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Corrective reading: Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and John Lydgate's *Troy Book*

This chapter focuses on a trope, one so common in medieval English literature that its critical work in the construction of late-medieval reading practices has gone unnoticed. This rhetorical device, often simply referred to as the humility topos, flourishes in Middle English during the fifteenth century, although it has its roots in fourteenth-century French of England and was common in Latin hagiographies before that.[1] In the humility topos, a writer draws attention to the spectre of his or his work's flaws in order to elicit a kinder reception by readers.[2] It is a trope used by two of the three most influential poets of late-medieval England, Geoffrey Chaucer and his successor John Lydgate, and is turned to repeatedly by the merchant and translator who first introduced the printing press to England, William Caxton. In the hands of all three, and in its use by scores of other writers from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries, the topos accomplishes work that extends beyond the performance of humility and its consonant structuring of writerly authority. It does so through an additional feature in which writers anticipate readers' responses to the flaws of a work and, most significantly, request that readers correct them. For example, as the fifteenth-century poet John Lydgate writes in *The Fall of princes*, he 'requeyr[es] of humbles / That all thoo which shal this makyng rede, / For to correcte wher-as they se nede', that is, he humbly requires all those who read his poem to correct it wherever they see need.[3] I call this feature of the humility topos the 'emendation invitation', and it serves to promote – or discourage, in the variations of the discourse it establishes – 'corrective reading'. For its expansive late-medieval deployment by writers, corrective reading elicited through emendation invitations deserves closer scrutiny. In particular, its reliance on participation positions emendation as crucial to understanding how late-medieval writers explored what the growing audience of vernacular readers might

be capable of achieving, for good or ill. In other words, through the vehicle of the humility topos, emendation occupies a central position contributing to a discourse of participatory reading that exemplifies how late-medieval writers articulated, anticipated, and responded to the participatory work of readers.

An early emendation invitation can be found in the Anglo-Norman *Roman de toute chevalrie*, a version of the Alexander legend composed by Thomas of Kent around 1175. This and other texts that followed attest to use of the invitation written in the French of England and the Continent.[4] The emendation invitation thus possess long-standing status among the vernaculars of medieval Europe. It is not until the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, however, and in Middle English, that the emendation invitation reaches the pinnacle of its utility, versatility, and popularity. Over the course of the century, variations emerge in its use. These variations demonstrate a systemic reliance upon the emendation invitation that reveals it as foundational to a discourse of participatory reading, one well established enough that variant expressions and uses of it become possible. Such variations also proliferate widely in late-medieval English literature, to the extent that patterns can be identified in the deployment of variations on the emendation invitation, and these variations distinguish among groups of readers to encourage some and discourage others, and similarly encourage or discourage types of corrections.

The emendation invitation thus depicts participatory reading expressed through correction, and it emerges in numerous contexts that touch upon defining features of England's late-medieval literary scene, such as writerly authority, censorship, gendered audiences, vernacular reading practices, and the technological shift from manuscript to print. In its emergence, it most commonly demonstrates varying attitudes towards readers' corrective reading that seek either to encourage or restrict its practice. These attitudes strongly resemble those adopted towards open- and closed-access participation possible today in digital media, suggesting a longer, premodern history of practices today considered characteristic of digital media, such as crowd-sourced editing.

Open and closed-access invitations

What follows will delve more deeply into an example of each of these variations on the emendation invitation, selected from among the many writers who use the invitation partly for clarity of expres-

sion and partly because all three examples come from writers associated with Chaucer: Chaucer himself, Lydgate, Chaucer's most influential follower, and Thomas Norton, a late fifteenth-century Chaucerian. Chaucer's contributions to the development of a modern understanding of the writer as author, possessing authority and creative originality, has long been explored by critics.[5] Yet constructing authorship also implicitly constructs readership as well. Thus, even though emendation invitations predate Chaucer, his adoption of the emendation invitation signals both recognition of its influential work in constructing readership through a participatory reading practice, and promotes to other writers its utility in constructing relations among writers, texts, and readers – a promotion traceable through how Lydgate and Norton, and many other authors influenced by Chaucer, adopt the emendation invitation even as they use variations of it. That these examples, and many others, emerge across a variety of genres from courtly romance to history to alchemical treatises testify as well to its systematic use in late-medieval literary culture.

As Lydgate, referenced above, depicts an open example of the emendation invitation through inviting all readers to correct the text, Chaucer occupies a middle ground in his offer of an early example of the emendation invitation in Middle English at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* following the 'Go, little book' address of the Envoy. There, Chaucer famously expresses concern about the stability involved in the transmission of his text, and envisions a compensation for this instability. In doing so, he relies on the discourse of participation exemplified through the emendation invitation. Yet, rather than inviting any readers to contribute, Chaucer restricts participation only to a named few:

> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writing of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non miswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge;
> And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I biseche!
> …
> O moral Gower, this book I directe
> To the and to the, philosophical Strode,
> To vouchen sauf, ther need is, to correcte,
> Of youre benignites and zeles goode.[6]

Commonly assessed for what it might indicate about Chaucer's literary circle, critics most often refer to this passage as a dedication

and commentary on the capabilities of English as a literary language, expressed through the focus on the writer's incapability, so familiar in humility topoi.[7] However, Chaucer moves beyond the expression of authorial humility through his evocation of emendation. Chaucer charges two specific people, Strode and Gower, to intervene in the work of manuscript transmission by acting as editors and preservers of Chaucer's text.

Chaucer's use of the emendation invitation demonstrates an emendation invitation restricted to only two people, specified by name; it is neither fully open, nor is it entirely closed, forbidding correction by any and all readers. In representing himself as possessing both the authority to secure the future of his work and its treatment at the hands of readers, Chaucer employs the emendation invitation to contribute to his writerly authority, interest in and control over textual transmission, and his interest in and limitation of readers' participation. Considering how writers use the emendation invitation to shape relations with readers and the text provides opportunity to resist (in the words of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari) 'cut[ting] the book off from its relations with the outside'.[8] In other words, viewing Chaucer's dedication of the book as merely an example of the humility topos overlooks how writers sought to use the trope to imagine and guide relations with readers. Instead, in its use by Chaucer, the passage depicts how Chaucer both assessed the roles of his readers and envisioned his relationship to his audience. He deploys his authority as creator of the text in order to influence who should care for the work after it leaves his hands and control, even as he anticipates who will not care – like the scribes who would copy his text. Accordingly, Chaucer's emendation invitation can be situated in conversation with his later short lyric, 'Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn', in which Chaucer chides – perhaps playfully, perhaps seriously – his scribe for the many infelicities that Adam has introduced into Chaucer's works, which Chaucer must then correct. Intimately familiar with the problems a scribe can create for his texts, Chaucer seeks to forestall those problems by placing Gower and Strode in charge of overseeing the correction of *Troilus and Criseyde*. That 'Adam Scriveyn' was composed after *Troilus and Criseyde* indicates that Chaucer was, perhaps, aware that seeking to encourage a restricted audience of correctors to oversee and emend his text had little impact.

In crafting his authority to limit emendation to specific readers, Chaucer draws on terms commonly found in humility topoi:

the terms of correction and emendation. Gower and Strode are 'to correcte' the text where they determine that need exists. In asking them to 'vouchen sauf', Chaucer requests that they guide and also that they permit such correction, consequently placing Gower and Strode in charge of determining the emendation the text undergoes. Furthermore, in doing so, he suggests that they form a particular class of reader, that of the professional reader whose experience and education situate them as learned and familiar with sophisticated literature and its transmission. Chaucer thus turns to the emendation invitation to provide language and practice through which to guide engagement with the text. Such examples of the emendation invitation as Chaucer's perform key work in establishing a discourse of participation focused on soliciting specific readers' contributions to the text's correction and transmission.

The emendation invitation both informs us about writers' expectations regarding what work readers should or should not perform, and it highlights the diverse strategies writers employed in anticipating and shaping participation with their audiences. It also, and quite explicitly, provides instructions for readers regarding how they should participate with and respond to the text or author. Recognizing this also highlights how the emendation invitation makes reading a visible activity, and articulates sophisticated subject positions for readers, whom the topoi represents in the role of overseeing the text after its copying and dissemination.

These instructions consequently act as guidance that attempts to shape a subsequent reading experience. One of the challenges of studying medieval reading is that its performance, at the cognitive level, leaves no material traces, and what usually offers itself for study is the retrospective evidence of reading, such as that presented by manuscript marginalia. Examining the variety of means by which writers chose to phrase their invitations to emend, or discouraged readers from doing so, provides access to a critical backdrop against which to situate specific medieval readers' manuscript marginalia. In this context, the invitation to emend crafts expectations regarding readers' participation in manuscript transmission and treatment: it maps out the details of reading in advance – proleptically, rather than retrospectively.[9] Considering the invitation emendation in this way thus invites us to situate studies of individual manuscripts' marginalia against this context, when evaluating what manuscript marginalia contribute to the picture of late-medieval English readers and reading practices.

The discourse of participation figured through emendation invitations also invites researchers to consider how specific texts and their readers participate in that discourse. In its simplest form, this assessment might begin by considering whether the text in a specific manuscript includes an emendation invitation. Such assessment would refine understanding of the marginalia of that manuscript by further characterizing its readers as responding to, resisting, or ignoring such invitations.

An example of an emendation invitation that strikingly contrasts with and almost certainly responds to Chaucer's invitation to Gower and Strode at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* is that provided by John Lydgate in his response to *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Troy book*, in which Lydgate extends and refines his invitation to emend the text no fewer than six times. Rather than strictly modelling his use of the invitation after that of Chaucer, which might be expected given how strongly and frequently Lydgate affiliates his work as a writer with Chaucer's, Lydgate employs an alternative approach. Whereas Chaucer envisions restricted, limited participation in the work of emendation guided by Gower and Strode, Lydgate, at the end of the *Troy book* prologue, invites correction of his work in expansive terms:

> Preynge to alle þat schal it rede or se,
> Wher as I erre for to amenden me,
> Of humble herte and lowe entencioun
> Commyttyng al to her correccioun,
> And ther-of thanke; my wille is þat þei wynne,
> For thoruȝ her support þus I wil begynne.[10]

Lydgate invites all readers – not simply a learned subset of the author's contacts, or the audience of scribes as professional readers – to participate in the work of textual correction. In his expansive conception of a broad audience eligible, fit, and likely to correct the text, Lydgate's use of the emendation invitation exemplifies the open type of emendation invitation, one that sees value in encouraging corrective reading. For Lydgate, adopting a model of openness facilitates the kinds of participation with readers that leads to the improvement of his text in the face of the inevitable vagaries of manuscript transmission. Lydgate's open-access model of emendation relies on the technological qualities of a manuscript as a writing surface accessible to modification by readers. Corrective reading is thus a process both interactive and participatory; the interactive participation possible through

corrective reading encourages the development of a collaborative relationship between writer, text, and readers. For Lydgate, corrective reading is a form of social reading with benefits accruing to writer, text, and readers alike.

As with Chaucer, Lydgate relies on his role as writer to provide the grounds for instructing readers and constructing the basis of their work as such. Reading should be an act embarked upon not simply to benefit the reader by gaining an understanding of the matters a text expresses, but also performed with a critical eye for where the text might need correction, benefitting the reputation of the writer and the reliability of the text. To facilitate this corrective reading, Lydgate also specifies the types of emendations he desires when he restates his emendation invitation at the end of book five. Expecting similar types of scribal alterations as Chaucer seems to have unhappily anticipated at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Lydgate beseeches 'al þat shal þis noble story rede' to correct 'falsely metrid' lines and emend lines where they observe that 'any word [is] myssit'.[11] ('Myssit' here describes words that can be absent, unbecoming, or unsuitable.) He then links this collaborative work of review and editorial correction to moral and intellectual improvement – his own and his readers': not to emend a passage in need of correction 'is no worshippe to hym þat is wys', as Lydgate explains.[12] This form of participatory reading thus, as Lydgate sees it, conveys benefits to the reader, the writer's reputation, and the stability and truth of the text.

Lydgate's encouragement of reader emendation also speaks to one of his poem's central projects, the provision and preservation of truth. His use of the emendation invitation promotes corrective reading, which he views as conveying moral benefits to his readers. In correcting the text as Lydgate invites, participatory audiences would put the moral instruction the text offers to practical use by assisting in correcting it and Lydgate. The work of such readers would thus contribute to the preservation of textual and personal truth, preventing Lydgate's translations and elaborations from 'hyd[ing] trouthe falsely under cloude' (265) as had been done in other literary retellings of the Trojan War. Readers protect the truth of *Troy book* by correcting its errors and winnowing false from true as they read. Furthermore, the connotations of 'amenden' and 'correccioun' that evoke practices of textual emendation enhance the moral valence of readers' corrective work, for 'amenden' and 'correccioun' are also common terms in the discourse of moral improvement.[13] In effect, Lydgate positions

corrective reading as enabling readers to participate in the work both materially and morally. How readers participate, what they change, why they change it, and what the results are – all is initially left to their discretion. Yet, by yoking reader participation to moral correction, *Troy book* does not simply instruct its readers in virtues; instead, *Troy book* directs readers to a practice that enables them to perform virtue through emendation. Corrective reading transforms *Troy book* into a dynamic, moral learning space for its readers.

One of the fundamental effects of emendation invitations is their emphasis on the development of readerly agency, for the invitations suggest that readers can and should make choices about how they participate in response to a text. In addition, the invitations suggest that the decisions readers make carry significance for themselves, the writer, and the text. In the way that they emphasize agency, the emendation invitations both create a discourse of reader participation, and further normalize an identity of readers as participants whose work matters. This carries significance because, in the inclusivity of invitations addressed to 'alle' of the readers of a work, these emendation invitations speak not to the audience of professional readers alone, but to the audience of amateur readers as well. Such treatment conveys legitimacy upon their efforts, encouraging them. It also distils from the sophisticated interpretive and textual practices of professional readers basic building blocks – paying attention to the metre, to word choice, or other errors – that provide guidance to amateur readers desirous of education in more formal modes of reading. Finally, it facilitates and directs their investment in literary culture, much as open-access editing today does, by encouraging audiences to read a text seriously.[14] Given that some of the invitations occur at the end of the text,[15] rather than the start, they could also have been a spur to reread with another focus in mind than readers might have had in their initial engagement with the work.

While Lydgate's attempts to encourage amateur readers to participate in emendation express optimism that their contributions can be useful for a text, and value the prospect of reader participation, other writers explicitly and comprehensively condemn reader participation in the creation of a text's meaning, or limit participation to specific people, as Chaucer does in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and as other writers do in suggesting that corrections be managed by the patron who commissioned their texts. Such attempts to close access to emendation indicate concern regarding

the negative repercussions of reader participation, and lead to attempts to control the participation of readers by encouraging readers to receive passively the text as transmitted by its author. One writer interested in maintaining authorial control over the text was Thomas Norton.[16] The *Ordinal of alchemy*, a text the author began composing in 1477 to introduce the science of alchemy to a lay vernacular audience, offers a dissenting view on the work of readers that sharply contrasts with the more inclusive invitations of Lydgate and other writers who openly invite reader emendation.[17] It is a contrast that emphasizes anxieties about readers' abilities and enables the assemblage of a more detailed picture of expectations for, and about, readers. These anxieties seem to cluster around texts whose topics or genres were viewed as weighty or dangerous: alchemy, and also religious writing.

Norton cites Chaucer's 'Canon's Yeoman's Tale' when discussing the Philosopher's Stone and thus situates himself within a tradition of English poetic works on alchemy, even as he also situates himself within the Chaucerian tradition, thus making his work a particularly fitting example of an approach that contrasts with the Chaucerian Lydgate and Chaucer himself. The diversity of responses among these three writers indicates that, while attentiveness to readers and their relations to a text is certainly an aspect Chaucer draws attention to, his example does not become a template adopted by his followers. In contrast to Lydgate's open invitation to all readers, Norton does align himself more closely to Chaucer's model of restricted access to corrective reading – but does so to an extreme, by forbidding emendation altogether. Accordingly, Norton's approach exemplifies a highly restrictive model that also allows Chaucer's version to be identified as a hybrid example of the emendation invitation, partly open (to Gower and Strode), and also closed (to all others). Norton, in contrast, closes access to all readers: the only person eligible to change the text is the author himself. Yet Norton also demonstrates awareness of the work of readers and presumes them inclined towards corrective reading, even if he does not view the consequences of this reading practice in a positive light. Indeed, unlike Lydgate and other authors interested in open-access emendation, Norton views readers' emendations as an especially undesirable outcome, potentially dangerous in the hands of the 'rude peple' he aims to educate.[18] In the *Ordinal of alchemy*'s prologue, he explicitly and bluntly seeks to dissuade readers from participating materially with his text:

And that no man for better ne for wors
Change my writing, for drede of Goddis curs;
For where quyck sentence shal seme not to be,
There may wise men fynd selcouth privyte;
And changing of som oone sillable
May make this boke unprofitable. (170–5)

Fear, first of the curse of God – a rote phrase describing excommunication – and then for the integrity of author-developed meaning, becomes the tool Norton initially uses to forestall reader engagement with textual emendation and transmission. Norton seeks to evoke doubt in his readers regarding their fitness to engage with the text, however insignificant they perceive their emendations to be. Even changing 'oone sillable' may obscure meaning and render the book of little use. Perhaps motivated by the genre of his work as a treatise in the scientific mode, Norton views readers' attempts to correct seemingly obvious errors as opening the floodgates to textual corruption. He, as does Chaucer in 'Adam Scriveyn', views readers' and scribal modifications as corruptive, a view shared by modern editors for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Not only does Norton engage to forestall readers' drive to correct what might be perceived as minor orthographical errors, however, he also attempts to circumvent reader contributions based on what he anticipates will be mistaken acts of interpretation. Even when an initial reading leaves a reader struggling to identify the 'quyck sentence', Norton asserts that meaning exists, available to closer rereadings. 'Trust not to oon reading or twine', he further declares, 'But xx. tymes' (176–7). Neither one nor two readings will suffice; only rereading twenty times will do. This advice responds to his concern that readers will alter his work to draw out or correct places where the meaning seems obscure, a practice he emphatically condemns. He views readers who are interested in participating through corrective reading as engaged in a shallow mode of apprehension. In this way, Norton finds emendation lacking in substance and benefit.[19] He turns away from corrective reading to promote another reading practice instead, one defined by disciplined rereading.

Norton's efforts to control reader participation reflect his desire to preserve his treatise as a fixed work, and he expresses concern about the ease with which an emendation made in ignorance by a reader could disturb his system of concealed messages, such as his use of acrostics to identify himself as the author of the text.[20]

Consequently, Norton advocates textual stability as authorially determined. He ends at the last by developing another form of control: intellectual. In order to maintain textual stability and the primacy of authorial meaning, Norton encourages the development of the omnivorous reader, who will 'rede many bokis' but not emend them. Accordingly, Norton adopts a stance that favours readers whose consumption of the text focuses exclusively on interpretive reception, and further promotes recognition of authorial autonomy. His adoption of this stance further indicates that 'intensive' reading viewed as characteristic of pre-eighteenth century reading practices, which focuses on the close study of a small number of books, is countered here by Norton's advice to read not intensively alone, but also 'extensively', consulting and consuming a high number of books.[21]

Like all the Middle English writers who articulate a policy of closed or open access, Norton conveys his concern for the afterlives of his work, and envisions readers' immediate response to a text as likely to pursue corrective reading. Whereas Lydgate and Chaucer, to varying degrees, promote the participation of corrective reading and imply it as unlikely to occur without prompting, Norton tries to forbid participation altogether. They may also be responding in different ways to practices they already perceived as common and likely to be undertaken by their readers, and thus seek to shape particular effects of such anticipated engagement. Their differing stances, articulated over the course of nearly a hundred years, reveal the degree to which participatory reading through emendation had pervaded fifteenth-century vernacular literary discourse. Emendation invitations, and the corrective reading strategy they shape, not only intersect with expectations about readers' capabilities, but also demonstrate how corrective reading might be perceived as harmful, and therefore in need of efforts to control or even prohibit. In response to these concerns, Norton encourages a mode of reading that produces immaterial work from his audience: he focuses on the interpretive work of reading, rather than the kind of close reading encouraged by Lydgate's recommendation that his participatory readers pay attention to matters of syntax, spelling, and metre. Norton's choice may have reflected the higher stakes for him as a writer producing an alchemical poem that also critiqued the king; in such a context, he may have felt more cautious regarding what his readers might do with his work than Lydgate, who in focusing on history pursued a less fraught path.

Medieval emendation, modern crowd-sourcing, and collaboration

The treatment of the emendation invitation in these examples by Chaucer, Lydgate, and Norton exemplifies the three major types of emendation invitations: the open invitation, the closed invitation, and the hybrid invitation. The language used to describe these three types of the emendation – open and closed – highlights a parallel between medieval and contemporary media practices. In particular, it draws on the discourse of open access that has developed in response to the technological, economical, and social conditions that shape and are shaped by the internet and digital media.[22] That is, the shift from analogue and print to digital media, and the subsequent development of digital media, emphasized interaction – interaction not simply in accessing or sharing media, but in contributing to it. This interest in enhancing participation, insofar as it connects with emendation and participatory reading, can be best exemplified by three developments that linked a media platform to reader participation. The first of these is Wikipedia, whose culture of open-access, crowd-sourced editing is fuelled by readers who become contributors to the site; by blogging software that facilitated the development of communities of commentators that writers could encourage to participate in specific ways, as did Noah Wardrip-Fruin when he invited readers of his blog *Grand text auto* to submit questions, suggestions, and corrections to drafts of his then in-progress book; and the adoption of crowd-sourced editing applied to open peer review within academic journal publishing, initially explored by *Shakespeare quarterly* in their special issue on 'Shakespeare and New Media'.[23] That these developments became possible can be attributed partly to the emphasis on participation that emerged as a hallmark of what is referred to as 'Web 2.0', that is, second-generation internet culture, but also because this nascent culture emphasized an approach to digital media defined not by the mainstream capitalism-driven consumer economy, but by sharing and open access.[24]

   The sharing economy of second-gen digital media development countered traditional hierarchies that limited interaction between creators and consumers by enabling consumers to participate in media creation and development. The digital sharing economy also challenged the long-standing capitalism-driven framework that has developed around authorship, which constructs writing and editing as forms of labour recognized through copyright and consonant

financial remuneration, and reading as a form of entertainment with no labour value, and therefore no financial value. Through digital sharing economies, writers, texts, and readers can interact freely. This sense of 'free' connotes both freedom of access and freedom from the constraints of institutionalized financial valuation of writing and the lack thereof for reading. That these qualities can also apply to descriptions of late-medieval literary culture is neither coincidental nor irrelevant to how, in both cultures pre- and post-print, an interest in reader participation flourishes. In these literary cultures, value is expressed socially through reputation and influence, which readers can contribute to or hinder through their own efforts. In this context, the late-medieval emendation invitation, which identifies audiences of readers who are guided in accessing and contributing to a work, can be firmly situated within this long history of media access discourse.

The strikingly different approaches toward corrective reading that Chaucer, Lydgate, and Norton demonstrate also represent how late-medieval English authors grappled with models of review, correction, and reception. Their uses of corrective reading – whether encouraging or discouraging it – highlight issues including the authority of writers and readers, writer participation with audiences, and preservation the integrity of works whose every manuscript transmission invited fresh changes. Many of these are issues that have also emerged in contemporary debates about the state of academic publishing in the context of new approaches made possible by social media platforms, and have invited evaluation of the challenging economies of publishing, perceptions of collaboration, and opportunities to alter writer–reader participation. In this context, Chaucer's act of committing the text to the attentions of Gower and Strode, for example, evokes the academic peer-review process, for Chaucer authorizes the review of his work by an educated audience of his peers. Their learned review and emendation will help ensure the integrity of the text and, thereby, the writer's and text's reputation. Similarly, Lydgate also seeks to ensure the integrity of his text and its reputation along with his own, but he instead turns to his broad community of non-professional readers. Situating Chaucer, Lydgate, and Norton within the discourse of open and closed access asserts connection between the pre- and post-print media cultures. The analogues between medieval emendation invitations and modern editorial practices provide an alternative way to consider associational, rather than chronological, narratives of book history.

Considering Chaucer's, Lydgate's, and Norton's emendation invitations through the lens of closed/open access and crowd-sourcing also sheds more insight on the role of corrective reading as a practice advocated by Lydgate and other fifteenth-century writers. As noted by Kathleen Fitzpatrick, open-access practices, in particular, represent a form of interaction. Fitzpatrick uses the term, as do many, as a synonym for participation. In this light, she observes that '[T]he key issue is interaction. The author is not operating – and has never operated – in a vacuum, but has always been a participant'.[25] When the author participates or envisions participation through the invitation to emend the text, engagement with a reader becomes the focus. Furthermore, this participation depicts a collaborative relationship – or, in a closed-access invitation, resists collaboration – among writer, text, and reader. Corrective reading, articulated through the emendation invitation, can consequently be positioned as a nexus of social reading practices. Although the dominant narrative of reading in the later Middle Ages explores the rise of silent reading that made solitary reading a possibility, and a contrast with public reading practices, the emendation invitation points to a narrative of reading as a social act. Even if performed silently, emendation invitations structure social relations between writers and readers through promoting a model of readership that figures textual correction as a participatory activity furthering writer–reader relationships.

This focus on the social aspects of reading were furthered through the way some writers, in their emendation invitations, addressed their audience. Lydgate and most other writers address invitations to those who 'rede or se' the text, with William Caxton preferring to address those who 'see or here' the text.[26] Together, the 'see and here' and the 'rede and se' constructions gesture to the encompassing nature of medieval literacy and reading practices, where both those who see or hear the text engage in the work of reading.[27] Even the person who reads the text through aural apprehension can identify where the metre of a line has gone astray, and see to its correction. This construction first points toward the multivalent understanding of medieval literacy practices: hearing the text, as well as apprehending it with the eye, are both modes of reading. It does mean, however, that members of Lydgate's anticipated audience may not have possessed the writing skills that enabled them to follow through with the provision of corrections. Corrections may then have been enacted more by the most

sophisticated and learned of readers, such as scribes, instead. Yet the 'see or here' construction, in particular, emphasizes corrective reading as a social practice, in which participation furthers relations among readers in dialogue with each other as they speak of needed emendations to a text. Although readers invited to participate in corrective reading may only effect changes to a single manuscript (although corrections could proliferate through its descendant copies), Lydgate, Caxton, and other writers figured corrective reading as a social activity that provides immediate benefit to its participating practitioners.

In the assumption that readers can correct texts, writers employing the emendation invitation recognize a hallmark of crowd-sourced editing today that makes such contributions possible: that is, the accessibility of the medium to non-professional, amateur contributions. The reader who makes corrections to Wikipedia can do so because of its accessible design; in the fluidity and accessibility of manuscript culture, corrective readers simply needed access to a pen and ink in order to register their changes – and only to a knife to scrape away ink in order to rewrite a passage altogether. Fluidity, participation, and interaction mark the convergence among the technologies, practice, and study of open-access editing today and the materials, reading practices, and textual culture of late-medieval England. Both point to how late-medieval English writers, through the invitation to emend their texts, situate readers as participants in the creation of meaning through not reception alone, but also through production. Reading is thus represented as an activity that can include writing; readers and writers exist in a collaborative partnership of mutual benefit.

Lydgate clearly recognizes the possibilities of reader collaboration through emendation, and the value of including readers in the literate community presupposed by his texts. In *Troy book*, for example, Lydgate employs the humility aspect of the invitation to emend the text in order to engage more directly and equally with his readers: he refers in the prologue not to the text alone, but also to himself as the recipient of his readers' corrective work. At one point, he also enhances this sense of community participation between himself and his readers by addressing them as 'ȝe': 'ȝet in þe story ȝe may fynde plesaunce / Touching substaunce of þat myn auctour wryt. / And þou ȝe so be þat any word myssit, / Amendith it, with chere debonaire' (V.3492–5). The plurality of this pronoun figures readers as participants both in a relationship with Lydgate and as participants in a literary community of all those who 'rede

or se' the text, where membership is gained through the work of participatory reading.

Even for those readers approaching the text alone or in isolation, emendation invitations remind them that others also participate in similar ways, and each reader contributes to the continuing circulation of copies of the work that are ever improved. In this way, Lydgate envisions how reading with an eye turned to emendation becomes a means for participating in a shared literary endeavour. Furthermore, participation carries personal consequences for both text and writer, in addition to the gateway it provides for participation in literary culture of fifteenth-century England. Through his open invitation to emend the text of *Troy book*, Lydgate presents participation in literary culture as an attainment accessible to all possessing a basic degree of literacy. He does not require the ability to visually apprehend a text, but enough ability to understand metre and sense, so as to identify when a word has been left out or written in such a way that the formal qualities of the verse have been affected. For Lydgate, basic literacy involves familiarity with literary and artistic modes of expression. As participatory reading establishes a sense of community figured around beneficial contributions to a text, *Troy book* and texts that similarly invite open access to emendation offer a counter to the 'hostility to writing' that had erupted in the late fourteenth century, particularly during the Uprising of 1381.[28] Rather than figuring texts as a locus of divisiveness between the literate and illiterate, emendation invitations frequently gesture to the inclusivity and accessibility of reading and writing to the author's primary audiences, and to the possibility of furthering relations between writers and their readers.

How emendation invitations charge participatory reading with a sense of community participation invites another association to today's media culture, in the latter's emphasis on the relationship between participation and community. Indeed, scholars of digital media often credit participation with enhancing the social relationship of writers and readers by simulating presence and the give-and-take of conversation, thus providing the grounds for development of trust and familiarity.[29] In digital media open-access editing projects, with their feedback loops that facilitate interaction, a sense of community among author, text, and user can be sustained and developed.[30] In this way, when Noah Wardrip-Fruin asked for readers of his blog to offer corrections to his then-forthcoming monograph *Grand text auto*, he anticipated being

able to discuss suggestions with his readers through the comment features on his blog interface.[31] The situation clearly differs in manuscript and print cultures, where exchange is limited to the physical text and its reader, with the writer's presence simulated but not actualized. A change to a reader's copy of a manuscript or print edition does not automatically update a copy to which the writer has access. Yet, by relying on the use of first- and second-person forms of address as exemplified in Lydgate's emendation invitations, writers in medieval manuscript culture relied on participation through emendation 'to facilitate interactions similar to interpersonal communication'.[32] In other words, corrective reading offered medieval writers and readers a simulation of inter-personal interaction and education, an evocation of community participation in literary culture that views readers' textual partici-pation as enabling desirable, essential, and beneficial contributions on behalf of a writer, not a text alone. Furthermore, the reliance by Lydgate and other writers on corrective reading, predicated as it is on accepting and developing the accessibility of the manuscript text to readers' contributions, emphasizes how medieval notions of literary community contrast with the idea of the solitary writer that developed over the course of the print era. Corrective readers, today and in the fifteenth century, are social readers. As social readers, they participate in relationships both with the text and the writer as the objects of their correction.

Changing attitudes towards emendation

One of the fascinating developments in the use of emendation invi-tations that emerges over the course of the fifteenth century occurs through the wide range of variance in attitudes towards open- or closed-access emendation by readers. These attitudes are not static, but change over time. Although many readers today might expect attitudes towards emendation to change in the wake of the advent of the printing press, seeing it as stabilizing and fixing the form of the text, neither Caxton nor his immediate successors treat print as fixed in ways that prevent the transmission of reader emendations. This expectation regarding the transformative nature of print owes much to the work of Elizabeth Eisenstein's influential work on the introduction of the printing press.[33] More recent studies, however, attest to how printers and readers, even two centuries after the advent of the printing press in Europe, viewed it as adding little to textual stability, and, in some cases, worsening the reliability

of the text.[34] This recognition of the fallibility, malleability, and motility of the printed work may explain much about Caxton's continued reliance on the emendation invitation. Developments in the treatment of emendation invitations appear, instead, to correspond to the genre of the texts offering invitations to emend, the gender of the texts' intended audience, and the professional affiliations of a text's audiences. Surveying emendation invitations written between 1385 and 1499, during which more than thirty authors deploy emendation invitations, reveals trends that can better situate emendation invitations within the literary discourse of late-medieval England.

In general, the ratios of open to closed to hybrid change in significant ways over the course of the fifteenth century. Between 1380 and 1399, the ratio of open to closed to hybrid is 1:1:2, representing parity between open to closed and a preference for hybrid invitations.[35] By the end the fifteenth century, that ratio has flipped in dramatic favour of open invitations. Between 1480 and 1499, the ratio is 5.5:1:2.[36] There are more than five times the number of open invitations for every closed invitation extended to readers.[37] The general trends suggested by changing ratios of types of emendation invitations reveals, from 1380 to 1430, a preference for hybrid review that closes participation except to specific groups of participants, particularly among writers of devotional works. The situation then changes markedly. From 1431 to 1495, the preference is for open invitations. This increase in the solicitation of open-access emendation by readers is facilitated by Caxton, who contributes a significant portion of them, but the rise in numbers predates Caxton and his press largely due to Lydgate's preference for open-access emendation, particularly in poems written in the latter years of his career.

In other words, the technology of the printing press facilitated the change in the ratios towards open-access invitations to emend texts, but did not create that change. Nevertheless, print contributed significantly. Contrasting the ratios of emendation invitation types found in print with those in manuscript from 1475 to 1499 indicates that texts in print trend in favour of open emendation and, with it, corrective reading, 14:1:4. Texts that circulate in manuscript, in contrast, prefer closed invitations, 0:2:1. These ratios reflect changing behaviours and attitudes towards emendation and readers' access across genres and technologies of text. While Lotte Hellinga said of Caxton that his early choice to print short books that might be collected into a volume, followed

by his publication of Chaucer's *Canterbury tales*, reflected a way that he had 'made readers',[38] the use and treatment of emendation invitations additionally reflect how writers from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth centuries represent their investment in the project of making readers. Making readers, and making them work, involves considering how to encourage, direct, or limit corrective reading practices. These considerations were further emphasized by Caxton and his own followers in the early years of the printing press' contributions to English book culture, suggesting that early printers saw the press as providing an opportunity to enhance and further build upon the changing attitude toward readers displayed by other late-medieval writers.[39] Furthermore, in focusing on participation expressed through the practice of corrective reading, writers locate readers within a constructive, participatory, frequently collaborative understanding of England's literary culture.

These changing attitudes toward emendation and access suggest further developments in behaviour towards and understanding of non-professional readers. Whereas Chaucer emphasizes his authority over that of his readers, and restricts participation to a select few, writers over the course of the fifteenth century appear vigorous in seeking ways to engage readers' direct participation in literary culture. Readers become viewed as capable of contributing to a text in sophisticated ways. The emendation invitations in Lydgate's *Troy book* to all his readers depict them as capable of doing for his text what only Gower and Strode were represented as capable of doing for Chaucer's. Accordingly, the discourse differentiating the 'learned' from the 'lewid' diminishes and readers gain prominence as collaborative communities whose assistance and participation writers increasingly chose to value and solicit. In this way, Chaucer, Lydgate, and their fellows are evaluating not only their goals for the dissemination, reception, and futures of their works, but they are also considering how engaging the interest and participation of readers in different ways can contribute to the outcomes they seek.

Tracking reader responses to these invitations suggests that they worked with mixed success, either in encouraging or discouraging participation. The majority of changes to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, come from the hands of professional readers, the scribes who recopied Chaucer's work. Analysing scribal variants in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Barry Windeatt describes how scribes regularly altered Chaucer's more obscure or non-standard diction as they attempted to simplify or literalize the figurative complexity

of his verse, and demonstrates that these alterations frequently changed the syllabic content of Chaucer's lines.[40] His analysis has been extended by Daniel Wakelin's broad assessment of scribal correction in late-medieval England, which reveals scribes to have pursued the alterations they made with thoughtful deliberation.[41] In this light, Chaucer's commendation of his text to Gower and Strode seems as prescient as it was futile: professional readers did as they wished regardless of Chaucer's discouragement. As the majority of marginal comments and glosses appear to be scribal in origin, this suggests that Chaucer's discouragement of generalized corrective reading enjoyed limited success among amateur readers, who more often than not left the text clean of marginalia and, when providing it, did not offer the kinds of corrections other writers sought to elicit.

Perhaps aware of this treatment of Chaucer's texts, Lydgate's opposing invitations to emend *Fall of princes*, following the pattern established by the invitations of *Troy book*, also seem to have enjoyed mixed success. Of twenty-nine manuscripts of *Fall of princes*, twenty-six contain marginalia from readers other than the text's scribes. Of these twenty-six, only two contain the kinds of reader corrections Lydgate specifically elicits, University of Chicago Library MS 565 and British Library Harley 1766 – and in the latter, the changes seem to have been motivated not by a desire to improve the text, but to erase references to the papacy. By and large, scribes effected more corrections to texts in the act of copying them than did amateur readers, whose desire to participate in texts seems to have pursued other imperatives than textual emendation, such as that of noting passages of personal and moral significance.

This seeming disregard by readers of invitations to engage in corrective reading evokes a parallel with the current treatment of crowd-sourced editing. Aside from the highly publicized examples of crowd-sourced editing, such as that employed by Noah Wardrip-Fruin and *Shakespeare quarterly*, the practice of crowd-sourced, open-access peer reviewed editing has subsided since 2011, and attention has shifted to developing tools that facilitate open access to published work, rather than work pre-publication. While diagnosing the challenges facing such a complex practice that extends across disciplines and fields of study is beyond the scope of this book, let alone this chapter, and while noting that implementation of crowd-sourced peer review today differs in scope and aims than the medieval writer inviting his original audience to correct the text, one issue both rely on is the social aspect

of corrective reading. This social aspect, however, is largely fictive: medieval writers and readers can only enact participation with the text, not with each other; modern crowd-sourcing attempts like that developed by *Shakespeare quarterly* rely on novelty to draw attention and participation. Situating crowd-sourced editing projects within pre-existing communities has been attempted only by Wardrip-Fruin, who then found himself too overwhelmed to attend to the feedback. It could be, then, that audience take-up of corrective reading in medieval and digital media foundered in part because of how communities that foster investment in the writer–reader relations promoted by crowd-sourced approaches such as corrective reading struggle to coalesce around the texts. Its lack of success may – to inch out further on the limb of specula-tion – centre around the core of its activity: making readers work. Readers, as will be discussed further in the final chapter, may be resistant to the forms of labour enjoined upon or elicited from them through participatory reading practices, choosing instead to apply their efforts elsewhere.

The absence of widespread engagement in corrective reading in late-medieval England thus speaks to how the invitations to emend have contributed to literary culture in other ways than textual cor-rection, primarily by creating recognition of the agency and ability of readers to participate in literary culture through their reading practices, by creating a discourse focused on that participation, and by the various ways these invitations legitimize the participation of certain groups in contrast to that of others. One of the important consequences of the promotion of open, corrective reading by late-medieval writers is that it positions the community as validat-ing a work and the standards it represents. This is an issue cogent today in ongoing debates about open access, which suggest both promise and threat in the way they offer to shift the responsibility of validation away from closed-access models and institutionalized authority. The transition away from validation of a work by the learned, Latinate elite to the lay, vernacular commons suggests that late-medieval writers, even as they desired to develop and defend their own growing authority, viewed readers – if properly educated about how to read effectively in ways that subordinated their work to the aims of writers – as powerful partners in the development of literary culture. That the interest in corrective reading emerges around and continues to develop and flourish even after the intro-duction of print suggests that writers and printers, too, saw in it a valuable tool for developing literary community.

The positions taken by Lydgate in *Troy Book* and Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*, as well as that of Norton in the *Ordinal of alchemy*, and other writers who invited readers to emend their texts, are marked by encouraging emendation by all readers, by some under specified limitations, or discouraging it altogether. In the hybrid invitations mentioned previously, writers qualify open access to emendation in significant ways. A common element of these restrictions on open access includes the gender of their readers. Between 1385 and 1495, for example, 20/23 texts cite gender as a primary or secondary issue in promoting hybrid, not open, access to corrective reading. Furthermore, 11/23 of these texts can be classified as religious in focus, suggesting concerns that perhaps respond to the restrictions of Arundel's *Constitutions*. Published in 1409, the *Constitutions* are often credited with creating a perilous climate for writers, translators, and readers of devotional material, because of concerns about being affiliated with Wycliffitism.[42] While critical discussion in recent years has nuanced long-standing perceptions about the repressive influence of the *Constitutions*, certainly the discourse focused on restricting open access to corrective reading that emerges in the intersection of religious texts and audiences of women indicates that writers attended to how emendation invitations and the reading practice they promoted might affect or respond to such topical concerns.

A prominent example of this awareness of the topical implications of corrective reading can be identified through the emendation invitation provided in the prologue to the *Mirror of our lady*. This commentary on and partial translation of the Bridgettine Office used by the nuns at Syon was composed between 1420 and 1450. The writer of the prologue establishes a partially open, partially closed hybrid invitation to emend the text when he states, '[L]owely I submyt me and all oure wrytynges, and other werkes to the correccyon of oure mother holy chyrche, & of the prelates and fathers therof, and of all that are wyser and can fele better'. The text conveys some openness to emendation, in that the writer directs the invitation to unspecified male religious, while at the same time discouraging participation from the audience to whom the text is directed, nuns of Syon. To them, he immediately turns and says instead that he, 'Besech[es] you all way mooste dere and deuoute systres to praye that bothe thys, and all other dedes be euer rewlyd to oure lordes worship'.[43] That is, the work of correction should be left in the hands of men. For the male, clerical audience,

emendation is an open possibility; in contrast, the writer encourages women readers to pray.

This attempt to limit performance of corrective reading to a subset of the text's audience creates an equivalency between emendation and prayer. Emendation and prayer are opposing, but equivalent responses. This gesture also seeks to control readers' participation by gendering a particular type of reading activity, textual correction, as masculine work. Emendation is men's work; prayer, women's. Accordingly, the practice of corrective reading, which can be leveraged to establish a discourse of control over readers even as it authorizes readers' agency, thus contributes to a gendered discourse of late-medieval censorship. By restricting women's responses to prayer rather than emendation, the text seeks to curtail women's scholarly activities. This gendered treatment of corrective reading additionally represents women's participation as ephemeral, eschewing material textual legacies.

Similarly, concerns that readers or media consumers might go too far, do too much to the media with which they participate, drive much legislation aimed at controlling or even supporting digital media today. For example, the non-profit organization Creative Commons provides text for licenses that help rights owners negotiate the permissions given to others for the use of their works. Licenses address permitted forms of audience participation, interaction, and transformation of works, attempting to mediate among the agency, authority, and rights of users and those of a work's creators. These and other efforts address contemporary concerns regarding the sometimes-threatening ability of media consumers to become creators of modified and re-envisioned material. As participatory media have increased in popularity and ease of access, a 'backlash' has developed 'of new technologies, softwares, and legal methods that actively seek to prevent alteration and re-distribution of texts'.[44] Such concerns form a modern practice in comparison to which we can consider late-medieval attempts to control the creative, participatory abilities of readers, who may, at any moment, assert their own control over a text.

In views that express concern regarding how readers' changes could threaten the integrity of their works, medieval writers' comments can consequently be seen to reflect a developing awareness of their works as the product of their own creative effort. This presages a developing recognition of creative literary production as intellectual property that goes hand-in-hand with the developing notion of authorship as discussed by Alastair Minnis.[45] That is,

as writers explored strategies to define and secure their status as authors, not merely copyists collecting or adding to the work of ancient authorities, writers saw readers as possessing the ability to affect that status. The developing authority of writers could be threatened by corrective readers running amok. These concerns regarding the agency of readers are part of the landscape of late-medieval England, for reader authority intersected with concerns about heresy, particularly in the wake of Arundel's *Constitutions*. As has been discussed by Katherine Kerby-Fulton, however, modes of literary censorship antedate and postdate the *Constitutions*, and an attitude of tolerance existed even in the climate from which the *Constitutions* arose.[46] In consequence, recognizing the role of participation as articulated through the discourse of corrective reading in late-medieval English literature provides insight on premodern ideas of textual ownership. Yet, as in today's culture, reader participation could be as problematic as it was desirable. Participatory reading practices, even as they offered a means for instructing readers in how they should behave towards texts, motivating them, and engaging them in a literary community, could be – for some writers – too accessible, too extensive, and too empowering.

Although the roles of women in restrictions imposed upon corrective reading are especially telling for how medieval writers distinguished among their potential audiences and the abilities or potential of those audiences, women were not the only readers subject to restrictions placed upon corrective reading. Some writers also articulate separate approaches to Latinate readers and vernacular audiences, whom they view as differently able to engage with the text through corrective reading, and whose participatory reading is, consequently, differently valued. This attitude towards the participatory reading of diverse audiences is articulated in the *Pricke of conscience* around 1400 and in a Wycliffite glossed Gospel of Matthew written in the first half of the fifteenth century. Both restrict corrective reading to the learned, inviting emendation only from 'any man þat es clerk' and any 'lerid man in holy writ'.[47] John Capgrave, in his *Life of St Norbert*, tells the 'noble men' who wish to 'race / Or rende my leuys' – a rather violent means of interacting with the text – that he leaves the work in their hands to do so if they wish. In *Stans puer ad mensam*, Lydgate's verse instructions about etiquette for children, he simply claims responsibility for errors without encouraging youthful readers to correct them or offering to emend them himself. Lastly, John Russell, who wrote his *Boke of Nurture* on the life of royal household service in the middle of

the century, invites corrections from the 'yonge gentilmen' for whom he has written.[48] These attitudes suggest that, even as many writers viewed 'all who rede or se' a text as able to engage in corrective reading, they nevertheless distinguished some audiences as better fit for it, and better able to offer productive responses.

Conclusion

The comments about corrective reading described in the texts cited here, from Chaucer to Caxton and beyond, manifest how the participatory practice of corrective reading, as noted today in conversations about open-access editing, enables conferment of 'group identity', and facilitates 'the textualization of social relations'.[49] Through emendation invitations, late-medieval English texts become bodies through which not only changing ideas about readership, authorship, and participation in literary culture become worked out, but that also reflect the complex networks of social relations in an increasingly socially mobile culture. Emendation invitations depict how writers distinguished their work's reception among various audiences, and categorized these audiences according to networks of patronage, political hierarchy, gender, education, and professional relations. These varying attitudes towards corrective reading further attest to how – as Deleuze and Guattari have observed of the book more generally – late-medieval invitations to emend texts were understood to 'fix territories and genealogies'.[50] In other words, some texts offered territories open to the emendation of many categories of potential readers, whereas others closed these territories to a select few; through opening or closing the territory of the text, writers sought to shepherd and guide the transmission of their works across generations of copies.

Corrective reading functions as a participatory, interactive reading practice responsive to the materiality of the manuscript as a writing technology. Medieval manuscript culture was predisposed to participatory practices, given the number of 'nontrivial efforts' required 'to traverse the text',[51] for instance, the work required to expand abbreviations. That corrective reading continues to be deployed as a strategy for relating to readers in printed texts attests to the slowness of recognition that print represented a technology that functions in ways other than how manuscripts function. The use of corrective reading invitations in print books for decades after their introduction also attests to the ongoing influence of the idea of the participatory reader who contributes productively to

the transmission of a text. Furthermore, in a practice to which I will return in later chapters, materiality becomes significant for the way it shapes the possibilities of participatory reading practices. Corrective reading can be made possible and recommended to readers because the material body of the manuscript is accessible to readers' interventions. In advocating for its use, medieval writers give careful thought to the different ways material conditions impact and facilitate reading experiences. Finally, the invitational strategies that focus on emendation have not been recognized as contributing to late-medieval constructions of readers, yet manifestly they fashion the reader in important ways. They also affect the reception of medieval texts. Scholars now recognize that such contributions – emendations, modified prefaces, added passages – create texts worth study, not texts viewed as ravaged by the errant interventions of wayward readers. Beyond the reconsideration of the value of reader emendation stands the participatory reader, whose figure gave focus to writers' expectations about their audiences.

References to reader participation, rare in Middle English or Anglo-Norman works before the late fourteenth century, flourish in the fifteenth. This rise in the articulation of a discourse of participation provides insight on developing expectations for lay vernacular readers, as the increase in literacy intersected with the growing popularity of the English vernacular and the heightened production of books. Participation facilitates transformative reading practices: in the late Middle Ages as now, the spread of access to materials and technologies created both controversy and acclaim, those who wanted to support and those who wanted to control.[52] The presence of participation gestures toward textual practices and a concept of the reader that we have only recently begun to access, a reader whose deep engagement with texts could create as well as receive, and traces a more communal relationship between writer and reader that was later lost as the authority of print became fixed.

Texts inviting or discouraging participation, such as *Troy Book* and the *Ordinal of alchemy*, illustrate tensions among author, text, and readers that were occasioned by participation. They also demonstrate that such participation, as useful as it could be, was not always desirable. The empowered reader could at times be a threat as much as an ideal, and the tensions raised by participation could occasion 'a struggle for control over the authorial "purity" or "authenticity" of the text'.[53] Such struggles encompass a variety

of participatory practices. These struggles also reflect ongoing negotiations about emergent ideas of authorial control, textual integrity, and reader control. Lydgate, Caxton, and other writers position themselves as writers willing to collaborate with readers who are eager to engage deeply and constructively with their works – a position that does much to inform readers of the attitude with which they were expected to receive texts. Encouraging or discouraging corrective reading thus became a means of educating readers regarding how they were to read, and the behaviours appropriate reading entailed. Corrective reading and participatory reading practices more generally, in effect, contributed to a discourse of reading etiquette. Accordingly, the study of participation in medieval texts enables us to understand previously overlooked details of the reading process. Corrective reading practice, as elicited or discouraged in these works, including Lydgate's and the dozens of others that explicitly invite it, also demonstrates medieval recognition of the fluidity of texts within the register of reading practices.

By seeking out evidence for participatory reading practices, and recognizing how corrective reading offers a practice for textual participation, we can also turn to studies of other readers, such as the professional readers of the Douce *Piers Plowman* or Guillaume Machaut's *Voir Dit*, and re-evaluate such responses.[54] The professional readers who modify, alter, or otherwise leave their traces through the text of these works respond to them within what is clearly becoming a participatory tradition focused upon the practice of corrective reading. We may, then, also look for how other readers might resist or alternatively interpret the discourse of corrective reading, as exemplified by Norton, who discourages corrective reading only to promote, instead, an alternative of disciplined, temporally contextualized rereading.

In considering who participated in response to emendation invitations, I have here and above distinguished in some contexts between the category of all readers and that of scribes as professional readers. Doing so follows recent critical trends that examine how scribes acted as the first readers of texts.[55] Yet this is a point worth re-evaluating in the light of emendation invitations and the corrective reading they promoted, particularly with reference to writers' own sense of authority. That is, by themselves treating scribes as part of the community of their readers, late-medieval writers distinguished more emphatically between their roles and their authority and that of scribes. Given that St Bonaventure's long-standing definition of a writer included scribes in their role

as copyists, the choice of late-medieval writers to treat scribes not as fellow-writers, but as readers, signals how these writers sought to use emendation invitations to further authorize themselves. In other words, emendation invitations offered a rhetorical, persuasive discourse by which to distinguish authorial from scribal work. This makes a distinction between creative effort, textual reproduction, and emendation: in these writers' eyes, they are not only different types of work, but they belong to different literary identities. One type of work is that of the author. The others are situated as enjoying a lesser status that provides the ground for reclassifying scribes not as writers, but as readers. That writers nevertheless occasionally sought to distinguish scribal work as somewhat other than that of the general reader also testifies to how uneasily scribes fit into the category of readers. Consequently, the emendation invitation crafts a writer–text–reader triumvirate that strategically elides how scribes moved between the roles of writer and reader. In this way, variations in the discourse of corrective reading attest not only to the tension that surrounded the identity of the writer and the identity of the reader, but also to how the definition of who belonged in the category of 'reader' played a crucial role relative to the changing definition of 'writer'.

These are conversations pursued today in discussion of academic publishing trends. That they arise in a moment that, in parallel to the situation of late-medieval England, is characterized by increasingly diverse modes of literacy and accompanied by technological developments that increase ease of access to both books and writers, is not coincidental. Such conditions clearly impact how boundaries between writers and readers are both distinguished and deterritorialized; they also influence participation and its development as a culture of practice. Accordingly, it may be worth consideration, today, how Lydgate, Caxton, Chaucer, Norton, and other writers viewed the possibilities of accessible emendation and its potential to shape communities. Rather than pursuing the model of the text that eventually develops in the long history of print, that of the fixed text to whom the readers' contributions materially and socially remain constrained and marginalized, it could benefit to think of alternatives. The open-access style of emendation invitation situates the manuscript text and its iterations, as its copied and recopied, as a nexus for social interaction between writers and readers; it contributes to the development of a social economy of writer–reader relations that has not yet become dependent upon economic exchange. Instead, the social economy facilitated by

corrective reading figures participation as central to responding to a defining characteristic of manuscript culture: the possibility for textual flexibility. The work, even after its dissemination to the public, is never fixed. In its lack of fixity opportunity arises for ongoing social exchange, mediated through the pages of the text. Given the as-yet inability of crowd-sourced editing to affect in substantial ways the institutional editing practices of academic publishing that might, as I have suggested above, struggle in part because of the absent social culture around sites for disseminating work pre-publication, what culture might flourish within the realm of academic publishing today if digitally distributed essays and monographs were viewed as sites for ongoing conversation and exchange between writers and readers?

Finally, the practice of corrective reading, demonstrated through the emendation invitations that solicit it, continues into the first centuries of print culture. As David McKitterick discusses in his detailed account of reading practices and book history, 'From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, readers were requested by authors, stationers and printers alike to amend with the pen what had been set and printed in type'.[56] Writers did not cease to invite readers to participate and contribute materially to their texts with the introduction of print; such invitations continued to be a commonality of the possible ways in which readers could participate with those responsible for textual production and dissemination. Reliance upon modes of participatory reading, even well after the development of print culture, continued and flourished. Yet in how these invitations to emend identify the person to receive corrections, emendation invitations also reflect growing awareness of the particular material considerations of print. Readers, no longer able to effect changes to texts themselves in ways that would be transmitted to successive copies of a work, were invited to submit suggested corrections not only to authors, but to printers and publishers as well. The identification of alternatives to authors for receiving corrections gestures to the role played by printers both as gatekeepers to publication and as professionals concerned about, and interested in increasing, the fixity and reliability of printed texts. Thus, although Caxton represents the continuation of medieval practice in how he invites readers to engage in effecting corrections themselves, subsequent reliance of the emendation invitation, by the late sixteenth century, reflects how technological change affected not the act of corrective reading itself, but the material realities of changing modes of textual tradition. The continuance

of emendation invitations also suggests that, even though the fixity of the printed text limited the transmission of readers' corrections to subsequent copies of the work, corrective reading continued to play a valued role in shaping relations among writers, readers, and printers, and the texts that interested them all.

Notes

1 Representative comments about the humility topos describe it as no more than the passing offer of 'a hackneyed humility' (Margaret Connolly, in *John Shirley: book production in the noble household in fifteenth-century England* [Aldershot, UK and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998], 45) or the merely 'topical expression of (usually false) modesty' (John Dagenais, *The ethics of reading in manuscript culture: glossing the Libro de Buen Amor* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994], 24).

2 For examinations of the humility topos and its classical tradition, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, transl. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 407–13; see also Barbara Newman, who examines its use in relation to women in *Sister of wisdom: St. Hildegarde's theology of the feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 2–3, 35, 114–15, 182, 248, and 254–7. For examples of its use in Middle English, see Wogan-Browne *et al.*, *Idea of the vernacular*.

3 From *Fall of princes*, ed. Henry Bergen. Early English Text Society extra series 121–4 (London: Oxford University Press, 1924–27), at lines 3378–9.

4 *The Anglo-Norman 'Alexander'* ('*Le Roman de Toute Chevalerie*') *by Thomas of Kent*, ed. Brian Foster, with the assistance of Ian Short, 2 vols. Anglo-Norman Text Society 29–33 (London: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1976–7), lines 6655–6.

5 See in particular Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his readers: imagining the author in late-medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), and Stephanie Trigg, *Congenial souls: reading Chaucer from medieval to postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

6 Quotes from Chaucer's works come from the *Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987). Here, the lines cited are from V.1793–8 and 1856–9 in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

7 See, for example, Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's fifteenth-century audience and the narrowing of the "Chaucer tradition"', in *Writing after Chaucer: essential readings in Chaucer and the fifteenth century*, ed. Daniel J. Pinti (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1998), 107–8, and Anita Obermeier, *The history and anatomy of auctorial*

self-criticism in the European Middle Ages (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), 191–2.

8 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota, 1987), at 127.

9 The terms 'proleptic' and 'retrospective' are discussed more fully by Wakelin in 'Instructing Readers in Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts', at 433–4.

10 Quotations here and following are from the *Troy Book*, lines P.379–84. See Appendix A for other examples of emendation invitations.

11 *Ibid.*, V.3476, 3484, and 3494. Shortly after this passage, Lydgate echoes Chaucer's words in his poem to Adam Scriveyn when he writes that he wonders if there might be anyone capable of following in Chaucer's traces, and if there is anyone, Lydgate is, 'Besechyng hem, with her prude loke, / To race & skrape þoruȝ-oute al my boke, / Voide & adde wher hem semeth nede' (V.3537–9). In addition to his earlier open call for emendation, here Lydgate makes a Chaucerian, learned request for editorial intervention from a colleague.

12 *Ibid.*, V.3498.

13 See, for example, Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of princes*, in which Hoccleve explains: 'For whan a man y-falle in-to errour is, / His brother ought hym counseille & rede / To correcte & amende his wikked dede; / And yf he be vexed with maladie, / Mynystre hym helpe, his greef to remedie' (lines 2488–92, in the edition ed. by F. J. Furnivall, EETS extra series [hereafter e. s.] 72 [London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1897]).

14 See Dan Cohen, 'The social contract of scholarly publishing', an influential blog post, originally published in 2010, that shaped the debate surrounding modes of access to publishing and editing. Reprinted in *Debates in the digital humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 319–21.

15 See, for example, John Lydgate's *Troy Book*, where one of the invitations (discussed earlier in this chapter) occurs in book five of the poem.

16 Norton has been little-studied even in the wake of the publication of a critical edition of the *Ordinal*, which circulated in more than two dozen manuscript copies. In what is perhaps the most substantial article devoted to the study of Norton since the publication of the critical edition in 1975, Cynthea Masson argues that Norton approaches his audience with a 'pedagogical agenda' ('Poetry and pedagogy in Norton's *Ordinal of alchemy*', in *Florilegium* 17 [2000], 45–58, at 46). For the critical edition, see John Reidy, ed., *Ordinal of alchemy*, Early English Text Society o. s. 272 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), from which all quotations are drawn.

17 See Appendix A for examples of other writers employing open-access corrective reading invitations.

18 Norton explains that the text is 'sett owte in englishe blonte & rude, / For this is so made to teche a multitude / Of rude peple' (lines 3089–91).

19 Norton and Lydgate both write from the perspective of authors utilizing manuscript for the transmission of their works, but the sentiments they express change little with the introduction of print. Many of Caxton's prologues may be viewed almost as quotations of Lydgate (see Appendix A), and the expectation that readers may alter the texts they view in error flourishes over the course of the sixteenth century. For example, see Percy Simpson's *Proof-reading in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 25–31. Simpson's offers the most extended analysis of the continuing use of what I call emendation invitations in early modern print culture.

20 The first word of the preface and first two or three letters of the first words in each subsequent chapter spell out, 'liber Thomas Norton of Bristol. A perfect master ye may him trowe'. Jonathan Hughes views use of the acrostic as Norton's attempt to conceal his identity because he critiques Edward IV in the *Ordinal*. See 'Politics and the occult at the court of Edward IV', in *Princes and princely culture: 1450–1650*, vol. 2. Ed. Martin Grosman, Alasdair MacDonald, and Arie Vanderjagt (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 97–128, at 125.

21 Cf. Engelsing, 'Die Perioden der Lesergeschicte in der Neuzeit'.

22 For entries into the discussion about open and closed access, see Peter Suber, *Open access* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Martin Paul Eve, *Open access and the humanities: contexts, controversies, and the future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

23 For posts by Wardrip-Fruin with readers' comments, and for Wardrip-Fruin's evaluation of the process, see https://grandtextauto.soe.ucsc.edu/category/expressive-processing/. For the *Shakespeare Quarterly* crowd-sourced editing issue (61:3, Fall 2010), see its introduction by Katherine Rowe, guest editor, at http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/mcpress/ShakespeareQuarterly_NewMedia/.

24 On the development and identification of this generation of internet culture as a sharing economy, see Nicholas A. John, 'Sharing and Web 2.0: The emergence of a keyword'. *New Media and Society* 15:2 (2012), 167–82.

25 Kathleen Fitzpatrick, *Planned obsolescence: publishing, technology, and the future of the academy* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), at 56. For an assessment of how this might affect publishing in medieval studies, see Holly Crocker's introduction to the *postmedieval* forum discussion on the status of academic review, 'Introduction: how open, or, can vulnerability go digital?' Online at https://postmedieval-forum.com/forums/forum-ii-states-of-review/introduction/ along with the other essay distributed in this forum.

26 See Appendix A for other examples of invitations to emend; that quoted from William Caxton can be found in his publication of the *Golden Legend*, excerpted in *The prologues and epilogues of William Caxton*, EETS 176, ed. W. J. B. Crotch (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), at 73.

27 This point also applies to the expansiveness of medieval media practices, an issue addressed further in subsequent chapters.

28 See Crane, 'The writing lesson of 1381', 204.

29 Rodney H. Jones and Christoph A. Hafner, *Understanding digital literacies: a practical introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), at 43; Marohang Limbu, 'Digital and global literacies in networked communities: epistemic shifts and communications in the cloud era', *Digital rhetoric and global literacies: communication modes and digital practices in the networked world*, ed. Gustav Verhulsdonck and Marohang Limbu (Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2014), 131–153, at 141.

30 Although not to any great degree – no work of interactive fiction of which I am aware positions the writer at the keyboard, able to respond in person to each interaction of readers with her text. Rather, the modifiability of hypertext fiction produces an illusion of readers and writers engaged in dialogue through the text and the technological means of displaying it. This point further illustrates what Wendy Chun refers to as the fantasy of freedom (here, the freedom to converse beyond the physical boundaries of immediate presence) developed in digital media discourse (*Control and freedom: power and paranoia in the age of fiber optics* [Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 2006]).

31 It is worth noting that Wardrip-Fruin discovered this expectation to be a fantasy: he did not have time to address the comments he received. See 'Blog-based peer review: four surprises', http://grandtextauto. org/2009/05/12/blog-based-peer-review-four-surprises/ at paragraph 21 and following. This suggests, as will be discussed below in its medieval application, crowd-sourced, open-access approaches did not produce a sustainable practice for writers or readers.

32 Spiro Kiousis, 'Interactivity: a concept explication', in *New media and society* 4.3 (2002), 355–83, at 356.

33 Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing press as an agent of change: communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe*. 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

34 For a magisterial response to Eisenstein's argument, along with a detailed counter depicting seventeenth-century attitudes towards the instability of printed texts, see Adrian Johns, *The nature of the book: print and knowledge in the making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

35 In this and all the ratios following, the first number represents the portion of open invitations; the second, closed invitations; and the

third, hybrid invitations. For this first ratio, the raw totals of open, closed, and hybrid invitations are: 1, 1, 2.

36 For 1480–99 the raw numbers of invitations total 11, 2, 4.

37 See Appendix A for quotations from texts providing invitations to emend.

38 Lotte Hellinga, *Caxton in focus: the beginning of printing in England* (London: British Library, 1982), 101–2, at 102.

39 On the role of the printing press in this period, see Julia Boffey, 'From manuscript to print: continuity and change', in *A companion to the early printed book in Britain, 1476–1558*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Woodbridge, UK, and Rochester: Boydell and Brewer, 2014), 13–26.

40 Barry Windeatt, 'The scribes as Chaucer's early critics', *Writing after Chaucer: essential readings in Chaucer and the fifteenth century*, ed. Daniel Pinti (New York: Routledge, 1998), 27–44. Ralph Hanna discusses even more significant textual differences in the stemmatic affiliations of *Troilus* manuscripts in *Pursuing history: Middle English manuscripts and their texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), in chapter seven, 'The manuscripts and transmission of Chaucer's *Troilus*', 115–29.

41 As Daniel Wakelin argues in *Scribal correction and literary craft: English manuscripts 1375–1510* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), however, emendation is one of the ways scribes commonly adjusted and interacted with the texts they copied.

42 Subsequent scholarship has complicated the argument that the *Constitutions* generated a climate of censorship and can be partly held responsible for the 'dullness' of fifteenth-century literature, but for the most influential voice supporting this analysis of the *Constitutions* as exerting a repressive effect on vernacular religious literary composition, see Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and cultural change: vernacular theology, the Oxford translation debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1407'. *Speculum* 70:4 (1995), 822–64. For an overview of responses to Watson's argument, see the special issue of *English Language Notes* 44:1 (2006), 'Vernacular theology and medieval studies: literary history and the religious turn', ed. Bruce Holsinger and Elizabeth Robertson, dedicated to this topic.

43 From *The myroure of oure ladye*, EETS e. s. 19. Ed. John Henry Blunt (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1873, repr. 1998), 8–9.

44 Rob Cover, 'Audience inter/active: interactive media, narrative control and reconceiving audience history', in *New Media & Society* 8.1 (2006), 139–58, at 140.

45 See Minnis, *Medieval theory of authorship*.

46 See Katherine Kerby-Fulton, *Books under suspicion: censorship and tolerance of revelatory writing in late medieval England* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2006).

47 The *Pricke of Conscience* quote comes from *The pricke of conscience (stimulus conscientiae): a Northumbrian poem by Richard Rolle de Hampole*, ed. Richard Morris (Berlin: A. Asher, 1863), line 9587; the Wycliffite gloss is transcribed in Margaret Deansely, *The Lollard Bible and other medieval biblical versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), at 457. Excerpts from both texts are available in Appendix A.

48 All the texts referenced above are excerpted in Appendix A. The Capgrave quote comes from *The life of St. Norbert by John Capgrave*, ed. by Cyril Lawrence Smetana (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediavel Studies, 1977), lines 19–28. John Lydgate's *Stans puer ad mensam* and John Russell's *Boke of nurture* are available in *Early English meals and manners*, ed. F. J. Furnivall. E.E.T.S. o. s. 32 (London: N. Trübner, 1931); the relevant lines of *Stans puer* are 92–9 and, of the *Boke of nurture*, 1235–8.

49 Sande Cohen, 'Publication, knowledge, merit: on some politics of editing'. *Cultural critique* 75 (Spring 2010), 114–47, at 126.

50 Deleuze and Guattari, *A thousand plateaus*, 127.

51 Espin Aarseth, *Cybertext: perspectives on ergodic literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1.

52 For the most influential discussion of books and manuscripts as technologies, see Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy Vickers, 'Introduction: language machines', in *Language machines: technologies of literary and cultural production*, ed. Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy J. Vickers. (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–16, esp. 3–5.

53 Cover, 'Audience inter/active', 140.

54 Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *Iconography and the professional reader*, and Deborah McGrady, *Controlling readers: Guillaume de Machaut and his late medieval audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

55 See, for example, Wakelin, *Scribal correction and literary craft* and the essay collection *Author, reader, book: medieval authorship in theory and practice*, ed. Stephen Partridge and Erik Kwakkel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), and Matthew Fisher, *Scribal authorship and the writing of history in medieval England* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

56 David McKitterick, *Print, manuscript and the search for order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 183.