Introduction: Reading practices and participation in digital and medieval media

'Where is the moralizynge?' So asked a friend of the early fifteenth-century clerk and writer Thomas Hoccleve when shown a copy of Hoccleve's newly translated poem 'Jereslaus' Wife'. Hoccleve describes this exchange in his long poem *Dialogue*, in which he explains that he had 'endid' the tale a 'wike or two' before his friend visited. Taking up the work, the friend read the poem eagerly, but objected to its ending. After storming home for his copy of Hoccleve's source, the friend returned, book in hand, to regale Hoccleve with the moral. In response, Hoccleve adds it following the end of his poem.[1]

The interaction Hoccleve describes represents one of the under-reported ways in which medieval readers could participate in the development of texts. Hoccleve clearly views his work in translating and composing the tale as finished and complete before his friend confronts him with an alternative view of the work that prompts Hoccleve to add the interlude and the moralizing. He then identifies the moral as an addition for which his friendly reader holds responsibility. His friend's participation alters both the text itself, through the provision of an explicit moral, and Hoccleve's own nascent role as author. This alteration enacted through participation responds to the reader's casual assumption that he possesses authority sufficient to counter Hoccleve's own authority. Neither he nor Hoccleve view the writer as the sole determinant of the work. Instead, his friend asserts authority as a reader to contribute to Hoccleve's work, and the friend's suggestions lead to its modification.

This relationship Hoccleve depicts between a writer who accepts and responds to the authority of a reader occurs at a critical moment in the history of medieval English literature. From the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, expanding literacy among the upwardly mobile mercantile and professional classes

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of England created new audiences desirous of vernacular reading material. At the same time, writers approached composition in Middle English with increasing interest and vigour, exploring the shifting boundaries of their role in the transition from the medieval writer – subordinate to the creativity and influence of the authorities of antiquity – to the modern notion of the author as the sole creator of unique works.

To the culture of late-medieval England that witnessed the rising prominence of poetry, and the growing facility of the English vernacular, both writers and readers contributed in fundamental ways, among which can be included the shaping of their own roles. Although the transition of the medieval writer into the modern author, with a modern author's understanding of authority and creative ownership of a text, has been well studied, the reader plays an often overlooked, albeit central role. For, among the topics to which late-medieval English writers repeatedly turn when considering both their authority and that of their texts, the issue of what readers, not just writers, should do develops as a central concern. This both recognizes the identity of an English reading public, as Katharine Breen has discussed, while building on that recognition to consider what the lay vernacular reader could and might do.[2] Hoccleve's friend did not volunteer this response to Hoccleve's work without context or precedent: Writers in late-medieval England imagine readers as possessing the authority to change the text, turn a page, or move away from a work, all modes of participation, and they established a discourse that emphasized these and other modes of readers' participation. Along with recognizing readers' capabilities, writers also recognize both the potential and the threat offered by this participation to support or undermine writers' own authority. In other words, the attention paid to writerly authority is incomplete without attending to its complement, readerly authority; one cannot understand medieval writers without understanding also medieval readers, their relations to each other, and the profound role played by readers – both through the ways writers anticipated their participation, and as readers effected it. It is this subject of participation that provides the basis for this study, and offers a needed corrective to a view of medieval literature dominated by the role of writers. How was the participation of readers elicited by writers and texts? What readers were invited to participate? And what did their participation achieve for themselves or others?

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The context: reading, participation, and agency

The central subject of this project thus focuses on participation, a concept for which I am indebted to digital media studies. Perhaps because of the autobiographical self-interest of a writer raised in a print-centric culture but currently inhabiting a culture impacted by a new technology of writing and reading technology, I find great interest in studying a culture on the cusp of a parallel, earlier change. Yet beyond the bounds of self-interest, digital media can offer much to those studying media studies, literary culture, and book history in the late Middle Ages. In digital media, participation relates to interaction, which together have been used to emphasize the ground-breaking nature of the digital, initially perceived as setting ‘new’ media aside from ‘old’ media. While that divisive view has since diminished in the current approaches of digital media studies, which recognize greater continuity among historical forms of media, the attention given to participation still proves beneficial for current work. Henry Jenkins, who coined the term ‘participatory culture’, offers a useful distinction between participation and interaction, which might otherwise seem synonymous. Interaction is mediated by tools; clicking a link that takes one from one web page to another constitutes interaction. Participation, in contrast, develops through social relations, casting light upon not simply the technology, but also the culture it shapes and by which it is shaped.[3] To use participation as a concept through which one can scrutinize a literary culture requires evaluating the processes and procedures that condition relations between, for example, medieval readers and writers, who interact through the technology of the manuscript or printed text. Participation thus creates the grounds for studying interactions among the different facets that contribute to medieval literary culture in general: writer–reader relations, the materiality of medieval manuscripts, reading practices, and the book as a technology.

In late-medieval England, developing participatory reading practices often centres around eliciting and guiding readers’ choices. Consequently, the participatory reading practices I focus on can be described as ‘proleptic’ reading, which is determined in advance of the moment of reading.[4] Writers recommend or use their texts to model a variety of practices that seek to elicit, shape, and frame the choices readers might make as they apprehend texts. Focusing on participation as a determining condition of medieval literary expression and interpretation enables a reframing of the

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traditional approaches to studying relationships between writers and readers and texts in medieval literary culture, in which the work and aims of writers occupy the centre frame, and readers are considered secondarily for the evidence they provide supporting assessments of those writers. In attending to participatory reading, it is readers who occupy the central role, and the work of writers supplies the evidence needed to understand perceptions about and constructions of readers' roles and capabilities in late-medieval literary culture.

Attending to the choices medieval readers were encouraged to make – and the choices they then chose to make – thus necessitates considering how writers anticipated that readers might express agency.[5] Agency itself has generated much enthusiasm among critics of digital media. Such critics have viewed digitally mediated interaction and participation as anticipating and instantiating post-structuralist, postmodern theories of the open text. Representing the first wave of new media criticism, George Landow argued that hypertext, for example, 'provides an infinitely recenterable system whose provisional point of focus depends upon the reader, who becomes a truly active reader' by choosing the order in which to link together sections of a hypermedia work.[6] In contrast, the experience of reading a novel or other traditional print text was perceived as supporting 'passive' reading, which conveyed readers from beginning to end of a work without necessitating their input.[7] Criticism that partook of this and similar views thus often supported anxieties about the book, and even touted its demise.[8]

Yet such discourse has not gone unchallenged. Scholars of digital media have since resisted the liberatory and excessively democratizing rhetoric of earlier criticism to argue that digital media in many cases perpetuates, if not increases, restrictions on interactors.[9] Considering such, Henning Ziegler highlights how digital media creates these restrictions through the very mechanism that had previously been lauded as the hallmark of digital media's liberation from the passivity and fixity of print: the hyperlink. Ziegler explains that 'The link necessarily partakes in a hegemonic framework that actually highlights the limits of choice rather than its possibilities.'[10] Ziegler emphasizes that, by creating coded links within a work of hypermedia, writers and designers restrict the ability of readers to determine extra- or intertextual connections for themselves. In consequence, the choices readers can easily effect are limited to the links presented to them. Ziegler's assessment does not stand alone.

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Critics now argue that digital media can disempower users and provide mechanisms for their restraint. For example, as one critic has observed, '[A]uthors may actually have more control over the work than in conventional fiction, where readers are free to read the end of the story first if they wish'.[11] In the field of popular media, journalist Nicolas Carr turns to print history, and even the culture of medieval manuscripts, to argue that today's digital media negatively affect intelligence and attentiveness.[12] As these and similar comments suggest, examining how participation functions in a particular work or media context can raise awareness of how its accompanying instructions or design can facilitate or restrict agency. These critiques, however, all too often elide use and the discourse and evidence of subsequent use, focusing instead on the technology in acts of technological determinism – suggesting that technology itself controls behaviour.

In contrast, I do not focus exclusively on the manuscript as the technology through which participation emerges. Rather, I examine how the social mediation of participation manifests through late-medieval English reading practices, which may rely on or function independently of manuscript technology. Indeed, many of the practices studied here continue well into the early age of print, and other practices rely on media other than the manuscript, giving rise to what I call – and discuss further in Chapter 3 as – 'extracodexical' texts. What takes centre stage in place of the manuscript and alternative media are the choices enjoined upon and elicited from readers through the activity of reading. I therefore offer an overarching argument about how the modes of participatory reading examined here represent practices elicited for and applied to socially contextualized purposes. As each of the chapters examines a particular practice, whether as modelled in a text, elicited from readers through the guidance of writers, or necessitated by the interpretive demands of texts themselves, I demonstrate how the medieval work of reading is viewed and enacted through readers' participatory work. In other words, I use connections between digital and medieval media to illuminate constructions of readers and reading practices; in so doing, I explore their contributory role in shaping late-medieval literary culture.

Medieval media, digital media, and book history

Tracing the affinities between participation in digital and medieval literary cultures situates the medieval as participating in the long

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history of media forms and practices. This project is not the only to have broken ground in exploring the relevance of the digital to the medieval; engaging with digital media criticism and theory has gained standing in recent years as scholars identify productive ways to initiate these cross-temporal studies. Martin Foys's *Virtually Anglo-Saxon* represents an early, influential pathbreaker that demonstrated how digital media might contrast usefully with medieval media in ways that demonstrated the historical specificity of each period's media. Focusing on one particular genre of digital and print media, the multi-threaded narrative, Andrew Higl explored how this genre might illuminate readers' ludic engagement with early manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*. With a similarly tight focus, Seeta Chaganti analysed virtuality in the medieval *danse macabre*. Chaganti argues that dance provided a metaphor for interpretation that evokes virtual reality in response to a single poem. These and *Participatory reading in late-medieval England* demonstrate that perspectives offered by interdisciplinary engagement with digital media studies continue to offer medieval studies productive ways of rethinking our assumptions about medieval literature and culture.

In particular, examining participation in late-medieval literary culture through the perspectives offered by digital media criticism and theory facilitates identification and evaluation of the processes and procedures that shaped how readers engaged with works, interpreted texts, thought of authors, and practised reading. Indeed, focusing on participation in late-medieval English literary culture reveals how commonly writers turn to participation as a mode of reading in order to envision possibilities for interaction among themselves, their texts, and their readers, and both facilitate as well as constrain those possibilities in order to try achieving ones viewed as desirable. This historical moment illuminates a period that categorically differs from that of previous periods in which vernacular, lay readers' participation is an occasional act, not a sustained focus of attention. Furthermore, how writers treat readers from the fourteenth to early sixteenth centuries anticipates and relates to many similar concerns in later literature, particularly in the current digital era. Consequently, the way that late-medieval writers anticipate, depict, model, and shape reader participation demonstrates a developing understanding of readers as participants, and a growing reliance upon and expectation of their participation – in other words, a literary culture focused on ways to make readers work.

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Analysing the role of reader participation in late-medieval English literary culture consequently provides an opportunity to inform the history of books and reading with the approaches of contemporary digital media theory and criticism. As the critic Thomas Pettitt has suggested when arguing for the idea of a 'Gutenberg Parenthesis', in which pre- and post-print media share more in common with each other than either does with print media, medieval literature and modern digital culture intersect in a variety of ways. As I trace these historical intersections of medieval and digital media studies through participatory practices, I show how experiences now perceived as characteristic of digital media, such as open emendation, nonlinear apprehension, and immersion, offer parallels to practices that emerge in the context of medieval reading.

To help provide a framework through which to identify and assess these practices, I thus turn to digital media criticism, in which studies of the 'new literacies' required by digital media have flourished. Reading has come under scrutiny in digital media studies partly because the remediation of texts into digital formats, along with the new possibilities for design and artistry in digital media, have led to questioning the nature of the reading experiences such works prompt. For example, in the iPad work *Pry*, whose creators identify it as both a novella and a 'book without borders', how much does the experience of apprehending it resemble reading when the work required involves not only comprehension of text, image, and video, but also manipulation of the screen via using one's fingers to 'pry' open the eyes of the paralysed main character?[13] To help distinguish how digital media constitute and facilitate reading, one model of reading applied to digital media proposes distinguishing among three different, but overlapping acts: manipulation (the processes of handling a text), comprehension (understanding a work), and interpretation (the relationship between the text and the context, such as other texts, the reader applies to its explanation).[14] As the term 'manipulation' suggests, critics view this reading act in relation to physical engagement with a text, whether in digital or print form; such an approach needs modification for the literacy conditions of the late Middle Ages, in which reading might not require physically engaging with a text. I refer to this task more generally as apprehension, which involves processes that can include but are not restricted to manipulation.

This methodology thus positions *Participatory reading in late-medieval England* as drawing on three disciplinary modes of

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investigation and analysis: book and reading history, manuscript studies, and digital media studies, to offer an argument situated within the inquiries of cultural studies. The consequences of my methodology have further bearing on how readers and critics of medieval and media culture can engage with connections between historically distant moments and works. As Eileen Joy and Myra Seaman say of studies that read the past through the present, such approaches 'reveal mentalities and social customs that persist over long durations of time, as well as certain sensual particularities unique to their respective times of production and reception'.[15] The digital and the medieval may here be separated by more than five hundred years, but the uniqueness of one period can help identify and extend our understanding of the uniqueness of another. Examining these persistent analogues is not to treat them as simple parallels surprisingly shared by two cultures. Instead, these resonances between media practices today and in the late Middle Ages become points of departure for exploring participatory reading practices within a specific historical environment: that of England from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, during which period writers from Chaucer to Caxton and beyond consider what it means to be a reader in ways that centre around eliciting participation, guiding it, and discouraging it. Furthermore, my approach casts light on how the reading practices that shaped late-medieval literary culture are not isolated, even as it emphasizes that the uniqueness of digital media does not rely on its newness. Here, practices in use before the 'Gutenberg Parenthesis' not only chip away at the opening parenthesis, but reappear after its closure – their guises changed, their meanings and applications specific to their own moments, but nevertheless in and inviting dialogue. Assessing medieval reading practices through the language and criticism of digital media accomplishes more than shedding light on medieval writer–reader relations; it also suggests that the print period that defines so much about our views on writers and readers is in many ways an anomaly, and that the medieval and the digital share an interest in exploring texts in a literary culture not guided by property relationships, but by community and knowledge.

Participatory reading in late-medieval England

In this context of the relationship between reading and changes in media culture, participation not only offers a discourse and procedures to shape relations between writers, readers, and texts,

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but also becomes a framework used by writers to explore the developing authority of themselves and their texts, and the limits of this authority when contrasted to that of readers, thus casting light upon the literary culture of late-medieval England. Such concerns were vital in the context of the rapid expansion of lay literacy that characterizes England from the late fourteenth through early sixteenth centuries. As has become a critical commonplace to note, assessment of literacy proves a slippery issue, in part because literate practice in the Middle Ages involved skills that did not necessarily require an individual ability to read. Rebecca Krug thus advocates for the term 'literate practice', which acknowledges how literacy among vernacular readers in late-medieval England could encompass a range of skills.[16] Offering a useful way to frame the various skills that could be involved in literate practice, Paul Saenger distinguishes between 'phonetic literacy' and 'comprehension literacy', where phonetic literacy marks a reader able to sound out words and pronounce them orally, whether in English or through that mainstay of the popular medieval book trade, the Latin book of hours. Comprehension literacy involves gazing upon a written text and apprehending it silently and fully.[17] Estimates of literacy consequently vary. Conservative estimates suggest perhaps as little as 5 per cent of the overall population could read, but in urban locations perhaps as much as 50 per cent of the male population could read English. This expansion was concentrated among the mercantile, gentry, and noble classes for whom literacy and literary engagement marked opportunities for developing social prestige. Late-medieval England represents a period and place characterized by developments in literate skills that are concentrated in urban locales and expand down the social scale.[18]

In consequence of these changes, the growing audience of vernacular readers in this period evidences eagerness for new works, and eagerness for instruction, while not sharing in the formal training and sophisticated Latinate practices writers themselves possessed. At the same time, writers were becoming increasingly aware of and interested in their own authority and ownership of their literary work. This increased interest in writers' authority marks the transition from the early medieval notion of a writer who copies and reworks the ideas of ancient authorities to the modern notion of an author who bears the authority and responsibility of original, creative production.[19] Yet writers did not define themselves solely in contrast to ancient authorities and other writers. Readers, too, played a vital role. They could support or upset a writer's plans for

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his text and, by extension, his reputation; readers could also read in ways that supported beneficial interpretations of a text, or not read in such a productive way. Thus readers were, in their actions and in their potential, figures whose status provoked the ongoing interest and concern of writers. Readers presented the potential for productive partnership with writers through their participatory engagement with texts even as they simultaneously proffered the possibility of disruptive work. By distinguishing themselves from readers, and by exerting control over them, writers both emphasized their own authority and promoted a particular ideology of readerly identity and readerly work as complementary to that of writers, but separate and subordinate. Accordingly, writers in late-medieval England, in order to maintain and develop their own status and engage readers in their projects, focus on how readers can help and hinder through participatory reading practices. What becomes particularly clear in assessing reader participation in England from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries is that the changing status of writers is accompanied by developments in the role of readers in vernacular literary culture.

Reading practices thus emerge as crucial to the definitional strategies of readers, writers, and their relationships. While the reading practices discussed herein are seldom new to Latin-literate writers, and are often drawn from Latinate scholastic traditions, they are frequently presented to readers treated as unaware of them and in need of education in sophisticated reading practice. These readers occupy a variety of categories, among which approaches to the assessment of reading practices in medieval studies have long focused on distinguishing. Such distinctions have helped draw attention to overlooked communities, such as those of women readers, or have addressed the differences in skill levels between scribes, considered to be professional readers, and the general untrained layperson, considered to be an amateur reader.[20] Other approaches have attended to evidence for the occurrence of reading, as, for example, through marginal annotations or in the layout of a manuscript.[21] Some of the most specific work on reading practices emerges in studies of devotional reading.[22] These latter studies tend to address the experience of reading in particular genres, examining reading for its devotional affect or performative qualities.[23] Yet space remains in which to push consideration of reading further by examining the specific reading processes through which writers urged readers to make meaning of their works and, in the process, shed light on the role made for readers in

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late-medieval vernacular culture. Further assessment of reading in these directions is needful particularly because studies of medieval reading often focus on the goal of the reading experience, or the literary genre that forms reading matter; the former can result in mistaking the goal for the process, and the latter can overlook how the same reading practice can be applied or elicited across genres. Focusing on reading through the practice of participation helps illuminate the variety of processes that supported apprehension, as participation itself requires making readers work. Attending to the participatory practices of reading apprehension in late-medieval England also helps distinguish the different modes of reading that contributed in the period to intensive reading, which historians of reading view as characteristic of reading work before the end of the eighteenth century.[24]

In order to both sketch the outlines of the discourse and practices of participatory reading, I focus on a wide, eclectic range of texts that often circulated independently of each other, and whose authors were seldom responding to one another. While in some cases a writer's response to an earlier writer's treatment of a participatory reading practice comes into focus, in most the writers and texts studied herein circulated among different audiences whose common, defining characteristic is their choice of vernacular reading material. In this way, I show how the practices identified and studied herein were not the purview of a small group of writers or their coterie readers, but instead develop, contribute to, and reflect a widespread engagement with participatory reading practices.

The first section of the book, 'Participatory discourse', examines two reading practices writers used explicitly to invite readers' participation, and details the characteristics and work of readers as constructed through these reading practices. These practices were used by influential writers including Chaucer and Langland, although neither established the practices, which are employed by writers across a variety of genres, secular and religious. Highlighting this widespread use of such practices facilitates recognition of how participatory reading became a prevalent, systematic practice. In this way, participatory reading practices shaped readers' identities and their relations with writers and texts. The second section of the book, 'Evoking participation', reviews texts that elicited particular participatory reading practices not reliant upon explicit descriptions or invitations. Examining the strategies for eliciting participation demonstrates how participatory reading became so

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ingrained and expected in late-medieval literary culture that it need not be addressed explicitly, but could nevertheless structure readers' behaviour and textual interpretations.

Through exploring the shift from invited to elicited participation, two themes emerge throughout *Participatory reading in late-medieval England*: one focused on materiality and the other focused on the body of the reader. Materiality emerges through corrective and nonlinear reading practices, which in different ways involve interaction with the book as material object. Material engagement becomes a way of framing the experience of immersive reading, which also relies on the materiality not simply of objects, but also on the materiality of the reader's body. In addressing how participatory practices engage the material body of the reader, I show how participatory reading practices evidence a late-medieval awareness of the significance of bodily experience to the work of reading. In other words, studying the participatory work of reading involves assessing how reading was understood as a bodily, embodied activity. Embodiment becomes manifest in reading practice through the mobility of readers in architectural space, through the practice of immersion that led readers to situate themselves as if physically embodied in narratives, and to other reading experiences that rely upon bodily experience and perception. This approach thus expands the understanding of not only the range of medieval participatory reading experiences, but also the roles of medieval multimedia texts.

In Chapter 1, 'Corrective reading', I focus on invitations issued to readers by writers who describe a reading practice focused on the process of emendation. Emendation invitations emerge in conjunction with a popular topos of humility, in which the writer expresses insecurity regarding the text. Writers in late-medieval England often add an additional, overlooked feature to the topos: they invite readers to correct the text as they read. This practice of corrective reading relies on a characteristic shared by medieval manuscripts as well as much digital media: that of accessibility to correction. A reader able to write and in possession of a pen and ink might effect changes with almost as much ease as that of a modern reader who can, with only a few clicks of a mouse, add to, edit, or remove passages in a Wikipedia article. In digital media studies, this accessibility to reader intervention is termed 'openness'. Medieval writers, in their recommendation of corrective reading, reflect a similar awareness of the openness of the material form of manuscripts. Whereas readers' marginal contributions have

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conventionally been studied as individual actions following the act of reading within a specific manuscript, this chapter demonstrates that writers were deeply engaged in shaping the practice of readers' corrections, seeking to guide how and to what readers responded before readers ever set pen to parchment.

In tracing the boundaries of emendation invitations, Chapter 1 tightens focus on one of the much-studied moments of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* that arrive near the poem's final lines, when Chaucer dedicates the text to his colleagues Gower and Strode, granting them the authority, where 'ther need is, to correcte' the text.[25] Chaucer presents a model that, viewed through the perspective of today's digital media approaches to crowd-sourced editing, is defined as closed-access, for he restricts permission to change a text only to a select few. Chaucer's most prolific and ardent follower, John Lydgate, develops a dramatically different approach in his response to *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Troy book*. There, Lydgate creates an open-access model of editing when he invites 'alle þat schal it rede or se' to correct his work.[26] More than five hundred years ago, Lydgate recognizes the potential seen today in developing open-access relationships with readers through digital media, and turns to this potential to engage with his readers, shape his reputation, and contribute to the transmission of his text.

In effect, Chaucer articulates a closed-access mode of emendation, while Lydgate emphasizes an open-access model characterized by invited correction. Through their disparate attitudes towards error, Chaucer and Lydgate demonstrate their perceptions about the role of readers as participants in textual correction after the release and dissemination of their texts, and use corrective reading practice as a means by which to shape the responses of the readers that they anticipated would engage with their texts. In these ways, addressing corrective reading becomes a dominant method for guiding readers' interaction with and contribution to English literary culture. The resistance to such participatory reading displayed by writers like Chaucer also points to the tension developing in response to the increasing ability of readers to exert their own authority over a text. Consequently, corrective reading becomes a practice inflected by contemporary concerns about readers' authority, the gender of readers, censorship, and the developing technology of print in ways that reveal reading as a contested practice.

Chapter 2 attends to the practice of nonlinear reading, which has long been viewed as a defining feature of digital media. Through

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the use of links and the juxtaposition of disparate forms of media on the same page, hypertext and hypermedia works have been celebrated for enabling and making widespread a reading practice defined as selective, discontinuous, nonlinear. Through this way of mediating text, readers choose where to begin and end their reading. This selective approach to reading is facilitated by links that enable readers to read nonlinearly among other pages or nodes of text in whatever order they choose. They are not simply bound to read linearly from start to finish. Depicting a similar interest in nonlinear reading practice, Middle English devotional texts written in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries often explicitly recommend this practice to their audiences. Yet, although most commonly articulated in devotional works, evidence for nonlinear reading and nonlinear narrative structures can be identified in secular works as well. Strikingly different, however, are the purposes critics treat as served by nonlinearity in digital media when compared to the purposes medieval writers viewed as facilitated by nonlinear reading: today's nonlinearity is viewed as facilitating a speedy, 'hyper' practice of shallow engagement, while medieval nonlinear reading was recommended as a way to encourage deeper, more intense focus on a work or a passage. Contrasting these two perspectives on nonlinear reading points to the culturally determined consequences of reading.

To explore how writers engaged with or promoted nonlinear reading, Chapter 2 examines three texts that represent different modes of nonlinear reading: the *Orcherd of Syon* invites female readers to determine their own nonlinear reading pathways that they might customize their devotional experience, introducing the issue of how reading can facilitate or control readers' agency; in doing so, the translator of the *Orcherd* draws on metaphors of mobility, the body, and time that become central to the subsequent participatory reading practices described in the following chapters. In contrast to the *Orcherd* stand *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Thebes*. The former models nonlinear reading for its audience through the assemblage of a poetic text from diverse sources, demonstrating how a writer might seek to recreate the experience of nonlinear reading for an audience apprehending a linear text; and John Lydgate's sequel to the *Canterbury Tales*, the *Siege of Thebes*, invites a hybridized approach to nonlinear reading, both guiding readers and eliciting readers' own choices, much as does the *Canterbury Tales*. These texts reveal how medieval writers viewed nonlinear reading as a practice crucial to facilitating partici-

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pation in literary culture across the divide of secular and devotional works. In addition, considering manuscripts of *Titus and Vespasian* and the *Siege of Thebes* reveals the complex material politics of nonlinearity, in which writers' aims could be supported or undermined by scribal choices of layout beyond the writers' control.

Even as increasing scholarly attention has been devoted to the significance of the material nature of medieval manuscripts, attention has only begun to focus on how the materiality of a text affects readers' apprehension of it. John Lydgate's 'Soteltes for the coronation banquet of Henry VI' represents one of these texts that gestures to one of the alternative material contexts favoured by late-medieval writers, for the 'Soteltes' text, extant in multiple surviving manuscript copies, offers a series of stanzas that accompanied, described, and spoke on behalf of figurative dishes presented at the 1429 coronation feast. Movement, initially discussed in Chapter 2 as a metaphor for nonlinear textual navigation, returns here in Chapter 3 with a difference: in the case of the 'Soteltes', it is the physical mobility of the text that contributes to one mode of its apprehension, alongside the visual, aural, textual, gestural, and performative. This chapter thus shows interaction among multiple participatory reading practices, a subject that returns again in subsequent chapters. Through their reliance upon movement and, in anticipation of Chapter 4, space, texts like the 'Soteltes' demonstrate how different aspects of materiality affect and give rise to distinct participatory reading practices. Furthermore, in the identity of the 'Soteltes' as banqueting texts, they can be situated along with texts represented on wall hangings, vases, plates, and decorative boxes. These represent a little-studied category of medieval textual media that I refer to as 'extracodexical'. Extracodexical texts present a challenge to literary critics and manuscript scholars, for they gesture to the commingling of different modes of apprehension predicated upon the material conditions of a text. These materialities could incorporate elements of the visual, physical, aural, and gestural. Such multiple modes of apprehension point to the role of performative materiality, an approach that has been applied to how digital media manifest meaning through participation. In the case of the 'Soteltes', as the audience at the coronation banquet witnessed the performance of the 'Soteltes' from their seats, the figurative dishes themselves were ceremoniously ushered into the hall and moved into the sight of all. Space, place, movement, image, and text work with and through readers to shape recognition of the new king's authority. In such cases,

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then, reading can be understood as an act that requires not simply participation through the apprehension of a textual message either visually or aurally – the most basic understanding of medieval literacy – but as an act that requires familiarity with other, material modes of meaning-making, all deliberately selected, as well.

Reading was not only an experience that could occur as audiences sat reading a text, or metaphorically navigated a text described as a garden. Participatory reading could also be enacted through the efforts of a reader who negotiated architectural spaces. Exploration of the moving body in medieval textuality, then, invites consideration of what happens to that body as it negotiates architectural space to engage in specific reading experiences. In Chapter 4, I examine how texts painted onto walls in the Percy family's principal estates of Leconfield and Wressle, preserved in the British Library manuscript Royal 18 D.ii, and in the mural of the *danse macabre* installed in a cloister at medieval St Paul's Cathedral in London, invite consideration of the relationship between architecture, text, and image within and without the manuscript space. By turning to digital media theorists focusing on space, particularly those addressing architecture and embodied space, I argue in this chapter that the wall texts in their architectural frames elicit participation from readers whose bodies become the framers of knowledge as they move through and read the different estate spaces provided with wall texts. This chapter further argues that, by describing the original locations of the texts, the Percy family manuscript Royal 18 D.ii, and John Stow's manuscript containing Lydgate's text of the *daunce macabre*, Trinity College, Cambridge R.3.21, create opportunities for the virtual tourism of a fabricated space. In this way, Chapter 4 shows how the presentation of the wall texts evokes virtual space that the reader can then negotiate. In addition, the two wall texts in their manuscript and architectural contexts produce a tension between lived and virtual space that invites readers to engage in types of mental pilgrimage. Finally, forging a link between the manuscript as enabling virtual travel and the body of the reader who negotiates that space shows how mobility as part of reading experiences alters and extends the reach of the human body, a turn to the medieval posthuman.[27]

Given that the 'best-seller of the Middle Ages' was the book of hours, a devotional text whose reading was determined by calendars, clocks, and church hours, it is a striking oversight that little attention has been paid by medievalists to the relationship between time and reading, even as late antique and medieval thinkers like

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Augustine have themselves considered the subject. Books of hours were not alone in situating reading within a temporal frame: medieval writers advocating nonlinear reading also refer to the relationship between time and reading. For these writers, temporal choices made by readers determined interpretation. Returning to digital media criticism about the relationship between time and agency in video games, and developing further the metaphorical relationship between reading and time first introduced in Chapter 2 as it becomes reading practice, Chapter 5 explores the significance of time to reading experiences. Time and temporal participation develop markedly in three fifteenth-century texts that encourage readers to make temporal choices as part of their reading experiences: *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy*, a prophetic text focused on the relationship between Thomas Rhymer and the Queen of Faerie; Dame Eleanor Hull's *Commentary on the penitential Psalms*; and Thomas Norton's *Ordinal of alchemy*. In the way these writers and texts invite readers to make temporal choices and interpretations through the reading process, they encourage readers to perform reading shaped by temporality. Such temporal performativity includes inviting readers to rethink relationships created by the chronology of history by moving nonlinearly through time. Indeed, *Thomas of Erceldoune's prophecy* provokes readers to reorganize chronologies, with the effect that readers craft individual narratives of past and future. Hull and Norton focus on modes of temporal manipulation, engaging readers in choices that affect their temporalized experiences of reading. These texts encourage readers to shape their understanding of personal history, political history, and the future of the political or spiritual self through temporally mediated reading. In this way, specific perceptual views of time emerge from individual acts of reading. Reading becomes an experience shaped by temporalities, and the mode in which one reads evokes a particular performative relationship to time.

The conclusion of *Participatory reading in late-medieval England* introduces the topic of resistance to reading and the relationship between the refusal to read and the participatory reading practices discussed in previous chapters. As writers struggled to both solicit and guide readers' exercise of agency through reading practices, they also reflect ongoing concerns that what readers could do might easily escape the boundaries writers sought to establish. One practice that reflects how readers might act in ways that not only countered writers' attempts to guide reception and interpretation of texts is through what Leah Price calls 'nonreading'. When the

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Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* takes up a book of wicked wives with which to beat her husband Jankyn over the head, her use of the manuscript illustrates a moment in which, instead of turning to the book for its designed role, the Wife repurposes it into a weapon. In the Wife's moment of nonreading, the book has become 'more valuable for some other purpose',[28] and that new value places it into a fresh network of social relations. Other examples of nonreading that attend to the material nature of texts include readers' signatures and doodles, where the book becomes useful in ways that have little to do with their textual contents. Considering the role of nonreading through the lens of digitally inspired object-oriented theory that focuses on assemblages and relations within networks, this chapter argues that, when letters or books are more valuable for nonreading, their meanings, and the ways in which readers participate with them, change. This change affects books even in moments of reading, for it highlights their ever-present potential to act and be used in ways contrary to how writers might want them to work. Analysing the role of nonreading through its literary instantiations in scenes like that from the Wife of Bath's Prologue, and in manuscripts where readers draw or inscribe their names, extends the argument of *Participatory reading in late-medieval England* to encompass acts of participation that resist and critique modes of participatory reading like those studied in previous chapters. In this way, I demonstrate how nonreading could shift books into alternative networks, and highlights how medieval readers could take charge and make books and reading work for themselves.

In arguing for recognition of the emergence and dissemination of a wide range of participatory, vernacular reading practices throughout *Participatory reading in late-medieval England*, I also show how these participatory reading practices enhanced tension between writers and readers. Such tension reveals an overlooked aspect to late-medieval literary culture of which I trace the importance: just as tensions surface in the developing notion of authorship, so too do they emerge around the practice of participatory reading. Reading involves culturally constructed practices; in a changing literary culture, what reading entails undergoes change and changed meaning. The growing tension between writers and readers thus requires revising accepted perceptions of the roles of the writer and reader, along with reading practices. I thus argue that the writer was not perceived as an unchallenged authority, nor were the readers' contributions limited to marginal additions.

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Instead, I show that the boundary between writing and reading is less stable, that writers explored what readers might be to them by anticipating readers' enthusiasm for textual participation, and viewed readers as possessing a growing authority to contribute in sophisticated ways to late-medieval English literary culture. I thus cast new light on the literary practices of a period pre- and post-print to demonstrate how participatory reading vitally contributed to and shaped these negotiations of fragile authority. Finally, I end by revealing how readers resisted and critiqued participatory reading practices in ways that allowed readers, not writers, to set the agenda for their reading experiences.

Notes

1 For the full interlude, see 'Jereslaus's wife' in the *Dialogue*, from *Hoccleve's works: the minor poems*, ed. Frederick Furnivall and I. Gollancz. Early English Text Society Extra Series Nos. 61 and 73. Revised by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 174–8.

2 Katherine Breen, *Imagining an English reading public, 1150–1400* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

3 Jenkins's work has profoundly influenced the study of the social cultures and uses of digital media; see Henry Jenkins, *Convergence culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Joshua Green and Henry Jenkins, 'The moral economy of Web 2.0: Audience research and convergence culture'. *Media industries: history, theory, and method*, ed. Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 213–25; Henry Jenkins, 'What happened before YouTube'. *YouTube*, ed. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 109–25; Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable media: creating value and meaning in a networked culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

4 Daniel Wakelin, 'Instructing readers in fifteenth-century manuscripts.' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73:3 (September 2010), 453–52, at 433–4.

5 In the seminal and still-influential discussion of agency offered in *Hamlet on the holodeck: the future of narrative in cyberspace* (New York: Free Press, 1997), Janet Murray defines agency through participation as 'the satisfying power to take meaningful actions and see the results of our decisions and choices' (126). This view of agency represents it partly as an aesthetic experience (it can be 'satisfying') and as linked to meaning, in which a person's intentional decisions and choices determine their relationship to, and understanding of, a work.

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6 George Landow, *Hypertext 3.0: critical theory and new media in an era of globalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 56.
7 Some scholars have even taken the increase in annotations appearing in early modern print books as encouraging passive readers, though William Sherman cautions against this view: *Used books: marking readers in renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), xi, 5, 45.
8 See Robert Coover, 'The end of books', in *The New York Times book review* (June 21, 1992), 11, 23–5; Astrid Ensslin and Alice Bell, 'New perspectives on digital literature: criticism and analysis', *dichtung-digital* no. 37 (2007) at www.brown.edu/Research/dichtung-digital/editorial/2007.htm; Ray Kurzweil, 'The future of libraries, part 2: the end of books', *Library journal* (February 15, 1992), 140–1; and Priscilla Coit Murphy, 'Books are dead, long live books', in *Rethinking media change*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 81–94.
9 For an introductory discussion to the use of interactivity to exert control over readers, see Andrew Dewdney and Peter Ride, *The digital media handbook*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2014), 263–76.
10 Henning Ziegler, 'When hypertext became uncool: notes on power, politics, and the interface', *dichtung-digital*, no. 27 (2003) at www.brown.edu/Research/dichtung-digital/2003/issue/1/ziegler/index.htm.
11 Jill Walker Rettberg, 'Feral hypertext: when hypertext literature escapes control', *The international handbook of internet research*, ed. by Jeremy Hunsinger, Lisbeth Klastrup, and Matthew Allen (Dordrecht and London: Springer Verlag, 2010), 477–93, at 487.
12 Nicholas Carr, *The shallows: what the internet is doing to our brains* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011).
13 For an introduction to *Pry*, including demo videos, review http://prynovella.com.
14 See Ray Siemens *et al.*, 'Human–computer interface/interaction and the book: a consultation-derived perspective on foundational e-book research', in *Collaborative research in the digital humanities*, ed. Marilyn Deegan and Willard McCarty (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012), 163–90; Bertrand Gervais, 'Is there a text on this screen? reading in an era of hypertextuality', *A companion to digital literary studies*, ed. Susan Schreibman and Ray Siemens (Oxford: Blackwell, 2013), 183–202. This conceptualization of reading activities builds on the work of Gilles Thérien, *Sémiologies* (Montreal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 1985).
15 Eileen A. Joy and Myra J. Seaman, 'Through a glass, darkly: medieval cultural studies at the end of history', in *Cultural studies of the modern Middle Ages*, ed. Eileen A. Joy, Myra J. Seaman, Kimberly K. Bell, and Mary K. Ramsey (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 1–22. Relatedly,

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see also *Truth and tales: cultural mobility and medieval media*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2015).

16 Rebecca Krug, *Reading families: women's literate practice in late medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 7; and Sharon D. Michalove, 'The education of aristocratic women in fifteenth-century England', *Estrangement, enterprise and education in fifteenth-century England*, ed. Sharon D. Michalove and A. Compton Reeves (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), 117–39, who notes that elite women did not need to learn how to write because they had access to scribes who could write for them.

17 Paul Saenger, 'Books of Hours and the reading habits of the later Middle Ages', *The culture of print: power and the uses of print in early modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 141–73.

18 For particular discussions and summaries of the work on literacy rates in late-medieval England, see Susan Crane, 'The writing lesson of 1381', *Chaucer's England: literature in historical context*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 201–23, at 202; Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festial: Orthodoxy, Lollardy and the common people in fourteenth-century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 26–8.

19 Alastair Minnis remains the authority on this subject; see *Medieval theory of authorship: scholastic literary attitudes in the later Middle Ages*. 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010). For related studies on the rise of the vernacular in late-medieval England, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne *et al.*, *Idea of the vernacular: an anthology of Middle English literary theory, 1280–1520* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), as an accessible overview; see also the essay collections edited by Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, *The vulgar tongue: medieval and postmedieval vernacularity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), and Elisabeth Salter and Helen Wicker, *Vernacularity in England and Wales, c. 1300–1500* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2011).

20 Studies particularly influential in these ways include Krug, *Reading families*; Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Denise L. Despres, *Iconography and the professional reader: The politics of book production in the Douce* Piers Plowman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

21 For exemplary studies of this nature, see Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *ibid.*; Jane Griffiths, *Diverting authorities: experimental glossing in manuscript and print* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); C. David Benson and Barry A. Windeatt, 'The manuscript glosses to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Chaucer Review* 25.1 (1990), 33–53; Julia Boffey, 'Annotation in some manuscripts of *Troilus and Criseyde*', *English Manuscript Studies* 5 (1995), 1–17; Ralph Hanna III and A.S.G. Edwards, 'Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer', in *Reading from the margins*, ed. Seth Lerer (San Marino: Huntington

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Library, 1996), 11–35; and Ryan Perry, '"some sprytuall matter of gostly edyfycacion": Readers and readings of Nicholas Love's "Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ"', in *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran lives of Christ*, ed. Ian Johnson and Allan F. Westphall (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 79–126.

22 Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the wilderness: private devotion and public performance in late medieval England* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Jennifer Bryan, *Looking inward: devotional reading and the private self in late medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

23 See Brantley, *Reading in the wilderness*, and Robert L. A. Clark and Pamela Sheingorn, 'Performative reading: experiencing through the poet's body in Guillaume de Digulleville's Pelerinage de Jhesucrist', in *Cultural performances in medieval France: essays in honor of Nancy Freeman Regalado*, ed. Eglal Doss-Quinby, Roberta L. Krueger, and E. Jane Burns (Rochester: Brewer, 2007), 135–51; also Robert L. A. Clark and Pamela Sheingorn, 'Performative reading: The illustrated manuscripts of Arnoul Greban's Mystere de la Passion', *European medieval drama* 6 (2002), 129–54; and Robert L. A. Clark and Pamela Sheingorn, '"Visible words": gesture and performance in the miniatures of BNF, MS FR. 819–20', in *Parisian confraternity drama of the fourteenth century: the Miracles de Nostre Dame par personages*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox, Medieval texts and cultures of Northern Europe 22 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 193–217.

24 The distinction between intensive and extensive reading, which is characterized by frequent and wide-ranging access to a great number of books, as opposed to focused concentration applied to a small number, was developed by a seminal historian of the book, Rolf Engelsing, and is best summarized in his influential article, 'Die Perioden der Lesergeschicte in der Neuzeit' (The phases of reading in the modern age), in *Zur Sozialgeschicte deutscher Mittel-und Untershicten* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1973), 112–54. David Hall has shown a similar difference in kinds of reading at play in early modern New England; see 'The uses of literacy in New England, 1600–1850', in David Hall, *Cultures of print: essays in the history of the book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 36–78. Scholars have critiqued Engelsing's work, however, on several grounds.

25 Quoted from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. Ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

26 Cited from line 379ff. of *Troy book*, ed. by Henry Bergen, EETS e.s. 97, 103, 106, 126 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Trübner & Co., 1906–35).

27 For a key work on posthumanism, see Andy Clark, *Natural-born cyborgs: minds, technologies, and the future of human intelligence* (New

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York: Oxford University Press, 2003), at 138–9. Other influential contributions to the exploration of the posthuman include N. Katherine Hayles's *How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature, and informatics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Donna Haraway, 'A cyborg manifesto: science, technology, and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century', *Simians, cyborgs, and women: the reinvention of nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–81. In medieval studies, see particularly the inaugural issue of the journal *postmedieval* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), *When did we become post/human?*, edited by Eileen Joy and Craig Dionne. In a related argument, Cohen in *Medieval identity machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003) argues for understanding Margery Kempe's position as posthuman through her use of language. To this I would add that, in Cohen's terms, reading practices themselves function as identity machines.

28 Leah Price, *How to do things with books in Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Princeton University Press, 2012), 8.

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