What Chaucer Did to Shakespeare: Books and Bodkins in Hamlet and The Tempest

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This article is less concerned with what Shakespeare did to Chaucer than with what Chaucer did to Shakespeare: that is, how the experience of reading Chaucer, in certain cultural and bibliographical contexts, engaged Shakespeare throughout his career, not only providing sources but provoking his imagination. Like so many of his sources and inspirations, Chaucer's poetry came to Shakespeare not as a performative tradition but as a published book. We take a close look at Thomas Speght's 1598 volume, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, reprinted in 1602, the only edition to appear in Shakespeare's lifetime. And we examine, in particular, Chaucer's treatment of the death of Julius Caesar in the *Monk's Tale*, in order to show how Chaucer's handling of this political assassination provoked Shakespeare's exploration of this subject in his own *Julius Caesar*, as well as in *Hamlet* and *The Tempest*.

Keywords: Chaucer; Shakespeare; Middle Ages; *Hamlet*; *The Tempest*; *Julius Caesar*

Half a century ago, Muriel Bradbrook announced, in her article "What Shakespeare Did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*", that the play based on Chaucer's poem, "unlike most of Shakespeare's plays, was designed to be read as Literature" (311). Shakespeare's relationship to Chaucer, in her view, was not that of a "Renaissance" dramatist transforming a "medieval" narrator as much as it was of one poet speaking to another. What Shakespeare "was doing to Chaucer", she avers, was "what Chaucer had already done to Boccaccio" (Bradbrook 312) – that is, to have transmuted earlier source material through the alchemy of literary genius.

Much scholarship on Chaucer and Shakespeare still moves in these directions: seeking to understand the transformations of individual sources, the nature of poetic imagination, and the ways in which past figures have morphed into modern characters.[1] What Shakespeare did to Chaucer has long been a focus of such scholarship, and the bulk of its researches have been done by Shakespeareans seeking to understand the playwright's fascination with his literary heritage. In a sense, the relationship of Chaucer to Shakespeare has been largely conceived as one of looking back upon a past.

What if it were to be understood as looking forward to a future? As Chaucerians, we are concerned here less with what Shakespeare did to Chaucer than with what Chaucer did to Shakespeare: that is, how the experience of reading Chaucer, in

certain cultural and bibliographical contexts, engaged the playwright throughout his career, not only providing sources but provoking his imagination.

Like so many of his sources and inspirations, Chaucer's poetry came to Shakespeare not as a performative tradition but as a published book. Thomas Speght's 1598 volume, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, reprinted in 1602, was the only edition to appear in Shakespeare's lifetime. Unlike the earlier single-volume collections of the poetry – running from William Thynne's of 1532 to John Stow's of 1561 – Speght was less concerned with augmenting the number of texts attributed to the author than he was with classicizing that author himself. Speght's goal was to establish Chaucer as a poet as learned, complex, and as worthy of critical apparatus as Virgil or Ovid. With glossaries for Chaucer's archaic vocabulary, translations of his French, an appendix with a list of the authors that he cites, this edition promotes a vision of Chaucer as a classic author, fit for a scholar's study.[2]

Textual critics have long known that later readers of the medieval poet in his printed form were largely indifferent to the texts as they appeared. One black-letter Chaucer may have been as good as another to a sixteenth- or seventeenth-century reader, and there is much evidence that pre-Speght volumes of the poet's work were read and read from, annotated and explored, by owners well into the later seventeenth century.[3] Speght's volumes may thus not have enabled different, local readings of the poet's text as much as they enabled a new understanding of Chaucer's place in literary history and, furthermore, of the possibilities of vernacular authorial identity for the Jacobean period.

Speght established Chaucer as a figure of political as well as literary history. This "father of English poetry" was himself part of the patrilineage of English power. The Chaucer family tree, elaborately printed in the front matter to the edition, locates Chaucer in the mix between the middle class and aristocracy. This page's emphasis on Chaucer's "Progenie" makes real the ideal of a father Chaucer. Chaucer's own children share, in Speght's front matter, in fortunes marital and mercantile. However, Chaucer's own work also shares in legacies of fatherhood and inheritance. In his prefatory letter to Speght's edition, Francis Beaumont (the father of the playwright) recalls the time when he and Thomas Speght were together at Peterhouse, Cambridge, in the 1560s, and some "ancient learned men" recommended that they read Chaucer (Speght). This anecdote illustrates the pattern of an older generation bequeathing Chaucer to a younger generation, from father to son, that Seth Lerer's *Chaucer and his Readers* locates in dynamics of patrilineal succession and authorial self-representation in Chaucer's immediate heirs, such as Lydgate, Caxton, Hawes, and Skelton.[4] More recently, Louise M. Bishop has claimed that the "folio canon" of Chaucerian printing in the sixteenth century "constructs its Chaucer as a living father" (234), and the many "paratexts" in roman and italic type that surround Speght's black-letter poetic printing, in particular, embed Chaucer in the patrilineage of power, politics, and prosody.

By the end of Shakespeare's career, this vision of the patrilineal Chaucer took on special form in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, a play usually dated to 1613 and understood to be co-written with John Fletcher. Deeply indebted to the *Knight's Tale*, the play is rich with Chaucerian plotlines, idioms, and echoes. Its Prologue, however, clearly gives voice to this new, post-Speght sense of Chaucer as figure not just of poetic but paternal prowess. "New plays and maidenheads are near akin" (Prologue 1) it opens, with a powerful rhetorical association of the act of literary composition and sexual

conquest. A good play, the Prologue argues, is like a good wife, for after the opening night (in both senses of the phrase) it still retains its modesty. And their play, Shakespeare and Fletcher announce,

> [. . .] has a noble breeder, and a pure,
> A learnèd, and a poet never went
> More famous yet 'twixt Po and silver Trent.
> Chaucer, of all admired, the story gives:
> There constant to eternity it lives.
> If we let fall the nobleness of this
> And the first sound this child hear be a hiss,
> How will it shake the bones of that good man [. . .]. (Prologue 10–17)

This brilliant passage brings together all the themes of a paternalistic Chaucer that had been accumulating for two centuries and that, we believe, Speght's edition reified. To describe Chaucer as ''a noble breeder'' is to bring together class and culture. To find his fame between the Po and the Trent is to go back to the old metaphors of poetic inspiration in the sources of great rivers (a figuration that begins with the *Clerk's Tale* in its praise of Petrarch). But it is, as well, to locate Chaucer as the mediator between the classical, Italian past and the contemporary English, vernacular (if not regional) present. The play, here, is the offspring of Chaucer's prowess, the ''child'' (16) of that good man, whose ''bones'' lie (as the Prologue later puts it) in a ''sweet sleep'' (29).

Recalling the authorial gestures of Gower at the opening of *Pericles*, ''from ashes ancient Gower is come'' (1.2), the opening moves of *Two Noble Kinsmen* illustrate the extent to which Chaucer, for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, came to be understood less as a ''medieval'' maker, than as a guide to a deeper cultural inheritance, transporting his readers to the ancient cities of Athens and Rome, Troy and Thebes.[5] Neither of these plays places any specific periodizing claims on their medieval authors' distance or difference from the sources of the plays' narratives: in this sense, the Shakespearean appropriation of inherited literary material comes unmoored from his source's local and historical context. Shakespeare thus reads Chaucer as less the prime mover of the English literary tradition, than as a conduit to the ancient world.

This version of Chaucer's relationship to Shakespeare resonates with the recent arguments of art historians Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood, in *Anachronic Renaissance*. Renaissance works of art, they claim, display ''temporal instability'' (13), evading our current preoccupations with chronology and periodization and reflecting, instead, a sense of ''plural temporality'' (7). Thus, works that we would place in temporally diverse periods are, to a Renaissance mind, equally ''archaic'' or ''ancient''. This claim works very well for Chaucer, whose reputation, in the pervasively humanist literary climate of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, could only benefit by affiliation with classical authors.

In what follows, we offer some examples of what happens when Chaucer comes to Shakespeare. While Chaucerian material has long been seen in Shakespeare's early plays, from the echoes of Troilan love in *Romeo and Juliet* to the gestures towards the *Knight's Tale* at the opening of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (and, of course, in the embedded play of Pyramus and Thisbe, hearkening back to Chaucer's version of this story in his *Legend of Good Women*), we argue, here, that the availability of the

annotated, newly printed, and critically framed edition of Speght made possible a sustained engagement with Chaucerian literary politics. Speght's 1598 Chaucer, we contend, emphasizes Chaucer's status as an ancient authority, but it also highlights family relationships between fathers and their children, and between husbands and wives, both of which shape Shakespearean appropriations of Chaucer. Speght's framing of Chaucer prompts Shakespeare to read Chaucer's tales for the ongoing dialogue they represent, not only about the past, but also about the nature of families, and on relationships between the generations. Chaucerianism, for the later Shakespeare, is thus not only about mining plot, character, and narrative, but also about manipulating these social, familial and, ultimately, political themes.

I. Chaucer's Bodkin, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Shakespeare could not have written his own *Troilus and Cressida* without Chaucer's text at his desk. But could he have written *Hamlet* without Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*? The *Monk's Tale*, so tedious that Chaucer's Knight must interrupt its telling in the Canterbury sequence, is a series of stanzaic stories about tragic figures in what is known as the *de casibus* tradition.[6] Unpopular with modern readers, the *Monk's Tale*, in its own time, stood squarely in an important tradition of the literary critique of despotic rule. From Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* to Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, the medieval narrative of the fall of ancient tyrants, such as Antiochus and Nero, was a mainstay of morality and entertainment.[7] The *Monk's Tale* drew deeply on the former and informed the latter, much as Lydgate himself would inform the arguments of the mid-sixteenth-century *Mirror for Magistrates*, a text deeply embedded in Shakespeare's consciousness. The *Monk's Tale* bequeathed to readers from the late fourteenth through the late sixteenth centuries a particular vision of the classical tyrant: proud, yet fallen; mighty, yet powerless.

The section of the tale devoted to *Julius Caesar* emblematizes Chaucer's technique: a synthesis of earlier medieval material couched in an appositive, indeed dramatic rhetoric.[8] "O mighty Cesar," waxes the Monk, lamenting that the ruler who once had all of the "orient [. . .] As fer as that the day bigynneth dawe," had fallen victim to his enemies' "conspiracye" (VII.2679-2699). Chaucer conflates Brutus and Cassius into one here: this "Brutus Cassius" had decided just where Caesar should die, and by what instrument. "With bodykeyns" they killed him, in the "Capitolie":

> This Julius to the Capitolie wente
> Upon a day, as he was wont to goon,
> And in the Capitolie anon hym hente
> This false Brutus and his othere foon,
> And stiked hym with boydekyns anoon
> With many a wounde, and thus they lete hym lye;
> But nevere gronte he at no strook but oon,
> Or elles at two, but if his storie lye. (VII.2703–10)

Bodkins in the Capitol: how can we not hear *Hamlet* in these images? Caesar, as any reader of Plutarch would have known, was killed not in the Capitol (that is, the Temple of Jupiter on the Capitoline Hill) but in the Senate. The Capitoline murder of Caesar is a medieval invention, and Chaucer may have gotten it from the twelfth-century Vincent of Beauvais.[9] When Polonius recalls, before Hamlet and the visiting

actors, that he had once played Caesar, he locates his murder precisely in this Chaucerian locale: "I was killed i' th' Capitol. Brutus killed me" (3.2.99–100). Hamlet's joking response, "It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there" (3.2.101) not only reinforces the location of the assassination in the Capitol, but also offers a commentary upon its brutality, even connecting it, via "calf", to biblical notions of sacrifice. Indeed, in Shakespeare's own *Julius Caesar*, which gives Chaucer's tyrant a much more sympathetic treatment, he dies in the Capitol, and Polonius's remark has long been regarded as something of an inside joke for a contemporary audience that would have seen the Roman play on stage only a year or two before *Hamlet*.

However, it may well be an inside joke, not only for the playgoer, but also for the reader. For, while there was a medieval tradition of placing Caesar's murder at the Capitol, Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* would have been the only vernacular, English text available to Shakespeare that affirmed it. We could say, at this point, that what Chaucer did for Shakespeare was to provide him with an already voiced, even dramatized, performance of the Roman's tragic fall as it was performed by the Monk for the other pilgrims on the way to Canterbury. It makes it possible to take the legacies of classical political action and put them into vernacular poetic form. The *Monk's Tale*, more than just providing details of locale or phrasing, gives to the flavour of Polonius's reminiscence a rhetorical cast out of the old *de casibus* tradition. By situating Polonius and his old play within this literary culture, Shakespeare highlights the extent to which it is a culture that is in the past, a sea of outmoded structures and expectations that fail Hamlet, and that Hamlet seeks to define himself against. While this moment forges a connection between Polonius and the tragic figure that he played by anticipating his own imminent murder ("with many a wounde" [CT VII.2708]), it also highlights the difference between Polonius's ignominious stabbing behind the arras, and the more public assassination that Caesar courageously faces. It is a paradigm for political killing, moreover, that Hamlet is ultimately unable to embrace.

Chaucer makes possible, as well, a vision of the sententiousness from which Polonius himself must suffer. With his broad maximal advice, his fawning courtiership, and his at times comic senescence, Polonius remains a figure not just of an earlier political but of an earlier poetic generation. With his aphoristic advice and coercive paternalism, Polonius also recalls the sententious quality of Chaucer reception in the fifteenth century.[10] But he also comes off as a character out of Chaucer himself, a wordy aphorist, who must like Chaucer's Monk himself, be stinted of his Tale. "Hoo!," interrupts the Knight, "namoore of this" (CT VII. 2767) and with this politic intrusion by the Canterbury pilgrims' senior member, Chaucer can signal the exhaustion of the serial, *de casibus* tradition for his own literary purposes. That this tradition had a vigorous, post-Chaucerian afterlife remains one of the fascinations of late-medieval literary history. And yet, for Shakespeare, too, Polonius, much like the Monk, must be silenced.

> Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
> I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune. (*Hamlet* 3.4.30-31)

And when the Knight has stopped the Monk, the Host chimes in as well, in ways that comically reflect on Fortune, tragedy, and literary prowess:

> Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde.
> He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde
> I not nevere what; and als of a tragedie
> Right now ye herde [. . .] (CT, VII.2781–84)

The Monk himself, bewailing Caesar's murder, reflects on how "Fortune unto swich a fyn thee broghte!" (2694) and it would seem that his own literary demise is nothing less than a strange, comic turn upon his own prolixity. The Knight and Host, like a burlesque Brutus and Cassius, bring him down. And so, too, does Polonius die like a mock Caesar, killed not before the Capitol but behind bedroom draperies.

At moments such as these, Chaucer and Shakespeare replace words with actions. Casca's announcement – the last words before Caesar is stabbed – makes the association: "Speak hands for me" (3.1.76). And Hamlet, turning to his mother from Polonius's corpse addresses her, "Leave wringing of your hands" (3.4.33). The hands are instruments of action, and when Hamlet reflects earlier upon his own imagined self-demise, he does so in a fashion that recalls the death of Caesar: "When he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin?" (3.1. 77–78). The "boydekins" of the Roman assassins, in the Monk's telling, "stiked" Caesar "with many a wounde" (VII.2707–08), and the word "bodkin" itself sticks in the memory of the reader, schooled in both Chaucer and Shakespeare, at this great moment.

"Bodkin", spelled variously in Middle English as "boidekin", "boydekin" and the like, is an unusual word. Its etymology has long been in doubt (French? Welsh?), and it first appears in English writing in the middle of the fourteenth century to mean, apparently, a short, thin, stiletto-like dagger. Chaucer's are some of the earliest recorded uses: along with Caesar's assassins in the *Monk's Tale*, the knife-toting miller of the *Reeve's Tale* carries one (CT I.3960).[11]

A bodkin may be a physical object, but it is also a marker of political action. In Middle English, the word appears, after Chaucer, in the poetry of Lydgate, and there in a distinctively Caesarian context. In the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate reports how Caesar was slain "with boidekenys" (VI.2868) and again, in the *Mumming for the Mercers of London*, he refers to Caesar's death, "With bodekyns he was eslaw / At the Capitoyle" (78). These passages are clearly Chaucerian in origin, hearkening back to Caesar's death in the *Monk's Tale*. Indeed, it would appear that for the reader of late Middle English literature, bodkins and Caesar are irrevocably linked together.

By the sixteenth century, however, the word had come to seem an archaism. It does appear in the Coverdale Bible of 1534 (1 Kings xviii.28), but the King James translators would update it with "lancet" in the Authorized Version of 1611.[12] The *OED* records a usage of 1547 from a *Dictionary of English and Welshe* and an appearance in Sidney, but it does seem clear, from the lexicography, that the word "bodkin" is a niche word. Hamlet brings it back, and the modern reader may assume that it is common currency in Shakespeare's time. But it was clearly not, and Shakespeare's other, limited uses of the word continue to evoke its Chaucerian, Caesarian inheritance. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, the word appears during the pageant of the Nine Worthies, when Holofernes appears as Judas Maccabeus. The witty banter among the King of Navarre's men quickly turns Judas Maccabeus into Judas Iscariot, the traitor, via a series of jokes about coins that stem from wordplay on the archaic "yclept" (5.2.592) as in "named", and "clipped" (5.2.593) as in a counterfeit, such as "plain Judas" (5.2.593), the traitor. Jokes about coins produce one about

"the head of a bodkin" (5.2.605) that reminds everyone of Caesar, one of the Nine Worthies:

> LONGUEVILLE. The face of an old Roman coin, scarce seen.
> BOYET. The pommel of Caesar's falchion. (5.2.607–08)

Linking Caesar and the bodkin with the thematics of betrayal, here identified with Judas, this exchange takes place at a time in the play just before all plays, and wordplays, of this kind come to an abrupt end with news that the Princess's father has died — once again replacing words in all their abundance with a blunt and tragic physical reality.

We may situate the word's appearance in *The Winter's Tale* within a similar set of connections between Caesar's story and the bodkin. Discovering the baby Perdita abandoned by Antigonus on the coast of Bohemia, the Old Shepherd calls to his son, a Clown, and asks him, "What ail'st thou, man?" (3.3.80). The Clown retorts: "I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land! But I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky. Betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin's point" (3.3.81–84). Clown has just witnessed two "heavy matters" (3.3.108): the shipwreck and the bear's successful pursuit of Antigonus. These events transform the Monk's bodkin from an emblem of violent tragedy into an example of the random cruelty of Fortune. Similarly, the innocent Antigonus, a just man and good advisor who meets a tragic end, revisits the "Brutus Cassius" whom Caesar cannot trust: in *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes wrongly believes Antigonus to be a Brutus, conspiring on his life, and banishes him for this reason. This example also illustrates the extent to which Caesar and the bodkin are, by this point, bound up in memories of *Hamlet*, with Antigonus constituting a virtuous alternative to the flawed Polonius, just as the Clown's words above recall Hamlet's desolate vision of the "brave o'erhanging firmament" in his famous speech to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, "I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth" (2.2.294ff.).

This verbal constellation helps us redefine some of the ways in which Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* shaped both the verbal details and some of the broader literary contexts in which Shakespeare represents and recalls Julius Caesar's murder. Our close examination of these verbal details identifies Polonius with Caesar's killing "by conspiracye" in the Capitol, as well as with an older model of Chaucerian reception that is reflected not only in the Monk's tragic vision of history, shaped by the whims of Fortune (a subject on which Chaucer also wrote a short poem), but also recalled in the proverbial wisdom of the *Tale of Melibee* or the strict moralism of the *Manciple's Tale*. However, it also constitutes a meditation upon the political act of killing Caesar, as well as the traditions associated with its literary reputation. Haunted by the murder of his own father, which he then stages in *The Murder of Gonzago*, Hamlet refuses the opportunity to murder Claudius, who is sequestered away in private prayer, rather than in public at the Senate House, or Capitol. Hamlet thus distances himself from the brutality of assassination ("It was a brute part of him" [3.2.101]) as well as from the classically sanctioned option of suicide ("When he himself might his quietus make / With a bare bodkin?" [3.1.77–78]), a model which had become problematic in the Christian present, although his murder of Polonius and duel with Laertes ultimately return him to precisely this model. What is important, for the purposes of *Hamlet*, is not only that Chaucer represents the culture against which

Hamlet is struggling to define himself, but also that Speght's Chaucer sets the terms for that struggle as intergenerational and fundamentally political.

II. Chaucer's book, Shakespeare's *Tempest*

If the *Monk's Tale* resonates with an Elizabethan Shakespeare writing about regicide and revenge, what happens to Speght's Chaucer in the Jacobean period? While *Troilus and Criseyde* had an enduring readership throughout the seventeenth century, and while Chaucer's lyrics and advisory short poems were among the most frequently recopied and reread, the reading tastes for the *Canterbury Tales* seem to have changed in this period, as King James I's own fascination with magic and the occult filtered through courtly culture to provoke new ways of reading Chaucer's tales of romance and sorcery: the *Franklin's Tale*, the *Man of Law's Tale*, the *Clerk's Tale*, the *Squire's Tale*.

After the death of Elizabeth I, a new generation of women took on assertive roles as patrons of the theatre and theatrical performance, including Anne of Denmark and her daughter, Elizabeth, as well as Henrietta Maria and her own daughters.[13] In such an environment, Chaucerian tales could also be read, not just as parables of magic, but as paradigms for marriage. In this context, the broad outlines of the *Man of Law's Tale* find their transformation into *Pericles*: in both, a female protagonist, far from home, becomes a paragon of inner integrity expressed through verbal acts of preaching and conversion. Similarly, the unhappy wives of the *Franklin's* and the *Clerk's* tales – caught between service and assertiveness, fealty to domestic politics and the love of others or of children – are refracted in the faithful Imogen of *Cymbeline* and the saintly Hermione of *The Winter's Tale* (its very title a recollection of Chaucerian narrative), and even the tragic yet self-possessed Katherine of *Henry VIII, or All is True*. As Shakespeare's distinctively Jacobean approach to Chaucer privileges romance over exemplum, tales of magic and fantasy are preferred to history or social satire, while narratives of fathers and sons are transformed into a fascination with the dynamics between fathers and daughters, and husbands and wives. This shift in generic, formal and thematic interests speaks to the tastes of a wider reading public, and to a court in which theatre has become, as it were, a family affair.

Speght's image of the Chaucer genealogy figures powerfully, as well, in a world in which a new king has taken over from a childless queen, a world in which the whole question of descent is culturally contested, and a world in which – as Jonathan Goldberg expressed it three decades ago – the "politics of the family" govern the idioms and iconography of Jacobean rule (Goldberg 55–112). Although their tales are told at different times in the *Canterbury Tales* and they appear in different fragments, the Clerk, the Man of Law, and the Franklin follow each other in the *General Prologue*, linked by their status as emergent middle-class, educated, career men. They are the representatives of what Anne Middleton called "Chaucer's 'New Men': figures of "evident ambition", whose "efforts to appear worthy in public" and whose "manifest social identity" generated a kind of "literary performance" keyed to an understanding of the pleasures of literature, the social values of talk, and the values of the verbal imagination (17). It is possible to find in them anticipations of a Shakespearean literary ambition, and in their tales the flourish and the flavour of late Shakespeare.

The rising tide of antiquarianism and the new ways of reading, editing and publishing the texts of classical antiquity, moreover, would have recast the Jacobean period's assessments of the *Knight's Tale*, or the *Legend of Good Women*. As Robert C. Evans noticed long ago, Ben Jonson's own, marked-up copy of his 1602 Speght edition reveals the "numerous ways that Chaucer's learning continued to command the reverent respect" of his readers, and Jonson's own assiduous cultivation of his own learning, as well as that of his early seventeenth-century contemporaries, enabled them to find in Chaucer what Speght called "a man of great reading, & deep judgment" – the very passage that, as Evans notes, Jonson marked in the margin and underlined (333). Evidence from Jonson's markings and from other evidence strongly suggests that the early seventeenth-century readership of Chaucer was moving away from older "medieval" forms: for example, the allegorical exemplum (the *Tale of Melibee*, the *Prioress's Tale*, the *Second Nun's Tale*), estates satire (the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, the *Miller's Tale*, the *Reeve's Tale*), and the ecclesiastical critique (the *Friar's Tale*, the *Summoner's Tale*, the *Pardoner's Tale*).[14] This is not to say that these tales completely fell out of favour, or that the ribald and comic Chaucer so beloved of modern audiences had been adumbrated by a classicizing writer with a taste for magic. But it is to say that Chaucer was being used differently by Jacobean writers. Evans finds in the aggregation of Jonsonian annotations a concern with the question of the passions, with the relationships between irrational desires and self-command, and with the nature of individual control and social expectation. There is much, Evans suggests, that is Chaucerian (in these senses) about Jonson's *Alchemist* and *Volpone*, and we would suggest, further, that for Shakespeare in his Jacobean mode, the tales of integrity and defiance, of will and wilfulness, were similarly appealing.

Take, for example, Prospero, perhaps the most auto-allegorical of Shakespeare's player-politicians. When Prospero speaks as conjurer, he speaks as a character out of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale*, closing the masque of Act 4 of *The Tempest* with the announcement, "Our revels now are ended" (4.1.148). His line recalls, as scholars agree, the *Franklin's Tale*'s account of how the clerk of Orleans, his magic granting images of ladies dancing and "knyghtes justyng in a playn", could just vanish with a word: "And farewel! Al oure revel was ygo" CT (V.1204). Scholarship has highlighted Shakespeare's use of the *Franklin's Tale* as a source for *The Tempest's* narrative of magic and shipwrecks, opening into broad shared themes of forgiveness and redemption, but it has yet to produce a sustained examination of Chaucer's place in the work of the late Shakespeare.[15] Yet, as Deanne Williams has recently argued, the *Franklin's Tale* also transported Shakespeare to the ancient Britain of *Cymbeline*, composed at about the same time in his career ("Shakespearean Medievalism").

It is well known that the 1623 first folio opens with *The Tempest*, providing a frame for Shakespeare's own authorial reception as author, even as magus, and, read in the context of Speght's Chaucer, as father. For while we credit Jonson with having invented the idea of a folio edition of a living English author, we overlook the extent to which his 1616 *Works*, which Heminges and Condell were emulating, was itself provoked by the great folio Chaucer editions, and particularly by Speght. And what is also overlooked is the extent to which the 1623 first folio, as a whole, is not just introduced by but bracketed by plays that bring us deeply into ambiences of romance and family relations, complicated by the Jacobean reading of Chaucer. That folio may begin with the *Tempest*, but it ends with *Cymbeline*, a play as rooted in the classical past as any of the *Canterbury Tales* or *Troilus and Criseyde*, and a play, too,

that draws on Chaucerian material reformulated for a Jacobean audience. The immanence of Chaucer's *Franklin's Tale* in late Shakespeare is thus not simply grounded in particular allusions, such as Prospero's announcement that "Our revels now are ended" (4.1.148) or the very name of Arviragus in *Cymbeline*. Our concern is, therefore, not so much to revive interest in these local allusions but instead to provoke a reconsideration of a broader debt to Chaucer in late Shakespeare: a Chaucer that brackets, or even embraces Shakespeare.

To begin that provocation, we return to *The Tempest* not only in the context of the *Franklin's Tale*, but also as a return to that now-iconic moment in the Speght Chaucer, in which the Monk situates Julius Caesar's death, by bodkin, in the Capitol. Can we think of *The Tempest*, with its many representations of "conspiracie", as also revisiting the *Monk's Tale*? Scholars often point out that *The Tempest* is one play for which Shakespeare seems to be lacking a major source (although there are a wealth of minor ones, from Virgil to Montaigne). Yet it is possible to see Shakespeare returning, in *The Tempest*, to the story of conspiracy and murder played out in *Julius Caesar*, and replayed in *Hamlet*, that has its roots in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*. Of course it must also be understood as a repetition with a difference: Prospero is, in many ways, the ultimate anti-Caesar, far from having any military triumphs or imperial ambitions. He is conspired against and overthrown, certainly, but as a result of his neglect of his duties, not his desire for more power. *The Tempest* tailors a story that Shakespeare first told in Elizabethan cloak-and-dagger style, into one better suited to an intellectual Stuart monarch who was, himself, subjected to the plots of many conspirators. Thus, Prospero is not assassinated in the Capitol, but usurped from his dukedom in Milan; not murdered, but exiled; and, given the opportunity to confront his conspirators, he resolves his political conflicts through books, not bodkins.

If we imagine Prospero as a Jacobean Caesar, invested more in paternity than political power, we may think of Antonio and Sebastian as versions of Brutus and Cassius, whose conspiracy to murder Alonso and Gonzalo ("Draw thy sword" 2.1.297) is interrupted by magic, when Ariel awakens Gonzalo: "While you here do snoring lie, / Open-eyed conspiracy, / His time doth take" (2.1.305–07). Caliban, by contrast, plots Prospero's overthrow as an act not of bloodshed but of bibliography: "Remember / First to possess his books" (3.2.92–93). While the verbal link in *The Tempest* to the *Monk's Tale* is not so much "bodkin" as "conspiracy", the association between the two is recalled by the appearance of the Reapers in the masque ("You sunburned sicklemen" [4.1.134]), which immediately puts Prospero in mind of "that foul conspiracy / Of the beast Caliban and his confederates / Against my life" (4.1.139–41).

Just as Shakespeare transforms the story of Caesar into the intergenerational conflict of Claudius and Hamlet, he reworks it, in *The Tempest*, into the sexual ambitions and deferred longings of the younger generation. Caliban has both a different strategy to plot Prospero's overthrow but also a different motivation: "I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans" (1.2.352–53). And whatever murderous fantasies Ferdinand may entertain while hauling wood are suppressed for a greater political good and dynastic vision. We can even extend our argument to Miranda, who marries into a life of courtly international Realpolitik that, as her prescient game of chess with Ferdinand suggests, are associated with the kind of marital challenges faced by a Dorigen or Griselda.

Our essay ends, then, with this set of provocations for more work on a distinctively Jacobean context for Shakespeare and Chaucer. More work can be done with the largely still unread personal annotations of seventeenth-century owners of Speght's edition. Alison Wiggins has concluded her survey of Renaissance annotators with the daunting challenge that "to turn the pages of all c. 450 extant copies of Renaissance printed Chaucer would be an ambitious goal, but it will be essential to depicting a more dynamic view of his post-medieval reception" (36). We would argue that such a project must go hand in hand with an assessment of the literary transformations of Chaucerian material, not only in Shakespeare, but also in his Jacobean dramatic and poetic contemporaries such as John Webster and John Fletcher. The publication of Speght's Chaucer was, of course, not greeted with a book party. Nonetheless, its publication did alter the possibilities for understanding Chaucer as a poetic, political, and even dramatic figure. To return to Muriel Bradbrook's avowals of half a century ago, Shakespeare may well have thought of his own *Troilus and Cressida* as a work designed to be read as literature. But such a statement must compel us to assess how Shakespeare and his contemporaries read Chaucer "as literature", and how that literary engagement provoked the writing of dramatic verse. Our extended reflections on the *Monk's Tale* and our concluding, suggestive remarks on Shakespeare's late plays and the Chaucer canon may stimulate reassessments of what Chaucer's poetry did to the literary culture of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. At the very least, what he did for that culture may have been to provide a voiced set of personal performances, each of which engage with a classical and a vernacular past in distinctive ways, and all of which – taken in the aggregate – may have provided Shakespeare with a model for a dramatized, rhetorical experience of literary making. Theatre, by the first decades of the seventeenth century, may well have been, as we suggest in closing, something of a family affair. It is this intersection of the political, the familial, and the dramatic that Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* embeds, and future critics will, we hope, look beyond the power of mere textual allusions to consider Shakespeare's illusions of power as learned, at least in part, from Chaucer.[16]

Notes

1. See Donaldson; Thompson; and the recent essay collections by Driver and Ray, Perry and Watkins, Beckwith and Simpson.
2. See Pearsall; Machan; Dane.
3. See Wiggins. More specific studies include Lerer, "Unpublished Sixteenth-Century Arguments" and Evans. It should be noted that Jonson's Chaucer is a copy of the 1602 Speght edition.
4. See also Cooper.
5. See Davis; Williams, "Papa Don't Preach"; Jones; Yeager.
6. The single best, sustained engagement with the *Monk's Tale* and its literary traditions remains Wallace's chapter.
7. See Scanlon; Nolan.
8. All quotations from Chaucer's works are from Benson. References to the *Canterbury Tales* will be by Fragment and line number. The Monk's version of Julius Caesar is at VII. 2671–726.
9. Benson p. 935, to VII.2703 and Aiken.
10. See Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, and Lawton.
11. See the *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v., boidekin.

12. These and the following quotations come from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., bodkin, n., def. 1. The quotation from the Coverdale bible reads: "They [. . .] provoked them selues with knyues & botkens".

13. See Tomlinson; Britland; McManus, *Women on the Renaissance Stage* and *Women and Culture*.

14. Wiggins considers a collection of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century annotations to Chaucer volumes, selected largely on the basis of their association with identifiable owners, to argue that Chaucer could be variously understood as "a magus and alchemist; a laureate poet; an antiquarian curiosity; a beacon of Protestantism; a source of sententious wisdom; or an adviser in the art of love and marriage". The marginalia also point to ways in which "Chaucer was assimilated into the world of humanist learning and scholarship", as well as offering evidence for particular female readerships (34–35).

15. See Hillman; Walker; Knopp.

16. Our own allusion is to Orgel's *The Illusion of Power*.

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