
Original Article

Queer environments: Reanimating 'Adam Scrivyen'

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Abstract Integrating queer theory and ecocriticism, this essay reassesses the historical manuscript contexts of Geoffrey Chaucer's shortest poem, commonly known as 'Adam Scriveyn,' while also reconsidering the text's varied afterlives in contemporary scholarship, including its manifestations in printed editions and digital media. Attending to the material transformations of the poem across time invites close scrutiny of the medieval homosocial networks of textual production, and Elizabeth Freeman's critique of chrononormativity helps to illustrate how the poet Chaucer, the London scrivener Adam Pynkhurst, and early copyist John Shirley are 'engrouped' into a queer collective bound together by intimate forms of co-dependency. Queer relationality in turn structures the literary and affective networks that contemporary medievalists construct by means of the poem itself. Both manuscript scholars and literary critics enact what Carolyn Dinshaw calls a 'queer touch' across time, inhabiting a temporality that incorporates the text's previous readers and editors and even the animal body that gave its life to produce the parchment upon which the ordinary text was written. This analysis examines the visual presentation of Pynkhurst's handwriting on the website *Late Medieval English Scribes* and interactive online interface of the collaborative project *Networks of Book Makers, Owners and Users in Late Medieval England*. Instantiating the 'trans-corporeality' and 'distributed agency' of ecotheorists Stacy Alaimo and Jane Bennett, digital media not only (re)animates textual objects but also demonstrates how texts circulate through networked environments by means of human participants and more-than-human forces.

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This article combines queer theory and ecocriticism to reassess the manuscript origins and digital afterlives of Geoffrey Chaucer's shortest poem, commonly known as 'Adam Sciveyn.' I consider the material histories and literary networks that scholars construct by means of Chaucer's 'Adam Sciveyn' and explore some of the queer implications of this text's varied incarnations over time (in premodern manuscripts and in print, as well as in modern scholarship and online databases). This poem – which expresses Chaucer's anxieties over manuscript networks as an imperfect form of textual dissemination – aptly invites modern-day audiences to ponder how media environments transmit and give life to textual objects. After examining some of the varied iterations of 'Adam Sciveyn' through manuscript, print, and digital interfaces, I will conclude by outlining some of the future possibilities a queer approach can offer to textual studies and to ecotheory. Integrating queer theory with material and environmental studies lends new insights into the role that authors, scribes, editors, scholars, and readers play in the dynamic life of any given text across time. Just as importantly, a queer ecocritical approach expands the scope of manuscript networks beyond human participants – including the nonhuman animal whose life was given to produce the parchment of the originary manuscript as well as the technologies of transmission (print or online) that structure any reader's experience of a text.

Homosocial scribal relations

It might appear upon first read that there is not much to work with in the poem 'Adam Sciveyn.' Numbering just six lines of verse (one stanza), this is the shortest work attributed to Chaucer. It appears in a few early modern printed editions (first appearing in John Stowe's 1561 edition of *Chaucer's Works*), but only one manuscript version survives in an anthology written out by fifteenth-century bibliophile John Shirley (Cook, 2016). Shirley gives the poem the title 'Chauciers Wordes, a Geffrey vn to Adame his owen scryveyne' ['Chaucer's Words, from Geoffrey to Adam his own Scribe'] in Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20, fol. 367. In the poem, Chaucer famously chides his scribe for miscopying the author's few completed works, *Boece* (Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*) and *Troilus* (the tragic love story *Troilus and Criseyde*). I reproduce the text as it appears in *The Riverside Chaucer*, the edition of the printed text that still remains the most widely cited in literary scholarship today:

Adam sciveyn, if ever it thee bifalle
Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,
Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,
But after my making thow wryte more trewe;



So ofte adaye I mote thy werk renewe,
 It to correcte and eke to rubbe and scrape,
 And al is thurgh thy negligence and rape. (Benson, 1988, 650)¹

In this poem, the poet Chaucer addresses the ‘scribeyn’ [scribe] named Adam. Should the time come when Adam must copy out or rewrite (‘wryten newe’) Chaucer’s *Boece* or *Troilus*, the scribe ought to be careful to reproduce the work (Chaucer’s ‘makyng’) as closely as possible (‘wryte more trewe’). If the scribe fails to do so, may he be cursed with a skin ailment (‘the scalle’). The poet ends this poem by revealing that he, the poet, must often ‘renewe’ [redo] the scribe’s sloppy work, correcting it by rubbing and scraping away the errors. The reference to rubbing and scraping implies that the writing takes place on parchment, i.e., writing surface created from animal skin. All of this extra labour on the part of the author is due to the scribe’s inattentiveness and ‘rape,’ a word that can be glossed by modern Chaucer scholars either as ‘haste’ or as (physical or sexual) ‘violation’ (Dinshaw, 1989, 8).

In *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (1989), queer theorist and literary critic Carolyn Dinshaw carefully unpacks this poem through a feminist perspective, situating its rhetorical operations within a nexus of relations between men. The material text is coded as female and is the target of homosocial violence (Dinshaw, 1989, 9). If ‘my makyng,’ the work of one man (Chaucer), is not accurately copied by another (Adam the scribe), then this ‘werk’ must be rubbed and scraped with a sharp instrument in order to be corrected. The phallic imagery of rubbing and scraping thus takes on dire implications in the context of sexual violence. Dinshaw notes that it is precisely the body that structures the poem’s key analogy: ‘Literary production takes place on bodies – on the animal skins made into pages, on cursed scribe’s scalps,’ and the entire poem depends upon a ‘figurative identification [...] between the human body and the manuscript page’ (Dinshaw, 1989, 3). In this broader context, the manuscript (parchment surface) assumes a passive, feminized role as an object mediating the relationship between two men: writing itself is, in Dinshaw’s reading, ‘an act upon a body construed as feminine’ (Dinshaw, 1989, 9).

The ethical and interpretive implications of ‘coding’ a text as an objectified and passively receptive female victim of violence will be addressed below, but the complex dynamics of homosocial relations outlined in this poem warrant some further exploration as well. How does an analysis of homosocial relations in this poem transform once we acknowledge that one of the objectified targets of rhetorical violence in the text is *also* the scribe Adam? At the Biennial International Congress of the New Chaucer Society in Glasgow in 2004, manuscript scholar Linne R. Mooney identified the mysterious ‘Adam’ addressed in Chaucer’s poem as a real-life historical person: the London scrivener Adam Pynkhurst (Mooney, 2006). Mooney based her findings on a comparison of Pynkhurst’s handwriting (including his signature) in London

1 All citations of Chaucer’s work are to this edition unless otherwise indicated.

guild documents alongside two of the earliest manuscripts of Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* dating from the first decade of the fifteenth century: San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS EL 26 C 9, commonly known as the Ellesmere Manuscript or Ellesmere Chaucer; and Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Peniarth 392D, commonly known as the Hengwrt Chaucer. Mooney’s identification quickly garnered attention not only in academic circles but also in popular media as well (Mooney, 2006; Ezard, 2004). Created as part of a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council of the UK in 2007–2011, Mooney as Principal Investigator with a team of collaborators capitalized on a broad interest in these paleographical discoveries to launch *Late Medieval English Scribes*, a website that aims to present digitized samples of all scribal hands in medieval or early modern manuscripts of English writings by major authors including Chaucer (Mooney, Horobin, and Stubbs, 2011). Searching this website for samples of Pynkhurst’s handwriting reveals distinctive letter forms with flamboyant ornamentations, including long ascenders and descenders with curvy and patterned tendrils (London, Guildhall Library, MS 5370, fol. 56) (Figure 1).²

2 Reproduced in Mooney (2006, 155); see also online samples of his handwriting with ‘Pynkhurst characteristics’ and ‘Further Pynkhurst characteristics’ elaborated by Mooney, Horobin, and Stubbs (2011).

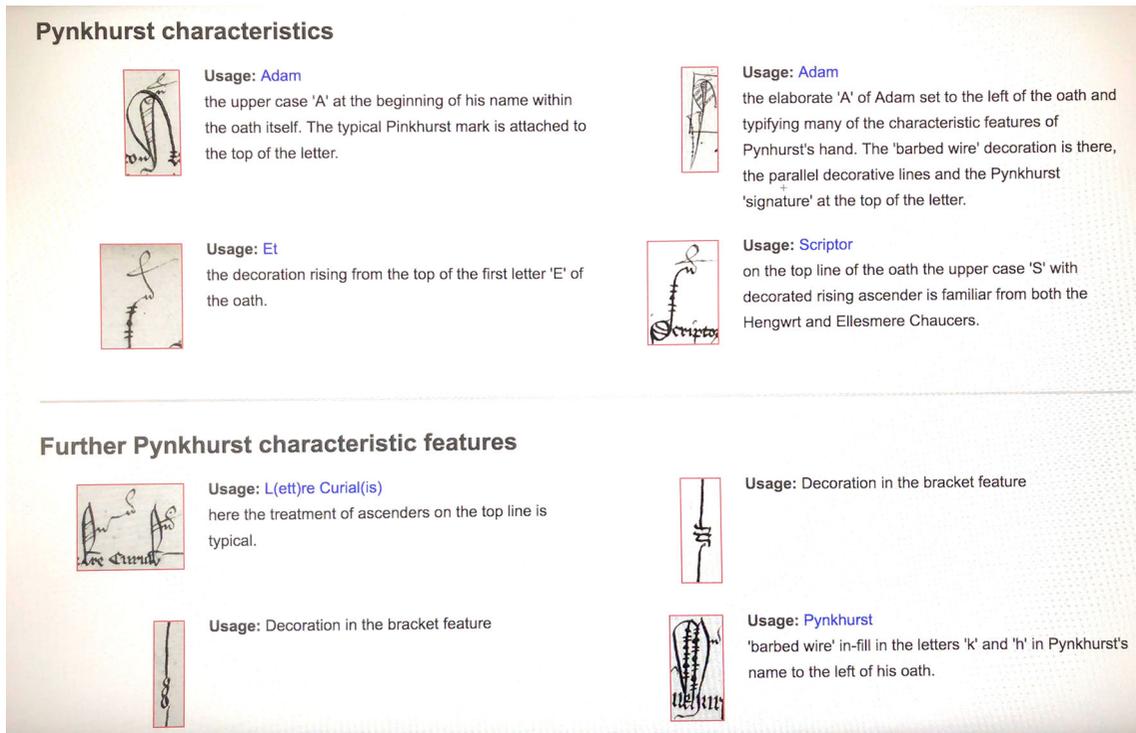


Figure 1: Samples of Adam Pynkhurst’s handwriting as displayed on *Late Medieval English Scribes*. These specimens of ‘characteristic’ features of Pynkhurst’s hand are extracted from a document in his hand with his signature: London, Guildhall Library 5370, fol. 56 (Scriveners’ Company Common Paper). Accessed 1 November 2017.



In presenting these particular examples of rather showy handwriting as ‘characteristics’ of Pynkhurst, the *Late Medieval English Scribes* website waxes poetic in its own descriptions of Pynkhurst’s distinctive handwriting features: ‘the elaborate “A” of Adam,’ for instance, exhibits a “barbed wire” decoration’ with ‘parallel decorative lines’ and ‘the Pynkhurst “signature”’ (a wispy curvy flourish) appears at the head of this same letter A (Mooney, Horobin, and Stubbs, 2011). The coexistence of such florid verbal descriptions of the word ‘Adam’ alongside the photographic reproductions of Pynkhurst’s letter-forms implicitly suggests an alignment between the ‘characteristics’ of the scribe and, potentially, his historical identity or personal character. The website’s visual reproduction of multiple capital letter A shapes alongside textual descriptions using phrases such as ‘The typical Pynkhurst mark’ [*sic*] or ‘the elaborate “A” of Adam’ and ‘characteristic features of Pynkhurst’s hand’ [*sic*] imbue the scribe’s handwriting – and Adam himself – with a distinctive ‘mark’ and a flamboyant personality (Mooney, Horobin, and Stubbs, 2011).

The deliberate construction of Pynkhurst’s ‘characteristics’ through this visual-textual layout of online search results could suggest that the creators of *Late Medieval English Scribes* are taking some of their cues from Chaucer himself. In the context of Pynkhurst’s recognizable handwriting and at times flashy style, Chaucer’s poem artfully constructs the scribe’s own body as an aesthetic object as much as the text he copies (or should recopy). Adam, who apparently prizes his ‘long lokkes’ of hair, curiously resembles some of Chaucer’s fictional pilgrims who are obsessed with maintaining a distinctive external appearance. In the *General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*, for instance, the fashionable young Squire is described as having curly locks or ‘lokkes crulle’ (81) while the notoriously ambiguous Pardoner – always dressed in ‘the newe jet’ [‘the most current style’] and allegedly ‘a geldyng or a mare’ [‘a castrated sheep or female horse’] – sports ‘lokkes’ that ‘henge [b]y ounces’ (General Prologue, 682, 691, 677). Moreover, the ‘scalle’ or skin condition that Chaucer uses to curse Adam enacts a verbal assault on the scribe’s corporeal form. That is, the poem wounds the scribe’s sense of personal aesthetics or physical beauty as much as it denounces the material outcomes of his sloppy labor. The poem thus renders vividly physical and situationally appropriate a seemingly unexpected conjunction of skin surfaces: the violated, scraped animal parchment and the diseased scalp of the human scribe (Mize, 2001, 359; O’Connell, 2005, 45–6).

Chaucer’s closing end-rhyme accuses Pynkhurst of ‘rape,’ a word that is variously glossed by scholars and editors as ‘haste’ or as ‘violation,’ and the implicit violence in the Middle English word is inescapably informed by our present-day knowledge of Chaucer’s own implication in a charge of *raptus* – now understood by most scholars and historians as sexual assault – of a woman named Cecily Champaigne (Morrison, 1999; Waymack, 2017). Acknowledging the serious implications of sexual violence against women (and how the *raptus*

charge reframes our understanding of Chaucer's biography), an underlying structure of toxic masculinity frames the text's open threat of bodily harm to a male body. A queer reading this poem exposes how discourses of 'rape' exploit misogynist frameworks to express ambivalence over an intimate, co-dependent mode of homosocial reproduction. The poet and the scribe both rely upon one another to make a living, yet they find themselves intertwined in an ambivalent co-dependency or resistant partnership.

In addition to thickening our understanding of affective ties between men that this poem discloses, queer theory can also help us rethink how structures of time operate in this text. I will soon discuss how Dinshaw's later works have framed queer theory and queer reading practices as a 'touch across time' (Dinshaw, 1999, 21), but first I would stress that Chaucer's 'Adam Sciveyn' resists any 'straight,' linear progression of chronological time from a single point of origin to a perfected copy; rather, it posits a recursive process of writing and rewriting that is never completed and vulnerable to failure at any stage. Evincing a queer temporality, the poem makes a call for Adam to perpetually rewrite a text that will always be flawed (it can be 'more trewe' but never perfect). The discourse of the poem posits an endlessly recursive cycle of authorial-scribal rewriting with 'no future' for a perfected text (Edelman, 2005) and one could further say the poem flagrantly embraces a queer art of failure (Halberstam, 2011). When John Shirley copies out the text in its only surviving manuscript witness (Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.20, fol. 367), the page exhibits smudges and imperfections – and nonetheless Shirley still embellishes the final line of the text (from the descender of the thorn he uses in the word 'thy') with a long decorative loop with extraneous ornamental flourishes.³ The material traces of the text in its earliest manuscript form embodies homosocial scribal identity in fragile deformation and ostentatious imperfection, from Chaucer to Pynkhurst to the surviving manuscript witness by Shirley.

3 Shirley's manuscript is fully digitized online under Creative Commons license: <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1373> (scroll to 366–67). Samples of Shirley's handwriting in the same manuscript are available at Mooney, Horobin, and Stubbs (2011); search for results for 'John Shirley.'

Queer touches

A few years after Mooney's identification of Adam Pynkhurst as 'Chaucer's scribe,' Alexandra Gillespie offered a nuanced close reading of *Adam Sciveyn* that not only attended to the meaning of the Middle English poem in light of Mooney's scholarship but also cast the poem as an artifact materially constructed through a fragile and contingent homosocial network (Gillespie, 2008). Among other things, Gillespie maintains that Mooney's identification of Pynkhurst as the historical 'Adam' addressed in Chaucer's poem does not fully resolve all of the poem's interpretive questions; the text still maintains an open-ended quality even if a solid identification of the scribe as Adam Pynkhurst has



been established.⁴ At the close of her essay, Gillespie notes ‘Chaucer never says that Adam copies *Boece* or *Troilus*. He only imagines that possibility, which is a matter of conditionality, “if,” futurity, “euer,” and happenstance,’ and even the ‘canonical [...] completeness’ of those named works is ‘ironically undone by the transience and mutability that both poems theorize long before’ they are miswritten by Adam (Gillespie, 2008, 279). While it is possible to situate this poem as an occasional verse directly addressed to a named individual, the poem nonetheless illustrates the conditional and contingent nature of all textuality – and offers an invitation for future acts of remaking.

If we think about book history as a form of textual remaking or even artistic performance, another gendered dimension opens up in the scholarly realm. When Gillespie provides the text of *Adam Scryvyn*, she reproduces the text not as it is transcribed by Mooney; Gillespie notes in her article that the text is ‘transcribed here with original punctuation’ (Gillespie, 2008, 271):

Chauciers wordes . a Geffrey vn to Adame his owen scryveyne /
 Adam . scryveyne / if euer it þee byfalle
 Boece or Troylus / for to wryten nuwe/
 Vnder þy long lokkes / þowe most haue þe scalle
 But affter my makyng / þowe wryte more truwe
 So offt a daye . I mot þy werk renuwe /
 It to . corect / and eke to rubbe and scrape /
 And al is thorough . þy negglygence and rape /
 (Gillespie, 2008, 271)

Gillespie hews very closely to Shirley’s manuscript witness (i.e., the earliest and only surviving handwritten witness we have for Chaucer’s poem). Not only does she maintain the graphic layout of the handwritten text on the page (line breaks) and its spelling and capitalization, but she even retains the punctus (.) and dash (/) which Shirley uses to indicate a caesura or line break, as well as replicating the letter V where most modern editions would substitute the letter U, and preserving the antiquated letter thorn (þ) to designate the sound ‘th.’ In transcribing the poem in such a painstakingly detailed manner (not as, say, how *The Riverside Chaucer* presents the received text as quoted above), Gillespie returns the modern printed text as close as possible to its manuscript form or originary visual interface.

This typographical display of exactness by Gillespie could be read as a subtle form of ‘upstaging’ Mooney or *The Riverside Chaucer* or deliberately leaping backwards in time prior to her most proximate precursors in the material presentation of the text. Insofar as the transcription of the poem announces an adherence to ‘the original punctuation’ (Gillespie, 2008, 271), this attempt to reproduce the graphic form of Shirley’s manuscript copy in a new typographical medium suggests an imagined ‘possibility of contact between linguistic fragments across time,’ to borrow a phrase from Dinshaw’s rich theorizing of queer reading practices (Dinshaw, 1999, 21). In other words, this careful

4 Recent scholarship has reassessed Mooney’s scribal identifications as well as Chaucer’s authorship of ‘Adam Scryveyn’ on the grounds of metrical analysis (Warner, 2015; Weiskott, 2017).

transcription reveals an implicitly ‘partial, affective connection’ to the text and undisclosed desire to forge a ‘touch across time’ (Dinshaw, 1999, 21) with an originary object of study. Such a desire becomes visible even through what would otherwise seem a neutral or so-called ‘diplomatic’ transcription of text.

This close analysis of textual editing and reading practices does not merely address a series of attempts to figuratively ‘touch’ a textual object across disparate flashpoints in time; it also sketches an implicitly queer practice of literary history along two concurrent gendered networks: a collective of medieval men directly involved in manuscript production (Chaucer, Pynkhurst, and Shirley) and a later intersecting network of present-day women publishing in print (Dinshaw, Mooney, and Gillespie). Through Gillespie’s display of typographical precision, Dinshaw’s ‘queer touch’ transpires in a re-mediated temporality of gendered labor. Gillespie’s modern-day typography reproduces *something like* an original manuscript interface, and the act of typesetting (even if such typesetting now happens electronically and not manually) emerges as nostalgic performance of a moment of creation that can never truly be accessed. Such a carefully-produced graphic layout (or textual interface) reveals a desire for direct contact with an original handwritten text – even if that physical touch can never be fully enacted.

Queer environments

By this point in this analysis, it should be clear that touch is not simply a metaphor for queer reading practices: touch can, of course, denote physical contact with the surface of a text or object. Before moving into a discussion of ‘Adam Sciveyn’ in cyberspace, it is important to remain ever mindful of the persistent materiality of any text beyond its writing (the alphabetic letter-shapes that transmit its content); just as crucial is the physical surface and matter upon which the poem depends. As indicated briefly in the opening of this essay, touch and materiality frame the scene of performance in Chaucer’s poem. The lyric directly references the tactility and physical labor of rubbing and scraping parchment, suggesting both the animal origins of the writing surface upon which the text is transmitted and the human labor involved in producing the work. Insofar as physical contact is foregrounded in the poem, the text does not just enact rhetorical violence against a feminized text (or a male scribe); it implicates the literal violence brought upon the material text in the past killing of the animal that generates the text as matter. As Bruce Holsinger remarks: ‘A large part of our written inheritance survives as a great mass of animal remains’ (Holsinger, 2015).⁵ Sarah Kay observes that a pervasive, systemic exploitation of nonhuman animals was necessary to create parchment, making medieval texts the conceptual double or ‘an opposing face’ for the reader’s own skin (Kay, 2011, 14). In this context, one can think of a ‘form of reading in which the page, rather than enclosing the reader within its animal hide, offers itself as an abstract

⁵ See also Holsinger (2010).



face' (Kay, 2011, 17). If the text is rhetorically figured as a victim of violence in 'Adam Scriveyn' – in gendered or in species terms – then the feminized textual object and the nonhuman animal are ontologically linked.

If we extend this conceptual alignment of nonhuman animal skin and the body of the reader, then either Adam or Chaucer can be the reader as well as the (re)copyist of the text before him – and either one is implicated in a process of writing and scraping on the surface of animal skin. In the act of reading and writing, an uncanny relationship emerges between the lifeless material text and the living, performing body. In a queer interface between bodies (nonliving nonhuman and living human), the imperfections on Adam's writing surface will result in imperfections in Adam's own skin: in particular, the 'scalle' on the scalp or surface of the human head. This intimate, corporeal interface between an inert nonhuman skin and a living human body rhetorically blurs distinctions of living and nonliving, masculine and feminine, human and nonhuman.

Elsewhere in this Special Issue, Malte Urban argues that the manuscript variance across multiple medieval copies of John Gower's *Confessio amantis* – as well as the relationships among the literary work's fictive interlocutors – effectively disrupt what Elizabeth Freeman would call linear models of chrononormativity, and Chaucer's poem to his scribe Adam similarly demonstrates how the embodied participants in a medieval literary work are 'bound to one another, engrouped, made to feel coherently collective, through particular orchestrations of time' (Freeman, 2010, 3). In my queer reading of relationship between the speaker Chaucer and his addressee Adam, the poet and scribe are profoundly 'engrouped' or 'bound to one another' through the socioeconomic and temporal circumstances of physical labor and textual production. The fraught affective 'engroupment' of the scribe-writer and the author-maker that structures this poem becomes all the more complex when once the body of a third participant is granted full entry into the collective: the animal upon whose skin both humans are laboring. It is precisely the persistent physicality of the animal parchment that enables the complex orchestrations of time, labor, and affect in this work, and Chaucer's poem to Adam – and the work's divergent material histories – thwart any tidy model of chrononormativity as a result. The implicit network of embodied relationships encoded even in the literary work's originary moment – a dynamic triangulation of poet, animal parchment, and scribe – effectively 'engroups' human and nonhuman bodies not into any 'coherent collective,' but rather sets them in motion through a series of pliable combinations.

Digital interfaces

In the sections above, I have explored how Chaucer's poem to Adam evinces a queer co-dependency of author and scribe, and my ecological approach to parchment suggests that animal skin does not just passively mediate between two human agents but actively reconfigures the 'engroupment' of participants

into a collective (the embodied network of the author, parchment, and scribe, as a trio of participants interacting over time). In closing this essay, I turn to one more important agent in the extended life of this poem: the reader of the (perpetually re-mediated) text.

The dynamic relationship between the reader and a text – or to put things more pointedly, the queer interplay between the surface of a text and the body of a reader – provides a useful context for considering the role of a technological interface (the relationship between a particular form of media and its users) within a digital environment. As suggested above in my comparison of this text across scholarly publications, ‘Adam Scriveyn’ is subject to transformation each time the work is transmitted. The text of ‘Adam Scriveyn’ moreover enjoys a considerable digital afterlife on any number of Chaucerian and literary websites, literature databases, or subscription-based online resources such as *Early English Books Online (EEBO)* through which one can search for digitized reproductions of early printed books that include this poem among Chaucer’s works (<http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home>). Although all these variants are beyond the scope of this essay, I will discuss how the work of Chaucer and Pynkhurst are situated in collaborative digital projects using as my example *Networks of Book Makers, Owners and Users in Late Medieval England* (<https://hridigital.shef.ac.uk/networks-of-books/>); this project, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation with Estelle Stubbs as Principal Investigator, ‘uses network visualisation to advance knowledge of individuals, institutions and communities in both the medieval and the early modern periods which made and used books’ (Stubbs, 2013). This online database seeks not only to present information about manuscript networks to any visitor who seeks to explore this material; the digital project openly struggles with ways to present manuscripts themselves not merely as inert objects but as things with dynamic agency.

It is precisely the visual interface of the *Networks of Book Makers* website that presents scholarship on late-medieval London bookmaking networks as an interactive resource. As an earlier version of the website’s homepage once stated: ‘This project uses network visualisation to create a dynamic interface linking specific manuscripts with patrons, scribes, owners, places, or organizations’⁶ (Stubbs, 2013). The database allowed the user to search for key terms (such as the names of authors or manuscripts) to discover meaningful relationships among persons, institutions, and manuscripts – with relevant links to scholarship provided (scholarship being defined as peer-reviewed academic works). For instance, a search conducted in July 2015 for ‘Adam Pynkhurst’ (Person) with the filter ‘Manuscripts’ produced a particular diagram (Figure 2); hovering over the central node revealed a bibliographic entry. In this visualization, the relationship between the people and manuscripts are represented in the form of what Manuel Lima identifies as a ‘radiating tree’ model for networked data visualization (Lima, 2014, 122–53). If ‘Adam Pynkhurst’ is the trunk or root of the tree, then all the entities surrounding it branch out from this central core.

6 Now unavailable but accessed in July 2015.

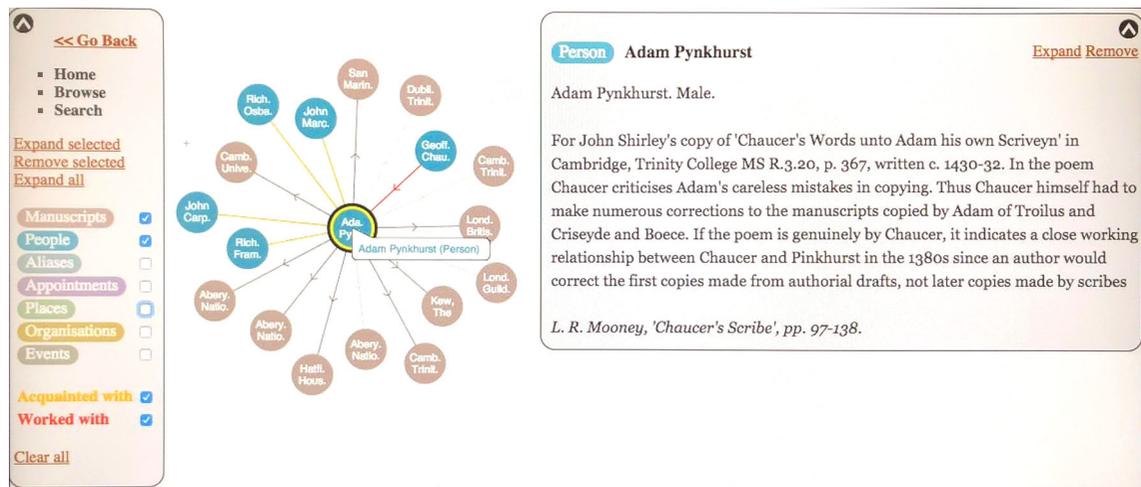


Figure 2: Screenshot of a search for 'Adam Pynkhurst' with 'Manuscripts' filter applied on the interactive online website *Networks of Bookmakers, Users, and Owners, in Late Medieval England*. <https://hrdigital.shef.ac.uk/networks-of-books/> Accessed July 2015.

The central node of 'Adam Pynkhurst' is represented as a root (central node) from which other entities are connected. This graphic structure conforms the 'radial tree' in Manuel Lima's taxonomy of data visualization schemes (Lima, 2014, 122–53).

What does the 'radial tree' visual interface of this network reveal? In their recent work on the long history of data visualization from medieval manuscripts to online networked data visualization, Lima and Mary Franklin-Brown have both noted that a conceptual tree metaphor has long shaped the graphic representation of information, and medieval scholastic writings in particular demonstrate how tree-like modes of representing knowledge can lend an organic quality to theoretical constructs for understanding relations among people or among things (Lima, 2013, 2014; Franklin-Brown, 2012). In a medieval or a modern context, nodes of tree-like diagrams effectively assert the animacy of textual objects in networked environments (embodied and digital). As for the digital realm in particular, the clustered network visualization scheme of the website *Networks of Book Makers, Owners and Users in Late Medieval England* renders humans (such as Chaucer or Pynkhurst) as ontologically equivalent to manuscripts (Ellesmere, Hengwrt, or Cambridge Trinity Manuscript) and nonhuman collective entities (Guildhall Library). A human, a manuscript, and an institutional archive share equal status as co-participants (nodes) in such networked web of agentive relations.

This interactive digital platform can be understood as just one experiment in using an online (digital) interface to thoughtfully reconfigure human/nonhuman

networks of affinity. While the project as a whole ultimately centers humans – and predominantly men – as the historical agents and major participants in late-medieval bookmaking networks, the online data visualization scheme nonetheless asked visitors to entertain interpretive frameworks that not only could decenter men but might also shift the focus away from autonomous human subjects altogether. Such an online interface unwittingly – or mischievously – creates what ecofeminist Stacy Alaimo might call a form of ‘trans-corporeality’ or a ‘mobile space’ of ‘material interconnections of human corporeality with the more-than-human world’ (Alaimo, 2010, 2). In any case, the online interface demonstrates in graphic form what ecotheorist Jane Bennett calls distributive agency, a framework that ‘does not posit a subject as the root cause of an effect’ (Bennett, 2010, 31). It is paradoxically a network visualization generated by placing Adam Pinkhurst at the ‘root’ or central node that vividly exposes the ‘thing-power’ beyond Pynkhurst himself: a quality that Bennett identifies as ‘the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle’ (Bennett, 2010, 6). In this context, the visual interface of re-mediated medieval manuscript data not only sets the stage for new kinds of readings; the visualization also enacts in itself new forms of reading and creates unanticipated constellations of participants in the making of meaning. A digital interface can showcase a homosocial network of labor between men while also suggesting queer relations, a malleable experience of time, and the creation of expansively distributed network environments.

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