo's *Lusty Wife of Canterbury* (1972), as well as Michael Wotruba's *Novelle licenziose di vergini vogliose*, which features Chaucer guiding Boccaccio through Hell (Kevin J. Harty, *The Reel Middle Ages: American, Western, and Eastern European, Middle Eastern and Asian Films about Medieval Europe* [Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 1999], 7 and 373).

   We should not be misled by Michael Powell's *A Canterbury Tale* (1944), which is British and has nothing to do with Chaucer.
2. Conferring nobility on a lowly squire is an essentially American twist, for "in an authentic medieval romance," as Angela Jane Weisl points out, "[William] would turn out instead to be [Edward the Black Prince's] long-lost son" (Angela Jane Weisl, *The Persistence of Medievalism: Narrative Adventures in Contemporary Culture* [New York: Palgrave, 2003], 5).
3. Kathleen Forni, "Reinventing Chaucer: Helgeland's *A Knight's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 256; Dave Kehr, "Medieval Tale, Modern Twist (Review of *A Knight's Tale*)," *New York Times*, May 4, 2001, www.nytimes.com; and Elvis Mitchell, "In Merrie Olde England, Waving His Banner All over the Place (Review of *A Knight's Tale*)," *New York Times*, May 11, 2001, www.nytimes.com.
4. Brian Helgeland, *A Knight's Tale: The Shooting Script* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2001), ix.
5. Umberto Eco, "Dreaming of the Middle Ages," in *Travels in Hyper Reality*, trans. William Weaver (London: Harvest/Harcourt, 1986), 61.
6. Mitchell, "In Merrie Olde England."
7. Kehr, "Medieval Tale."
8. This did not prevent, however, the film's marketers from promoting it as "an adaptation of the medieval text" (Forni, "Reinventing Chaucer," 254–55).
9. Forni, "Reinventing Chaucer," 259.
10. John Tierney, "What Women Want," *New York Times*, 2005, May 24, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com.

11. Stephen Lyng, "Edgework and the Risk-Taking Experience," in *Edgework: The Sociology of Risk-Taking*, ed. Stephen Lyng (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7; and Rick Lyman, "A Culture of Both Luck and Pluck," *New York Times*, December 18, 1999, B9.
12. Ben Gilad, *Early Warning: Using Competitive Intelligence to Anticipate Market Shifts, Control Risk, and Create Powerful Strategies* (New York: Amacom, 2004), 5.
13. Lori Holyfield, Lillian Jonas, and Ann Zajicek, "Adventure without Risk Is Like Disneyland," in *Edgework*, ed. Lyng, 173–86.
14. For a notorious business example, see Kurt Eichenwald's book on the Enron scandal, *Conspiracy of Fools: A True Story* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005).
15. See articles at "Chaucer" in unsophisticated but often referenced sources like wikipedia.org for evidence of the popular myth.
16. Helgeland, *A Knight's Tale*, 127. The first quote is not in the film.
17. These are made to appear more dangerous by the filmmakers, as shown on the DVD's bonus tracks: to make the splintering of the jousting shafts appear more spectacular, the empty tubes are filled with pieces of spaghetti that scatter and spray when the shaft is broken on impact.
18. Lyng, "Edgework and the Risk-Taking Experience," 6.
19. Gerda Reith, "On the Edge: Drugs and the Consumption of Risk in Late Modernity," in *Edgework*, ed. Lyng, 232–33.
20. These shots reflect Americans' stereotype of Chaucer that reduces him to a teller of bawdy tales.
21. In the script and the outtakes, we see him in bed with his wife, Phillippa (Scene 126, page 100–101), but the film does not include any aspect of that relationship.
22. Lyng, "Edgework and the Risk-Taking Experience," 5.

Postscript

1. Lee Patterson, "The Disenchanted Classroom," Teaching Chaucer in the 1990s, http://web.english.ufl.edu/exemplaria/sympo.html#patterson.
2. Find these sites at http://www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/, http://hosting.uaa.alaska.edu/afdtk/pedagogy.htm, and http://www.unc.edu/depts/chaucer/index.html.
3. Marvin Mudrick, "Chaucer and What We Make of Him," *Hudson Review* 6 (1953–54): 130.
   I based this observation of fan letters in Percy MacKaye's and Gordon Brinley's archives, as well as my classroom experience with students who come to the course excited about Chaucer after seeing *A Knight's Tale* or, believe it or not, the animated film inspired by *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, *Rock-a-Doodle*.

4. Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4; and Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986),18.
5. A spelling anticipated by the 1687 edition based on Speght's 1602 edition (Derek Pearsall, "Thomas Speght [Ca.1550–?]," in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers [Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984], 91).
6. Barnes&Noble.com, *Customer Reviews for* The Knight's Tale: From *The Canterbury Tales* (2003), Http://search.barnesandnoble.com/booksearch/isbnInquiry.asp?userid=53KBHQH60D&isbn=0521499127&itm=2.
7. In this way, then, popular Chaucer is not much different from academic Chaucer. As has been well documented, academics have always re-created Chaucer in their own image. The earliest American scholars made "Chaucer an honorary American" by emphasizing that the poet "got where he did by hard work and not be receiving special favours from king or aristocracy" (Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* [Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992], 7). More recently, we have been shown the ways current scholarship often presents a "bourgeois Chaucer [who] functions to reproduce dominant American ideology" (Britton J. Harwood, "The Political Use of Chaucer in Twentieth-Century America," in *Medievalism in the Modern World: Essays in Honour of Leslie J. Workman*, ed. Richard Utz and Tom Shippey [Turnhout: Brepols, 1998], 390).
8. David Cowart, *Literary Symbiosis: The Reconfigured Text in Twentieth-Century Writing* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1993), 16.

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