The Birth and Death of the Author

*The Birth and Death of the Author* is a work about the changing nature of authorship as a concept. In eight specialist interventions by a diverse group of the finest international scholars it tells a history of print authorship in a set of author case studies from the fifteenth to the twenty-first century. The introduction surveys the prehistory of print authorship and sets the historical and theoretical framework that opens the discussion for the seven succeeding chapters. Engaging particularly with the history of the materials and technology of authorship it places this in conversation with the critical history of the author up to and beyond the crisis of Barthes’s ‘Death of the Author’.

As a multi-authored history of authorship itself, each subsequent chapter takes a single author or work from every century since the advent of print and focuses in on the relationship between the author and the reader. Thus, they explore the complexities of the concept of authorship in the works of Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate (Andrew Galloway, Cornell University), William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe (Rory Loughnane, University of Kent), John Taylor, ‘the Water Poet’ (Edel Semple, University College Cork), Samuel Richardson (Natasha Simonova, University of Oxford), Herman Melville (and his reluctant scrivener ‘Bartleby’) (William E. Engel, Sewanee, The University of the South), James Joyce (Brad Tuggle, University of Alabama), and Grant Morrison (Darragh Greene, University College Dublin).

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1 For some studies of these kinds see Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer’s
Inscribed Identities
Life Writing as Self-Realization
Joan Ramon Resina

Research Methodologies for Auto/biography Studies
Edited by Ashley Barnwell and Kate Douglas

The Autobiography Effect
Writing the Self in Post-Structuralist Theory
Dennis Schep

Multilingual Life Writing by French and Francophone Women
Translingual Selves
Natalie Edwards

A Poetics of Arabic Autobiography
Between Dissociation and Belonging
Ariel M. Sheetrit

Writing Life Writing
Narrative, History, Autobiography
Paul John Eakin

The Birth and Death of the Author
A Multi-Author ed History of Authorship in Print
Edited by Andrew J. Power
Contents

List of Figures vii
Acknowledgements ix
List of Contributors xi

Introduction: The Begetting and Forgetting of the Author 1
ANDREW J. POWER

1 Fifteenth Century: Fathering Chaucer: Thoreau, Hoccleve, Lydgate, and the Invention of the First English Author 32
ANDREW GALLOWAY

2 Sixteenth Century: Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Traces of Authorship 54
RORY LOUGHNANE

3 Seventeenth Century: Authorial Identity and Print in John Taylor’s Common Whore and Arrant Thiefe Pamphlets 79
EDEL SEMPLE

4 Eighteenth Century: Samuel Richardson’s ‘Murdering Pen’ and the End of the Novel 98
NATASHA SIMONOVA

5 Nineteenth Century: Melville’s ‘Bartleby’ and the Prefiguration of the Author’s Own Preference Not to Write 117
WILLIAM E. ENGEL
Contents

6  Twentieth Century: La Mort de l’Auteur: James Joyce and the Birth of Writing 144
   BRAD TUGGLE

7  Twenty-First Century: ‘Who Is That Knocking on Your Door?’: Authorship, Print, and the Multimodal Comics of Grant Morrison in the Digital Age 156
   DARRAGH GREENE

Bibliography 173
Index 187
Figures

1.1 Chaucer’s image in Thomas Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*. © British Library Board: Harley MS 4866, fol. 88

1.2 Lydgate joining the Canterbury Pilgrims in John Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*. © British Library Board: Royal MS 18 DII, fol. 148

5.1 Melville’s changes made on the form for a Memorandum of Agreement with Dix & Edwards to publish *The Piazza Tales*, 17 May 1856, showing revision of percentage to be received on each copy sold, signed by Melville (Melville Collection 451, The Houghton Library, Harvard University)

5.2 Revised Memorandum of Agreement with Dix & Edwards to publish *The Confidence-Man*, 28 Oct 1856 (Melville Collection 455, The Houghton Library, Harvard University)

5.3 Scrivener’s fair copy incorporating changes made to Memorandum of Agreement with Dix & Edwards to publish *The Confidence-Man*, 10 Oct 1856 (Melville Collection 453, The Houghton Library, Harvard University)

5.4 Dix & Edwards copyright and sales record for *The Piazza Tales* indicating the book had not yet paid expenses hence no royalty payment, 30 August 1856 (Melville Collection 452, The Houghton Library, Harvard University)
My first thanks must go to the contributors to the volume not just for their excellent chapters but also for the spirit of collaboration with which they entered into this. I am particularly indebted to Rory Loughnane, Edel Semple, Darragh Greene, and William E. Engel who carefully and judiciously read my section of the book as it developed, as did my kind friend and colleague Adnan K. Abdulla. My work is the better for their insightful commentary. I am also grateful to Paul Vita and Anne McCabe at Saint Louis University – Madrid Campus for supporting a series of three conferences there (2015, 2016, 2017), and to my colleagues and friends there for organising them with me. At these conferences a wonderful group of plenaries, speakers, attendees, friends, and students inspired the kernel of an idea that grew into this volume. I am further indebted to the students of my Literary Criticism courses at the University of Sharjah who endured my ideas as we discussed issues of authorship along the way to and beyond Roland Barthes. Finally, in a book about print authorship, it is imperative that I thank all those at Routledge who have helped this book to print, especially Michelle Salyga, Bryony Reece, and the anonymous readers who saw its merits and whose insights helped to shape it, and also Manikandan Kuppan at CodeMantra who project managed the book for printing. What is of value in this book is due to these people, and all mistakes, missteps, inelegancies, and bad jokes that remain are my own and in spite of the good advice of my colleagues and friends.
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Introduction
The Begetting and Forgetting of the Author

Andrew J. Power

What Is Barthes’s Author?¹

For much of the century before Roland Barthes published his enigmatic and influential essay ‘The Death of the Author’ (1967), a choir, or perhaps cacophony, of critical voices and critical movements had, in a range of different ways, been attempting similarly to shift critical focus away from the authors of texts onto the texts themselves.² The Romantic movement had left criticism with the notion that the author (understood as a special entity, possessed of a “more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind”) ought to be the key determinant in all matters of literary meaning.³ A key catalyst in destabilising this notion was provided by students of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure who, in gathering and publishing their notes of his lectures into a volume, revolutionised the study of language itself and prefaced the advent of Structuralism (following developments in Russian Formalism in linguistic studies).⁴ In turn, I. A. Richards maintained this focus on language and meaning as he laid the cornerstone of the New Critical movement.⁵ Reader Response theorists took a slightly different tack and instead looked to the reader to provide meaning.⁶ Close Reading, as theorised by scholars like William Empson, drew our focus to how the text might generate meaning for a reader.⁷ Other New Critics, including W. K. Wimsatt, Jr and Monroe C. Beardsley, were as critical, however, of attempts to read the reader, as they were of attempts to read the author’s intention from the text.⁸ A growing suspicion of the ‘critic’ (a figure at whom Barthes also takes aim) is also evident during the first half of the twenty-first century, and is articulated most frankly in Northrop Frye’s rejection of a “conception of the critic as a parasite or jackal” living by literary criticism off the true work of the poet.⁹ Several other theories that sought meaning along the nexus, author – text – reader also served to complicate the author figure. For instance, Jacques Lacan (a follower of Sigmund Freud) sought the unconscious (author/reader) in the text (although his true focus was dream, not literature).¹⁰ And Michel Foucault perhaps recalling Wordsworth’s question ‘What is a Poet?’, and Sartre’s ‘What is Literature?’, asked in turn, ‘What Is an Author?’¹¹
The study of English literature in dedicated university departments was only roughly a hundred years old when Barthes’s essay was published and already these several movements and critical voices were asking us to look away from the author. Barthes’s pronouncement, or imperative, was simply the most urgent iteration encouraging us not just to look away, but to give up the ghost and walk away. In the essay he calls for “the destruction of the Author”, “the removal of the Author”, absenting, “distancing”, “diminishing” him (p. 145), praises those who have, suppressed the Author (p. 143), called him into question, derided him (p. 144), “removed him” (p. 147) before finally, recalling Nietzsche’s ‘Death of God’ (“Gott ist tot”), calling for “the death of the Author” (p. 148). Barthes, famously, enjoyed the fame that came with his own writings, so what was Barthes asking us to bury deep and to leave behind?

For one thing, Barthes’s author is male (so too is Foucault’s and Wordsworth’s poet). And if Barthes’s impulse to retire him to the background to allow his text to live is a good one, a counter-movement becomes quite forceful concurrently with Barthes’s and Foucault’s writings to remember forgotten and neglected authors who happen to be female (and later in the century, less Anglo-American). This collection does not ignore that movement, but it is not its purpose to fully engage with post-Barthesian studies of authorship. Rather, the essay contributions in the collection deal with the interconnection between technology and authors in an industry that was (like so many others and to its eternal detriment) dominated by male authors. In the essays that follow, seven contributing authors take an author and/or text each for the centuries that follow the invention of the printing press to the current age. In doing so they offer a chronological sweep across seven centuries of print technology and a broad range of issues that arise as a consequence of print for the study of authorship.

Barthes is not writing quill in hand in the vacuum of a private study and his pronouncement is not a witty riposte to a scurrilous fellow author who has offended him in print. Rather he wishes us to return our gazes from the adulated figure of the author in biographical criticism to the text itself in order to make it definitively the object of study. This is what makes the printing press the crucial moment for this history of the author, for it is the moment that textual stability becomes possible. Prior to the paradoxical fixity provided by the movable type of a printing press, the text was a less stable object to study. And Barthes’s conception of the author is modern. He does, at the outset of his essay, seem to imagine a primitive society before the author, in which “narrative is never undertaken by a person, but by a mediator, shaman or speaker, whose ‘performance’ may be admired (that is, his mastery of the narrative code), but not his ‘genius’.” And in spite of his will to annihilate the author, he does show a preference in his examples
(Balzac, Baudelaire, Van Gogh, Tchaikovsky, Mallarmé, Valéry, Proust, Flaubert, Thomas de Quincey) for a certain kind of author, and for particular modern authors. The technology of textual production, a technology now all but inextricable from the fact of published authorship, must be an integral part of any study of authorship. In focusing on the printing press this collection unfortunately repeats the exclusion that the printing press aided. Although Marjory Kempe may be asserted to be the author of the first autobiography in the English language, the way it was edited and arranged in discreet excerpts for publication as A Short Treatise of Contemplation by the famous printer Wynkyn de Worde in 1501 meant that “her voice was almost entirely expunged from the text” until the rediscovery of an original manuscript in 1938. Thus Virginia Woolf’s brief list of neglected female authors reveals the exceptions who prospered by print (like Aphra Behn) rather than the majority (like Dorothy Wordsworth) who remained in diary and manuscript, nominatively unpublished, until after their deaths.

Nancy Miller’s resistance to Barthes, for instance, comes in part from the very neglect in print that female authorship has endured. For the female author (excised from the history of print, and only in the relatively recent past “born” into print and to print culture from other authorial traditions, from the archives of the coterie circle, life writing and journal keeping) has not yet had the history in print from which to liberate the subject. If Barthes seeks to free the (male) author from the obligations that come with the “inky cloak”, “within” which he has lurked for seven centuries, the female author may have a whole different set of obligations that are related, but often opposed, to those of the authors (exclusively male) that Barthes thinks of as he writes away his forefathers in print. There are several good reasons to want to keep the author of a diary, a collection of letters, or a personal persecution narrative at the centre of their own work; and where theoretically Barthes’s injunctions against the (male) author might be logically and philosophically sound, politically they may contribute to or perpetuate a silencing of diverse (and the diversity of) authorial voices:

[...] for the underrepresented author, the thesis [of Barthes’ ‘Death of the Author’] can work to invalidate her/his legitimacy at a time when it has been achieved only recently and tentatively and, even then, only within certain parts of the globe. One should not work for the ‘death’, goes this [Nancy Miller’s] argument, when so many authors from our literary history and present have barely been ‘born’.

A Barthesian lens could only ever be a bad mirror for those who have represented and are presenting themselves in print.

Hannah Arendt begins her famous essay, ‘What is Authority?’ with a correction of the title question; it should have asked, she tells us,
‘What was authority?’ The introductory chapter offers an account of the history of authorship pre-print which more precisely answers a slightly modified version of Foucault’s question: ‘What was an author?’ The contributors to the book then take a single idiosyncratic author, text, or issue that may nevertheless be taken as idiomatic to the century for which they write, from the sixteenth to the twenty first; from the technological advancement that made possible mass produced fixed type authors to the unbound authors of the current computerised cloud surfing generation. Barthes insists that the author is modern. Without any inclination towards historical nuance or context, he vaguely cites ‘the end of the middle ages’ as a moment that contributed to his coming into being leaving scope for his emergence somewhere thereafter (where exactly after, and what of those authors who preceded the printing press, not least Dante and Chaucer?). My question then is what was an author before the advent of print technology rendered him, in Barthes’s formulation, modern, and before he became something so offensive to Barthes as to warrant his destruction. In a post-Barthesian critical landscape, where his declarations on the specific modernity of authorship and its post-Romantic death have been eroded by generations of critics, how might we approach the study of authorship in a way that acknowledges the revolutionary effects of the printing press over a long history that seems now to many to be coming to a close? In one regard, the purpose of this volume is to challenge and to test the details of some of the broad strokes that lie behind Barthes’s understanding of the author and his history. So the introduction flags moments rather than offering a continuous narrative, highlights examples of authorship that must have contributed in some way to the formation of Barthes’s idea of the Author, and notes some of the significant differences between ancient and pre-modern authors and modern ones before briefly summarising what is to come in the ensuing chapters.

My broad view connects the scattered points of light in the constellation, while each vignette-like chapter is focussed on a single star. We gain an impression from the set, a very detailed and intricate set of maps, and we may learn an extraordinary amount about our set, but we might get another infinitely complex map from another edited collection with the same agenda. What this history might provide in its singularity is a model of the difference that Barthes’s idea of the author does not fully encompass, and perhaps more generally, that the history of authorship has not accounted for in full. This model offers the obvious possibility of a companion volume (or several) whose focus could remain material (for instance manuscript) but which offers another history of authorship through another critical lens.

In the present collection, each chapter deals with a work, or set of works, chosen for a particular issue raised for the concept of authorship. So, Andrew Galloway writes about influence, specifically of Geoffrey
Chaucer on Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate; Rory Loughnane writes about collaboration, specifically between William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe; Edel Semple explores self-fashioning, particularly of John Taylor, the "Water Poet" via the market place of pamphlet print; Natasha Simonova writes about reader (or fan) response to the works of Samuel Richardson; William E. Engel about failure, or refusal, to write, to be read, to signify in Herman Melville's 'Bartleby, the scrivener'; Brad Tuggle writes about a "sham" author who seems wilfully to frustrate interpretation in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*; and Darragh Greene collects several of the previous issues in exploring the comic book works of Grant Morrison. The great span of centuries is matched by texts also chosen for their range and for variety of mode, genre and medium: thus the longer poetic works of Chaucer and his contemporaries are balanced by the shorter cheap-print poems of Taylor, Loughnane deals with theatre, Greene with comic books. And the three prose writers differ markedly in tone and genre as indeed in press form: Richardson's self-published, gargantuan, four-volume serialised novel, Melville's two-part short story (or novella, perhaps) printed a month apart in a monthly magazine, and the scattered bit-part-published *Work in Progress* that became *Finnegans Wake*. The design aims to cover not just a large time frame with a series of detailed examinations of particular authors but also to cover a range of issues that arise when one considers authorship (issues central to Barthes's argument and also those that seem to challenge it).

Of the earliest ages of the book in history, Sven Dahl warns that we are on "uncertain ground" and that "general conclusions" ought not to be gleaned from the "isolated". This is a sound warning in a more general sense, but we might add that the generality of Barthes's author figure is part of its problem. For Barthes does not ask for the death of an author – a specific author – but of *the* author. And while Dahl feels some unease at writing *The History of the Book*, this present collection is not *The History of the Author*. Rather, in gathering a selection of representative samples, isolated instances of the author through history, it offers a particular history, or a set of particular histories, to stand against, and in conversation with, Barthes's general notion of the author. For, as is most often the case, the particular belies the general, while at the same time providing detail/contour to a broad pattern. But, where should we begin?

**The Birth of the Author**

Where in our history does Barthes's imagined "shaman" reside? What is his text? On the walls of the Egyptian pyramids there are texts, the oldest of which date back to c. 2257 BCE (Pyramid of Unis). We might argue that the history of the book begins here (if we open up that term to
include all textual inscription in material or digital form). Here, certainly the “genius” of the author must remain obscure to us. In the hieroglyphs carved on the walls of these monuments a narrative emerges (famously in the journey of the sun through an underworld realm and back into a world of light), but from the inside of these tombs the author does not. Importantly, for all religious societies, death is only a transition beyond this world of the living and of the material text. In a spiritual sense an author (though dead) remains eternally the author of a work in a way that a secular, or at least an atheist, author cannot claim to. But for living readers the connection is broken and all that is left is the text. Similar Egyptian texts told in hieroglyph exist in other material forms over the course of the next millennium in the more brief Coffin Texts carved in wooden coffins (apparently illustrating that the afterlife was accessible to ordinary humans also), and later still in papyrus scrolls of the famous *Book of the Dead*. Here, certainly, the texts discovered are for the most part what might be best described as spells or incantations, meant to be sung for, or perhaps by, the dead. The sheer spread of these texts over geographical and temporal location negates any realistic search for an author, or multiple authors, across generations, or even the ‘shaman’ (or Egyptian high-priest, perhaps) that Barthes’s essay proposes. In the tombs of ancient Egypt we remain without an author though not without a text. Here the author does not write in their own person, does not assert their own authorship, but rather writes for a deity or its worshipper. The authority of the text is not his but the god’s.

A comparable text(s) exists in similar variety in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, which hales from the region of modern-day Iraq. Its oldest surviving variation is written in Sumerian and carved on a single clay tablet that dates to c. 2100 BCE, but it is elaborated in eight clay tablets (or fragments) written in Babylonian and dating to c. 1800 BCE, and is perfected (such as it is) in a set of twelve tablets in Akkadian, dating to 1300–1000 BCE (a further, thirteenth tablet tells a connected tale that stands outside of the main overarching narrative). This is a text that has a traceable moment and seems to date to a specific historic king, but it remains authorless to us. The possessive title that we use to refer to it indicates that it belongs to its protagonist, not to its author. Thematically, the author never made it back from the underworld to which its protagonist descended. In these texts, of and for the dead, lie the beginnings of Western literatures. They are preserved for us (like the mummified remains of the pyramids) by the material forms of the texts but that materiality is both the salvation of the text and the death of its author. This, of course, is the appeal of the obscure ancient society imagined in Barthes’s “shaman”. In the absence of an author the text is free. But the meanings and functions of these texts are also thus up for endless debate. While the death of the authors to obscurity is what liberates these texts, preserved for us only in fragmentary forms, their state leaves us
in a sort of critical limbo. These are not texts that are traditionally handled by literature departments, but by historians, theologians, linguists, archaeologists.

**Birth of the Reader**

The deathly focus of these early texts is serendipitous for a book that explores the death of the author, and it also reveals the essentially spiritual nature of the transaction in process. These are texts whose purposes are divine; but what should we make of a text whose author is divine? This is a problem for all liturgical faiths and must be, at times, only carefully addressed by the literary critic. Here the “Author-God” of Barthes’s text is indeed a God author (146). *The Book of Daniel* provides us with a reader encountering a text on a wall, perhaps like the obscure texts on the walls of the pyramids. The King of Babel, however, is provided with a closer connection to the author than is usually the case in the form of a sort of animated manicule (the author’s own hand, it seems) but without any real connection to the author:

> At the same hour appeared fingers of a man’s hand, which wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the King’s palace, and the King saw the palm of the hand that wrote. (Daniel, 5:5)

Terrified and perplexed he calls for “astrologians, Chaldeans, soothsayers, wisemen” and/or whoever else might read the writing and provide an interpretation, offering such reward as might make the reader “the third ruler in the kingdom” (Daniel 5: 5–7). Here, the necessity of interpretation in the act of reading is made manifest, as is the problem that Barthes discerned of the perceived mystery to be solved or revealed, a ‘secret’ to ‘decipher’ (Barthes, 147). The text requires decoding and requires a privileged reader (i.e. Daniel).

Authorship, authority, in these texts is often a mysterious and potent force but the work of the reader (or prophet, Imam, Rabbi, Priest, or perhaps ‘shaman’) is also a difficult craft, learned or inspired. Books of this kind (*Book of Daniel, Book of Job, Book of Esther*) remain focused on (and are often named for) a protagonist even while they are most commonly read as originating with a, or the, divine. Herein we have, not Barthes’s ‘Author-God’, but God-as-Author. This or these authors, when it comes to religious texts of this kind, are as difficult to conceive of as the meanings of these great early texts must be to interpret. But here we also have the model of interpretation that Barthes sought to resist; access to the true meaning of the text in such a culture must remain in the ownership of the specialised reader who claims to
understand the meaning (and the will) of God (or the author). In religion, this is a priest (Imam, Rabbi, ‘shaman’, etc.); in literary studies, the critic.33

Ancient Greece offers us, in the figure of Simonides of Ceos (d. 468 BCE), the first record of an author paid for his work.34 And it also offers us the earliest texts that might be thought of as critical and, unlike the other early texts we have looked at, give us the names of authors.35 In the Ion, Plato identifies Homer as the “best and most divine” of the poets, and he initially praises the capacity that Ion, the rhapsode, shows in understanding Homer’s “thought and not his words alone”.36 Herein, he configures Ion, rhapsodist or ‘elocutionist’, as “the interpreter of the thought of the poet to the audience” (530A / p. 10). This might roughly be said to describe the role of a critic, but of a particular kind of critic: one who assumes, or is assumed to have, access to the author’s thought and not just his text. But Plato is not as impressed by all this as he pretends, for later he describes the author, even the best of them, Homer, as little more than a conduit for “a divine power” (533C / p. 13). The poet is now but an interpreter of the muse who inspires him. Critics, at one further remove from divine inspiration, are ‘interpreters of interpreters’ (535A / p. 15).37

In Republic, Plato’s version of Socrates goes further, by adding Hesiod to his shortlist of the two great poets, urging that we cast them out from the ideal state that he is discussing.38 But he does so because of the dangerous power that they possess: “the strongest of us listen with pleasure, you know; we surrender our spirits to the guidance of the poet and sympathize with the hero, and are eager to praise the author because he so powerfully stirs our feelings”.39 And the state should only allow “hymns to the gods and praises of good men” (606E / p. 54).

Hesiod brings some of Plato’s scorn on himself, for he does suggest that he is a mere vessel for the gods whom he invites to judge his work. At the entry point to the narrative of Theogony, he appears in his own story, sitting under a shady tree:

One time, [the Muses] taught Hesiod beautiful song while he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon. And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me, the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-holding Zeus: ‘Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies: we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things.’ So spoke great Zeus’ ready-speaking daughters, and they plucked a staff, a branch of luxuriant laurel, a marvel, and gave it to me; and they breathed a divine voice into me, so that I might glorify what will be and what was before, and they commanded me to sing of the race of the blessed ones who always are, but always to sing of themselves first and last. (22–34)40
Hesiod is rather playful with authority here. He not only gives credit to the Muses for the whole work, but he also inserts a short passage of direct speech for them. And, he gives us a framing narrative in which he becomes a character and which we, perhaps, assume stands outside of the inspiration of the Muses. If he talks in the story in which he asks for their inspiration, have they inspired him (already) to do so? And from where is this proem or framing narrative inspired? Hesiod (or at least a version of himself) and the Muses (speaking almost as a collective entity) are in the story, so it must originate somewhere else, or with someone else. Future Hesiod perhaps, but with or without the inspiration (once again) of the Muses? Even at this earliest point of record, the authority of the author (displaced as it thus is) is something of a playful element of the narrative. Only later in the text does Hesiod seem to speak in his own voice when he addresses the Muses directly, “Hail, children of Zeus, and give me lovely song” (104).

Hesiod’s Works and Days is equally playful, but in terms of the reader or hearer rather than of the author. He begins by immediately addressing the Muses as though in his own voice. If they hear him, they will inspire him to write further. Then he addresses himself to Zeus, as their father, to listen and to judge as he addresses his main text to his brother, Perses, to whom he will “proclaim truths” (Works and Days, 1–10, 10), and of course it is also for a wider audience. In a sense, then, he has a whole set of “intended”, imagined, or “ideal readers” (or hearers) that include the Muses themselves, Zeus, and Perses, while, of course, all of these are literary devices more than anything else.41 Virgil takes up Hesiod’s model and in turn provides the example for Dante’s role in his own text which similarly deals with the place of humanity in the divine order but in a Christian context and with an abundance of further sources and influences. Petrarch too will take up the laurel, here gifted to Hesiod by the muses, that becomes for him a symbol of his wished literary accomplishment as of his beloved Laura.42 This conflation alone makes it difficult to untangle Petrarch-the-author from Petrarch-the-lover, who complains of his love for Laura in the sonnets. And the Dante-pilgrim must similarly bear some relationship to Dante the exiled Florentine author. Authors who place versions of themselves in their literary texts, like Chaucer’s pilgrim in The Canterbury Tales, defy the grave that Barthes would dig for them, but only as the literary versions of themselves, encased forever in the glass cases of their texts.

In contrast, Homer’s authorial entry points in his works are so brief as not to need mention beyond saying that he asks the Muses to sing him the stories he will tell. In this Aristotle finds him particularly praiseworthy, saying that he is the only poet who takes the appropriate part in his own work:

For the poet should say as little as possible in his own voice, as it is not this that makes him a mimetic artist. The others participate
in their own voice throughout, and engage in mimesis only briefly and occasionally, whereas Homer, after a brief introduction at once ‘brings onto stage’ a man, woman, or other figure. (XXIV / p. 123)\(^43\)

*Mimesis*, the craft of the dramatic author, denies the author a place on the stage or in his text; for the author’s art should *imitate* life, not be it. This is not to say that Plato and Aristotle have pre-empted Barthes in any meaningful way, but rather it illustrates a tension in the position of the author in relation to his text right from the beginnings of our theorisation of literary readership.\(^44\)

Significantly, modern criticism has sought to obliterate the idea of the common authorship of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* by arguing severally that the same author did not write both works; that he, or they were simply the recorders of epics that evolved in oral tradition; and that the name suggests an occupation or political status rather than a person.\(^45\)

In the Greek, *homeros* might mean “hostage” or, perhaps, person who guarantees political peace, or *home ros* might mean “here met” and refer to a previous singer of the song of the *Iliad*. So within his name, if that is what it is, we get the sense of someone who preserves in the ninth century BCE a song first sung in the eleventh century, and whose meaning preserves some sort of political peace between the Trojans and the Hellenic peoples.\(^46\) There is a sense here that textual meaning, in its very instability, is a politically stabilising force. We might imagine that over the centuries the singers collected and added where it was politically expedient to do so, where it helped to maintain the peace in newer and newly expanding versions of a growing song of Troy. The song that is sung by successive Homers preserves a peace in the body and memory of the author, and also grows and develops in intricacy and complexity with the embodying singer. New auditors (who hear or, eventually, read) are influenced to preserve a peace through the faithful repetition, or adaptation, of a song. The medium is significant here because the model of authorship must necessarily differ from that of a text-based culture. Here, author and singer may seem to collapse into one figure as the singer mediates and reworks the composition of other previous authors of, or contributors to, the narrative. Is an *original* author then somehow textually restored when a version of the text is committed to print?\(^47\) As Barbara Graziosi warns us, in echo of Aristotle’s praise, the poems themselves “carefully avoid giving any clear indications” of who the author was.\(^48\)

From the very first moments of western literary criticism then, Plato (in *Ion*) challenges the centrality of the author in any critical view. He admits to a love of his work, but the author cult surrounding Homer nonetheless seems something of a mystery to him. If we can judge in the case of Homer, we can judge for all literature. He supports his arguments regarding the inappropriateness of poetry to his state by reference
to several detailed passages of text, showing that even though it is the author who he thinks of rather than particular texts (he never mentions the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey*), like a good close reader, he is capable of dealing with the texts at a very detailed level. But, of course, this is all problematised by the fact that we are not speaking of Plato at all, or not directly at least, but of Socrates, whom Plato, as his student, purports to record. It is this ventriloquised speaker who argues with Ion about his capacity to understand Homer.49

What Plato does in authoring dialogues in which the main speaker is Socrates is important for the history of our topic because it gives immediacy to the problem posed by pre-written authorship. Oral literature is impossible to measure and easy to distort (or forge). In the case of Homer the first textual records are so long after the surmised origins of the story that the very existence of a person has been questioned (although Plato gives us anecdotes about him to accompany his discussion) and the case of Ossian (discussed in Galloway’s chapter, pp. 33–34) must similarly be a warning to us about what we can trust in the absence of a documentary text. Plato dramatises this problem by composing a dramatic dialogue (arguably without any drama in it) in which he offers us an oral culture in his writings. Socrates left us no text but is the accepted source of Socratic wisdom. And he is different, of course, when he appears in Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and in Xenophon’s *Apology*. A similar problem of origins exists for Ferdinand de Saussure, whose *Course in General Linguistics*, so influential in twentieth-century literary criticism, was gathered and published posthumously by his students.50 Plato may present his own argument in the character and the ventriloquised voice of Socrates. Thought of in this way, Plato gives us a tension between author, protagonist, recorder, shaman, rhapsode and text by playing an early game of authorly hide-and-seek or, if we view the nexus from the reader’s perspective, pin the tail on the author. The temptation that this inspires in readers to seek the hidden author (or authorial intent) in a text will in time lead to Barthes’s frustration with the game.51

As for the reader, or spectator, Aristotle derides the author who will “follow, and pander to the taste of, the spectator”; they thus make themselves servants to the “weakness of audiences” (XIII / p. 73). From its earliest beginnings literary criticism is therefore concerned with the intentions of the author and the responses of the reader, but crucially (like the New Critics who will succeed him over two thousand years later) Aristotle warns us against both the affections of the readers and the overinvolvement of the author in his own imitation of life. Again, this is not to say that Wimsatt and Beardsley’s great contributions (‘the Intentional Fallacy’ and ‘the Affective Fallacy’) are pre-empted, but rather that the particular problems that they address are inherent in the practices of authorship and readership. *Poetics* is Aristotle’s attempt to develop a greater formality beyond pure aesthetics to the study of literature
(perhaps in answer to Plato’s *Ion*), and its focus, in the section that we have, is dramatic literature such that even as he writes about epic he seems to think about the protagonist on the “stage” (XXIV / p. 123, see above). There ought to be a far less urgent tendency to treat a tragedian as invested autobiographically in his own work than there is with, for instance, a lyric poet who writes in a medium that traditionally speaks of the personal or at least in the first person. “[W]ith Brecht”, Barthes imagines “the Author diminishing like a figure at the far end of the literary stage” (145). But as the case of the Roman tragedian Seneca makes clear, any withdrawal from the stage has traditionally been as hard for critics / readers to allow as the “remov[al]” of the Author (Barthes, 147) in other media, for Seneca seems to place himself on the stage of his own (or rather his imitator’s) play, *Octavia* (69–96 CE). Its anonymous author apparently copied Seneca’s style so well that for much of its history the play was known as Seneca’s, even though it seemed to foresee the manner of his own death (and the death of Nero) at the hands of his erstwhile student and emperor. Moreover, Seneca’s death was for a long time inscribed with a significance that seemed complementary, if not essentially connected, to his stoic writings. If the identity of a biblical author (God) was as mysterious as it was essential to its meanings, so here the author’s virtue was inextricable from his written text. Tacitus describes the moment of Seneca’s suicide: “And his eloquence persisting at each final moment, he summoned scribes and dictated a considerable amount to them, which was published in his words and which I refrain from adapting”. This death of the author does little to silence him, for Seneca, in fact, is most vocal, in the moment of his death. And, as James Ker has intricately demonstrated, Seneca’s authority as an author cannot be disentangled from this moment of biographical end; his stoic person a speaks as much in his acceptance of death as his writings had professed that he should. Herein the biographical detail attests to the veracity of the textual existence.

A similar connection between the text and the combined person and persona obtains with Boethius, whose exile and misfortune are what leave him in need of the visitation of the titular character of *The Consolation of Philosophy* (c. 524 CE). He begins his text with a poem, a work in progress, in which he wishes for death’s release. But he breaks off, “I was writing this in silence broken only by the scratchings of my quill as I recorded these gloomy thoughts and tried to impose upon them a certain form”. The sound of his quill intrudes upon the poem and we are invited into Boethius’s (miserable) room, to vividly hear his writing process, to share the problem of composition with him. Boethius is the most consciously authorial of authors. Later, he pauses to ask himself something, perhaps also to stress his innocence to anyone who might be listening to him ask himself that question: “Every now and then, I lay down my quill and ask myself what is the point of this exercise” (I, iv / p. 14). Here, the point
must rest with the author whose text maintains within it (the fiction of, perhaps) the writing implement that connects the author (perpetually) to his text. If Barthes demands that at the moment the pen leaves the page and rests the author leave his text (as if dead), authors of this kind pose a problem for us for they remain connected to their texts, or indeed remain in their texts even after the pen has left the page. Barthes asserts that “the author is never more than the instance writing” (Barthes, 145), but what can it mean when Boethius is writing the instance writing? Importantly, should he be found guilty of the treason with which he is charged, his death will be required. Any reading of the moral intention of his writing must be gauged against the threatened death of this author.

Confessions of an Author-God

Augustine of Hippo begins his *Confessions* (397–400 CE) with a song of praise not entirely unlike those that appear on the walls of the tombs (long closed) in distant Egypt. Authorial voice is subsumed beneath the function of prayer, this is the voice of any worshipper rather than of a singular author. He begins by directly addressing God in the second person (“Great art thou”), he speaks for “man” very generally or in the second person of “his sins”, and when he speaks in the first person it is pluralised and general “Thou madest us” (I.1). In the first brief chapter an entirely impersonal voice emerges in supplication, “Grant me, Lord” (I.1). The generic character of this prayer, of praise and supplication, could be anyone and might happily be adopted by anyone in search of the right words for their prayer. But there is a more personal, and insistent first person, “I”, right from the opening of the second chapter. Here we have a speaker who insists on their own person, “I too exist” (I.2). This is the voice that develops in the course of this extraordinary work that details a litany of personal sins, very famously, into the Augustine who complains, “I have become a problem to myself” (X.33). This, surely, is not the author that Barthes has in mind, but his influence on the western tradition is profound.

As Albert Russell Ascoli observes, authority for Dante comes from two sources: one appeals to a written tradition embodied by Virgil and the other to divine power, God. And Dante’s projected persona, like that projected by Boethius is very much a literary figure. Invoking Virgil, “Thou art my master, and my author” (I:85), he becomes the protagonist of his own journey as Aeneas is of Virgil’s, borrowing particularly from book VI of the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas also travels in the underworld. But Dante’s hero cannot be other than Dante (though we may justly ask which, or what Dante?), “Midway upon the journey of our life / I found myself within a forest dark, / For the straightforward pathway had been lost” (*Inferno*, I:1–3). Barthes himself was fascinated by what Dante’s device offered to an author and in notes that he made for his own
creative writing project he alluded to the “good idea” of having a guiding figure (“or several”) in his own “comedy”. Barthes’s novel was to be titled *Vita Nova* in direct allusion it seems to Dante’s own *Vita Nuova*.60

In the preceding pages, traversing across several centuries and diverse genres and media, I have connected up authors (some unidentified, others divine) in earliest texts, classical antiquity and early medieval literature that have been sung, etched on the walls, pressed by stylus into clay tablet, and written in reed on papyrus or parchment, texts that have found auditors to copy them down, have appeared upon walls (replete with floating hands), have unfurled on scrolls, and are opened from the bound covers of a codex. At each juncture the authors utilising the technologies to address their readers have been male. “The Author”, Barthes tells us,

> when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book:… The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (145; italics in original)

Barthes here alludes, perhaps mockingly, to a tradition in which the author acts as parent to their work. But there is something off in Barthes’s description, curiously highlighted in the use of italic on the word “nourish”.61 Do the italics point us to the gender problem? A father may happily nourish a child with food provided externally, but it is not the same way in which a mother might wish to nourish a child from her own body. Barthes’s position, of course, plays upon this traditional trope, most common amongst male authors, of the creation of literature as akin in some way to childbirth.62 This usurpation of the maternal child-bear- ing function (if that is not too Foucauldian a word) as a way of fending off death and assuring immortality is perhaps part of the reason why Barthes insists so dramatically on death as the metaphor for the author relinquishing all ownership of the meaning of text.

The tradition is clearly instanced in William Wordsworth’s ‘Upon Receiving the Preceding Sheets from the Press’, amongst the ‘Desultory Stanzas’, XXXVII on *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent* (1820):

> “Time halts not in his noiseless march - / … / Life slips from underneath us … / … / … Go forth, my little Book! pursue thy way; / Go forth, and please the gentle and the good” (82, 84, 86–87). “Like portraiture” (59) the author’s printed work preserves an image of him in his life and guards him against the erasure of time. But unlike portraiture, Wordsworth’s poem seems to say, the work has a life of its own. Wordsworth borrows his phrasing here from Chaucer, who also bid “Go, litel book, go, litel myn trageyde” (*Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1786). Chaucer did so, however, in a way that differs markedly from how Wordsworth imagines
his role. For Chaucer’s work is not what is “published”, rather Criseyde’s name, “this sely womman” upon whom he offers no judgement, is what is “published so wyde” already that her guilt need not be dwelt upon. Further he does not take credit for the poem alone, but asks that it “kis the steppes [of] Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace” (V.1786, 91–92).

Chaucer’s list is decidedly phallocentric and here he seems to think of authorship as male. Christine de Pizan’s Book of the City of Ladies (1405 CE) offers an alternative reading of the history of women to that offered by a long tradition of male authors and, perhaps learning from the usurpation of female biological capabilities in male authorly tradition, inverts traditional binaries and crafts by having a female Reason assist her in building a city out of the stories of famous women. Chaucer’s Wife of Bath seems to pick up the thread and counters this exclusion of women from intellectual thought and a history of written authority (with which, by a quirk of marriage, she has been fully acquainted).63

Chaucer’s list of forefathers, calls to mind Foucault’s idea of the author “function” as he defers authority by citing the sources, The Aeneid, Metamorphoses, The Iliad, Pharsalia, and The Thebaid, not by name, but by authors’ names, that must be taken to “point” to these great works: “Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace”. The earliest of Chaucer’s stated sources is rendered in English by Chaucer as Omer. Homer’s name has been taken to refer to a tradition rather than a person. It is perhaps not pure coincidence that the first book printed in English (though not in England) by William Caxton was another history of Troy (Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye, 1474 CE).

Chaucer is not entirely removed from this phenomenon even in a manuscript culture. But unlike our imagined Homers, Chaucer attempts to protect his own original intention in his book, hoping that it be faithfully copied:

And for ther is so gret diuersite
In Englissh and in writing of oure toungue,
So prey I god that non myswrite the,
Ne the mysmetre for defaute of toungue.
And red wher-so thow or elles songe,
That thow be vnderstonde, god I biseche. (V.1793–1799)

Chaucer imagines his poem sung aloud, like Homeric song, but with the added complication that comes with something read rather than listened to. Now we have a reader who might “mysmetre” his verse with their tongue or language / translation. Here too, Chaucer speaks to a number of the other problems of authorship in the ages that preceded the printing press. First, English is not yet uniform. The invention of the printing press will slowly help to regularise the English language, through the
printing of commonly read texts like *The Book of Common Prayer* (earliest issues were in 1549, 1552, 1604, 1662) and through the eventual publication of dictionaries, first bilingual and then English language. Second, manuscript copying is not reliable. This is remedied by the mechanisation of print technology, although as Loughnane’s chapter in this book makes clear, there are numerous stages between the author’s quill and the printers’ shop in which accuracy of transmission is difficult to measure. The third problem that Chaucer identifies, that readers or hearers of his text might not “vnderstonde” it, is not so easily resolved and leads eventually to Barthes’s moment of authorial critical crisis and readerly triumph. Meaning is unstable, by which I mean meaning is unstable.

The Chapters

The chapters of this book begin before print with the medieval English author *par excellence*, Chaucer, seen through the admiring lens provided by his successors Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate in Galloway’s chapter for the fifteenth century. In this century the printing presses of Europe begin making their mark as the Gutenberg Bible (c. 1454 CE) is printed in Mainz, Germany (where Johannes Gutenberg had been printing texts perhaps as early as 1451). In English, William Caxton’s translation of Raoul Lefevre’s romance into *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* (1464) makes Caxton, working in Bruges, the first printer of an English language book. The chapter opens by considering a version (or rather versions) of Chaucer as author, proposed in a lecture by Henry David Thoreau (d. 1862). Here, as Thoreau attempts to settle himself in the role of the “shaman” identified by Barthes (Thoreau uses the word “seer”), as the ancient and preferable incarnation of the writer, the spectres of the fictional authors Orpheus and Linus, are summoned in a lecture (another aural text) that further recommends the (hoax?) author Ossian as an ideal to measure against Chaucer.64 Galloway identifies Thoreau’s Chaucer as standing somewhere between the oral and the textual. Chaucer seems to gain the best of both worlds; connected as he is to Homer and to Ossian he is both the retreated natural genius or bard, and also the domestic, bookish scholar of his narrative sources. It is worth thinking of common or at least famous images of Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer reading their own texts.65 Any relationship between author – text – reader in modern theory must be complicated by this other view of authorship. Certainly an author may deliver forth and release a text to the sort of independent existence that equates to Barthes’s death of the author and birth of the reader, but this must be complicated in any book culture that incorporates the author into the reading aloud process. In this configuration the text ought to be thought of as often something more lively, like a public lecture, an after-dinner speech, or even a sermon.
As Galloway excavates Chaucer’s authorial person he gives us Thomas Hoccleve’s styling of Chaucer as “first fynder”, his “fadir” and his “maistir” (p. 37). These are the essential patriarchal institutional authority figures. Master is particularly vivid if considered as an educational term or as artisanal (as opposite and in command of an apprentice). And “fynder” might suggest everything in the range from founding father to proprietor based on initial discovery (if the two need be thought of separately). But it also blurs the human and divine in a way that, like Lydgate’s Chaucer who assumes both a quasi-divine and a classical authority (venerated dead and living host, or rather Host, of Lydgate’s continuation of The Canterbury Tales), is directly addressed in the figure of Barthes’s “Author-God”. Chaucer, to Hoccleve, is “my fadir” of “our language”, which might easily transmute (though not exactly) to “Our father...” and the beginning of the ‘Lord’s Prayer’. Thought of in this way Barthes’s assertion (admonition even) that “it is language which speaks, not the author” is a far more problematic proposal. How can it be that “only language acts” when that language originates with an author directly involved in its delivery to an audience? Here the author is the source of language and (in perhaps too literal a way) is also the actor of that language.

In the time between the late medieval authors Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate and the early modern poet-dramatists Marlowe and Shakespeare, printing in England underwent significant developments and several literary vogues came and went. Caxton’s apprentice Wynkyn de Worde took over his press after his death and (conveniently marking the turn of the century) moved his business from Westminster (where he had begun printing in 1476, with an edition of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales) to the not-yet-famous Fleet Street in 1500/1501. This century then saw the foundation of the Stationers’ Company (1557) that regulated the printing industry by the maintenance of the Stationers’ Register in which publications, and the exclusive right to produce them, could be listed before printing. As the industry began to flourish in the city of London, the negative exempla of Fall of Princes narratives and the positive mirrors of saints’ lives competed in popularity with Sonnet sequences and (later) epyllion; the histories sought to issue warnings directly to readers while sonneteers seemed to complain personally about their intimate feelings. It is also the century in which authors of plays emerged from relative obscurity as the theatres have seemed to emerge from the mud of the Thames. This too was one means of publication, one that competed with the newly-invented printing press and which was regulated by the Office of the Master of the Revels, which from 1578 issued (or refused) licences to allowed plays.

Hoccleve, as Galloway shows us, often delivered his own text into his own (intended) reader’s hands: “it came from the hand, back, eyes, and mind of Thomas Hoccleve (and given Hoccleve’s habit of offering presentation copies of his poetry that he has himself made means
that often the very object over which he laboured is indeed in the reader’s hands)” (p. 42). As Loughnane demonstrates, an entirely different relationship existed between Shakespeare and his texts where the text certainly might come back at various stages but it passed through various hands that intervene, intrude, and perhaps even filch, work as it passes from author to playhouse, to Revels Office, Stationers Office, to printer, and back and forth between them until it reached the reader in the early modern print world.66

The transactions that Loughnane observes in a chapter that straddles the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries offer us a complicated and dynamic picture of authorship that is a far from the solitary genius of Thoreau’s Chaucer. Indeed, the appearance of an author’s name on the title page of a play-text post-1600 shows a shift in authorial status. These texts stand on a moment of (authorial) historical shift and are fascinating for it. The attempt to trace authorial share in a collaborative text is something that cannot even be communicated on a title page that boasts no author. Then, as we turn over the centuries from sixteenth to seventeenth, suddenly the producers of texts as well as potential readers, or consumers, care enough about, authorial authority to actually put it on a title page (with, or replacing “printed by... for...”). But how do we begin to imagine “authorial share” at this point in print authorship? Further, when we print “newly corrected by W.S.”, do we really mean to assert Shakespeare or is it a new short hand (author function) for “recently enacted by his majesties servants”? That is, while we try to untangle the authority of authorship against the control or ownership of the print-house, we still have the collective authority of the company to mediate.67

Who is selling these “recently performed by” texts? The “author” or the “men”?

In these two chapters, we have dealt with the close relationships between authors and their texts, or even with text at large. Loughnane seeks to navigate some of the difficulty of identifying text by author and author in text in the murky space of early modern print production and proliferation, complicated further still by unclear processes of collaboration. Prior to that, Galloway explores the author as he positions himself in his text, and who is then repositioned at the head of the language (partly again in the continuation of his text) by others, as if originator of text itself (first finder). These are our two most canonical authors, whose names (often to the frustration of scholars of their work) compete culturally with the texts that they wrote. Semple, contrarily, gives us an author at the beginning of the seventeenth century whose name and self-selected nickname, the Water Poet, survive in the imagination almost exclusive of text. Perhaps no other author in this collection better illustrates what Barthes sought to overturn than this author without a text. Rather than the death of the author for the birth of the reader, John Taylor seems to have proliferated an authorial identity at the expense of
his texts. But, of course, he is not actually an author without a text, and Semple works to resituate our understanding of Taylor’s works and of the idea(s) of authorship back inside of the series of his texts that centre on (and compare the dignity of authorship to) the criminal underworld of early-seventeenth century London.

Taylor’s positioning of himself in the world of print with the publication of a folio volume of his works in 1630 (works previously issued as pamphlets), is a significant marker in the changing status of the author as a consequence of the print revolution. Paper was still expensive in Taylor’s time, but in the printed pamphlet disseminated by Taylor we are a far cry from the manuscript tradition. Even in the hands of the professional copyist, Hoccleve, at the office of the Privy Seal (even the name suggests it) there is an intimacy and privacy to the process of the scribe that must of necessity be lost in the mechanical transmission of a movable-type press running off one-sheet pamphlets to be sold individually (cried, even) on the city streets. One of the extraordinary things about Taylor, perhaps in the same way as Hoccleve, is his personal engagement with the authored text. Certainly, the text is sent forth into the grimy, sordid world of the city, but Taylor’s presence in that world with his supposedly scattered texts ensures his fame. Direct contact with the author preserved the popularity of the potentially fragile text. Both text and author were alive in the city, available to the public in a way that could not have been possible in another medium. This, ironically, was what allowed him to return his collected texts to a more traditional format, a bound folio of works. As Semple shows, Taylor’s texts playfully engage this paradox of availability and exclusivity. Taylor is thus transformed from Waterman thief to Honest-man poet by the miracle of movable type first in the fluidity of cheap-press, one-sheet pamphlets and later in the fixed (bound) codex.

Simonova’s exploration of the “endings” of Samuel Richardson’s novels must surely strike a chord for Barthes scholars aware that he left behind his own (perhaps intentionally) unended novel. It was, apparently, styled after those other great works about works, Dante’s *Vita Nuova* and Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. Of the latter, he wrote,

> Is […] not the meaning of [Proust’s work] to present the image of a book which is written exclusively by seeking the Book? By an illogical twist of tense, the material work written by Proust thus occupies a strangely intermediary place in the Narrator’s activity, situated between an impulse (I want to write) and a decision (I will write).^{68}

In this, Richardson’s problem (or rather, that of his readers) may be a consequence of the expectation of more, an expectation fed by the process of publication in serial form. That promise and deferral of the serial
novel means that an end is perhaps harder to accept than in a single co-
dex work where the end may be felt to approach in a very material way. This problem for Richardson is made a virtue of the twentieth century as the unfinished work becomes an ideal in itself in this era. Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* certainly is the ultimate (and enormous) un-ended work. Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* goes, perhaps, a step further in beginning where it ends (like a traditional *rondeau*). It was not always so, of course, and before it ended as it began, it began as the *Work in Progress* that was published first in numerous serialised “fragments” as, for instance, the Ford Maddox Ford edited journal, ‘From Work in Progress’ (*Transatlantic Review*, Paris, 1:4 [1924], 215–223), (1927 in *Transition*, *Tales Told of Shem and Shaun, Three Fragments from Work in Progress* (Paris: Black Sun Press, 1929), and Anna Livia Plurabelle (London: Faber and Faber, 1930). Richardson’s serialised work means that he allows his readers the opportunity to respond before the work is fully published, or even ended. Like Hoccleve, who hand delivered presentation manuscript copies of his works to his patron, Richardson was also closely involved in the production of his own works and supplied presentation copies to a select group of readers. Simonova details how Richardson’s copy was returned to him with handwritten notes replete with alternative suggestions and plot improvements. He was thus induced to engage in correspondence with this reader in lengthy defences of his own intended version of the story (the “director’s cut” as it were). This / these readers made of Richardson’s novels a sort of ‘Read Your Own Adventure’ novel, like the ones recalled in the film *Black Mirror: Bandersnatch* (2018). As a professional printer (as well as writer) Richardson was personally involved in the establishment of the Statute of Anne (1710), effectively the first Copyright Act, but the form and nature of his publications meant that while this act secured his legal rights as author, his right to govern his characters’ fates and to determine their endings was, perhaps, compromised.

Richardson embraces the sort of patriarchal image of author that we saw in the construction of Chaucer as father of the English language (and its literature) but in Richardson’s variation he finds himself debate with his unruly daughters / readers, who are not fully ready to submit to his authorial will. Simonova reads this dynamic as something cultivated and embraced by a father figure who did not insist on a whole and fixed authorial text but was rather open to revision, addition, and redirection of his text.

Richardson’s correspondence with these “fans” gives, in Simonova’s exploration of it, a specific example of the tension that must exist more generally between author and reader, as Richardson claims (and is granted) authorial power over his own text even at the same time as his readers feel a sense of investment and even ownership of the character and plot of what they are reading. Thus, Richardson’s correspondence
with several of his readers gives us some particulars to go against the problems of a generalised reader. Simonova’s question of who among these is worthy to judge the novel throws up the almost spectral notion of “someone who had fully entered into the mind of its author” (p. 107).

By the nineteenth century the rise of other types of print publication had significantly impacted book publishing, such that David D. Hall asserts that the newspaper was of greater value to a mid-nineteenth century printer than any book might be. Engel treats us to a reading of Herman Melville’s ‘Bartleby, the Scrivener’; the tale of a professional scribe who refuses to write. This is a story that hints at the stressed relationship between a writer and his paymaster in a commercial world, that insists on the writer’s (specifically, a copyist’s) preferences. Bartleby never actually complains, though Galloway had given us a model for such complaint in the figure of Hoccleve, whose work for the Privy Seal might happily (or unhappily) be compared to Bartleby’s work as a legal copyist. Hoccleve works into his own poetry an autobiographical complaint that provides a tempting comparison to Herman Melville and that urges a similarly autobiographical reading that would fly in the face of Barthes’s prohibition. But as Engel deftly illustrates, such a reading must be infinitely more complex as indeed Galloway had reminded us of the distinction between “Hoccleve as scribe” and “Hoccleve (or anyone else) as poet” (p. 42). What differs most significantly between Hoccleve’s labours at the Privy Seal and Bartleby’s on Wall Street is the complete shift of social system that has occurred in the intervening years. The book, or any text, in nineteenth-century America is not as fraught with division of social class as it was in early modern England. In Melville’s Wall Street, walls, divisions, separations do not involve castle boundaries, landed gentry, and land lords, or the hierarchical social stratification maintained and reinforced with authorial writ; instead, it is capitalist economics that create division; economics underscored by similarly written forms. The office of a legal copyist is the perfect environment in which to explore the role of the author in the (or this) new world.

In this new world, where the newspaper has outrun the book it is fitting that ‘Bartleby’ was first published like Richardson’s novels in parts, but with a gap of only a month between the two in Putnam’s Magazine. Unlike the un-end-able novels of Richardson’s grand serialised protagonists, Bartleby’s biography is, it seems, inspired by his end and his death. This is a story, after all, about a would be author’s (our narrator) attempt to fix meaning to a writer (Bartleby) and his enigmatic text (“I would prefer not to”) by sketching out his biography. For Engel, Bartleby implicitly concerns itself with “the strain between the author’s will and the reader’s expectations” (p. 89). This is copiously illustrated by reference to Melville’s biographical details. And Engel’s biographical exploration of (“failed”) authorship in Melville’s tale is at its most
illuminating in its investigation of the curious scraps that adhere – like post-it notes – to a life: legal documents, an unfinished poem, letters to family and peers, a handwritten note and, of course, a bipartite tale published anonymously (although not unknown) in a monthly magazine. The final note (another appended epilogue) makes of Bartleby a “dead man” in a dead letter office (not even, for he has been removed from the post/post). Engel’s identification of a pattern of playful use of the materials of authorship as allusive metaphors in the story (often in pun) reveals the “overarching metafiction Melville has created about authority, writers, and the task of creative – even innovative – writing” (p. 125). What Engel discerns in the “Bartleby effect” is Melville wilfully “frustrating any effort at a conclusive reading or settled interpretation” (p. 128). Engel’s insightful focus on the dead wall reveries (there must be a paradox in there somewhere) of Bartleby offer an interesting connection back to the earliest days of script. Allusions to the Tombs and to Carthage and Petra give the suggestion of ruined civilisations (especially in cities), but the Tombs also suggest the Egyptian ruins which, connected with these “dead-wall revelries” might easily make one think of the Book of the Dead. Bartleby thus becomes a point at which the beginnings of authorship (we may think of Barthes’s shaman again) and the end of authorship (“I prefer not to”) meet. That the tale ends by reference to the “dead letter office” is perhaps ominous for the fate of the author and in a way that prefigures (perhaps literally) the idea at the centre of Barthes’s text except that in Melville’s rendering/configuration of the office it is the text that dies (without a reader) and not, or not necessarily the author.

From the passive resistance of Bartleby to the apparent authorial indifference of Joyce in the editorial process, Tuggle begins by making explicit the connection between the creative forces of twentieth-century literature and the critics who theorised an understanding of authorship indebted to those innovative authorial voices (or, perhaps, ventriloquists). Tuggle finds Joyce’s influence in the work of writers as diverse as William Faulkner, William Burroughs, Bryon Gysin, Ian Somerville, Roland Barthes, John Barth, Anthony Burgess, and Jacques Derrida. He outlines how, through the Sham that is Shem the Penman, “Joyce shows how the scribe, the writer, is only a small part of the process by which text gets made, delivered, and received” (p. 145). While observing the uneasy feeling that readers might have that “the writer may be putting you on” (p. 151), Tuggle’s reading of Finnegans Wake sees Joyce as the ultimate Barthesian, self-sacrificing martyr for the liberty of the text, or “the birth of the reader” (Barthes, 148). Where Loughnane draws attention to the difficulty of discerning particular authorial voice(s) especially in collaboration, Tuggle discerns in Joyce an even more fundamental problem with author studies: “Joyce’s text implies a lack of boundary between one person’s voice and another’s. Authors are always co-authors with their companions, family members, fellow writers, and even with
passing strangers” (p. 147). Or, to put it another way, “The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (Barthes, 146). Indeed, Tuggle gives us a “Wakean” Joyce “waiting to stumble upon good ideas” (p. 151).

This is entirely fitting in the chapter that samples for the twentieth century, for in many ways this is the century that is dominated by the figure of the editor. Much like the found art (later, in cinema, the found footage) movement of this century the artist discovers, arranges, and displays what they have found artistic in the world. But this is not a creation of the century in which it became a movement. As readers of this book will be(come) aware, literature has often been about (or at least has often been best revealed through) lost, found, discarded, or mistreated texts. This volume is made up (perhaps in more than one sense) of lost, found, or undeliverable letters: Chaucer’s found language, Taylor’s letters (of dedication) to every reader, the correspondence of Samuel Richardson’s characters and his own anonymous letters, and Bartleby’s Dead Letter office where letters go to die. Joyce, in his turn, gives us a letter “recovered from a trash heap” (p. 152). This is the ultimate in salvaged art, if it is that.

Greene gives us the paradox of the relatively new, in terms of this volume at least, medium of comics as though it is an aging form in danger of extinction. In his exploration of Grant Morrison’s *The Multiversity* we find that it is up to us to keep it alive, literally. As Greene reminds us, the advent of a new authorly/readerly technology means that anyone can be an “author”. The ease with which we might (and do) text (-message), blog, tweet, or just comment means that anyone engaged in any form of social platform might feel the pressure to compose their haiku-sized wisdom into the ether at all hours of the day and night. This innovation “instituted a paradigm shift in the concept of authorship” (p. 158). Comic books are arguably the medium of engagement for the twenty-first century as stage plays were for the sixteenth. What was once a niche market, the preserve of a particular brand of adolescent ‘nerd’ has now become a mainstream cultural touchstone. But the same tensions surround the artistic merit of this mode as did the rise of the early modern theatre. As the furore surrounding comments made by Bill Maher on the death of Stan Lee have indicated, a shift has occurred in who reads these things and how (-deeply). A growing critical field indicates that this is an area that has not only grown in popularity but in sophistication of approach (by makers and readers alike). But what is really striking about the comic book is that it did not remain within its medium for long after its creation. Like stage plays that swiftly moved from something to hear to something to read in the sixteenth century and early-seventeenth century, and that existed in multiple arena (inn yard theatre, amphitheatre public playhouse, indoor private theatre, occasional performance, etc.), comics shifted rapidly off the Technicolor
page to the silver screen to the TV to the IMAX 3D movie extravaganza to the computer game to the 2D computer interactive experience described by Greene in this volume. The printing press is now only (though it remains) the first step in the multiplatform life of an art form that continues to expand and evolve, not just to jump from cellulite panel to panel, but that has (at least in Morrison’s *Multiversity*) come to life. To dismiss it as childish – as Bill Maher did – is equivalent to dismissing stage plays as immoral entertainment, as the likes of William Prynne did in Shakespeare’s day. Maher thus aligns himself with the same Puritan instinct that would have suppressed the works of Kyd, Marlowe, Lyly, Shakespeare, and their contemporaries, and that did eventually drive theatre into the closet (in closet drama) with the closure of the theatres in 1642. The comparison is worth making for other reasons too. In much the same way that Loughnane drew our attention to the layers of potential collaboration (if not “textual corruption”) in the process that brought an early modern play text from theatrical author (play-wright) to reader, Greene adverts to the roles of “inker, letterer, and editor” at least in the range of personnel involved in the process of producing a comic book. In dealing with the least canonical writer explored in this work, Greene inevitably examines what makes canon, and what makes an author as opposed to a writer. He also draws us back to the start of the collection by considering the authorial “anxiety of influence” and the wish to “define” against predecessors in Chaucer and Hoccleve, as in Alan Moore and Morrison. As Crow Jane says in Bob Dylan’s *Tarantula*, “don’t [sic] do your ideas – everybody’s got those – let the ideas do you … and above all else, be all else!”

Central to Greene’s reading is the reader’s process of engagement with the physical object that is the comic, “handled and flipped through” (p. 161). For *The Multiversity* celebrates the physical print medium of the comic. It is the object, or artefact, that is the hero of the story; and it is a reader’s indifference or apathy that is the enemy. Importantly, Morrison’s implied theory of authorship incorporates the reader, but unlike Barthes, who demands his liberty, Morrison warns of how the reader can destroy the story. This is a key qualification of the Birth of the Reader. Morrison, the only LIVING author treated in this book, has observed how readers’ comments and criticisms narrow the scope of authors’ storytelling and the very value of imaginative literature. *Multiversity* deals with this and is a warning and curse on the reader who succumbs to ennui and an empty hand.

An End

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, print is in decline. The website, Newspaper Death Watch (newspaperdeathwatch.com) is dedicated to charting (in real time) the closure of longstanding newspaper
Introduction

presses in the USA. Book publishers have similarly struggled to deal with the invention of kindles and ebook-readers while internet book sales (or ebook and physical copies) through websites like Amazon and Abebooks have undoubtedly hurt smaller bookshops that have failed to adapt (or adapt quickly enough) to the globalisation of the print market, in the same manner that specialism comics shops have been forced to close (discussed in Greene, pp. 156–157). That the several palm-held devices that stand in for the paper text are collectively referred to as “Readers” adds irony to Barthes’s closing remark, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the Author” (Barthes, 148). And, sadly, it seems probable that an abundance of articles declaring a resurgence of print in recent years is a case of vested interests within the industry protesting their own continued relevance too much.74 In one such article, Rachel Nuwer asks whether “printed books [are] destined to eventually join the ranks of clay tablets, scrolls and type-written pages?”75 The existence of the text is certainly in a state of change (as, perhaps, it always has been), but if print is dying, must the Author, as Barthes abhorred him, also die out? If he does it is not hard to imagine him wandering back from the afterlife, or in some intangible form, like the spirit of Osiris to challenge our reading once again, and perpetually.

If “[a]ll stories are haunted by the ghosts of the stories they might have been”76 (Rushdie), I can only hope that the particular route that this collection of essays describes confirms the virtue of a work like this rather than forming the basis of a critique. The infinite variety of alternative narratives of the history of authorship should signal the great flaw in Barthes’s generalised and prescriptive theorisation of the relationship between author and text and reader (and whoever else might come between them). This collection is not intended to supply a dominant narrative. It is not the history of authorship. It is rather, and very consciously, a history, one single possible version of the story of print authorship since the invention of the printing press.

Notes

1 The question is intended to recall Wordsworth’s ‘What is a Poet?’ and Foucault’s ‘What Is an Author?’ both discussed below.
2 Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, Image – Music – Text (1967), pp. 142–148. Barthes makes no claim to be the first, acknowledging “it goes without saying that certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it [i.e. ‘the sway of the author’]” (Barthes, p. 143).
Andrew J. Power

Barthes identifies Mallarmé as “the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person” (Barthes, p. 143).

I. A. Richards, Principles of Literary Criticism (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1924). Barthes did not appreciate their efforts, asserting “the new criticism has often done no more than consolidate it [i.e. the power of the Author]” (Barthes, p. 143).


William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity (1930).


Arguably it did so only in the sense that the same text can be reprinted often by that press. The press, by adding a further mechanism of uncertainty between author and reader, created its own problems, many of which are dealt with in the ensuing pages.

Barthes, p. 142.


See Claudia Heuer, ‘The Professional Poet: Aphra Behn and Virginia Woolf’s Concept of the Female Writer’, in Aphra Behn and her Female Successors, ed. Margarete Rubik (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2011), pp. 151–166, particularly in terms of the ‘androgyney’ that might be perceived in the figure of the successful professional female author. The case, however, is often overstated. Dorothy Wordsworth, after all, was not entirely unpublished in her lifetime.


21 There are a number of histories of female authorship in existence. Nancy Miller’s The Heroine’s Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722–1782 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) and Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988) are stand out works, but closer to this volume is Mary Eagleton’s history of fictional female authorship (see note above) concurrently and ingeniously with a history of critical approaches to female authorship since the publication of Barthes’ ‘Death of the Author’. From an English historical perspective, Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, eds. The History of British Women’s Writing, 700–1500 (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).


23 As Taylor observes, the first question necessarily becomes the second, particularly if Barthes’ project is successful.

24 Barthes’s opening discussion revolves around a snippet of Balzac (d. 1850), and his subsequent examples include Baudelaire (d. 1867), Mallarmé (d. 1898), Valéry (d. 1945), Proust (d. 1880), de Quincey (d. 1859), and Van Gogh (d. 1890) and Tchaikovsky (d. 1893). I cite years of death rather than birth for obvious reasons. Barthes is writing, after all, only about dead authors.

25 As such a proposal for The Attack of the Author: A History of Authorship in and out of Print C16th-C21st using Hélène Cixous as its critical starting point is in preparation for the same press and surveys seven female authors to balance to seven male authors treated in this volume through a post-Barthesian lens.


27 The oldest of the ‘Coffin Texts’ date to around 2150 BCE, and the oldest version of the Book of the Dead to 1550 BCE (with some chapters existing in isolation from as early as 1600). Budge, p. xli.

28 Earlier civilizations in this region offer us cuneiform text on clay tablets the size of credit cards. But the fourth millennium BCE ‘accountants’ who used this system of record were not really authors, and certainly not in the sense that Barthes might have intended the word. Eleanor Robson, ‘The Clay Tablet Book in Sumer, Assyria, and Babylonia’, A Companion to the History of the Book, eds. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 67–83, p. 67.
29 Egyptologists do, of course, study Egyptian literature.
30 And this is one of those necessary sweeps that may be corrected and augmented by the detailed scholarship of historians, theologians, linguists, Egyptologists, archaeologists each for her / his own field.
31 Barthes seems to think of this moment when he writes of “the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression)” (p. 146). And Foucault explains the idea of the author ‘function’ by imagining a similar pointing but in the other direction: “I wish to restrict myself to the singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it.” (p. 115)
32 William E. Engel’s chapter (pp. 117–143) deals with this section of the Book of Daniel more closely.
33 Barthes writes, “to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law” (Barthes, p. 147).
35 I say more below about the author, Homer.
37 This develops into a tradition of (false-)opposition between authors and critics. Barthes identifies, with wrinkled nose, perhaps, the ‘reign of the Author [as] also that of the Critic’ (Barthes, p. 147), while Northrop Frye went so far as to refer to Critics as Jackals (Frye, p. 6).
38 I say more about Plato’s ventriloquising of his late teacher below.
43 Aristotle, Poetics, ed. and trans. Stephen Halliwell in Aristotle XXIII, Loeb Classic Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995). Aristotle is addressing himself to the threat that Plato discerned in literature for his ideal Republic, and to the lack of a science in what a critical reader does (or a rhapsode as it is in the particular case) in Ion. As such, he seeks to establish what “should be aimed at” (the intention, perhaps) by a poet in his ‘mimesis’ of life, as well as what he should avoid (XIII/p. 69).
44 Incidentally, the psychological aspect of Ferdinand de Saussure’s sign surely owes something to Plato’s forms (Republic); any understanding of a sign
is (individual because) determined by our experience of the thing attached (experienced like the particular of an object) even while our agreement upon the name of that thing is unaltered (the form).


46 This tradition is described in John Bagnell Bury, *A History of Greece to the Death of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), pp. 65–68. Foucault alludes to the belief that “several individuals have been referred to by [the] one name [i.e. Homer]” in ‘What Is an Author?’ (p. 122).


49 A variant problem is created by Thomas More when he includes himself in his own *Utopia*, how can we/should we separate More the character from More the author? Seán Burke discusses the difference briefly in his conclusion to *Ethics of Writing: Authorship and Legacy in Plato and Nietzsche* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), esp. pp. 222–233.

50 Roy Harris, ‘Introduction’, in de Saussure, pp. xiv–xxii, xviii. Lacan creates a playful variation of this in his most famous contribution to literary criticism, ‘The Insistence of the Letter in the Unconscious’, in the introduction to which he explains that the essay is developed from his teaching, presented in a lecture “to the philosophy group of the union of humanities students” at the Sorbonne in 1957 and then prepared for print in *La Psychanalyse* [I use the translation published later in 1966] and is thus “somewhere between the written and spoken word” Lacan, 112.

51 Lacan has even more fun with the game, playfully using a whole series of games, and children’s playing practices, as examples of how language (and meaning) might ‘slide’ (120). He refers to, or describes, for instance, various language learning or interpreting practices and fallacies as, ‘meaningless bagatelles’ (117), like looking into a kaleidoscope (119), swapping or pulling at the rings of a chain (120), climbing a tree (123), solving a rebus (128), playing Charades (130), “being caught on the rails” (137). When it comes to literature we might justifiably ask with whom we are playing these several (child’s) games.

52 Book 1 promises a more complete treatment of literature, but the first section on drama is all that we have.


Even before dealing very closely with the text, Charles Taylor offers a discussion of Augustine’s use of the first person (“radical first person”, is his term) in establishing a self-awareness and self-possession in terms of inwardness that pre-empts much of, and heavily influences, the Western tradition of philosophical thought. Sources of the Self (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); see esp. ‘Chapter 7: “In Interiore Homine”’, pp. 127–142. E. J. Hundert offers a correction in the nature of the self that Augustine presents by dealing in detail with the sinfulness and pride of that self-ish impulse in him. But the general principle stands. (‘Augustine and the Sources of the Divided Self’, Political Theory, 20:1 (February, 1992), pp. 86–104.

Albert Russell Ascoli’s comprehensive exploration of Dante’s influence on the western notion of authorship begins with a playful allusion to Michel Foucault’s ‘What Is an Author?’, asking instead, ‘What Is an “auctor”?’ Dante and the Making of a Modern Author (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 3. Ascoli very lucidly situates his own discussion of the theory of authorship/authority in Dante as it emerges from the essays of Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes (respectively ‘What Is Authority?’, ‘What Is an Author?’, ‘The Death of the Author’).


For a brief exploration of Dante’s use of the word autore, and in conjunction with volume (as distinct from libro) see Robert Hollander, ‘Dante’s Use of Aeneid I and II’ Comparative Literature 20:2 (Spring, 1968), 142–156, 144.


Barthes’s word, italicised in the original French, is ‘nourrir’.

Douglas A. Brooks, ed. Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2005) is an extended treatment of this trope.


Ossian was either discovered or created by James Macpherson and translated and published from oral Scots Gaelic sources in 1760 in Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland. Although Thoreau believed the poems to be genuine, they have long been considered almost complete forgeries. Recent scholarship has again brought this into question. Does it, or should it matter?

For instance, in a fresco entitled ‘La commedia illumine Firenze’, by Domenico di Michelino (1417–1491) in Santa Maria del Fiore, in Florence, Dante can be seen reading from his own great work, The Divine Comedy; MS 61, fol 1v in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge includes an illumination by an unknown artist that depicts Chaucer reading Troilus and Criseyde to the court of Richard II; An early-fifteenth century French copy
of Giovani Bocaccio’s *Des Cleres et Nobles Femmes* (Royal 20 C V, f.5 in the British Library) depicts, in two of four frontispiece panels, the author reading, and the author presenting a copy to Andrea Acciaiuoli, countess of Altavilla.

66 Writing about Shakespeare specifically, Robert Miola, says “our notion of plagiarism is foreign to Renaissance poetic theory and practice, which stressed the importance of *imitatio*, the creative imitation of others. According to this theory, a poet demonstrated originality not by inventing new stories but by adapting extant, particularly classical, ones. The genius lay not in the invention but in the transformation.” (*Shakespeare’s Reading*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 2). But as the accusation levelled at the upstart crow beautified with others’ feathers must show this is not quite as clear cut as Miola argues, and in the following century Taylor will also feel the need to respond to an accusation of textual theft (see pp. 87–92).

67 “In this age before copyright, once an author received final payment for his work he usually lost any further financial claim to it, so that a play belonged to whoever had purchased it. This purchaser was free to resell it to another company or agent, or a printer, without consulting the original author(s) or paying compensation.” Ioppolo, p. 24.


70 Hall notes the ‘social and cultural divisions’ in European book markets as differing from the ‘relatively homogenous’ early colonial American ones (Hall, p. 4).


5 Burrow, ed., *Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 64.


8 Thoreau states Chaucer lamented his ‘grosser works’ that he ‘cannot recall and annul’ but must admit that ‘alas, they are now continued from man to man’, words, Thoreau adds, ‘not to be forgotten’ (302). For the mid-fifteenth century source of this story, see Douglas Wurtele, ‘The Penitence of Geoffrey Chaucer’, *Viator* 11 (1980), 335–361.


10 See Barrington, pp. 10–13. Barrington goes on to provide a valuable survey of Chaucer’s appearance in nineteenth-century American poetic anthologies (pp. 17–42) but does not discuss Thoreau.

11 See the excerpts in Burrow, ed., *Chaucer*.

12 This trajectory in academic criticism can be briefly indicated. In 1915 the Harvard Chaucerian George Kittredge claimed that ‘naïveté is often rated as one of Chaucer’s permanent traits’, but went on to declare that ‘a naïf Collector of Customs would be a paradoxical monster’ [George Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915), p. 45]. The German Chaucerian Bernhard ten Brink in 1870 had indeed remarked that Chaucer combined ‘feinen poetischen sinn mit einer starken dosis realismus, tiefe der empfindung mit schalkhaftem witz, scharfsinn mit naivetät’ (‘fine poetic sense with a strong dose of realism, depth of sentiment with a roguish wit, acuity with naïveté’; Bernhard ten Brink, *Chau-
Kittredge’s emphasis on the ‘irony’ rather than ‘naïveté’ of Chaucer’s ingenuous voice dominated the twentieth century, especially after the 1960s under the influence of New Criticism with its attention to deliberate ‘ambiguity’. But Thoreau’s focus on Chaucer’s ‘childlike’ voice, shifting into that of a ‘sage’, is closely paralleled by at least one more recent essay. Lee Patterson’s focus on Chaucer’s self-portrait as a naive teller of the Tale of Sir Thopas followed by a kind of sage in recounting the Tale of Melibee formulates a claim for Chaucer’s ‘childlike’ detachment from ideologies: ‘my purpose here in trying to understand Chaucer’s representation of himself as a special kind of child, and his association of himself with what can broadly be termed children’s literature, is to insist upon the remarkable and underappreciated importance of childhood to the Chaucerian imagination … in presenting himself as simultaneously very young (a poppet) and very old (an elf), and in telling tales that locate childish matter within an adult perspective, Chaucer insists upon this paradox. The child possesses an original condition now lost that nonetheless remains with us and returns to visibility at the end … “The child is father to the man,” a Wordsworthian conundrum that Chaucer would have understood’ (Lee Patterson, “What Man Artow?”: Authorial Self-Definition in the Tale of Sir Thopas and The Tale of Melibee, Studies in the Age of Chaucer 11 (1989), 117–175, 175).

26 See John Anthony Burrow, Thomas Hoccleve, Authors of the Middle Ages 4: English Writers of the Late Middle Ages (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), pp. 50–54.
1: 800–1558, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 463–486. See also Figure 1.2.


34 Premierfait’s text has no full modern edition. For this passage, see Laurent de Premierfait, *Le livre de Jehan Boccace des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, Bibliothèque nationale de France ms 226, fol. 125. Available online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b55009572g/f7.image.r=premiervaitcs%20des226%20cas%20des%20226.


works, unless otherwise recorded, are from individual editions in *The New Oxford Shakespeare: Critical Reference Edition* (2 vols.)

2 Which plays, or set of plays, the actors are referring to remains in question. In the bibliographic tradition it had been assumed that Heminges and Condell differentiate between the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ early printings available, but David Scott Kastan argues that the actors simply mean all earlier printings are imperfect ‘perhaps because to men of the theater a cheaply published playbook could be nothing else’ (David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), p. 91. Lukas Erne suggests that they might be alluding to the Pavier Quartos: ‘the only Shakespearean playbooks published between Shakespeare’s death and early 1622, when work on the Folio began’ (Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 258.).


5 With multi-part plays, as Roslyn L. Knutson has demonstrated, Henslowe’s habit was to identify the first part by its basic unnumbered title, while indicating the part number for subsequent parts (See Roslyn L. Knutson, ‘Henslowe’s naming of parts’, *Notes and Queries* 30:2 (1983), 157–160.). As Taylor and Loughnane note: “Thus, ‘Harey the vi’ could be *1 Henry VI*, but could not be the play that the Folio identifies as *3 Henry VI* …; it also seems unlikely to be the play which the Folio identifies as *2 Henry VI* … which we have no reason to believe was ever called the first part of *Henry VI*” (‘Canon and Chronology’, p. 515).

6 The play was performed regularly over four consecutive months: March (7, 11, 16, 28), April (5, 13, 21), May (4, 7, 14, 19, 25), and June (12, 19) (Henslowe’s Diary, pp. 16–19).

7 *Henslowe’s Diary*, pp. 19–20. See Lawrence Manley and Sally-Beth MacLean, *Lord Strange’s Men and their Plays*, p. 339. The total takings for the seventeen recorded performances of the play are the most of any Lord Strange’s Men play at 35 pounds and 8 shillings. The play is also the most frequently performed play by this company.


10 For these borrowings, see J. M. Bemrose, ‘A Critical Examination of the Borrowings from *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece* in Samuel Nicholson’s *Acolastus*,’ *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15:1 (1964), 85–96.


12 Meres notes: ‘As *Plautus* and *Seneca* are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so *Shakespeare* among ye English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his *Ge[n]tleme[n] of Verona*, his *Errors*, his *Loue labors lost*, his *Loue labours wonne*, his *Midsummers night dreame*, & his *Merchant of Venice*: for Tragedy his *Richard the 2. Richard the 3. Henry the 4. King Iohn, Titus Andronicus* and his *Romeo and Iuliet*’ (London: STC 17834; sig. Oo2').
13 Quoted in Andrew Murphy, Shakespeare in Print: A Chronology of Shakespeare Publishing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 40. It is generally assumed that the reason seven of the Pavier quartos bear false dates represents the stationer’s attempt to somehow circumvent the ruling banning further printings. See Leo Kirschebaum, Shakespeare and the Stationers (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1955), pp. 198–199 and Kastan, Shakespeare after Theory, pp. 84–85.

14 For the relationship between the Pavier Quartos and the injunction, see Murphy, Shakespeare in Print, pp. 39–41.

15 The evidence for this lies in the unusual absence of stab-stitch holes for sewing and binding. As Zachary Lesser and Peter Stallybrass note, ‘Of the Folger’s nine copies or part-copies of The Whole Contention, only three have stab-stitch holes, while six do not (and were therefore sold not as pamphlets but as parts of bound books); of their six copies of King Lear, four have stab-stitch holes and two do not. Of the Huntington’s nine ‘Pavier Quartos’, only two have stab-stitch holes’. Shakespeare between Pamphlet and Book, 1608–1619’, in Shakespeare and Textual Studies, eds. Margaret Jane Kidnie and Sonia Massai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 129n18 (pp. 105–134).

16 See William Shakespeare, Merchant of Venice 1600 Q1; William Shakespeare A Midsummer Night’s Dream 1600 Q1; William Shakespeare The Merry Wives of Windsor 1602 Q1; William Shakespeare, King Lear 1608 Q1; and William Shakespeare, Pericles, Prince of Tyre 1609 Q1. ‘Reject all’ changes in this footnote. There is a question of attribution in these early printings so the direct quotation after the title is necessary instead of author name preceding title. It may seem strange, but that is part of the point.

17 It did, however, repeat that ‘the Lord Chamberlaine his Seruants’ performed it ‘sundry times’, a possible indicator of the play’s authorship and provenance; Shakespeare’s company, for whom he was lead dramatist, performed under the aegis of the Lord Chamberlain from 1594 to 1603 (the same company was identified as The Lord Hunsdon’s Men from late summer 1596 until 17 March 1597, when they reverted to the other title).


19 Francis Meres identifies both The Merchant of Venice and A Midsummer Night’s Dream as Shakespeare’s in 1598. Shakespeare’s authorship of 1 and 2 Henry IV is well attested in early editions (in 1599 Q2 and 1600 Q1, respectively), to which The Chronicle History of Henry the Fifth and Merry Wives bear a clear relationship. Sir John Oldcastle, given the strong likelihood that John Oldcastle was the original character name given to John Falstaff, would also suggest a plausible Shakespearean connection. See Gary Taylor, ‘The Fortunes of Oldcastle’, Shakespeare Survey 38 (1985), 85–100.

20 The 1598 quarto of Love’s Labour’s Lost is almost certainly not the first edition of the play: its title-page advert to the fact that it has been ‘Newly corrected and augmented By W. Shakespere’, and a book catalogue listing exists for a 1597 copy of the play. We cannot know whether this lost first edition had Shakespeare’s name on the title-page. The catalogue belonged to Edward, Viscount Conway; see Arthur Freeman and Paul Grinke ‘Four New Shakespeare Quartos?’, TLS (April 5, 2002).

21 Sixteen printings of fourteen plays: Q1 and Q2 1 Henry IV (1598); Q(2?) Love’s Labour’s Lost (1598); Q2 and Q3 Richard II (1598); Q2 Richard III (1598); Q2 Arden of Faversham (1599); Q2 Romeo and Juliet (1599); Q3 1 Henry IV (1599); Q2 Edward III (1599); Q1 2 Henry IV (1600); Q1 Henry V (1600); Q1 Much Ado About Nothing (1600); Q1 A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1600); Q2 Titus Andronicus (1600); Q1 The Merchant of Venice (1600). Ten title-page ascriptions for nine plays: Q1 1 Henry IV (1598); Q(2?) Love’s Labour’s Lost (1598); Q2 and Q3 Richard II (1598); Q2 Rich-
ard III (1598); Q3 1 Henry IV (1599); Q1 2 Henry IV (1600); Q1 Much Ado About Nothing (1600); Q1 A Midsummer Night’s Dream (1600); and Q1 The Merchant of Venice (1600).

22 One possible early example of this is Locrine (1595: ‘Newly set foorth, over-scene and corrected, by W.S.’), though it is difficult to see the point, or to gauge the effect, of this given Shakespeare’s near invisibility in print, outside of the two narrative poems, by this stage.

23 The rest of list comprises six (or seven) plays attributed to Shakespeare in early printed versions (Love’s Labour’s Lost, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, The Merchant of Venice, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV (meaning either the first or both parts), three plays only first published, and thereby attributed to Shakespeare, in the First Folio (The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Comedy of Errors and King John), and one unpreserved or ‘lost’ play (Love’s Labour’s Won).

24 The 1594 first quarto of Titus Andronicus was printed by John Danter for Edward White and Thomas Millington. The title-page to the 1600 second quarto printing of Titus Andronicus only records Edward White’s involvement. Millington, however, transferred the rights of the play to Thomas Pavier on 19 July 1602. Curiously, the 1611 third quarto recorded White’s name once more. Both Millington and White, therefore, thought that they had the rights to the play: Millington in transferring it to Pavier in 1602 and White in publishing it again in 1611. Discussing this issue, Lukas Erne concludes that ‘the explanation which best accounts for the evidence is that Danter transferred the rights in Titus to White and Millington after entering it but before the play was published’ and that the two men functioned as publishers as well as book-sellers for the first quarto (Shakespeare and the Book Trade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 139–140. Pavier later chose, for whatever reason (rights, economics), to not include it in his 1619 collection.


26 Alan H. Nelson records this inscription in a copy held at the Huntington Library; he notes that the inscription may be in Buc’s hand but it is not certain. The inscription was recorded at http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/BUC/quartos.html but this website is now retired. For further discussion of this inscription, see Richard Dutton, Licensing, Censorship and Authorship in Early Modern England (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 174.


28 The author, perhaps pointedly, swears ‘by sweet S. George’ in this passage.


33 See note 5.


35 See also William Rankins’ *Seven Satires* where he alludes to Marlowe’s atheism in a passage that refers to Machiavelli and Turks: ‘such as haue hell-borne Atheisme taught’ (London, 1598; STC 20700; sig. B4v). Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) picks up on Beard’s criticisms explicitly and claims ‘so our trigal poete Marlowe for his Epicurisme and Atheisme had a tragical death’ (London, 1598; STC 17834; sig. Oo7v–8r). William Vaughan in *The Golden Grove* (1600), in a section about atheists, recounts Marlowe’s death in Deptford and cautions the reader to ‘see the effects of Gods iustice’ (London, 1600; STC 24610; sig. C4v–C5r).

36 The attribution evidence for the text underlying the Folio copies of *2 Henry VI* and *3 Henry VI*, albeit adapted by Shakespeare, suggest Marlowe was never the dominant hand in either collaboration; see Taylor and Loughnane, ‘Canon and Chronology’, pp. 496, 498.

37 For example, the title-page to the fourth quarto of *Richard III*, printed in 1605 (London: STC 22316), recorded that the play ‘hath bin lately acted by the Right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his servaunts. Newly augmented, by William Shake-speare’, a word-for-word reprint of the 1598 second quarto title-page description (London; STC 22315). The change in company title, post-1603, to ‘the Kings Maiesties servaunts’ is only first reflected in the 1612 fifth quarto (London: STC 22318).

38 As this essay suggests, the perceived inferior quality of these highly variant shorter versions does not adequately explain their anonymous publication. See also Terri Bourus’ ‘The Good Enough Quarto: *Hamlet* as a Material Object’, *Critical Survey* 31:1–2 (2019), 72–86, whose formula about ‘good enough quartos’ could be usefully applied here. The relative ‘badness’ of these texts, and especially *Contention*, is the subject of another forthcoming study by the present author.


40 Signing the essay, Barthes likely appreciated the innately paradoxical situation of a named author asserting this critical position. See Seán Burke’s *The Death and Return of the Author* for a critique of its ahistorical foundations among other things.


2 Taylor published from 1612 until his death in 1653. Capp states that after Taylor returned from his journey to Scotland in 1619, he was ‘firmly established in the public mind as a “character” as well as a pamphleteer’ (p. 22).


4 For more on the Works see Capp, p. 30. As late as 1632, moralist William Prynne was outraged at the proliferation of play-books and the printing of folio-sized play-books; see ‘To the Christian Reader’, in *Histrio-mastix: The Players Scourge, or, Actors tragedie* (London: Edward Alde, Augustine Mathewes, Thomas Cotes and William Jones for Michael Sparke, 1633).

5 Capp, pp. 88–97; Wheale, p. 89.

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