Reviews

A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer Volume II The Canterbury Tales: The General Prologue. Part One A, edited by Malcolm Andrew, Daniel J.Ransom, Charles Moorman with the assistance of Lynne Hunt Levy. xxvii+298 pp; *Part One B Explanatory Notes*, by Malcolm Andrew. xxiii+623 pp. (Norman OK and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993.) ISBN 0-8061-2552-7.

This latest production of the Variorum Edition of Chaucer is the largest to date. The General Prologue [GP] is issued in two volumes, divided as follows. Volume 1 contains, firstly, the critical commentary dealing with sources and analogues, the date of composition, development of scholarly writing, particular approaches and topics, interpretations, and language and style. Secondly, there is the textual commentary, which contains the textual tradition, evidence of the glosses, table of correspondences, and descriptions of the manuscripts and printed editions. Thirdly, the text itself follows and on each page underneath the text there is the apparatus criticus together with comments on manuscript variations and readings as well as editorial comments and proposals. This is followed, finally, by an appendix containing those passages with translations from the texts which have been identified as sources for GP, an extensive bibliographical index which relates to both volumes, and a general index which relates only to this volume. The second volume contains a comprehensive account of all comment on GP together with an index restricted to the commentary in this volume. This arrangement was forced on the editors by the large amount of critical work done on GP and this is why so many contributors have been involved.

Some of the sections are those which form part of the normal pattern established for the Variorum. In GP, however, the critical commentary in volume one is separated from the critical commentary found in volume two. Much of the comment on GP has been on individual lines or individual portraits, and this makes it difficult to trace a coherent attitude to criticism of GP itself. Consequently Professor Andrew who is responsible for the commentary in both volumes has divided the main outline in volume one into the various parts outlined in the previous paragraph. As far as possible Andrew keeps his comments to what he has accepted as *significant* comment for GP as a whole, whereas detailed comments on individual lines or pilgrims are kept for volume two. Naturally this can lead to some disjunction because it is not always easy to separate the one from the other. One must accept that he has made a reasonable decision in the light of the mountain of material he faced.

In an analysis of the text the Variorum maintains its tradition of considering only ten manuscripts and Caxton's first edition for detailed comparison, though unique readings in them are traced in the other witnesses. The apparatus criticus is based on all printed editions up to that of Pratt (1974); more recent editions are not recorded, even though several have been issued since then. These more recent editions have been consulted and from time to time their readings are commented on in the accompanying explanatory notes.

Differences in punctuation are not normally recorded in the apparatus criticus, although occasionally a difference in punctuation is recorded in the notes. This is unfortunate as the punctuation can make a considerable difference to an understanding of what a passage means and, for example, comments on the punctuation used at lines 346 and 367 would have been welcome. No attention is likewise given to punctuation in the commentary on language and style in the introduction, for this section is essentially concerned only with style, and language as such receives little or no mention. The base text is Hengwrt [Hg] as is standard for the Variorum, but its text is given modern punctuation including capitalisation and word-division. The edition sometimes keeps words separate, sometimes introduces hyphens, and sometimes joins words as compounds. Where the edition's word-division differs from Hg or from other editions, this is not recorded in the notes, even though once again word-division may differ from one editor to the next and occasionally this can cause a difference in interpretation. What the editor thinks of as abbreviations are expanded silently in the text,and occasionally these are commented on in the notes. Thus the cross-stroke through final ll in *Averylle* (line 1) is interpreted as e; this expansion is referred to, but not justified in, the notes. The claim in the note that 'all the printed editions read some form of *Aprille*' (p.127) is true for the editions used for comparative purposes, but my own 1980 edition does not since it keeps the Hg reading. Since the notes sometimes refer to differences in my own and other recent editions, a reader might be forgiven for assuming that all differences found in such editions was recorded; they are not. Macrons over and flourishes attached to a final consonant are usually interpreted as an abbreviated e and this leads to such forms as *sope* (334), *tope* (590), *sleepe* (397) and *youre* (804.) There is no discussion of whether the first two abbreviations might not have been better expanded as *soppe* and *toppe*. Where the final flourish is attached to a letter in a group that can be interpreted as ou, it is interpreted as n, as *haubergeoun* (76), though whether the flourish represents the final n or the penultimate u is not clear. This point is significant because at line 820 this flourish is interpreted as a medial o to give the reading *echoon* (to rhyme with *anoon*) rather than *echoun*. The normal spelling of words like this is simple -on as at lines 747-8 where *euerichon* rhymes with *anon*. One can understand why the editors did not want the reading *echoun*, but it rather throws in question whether this flourish should be interpreted as an abbreviation at all. This reading is not commented on.

As it says in the introduction 'Despite Hg's number of uncommon readings, the present edition emends Hg only three times' (p.64.) An uncommon reading is one which is not supported by at least ten manuscripts, though this is a strange figure to choose since the editors appear to accept the Manly/Rickert proposal that for GP we should accept five major lines of descent. This could suggest that what is important is whether there are variations in these five lines of descent rather than across ten manuscripts. In GP there are 45 such readings in Hg as compared with 37 in Ellesmere [El]. It is difficult to evaluate the significance of these figures. There is a difference between the first part of GP up to line 300 and the second part. In the first part Hg has 23 unique readings and El only 7, whereas in the second part the respective numbers are Hg 22 and El 30. In other parts of the poem Hg tends to have a lower number of unique

readings than El. The three emendations in Hg made in this edition are, firstly, the change of *is* to *was* in Hg's 'There as this lord is kepere of the selle' (172.) Hg's reading is unique here, but its meaning is satisfactory and hardly merits alteration. The change is not justified, though the notes contain some discussion of the punctuation of the neighbouring lines. The position seems to be roughly as follows. Many scholars assume that line 172 follows directly on to line 171 and in that event the reading *was* makes better sense. But several editors think that line 172 goes better with line 173, and this is particularly true if the line reads *is*. It may well be that a change of *is* to *was* was made by a scribe or editor who thought that 172 should go with 171 rather than with 173 and consequently felt the past tense was more appropriate. Secondly, at line 324 (wrongly given as 342 on page 64, and not included in the list of Hg's unique readings on page 65) Hg and one other manuscript do not read *the* in 'That from tyme of kyng william weere falle'; but *the* is included in this edition. Once again the reason for the emendation is not given, but it may be partly a matter of language since determiners were becoming more regular at this time or of metre since the line has otherwise only nine syllables. But there are many instances where *tyme* has no determiner in the poem as a whole (cf. 1:1637, 1834, 3666) and there are equally many examples of nine-syllable lines. The third emendation is the inclusion of the couplet 637-8 in the description of the Summoner which may have been caused by eyeskip, though the couplet is not found in one other manuscript and its lines are bracketed in another as though they are not part of the original text. A fourth manuscript omits one of these lines and changes the rhyme. So it is clear that something unusual applied to this couplet; it may have been added or marked for deletion. The decision whether to include this couplet is a fine one, but the other two emendations are less justified. This seems particularly so in view of the fact that the edition reads *Rusus* at line 430. This reading instead of *Rufus* is found in several manuscripts and this edition assumes with Manly and Rickert that it must, therefore, have been in the copytext used by the scribes. But the reading is erroneous and the commentary clearly accepts that the reference is to Rufus. The preservation of the reading raises the question what text the edition is trying to offer, and this is a point which is not discussed in the volume. Is the edition trying to create this assumed copytext or is it trying to reconstitute Chaucer's original, assuming that these two are different? Although the edition states that Hg is the base text for the edition, it does not say how it intends to handle it or what precisely the edition represents. Why emend the one unique reading in Hg and two readings supported by other manuscripts, when other readings with little manuscript support are retained and when a reading which makes no sense is not emended? Two further readings in the edition merit mention. At line 32 the edition reads *anoon*, although it is accepted that the manuscript reads *anon* with a gap between *ano* and *n.* But there is no trace of a further o and no indication that one was ever written. It does not seem satisfactory to read what might have been there, when no trace of this assumed reading can be detected. At line 60 the edition accepts *armee* rather than *ariuee* as Hg's reading, though it is impossible to achieve certainty as to what the scribe actually meant as the notes make clear.

The second volume is a monument to patient reading and hard graft. Professor Andrew has waded through a mass of material but one may question whether the expenditure of all that energy was worthwhile. Since the coverage is comprehensive, one could argue that the compiler has spent too much time on scholarship that in many cases hardly deserves that name. The volume is arranged in what might described as a descending order of length. A portrait as a whole, then individual groups of lines within the portrait, then individual lines within a group and finally individual phrases or words may elicit comments. This arrangement naturally leads to some overlap since what an individual scholar says may appear in the discussions of the portrait as a whole, of groups of lines and of individual words. Thus the association of various pilgrims with signs of the zodiac as proposed by Spencer figures with reference to the Monk in comments on lines 198-206, on lines 198-9 and on lines 201-2. There are many cross-references, but they are not always helpful. The cut-off date for comment is 1985, which is different from the date used for editions, but references to works written after that date are found. Scholars quoted have to be looked up in the first volume, because the bibliography is not repeated in the second. Professor Andrew has spent a considerable amount of time in reading older scholarship and what he has found is sometimes interesting in predating what was re-discovered in later scholarship. Whether the results justify this length is uncertain. It is to my mind a weakness that authors are sometimes quoted through a single phrase or clause as though this quotation provides the kernel of what they thought. Thus on p. 127 it is said that Hales understood line 119 to mean that 'the Prioress never swore at all'; that Skeat claims there is support here for her 'love of gold and corals,' and that Kittredge claimed 'that in those days everybody swore.' Inevitably these quotations are plucked out of the work in question and do not necessarily give a balanced account of the whole work. Because the arrangement is largely chronological, Andrew cannot pick out the major themes and subsume the various accounts under a more general approach. He is very restrained in his account of the various opinions he refers to; he rarely says that an opinion is wrong or stupid. He confines himself to coded criticism by using such adverbials as 'curiously' and 'surprisingly.' The result is a blow-by-blow report of what has been written on each part of the Prologue which is at times somewhat indigestible. This is not Andrew's fault since he has carried out his brief remarkably well. What it does call into question is whether this is the most sensible use of a senior scholar's time and energy. The second volume will remain a veritable repository of information on what has been written on GP and future editors will no doubt use it to help them in their work. Other scholars are likely to dip into those parts which might seem of value to what they are doing. Few will actually try to read it from cover to cover.

The production of this book is excellent. The editors are to be complimented on the accuracy with which they have accomplished their task, for misprints and mistakes are few. The result is somewhat lengthier and organised less helpfully than most scholars might wish for, but then GP is different from the rest of Chaucer's output. Whether it should have been pruned is a question that constantly arises as one reads through the two

volumes. But we should be grateful for the material crammed between these four covers even if few will exploit it to the full.

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The Canterbury Tales*: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions*. Edited by John M. Bowers. A Teams Middle English Test Series Book. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Western Michigan University, 1992. ISBN 1-879288-23-0. vii + 200 pp. Price $8.95.

This volume consists of a brief introduction (pp.1-5), select bibliography (pp.5-10), editions of five texts or groups of texts (pp.11-196), and a short glossary (pp.197-200.) The five edited works are the prologue to Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, The Ploughman's Tale from the Christ Church manuscript, The Cook's Tale with the additions found in Bodley 686, two short sets of spurious links (one from Lansdowne 851 and the other from Royal 18 C ii), and The Canterbury Interlude and The Merchant's Tale of Beryn. Each of these edited works consists of a short introduction, the text itself with glosses of difficult words in the margin, and notes at the end. The purpose of the glossary at the end of the book is not clear since glosses are given in the margin of individual texts, but it may be intended to provide glosses for common words which are not glossed in the margin.

The purpose of the book, as its title indicates, is to provide editions of fifteenth-century continuations and additions. No information is provided as to what a continuation or addition might be, for there is no discussion of what might constitute Chaucer's text. It appears to be accepted that what is in the *Riverside Chaucer* is indeed the definitive text of the poem left by Chaucer and so anything not found in that edition constitutes an addition. However, there are many pieces which are not in that edition which are not included here. Thus, the Tale of Gamleyn is not edited in this volume, though the reason for its omission is not clear. Bowers writes 'while *Gamelyn* survives in a large number of manuscripts as a replacement for the unfinished Cook's Tale, the fourteenth-century romance was not written in response to Chaucer but was, quite possibly, found among the author's papers as a possible source for a substitute tale that was never composed' (p.vii.) It would appear it was because this tale was written in the fourteenth century that it is not included here. But he includes the Ploughman's Tale from the Christ Church manuscript, though not that from Thynne's edition of 1542. Neither was written 'in response to Chaucer,' even if both were written in the fifteenth rather than the fourteenth century, and yet only one is included. Naturally, there are many additions in a large number of the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, but the additions included here are somewhat restricted. No reason is given for the arbitrary decision of what is included or not. It is true that the editor claims that his book

'is a practical edition aspiring to no great scholarly rigor' (p.vii), but the premisses on which the edition is based do need to be made clear.

Bowers isolates four types of addition or supplementation of the poem. These are: to allow for a return trip to Southwark; to provide links for tales in the poem; to provide endings for unfinished tales; and to give pilgrims without a tale a narrative as his or her contribution. He neglects additions made within the tales, though he edits The Cook's Tale from Bodley 686 and highlights not only its new ending, but also the additions made within the body of the tale itself. Indeed, many tales in different manuscripts have similar additions. This edition, therefore, contains some additions and continuations, but it is by no means comprehensive.

Bowers is of the opinion that many of the additions are politically motivated. He sees in them the hand of Thomas Chaucer, Geoffrey's son, and his attempts to provide support for the new Lancastrian dynasty. This position is not argued in any depth and seems to be in conflict with the other view he expresses, namely that editors of the poem in the fifteenth century were distressed by the unfinished nature of the poem and tried manfully to create the impression of a complete work. The select bibliography is very patchy and does not contain many of the books or articles which have been devoted to the textual development of the poem over the last fifteen to twenty years. No one looking at this bibliography would have any inkling that there had been so much controversy over the manuscript tradition recently. There are, on the other hand, references to more sophisticated discussions of how to edit Middle English works, which appear to sit rather uncomfortably with the expressed view that this edition aspires to 'no great scholarly rigor.' References are provided throughout the book, as in the introductions and notes to each edited text; but it may be difficult for the reader to find out full bibliographical information about such books. In the opening note to the *Siege of Thebes* a reference is given to 'The Middle English encyclopedia *On the Properties of Things*' (p.19) and page references to various discussions in this work are added. But a student might find it hard to track down what edition was intended and how to find the specific passages referred to through the page numbers.

The texts are edited with modern paragraphing, punctuation, capitalisation, and word-division, and the letter forms have been modernised. Otherwise, the original spellings have been retained. Generally speaking the texts have been edited conservatively, and any changes are recorded in the notes. This decision is quite sensible and Bowers has largely taken his lead from previous editors who have edited these texts. The glosses in the margin are not always very helpful, and sometimes they are wrong. Consider some examples from Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*. On p.15 l.96 the expression *wel broke ye youre name* has the gloss 'broached,' presumably as a translation for *broke*, though how the readers would understand the gloss is difficult to imagine. However, on p.62 l.66 the expression *now broke we thy name* is glossed in the margin 'do credit to.' Not only is this gloss more correct, but there is no cross-reference to the previous example. Similarly the gloss for *I dar my hede assure* (p.15 l.103) as 'guarantee' hardly strikes the right note. An annotation for *this whil* (p.14 l.66) might have been welcome by students reading this text. Throughout all the texts there are

numerous words which might not be known to students in their Middle English form and which could reasonably have been glossed and others which are glossed in a somewhat unhelpful way. Common Middle English words which might have been glossed include *skill, hoppe, by any way, had up* and *religiouste*. Words which are not helpfully glossed include *sook* 'suckled' (p.26 l.21), though the subject is the baby Jesus and not his mother as the gloss 'suckled' implies, and *excitacioun* 'spiritual exercise' (p.27 l.46) where the meaning is probably 'awakening' as suggested in the *Middle English Dictionary*.

The problem with this edition is that it is not quite clear for whom it is intended. It appears in a series which is devoted to student texts and so one must assume it is meant for undergraduates and new postgraduates. For them a complete collection of the additions in the Chaucer apocrypha might have been welcome. That some texts have been edited elsewhere seems irrelevant, since students might not have access to such editions. The impression from the title of the volume is that the whole of the apocrypha is included and it might have been more helpful to students if that implied promise had been honoured. Students might also need a little more discussion about how one decides what is added to the text, which means some discussion about the text as left by Chaucer. A little more care as to what should be glossed or commented upon would also have been helpful. Students are not likely to have much interest in editorial minutiae and to include these with general notes might confuse them as to what was important in these texts. Nevertheless, it is difficult to get hold of some of the texts edited in this volume and Professor Bowers has done us a service by making them more readily available at a reasonable price.

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Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Legend of Good Women*. Edited by Janet Cowen and George Kane. East Lansing, Michigan: Colleagues Press, 1995. xii + 344 pages.

For the past three decades—indeed, since George Kane published his edition of the A version of Langland's *Piers Plowman* in 1960—debate about editing of Middle English texts has centred around the problems of the *Piers Plowman* tradition. By contrast, there has been relatively little attention given to the editing of Chaucer. Editions of Chaucer there have certainly been, prominent among them the *Variorum* Chaucer and the new Riverside, but the less-expert observer might be forgiven for thinking that Chaucerian editing is a peaceful business, compared to the warfare surrounding Langland's text.

There have been signs that this consensus (if that is what it is) is more apparent than real. Blake's articles, and his edition of *The Canterbury Tales*, have pointed to fundamental unresolved issues in the textual history of this work; other studies by (among others) Moorman, Owen, Ramsey, and Hanna have focussed on some of these issues; the very different approaches taken by the

Variorum and Riverside editors imply disagreement, without necessarily articulating it. Above all, there has been Kane's own article on Manly and Rickert's work (printed in Paul Ruggiers' *Editing Chaucer*: *The Great Tradition*) on *The Canterbury Tales*, and Kane's judgement in this piece that no part of Manly and Rickert's work is be trusted, and it must be entirely redone. In a long footnote to that article Kane outlines the procedures he thinks such an edition should follow:

Step 1. All the variants at every point, in every witness, should be identified;
Step 2. These variants should be scrutinized to establish, by editorial judgement, the original reading at each point;
Step 3. The agreements in unoriginal readings among witnesses at each point should be gathered, and the witnesses grouped into families on the basis of shared agreements.

A text may then be issued, giving the text of the putative original as established by the editor in (2) above, with all the variants from this original (as in 3 above) contained in an apparatus. This is exactly the model Kane established in his 1960 edition of the A version of *Piers Plowman*, and deployed in his 1975 edition of the B version with Talbot Donaldson.

This, too, is the model for this edition of *The Legend of Good Women*: thus the editors' declaration in the first sentence of their Preface (p. vii.) As the first application of these methods to a text outside Langland, and especially to a major Chaucerian text, this edition is accordingly of the deepest interest. The components of this edition will be familiar to readers of the *Piers Plowman* editions: a lengthy introduction, in this case consuming half the volume and containing intricately-detailed accounts of the manuscript variants and much else; an original-spelling text; a full corpus of variants in the apparatus.

Far the longest section of the introduction, at 69 pages, is the 'Analysis of variants in the *Legend*' section. This is the heart of this edition. Here, as in the similar sections in the Langland editions, the editors gather every variant, in every witness, and group them into categories according to the scribal variation exemplified (in the editors' opinion) in each variant: nearly eight pages for variants resulting from 'inducement of preceding copy,' five pages for 'inducement of following copy,' three pages for 'grammatical attraction,' and so on. Other parts of the introduction treat the variants in the Gg 4.27 copy, and in the Prologue. These sections of the introduction are vital because it is through these lists that the editors reveal their identification of the original reading at each point of the text, and their justification of this identification: Kane's Step 2, above.

There are some difficulties with this procedure. Firstly, the editors assert, with characteristic rigour, that because only agreement in unoriginal readings is significant of shared descent from exemplars below the archetype, therefore no genetic analysis of the manuscript relations is possible until the originality of each reading is determined. This is not correct. Cladistic methods, and their capacity to create 'unrooted trees,' have shown that it is not necessary to identify the original reading at each point before proceeding to stemmatic analysis. O'Hara and I discuss this at some length in our article on 'Computer-

assisted Stemmatic Analysis' in the first *Occasional Papers* volume. Consider a tradition of fifteen witnesses, all descending from an archetype 'O.' We discover that the witnesses divide neatly into three groups A, B, and C, each of five witnesses, with the witnesses of group A sharing the A set of variants, those of group B sharing the B set of variants, those of group C sharing the C set of variants. We can then examine those three sets of variants. It is likely that two of these sets (say, the A and B sets) will show evidence of being non-authorial and scribal, and thus likely to have each been introduced into the tradition by a single exemplar below the archetype. However, it is possible that the third set of readings (the C set) shows no evidence of being non-authorial and scribal. In this case, the five witnesses of this group do not share any exemplar below the archetype. Thus, they are not a genetic group in the sense that the witnesses of groups A and B are. Rather, the witnesses of C are related only through common descent from O, and the readings in which C witnesses agree against other groupings have come by descent from O itself, and not descent from a hyparchetype below O.

This model (which is the method used by the *Canterbury Tales* Project) inverts the procedures followed by Kane and Cowen. Where they first identify originality, and then identify the groupings, in this model one first identifies the groupings, and then examines the variants in these groupings for evidence of originality or otherwise. There is a simple practical advantage in this model: instead of having to assess the originality of every reading, in advance of stemmatic analysis, one has only to assess the originality of those readings which are apparently characteristic of witness family groupings. This will save considerable editorial effort. However, there is reason to think that the method adopted by the Kane and Cowen may have had other and more serious consequences, beyond the expenditure of their labour. The editors' method rests entirely on their confidence that through their long experience of scribal variation, and through their special feeling for Chaucer's poetry, they are able to deduce from the range of variants at every point just what the original reading was, and how this came to be corrupted into the extant variants.

The skill, sensitivity, and experience of the editors are evident on every page of this edition. Yet, there appear to me to be profound theoretical difficulties with this model. Chief among these is: exactly what is meant by 'the original reading'? Is this the reading of Chaucer's own autograph; of a scribal copy prepared under Chaucer's supervision but perhaps containing errors; or is it the reading of the most recent exclusive common ancestor of all extant witnesses, which might actually be separated by several stages of copying from Chaucer's own copy? It is an axiom of stemmatics that it can only reveal the readings most likely to have been present in the most recent exclusive common ancestor. But at various points, it is clear that the editors believe that what they are identifying is Chaucer's own reading: thus on p. 41 the editors list five readings where they believe all witnesses are in error, and in each case give what they think is the 'correct' reading—that is, Chaucer's own reading. In cases such as this, the editors feel themselves able to go beyond the actual manuscript evidence. This reader does not always feel able to go with them, as I will show in my discussion of some of these readings.

A second difficulty arising from the editor's policy of identifying 'original readings' first, and only then attempting to recover the history of the copying of the text through analysis of genetic agreements, is that the editors do not use this late-acquired knowledge of the history of the copying to assess the authority of any one reading. In theory, having arrived at a determination of the manuscript relations, the editors might use that knowledge to re-assess their decisions concerning the originality, or otherwise, of each reading. In practice, there is no evidence that the editors ever did this. There is at least one important group of readings where their analysis of witness relations, as the editors have themselves presented it, might have led them to question their choice of 'original reading.' This is the group of sixteen readings given on page 40 as cases where the editors believe that Gg 4.27 alone preserves the correct and 'original' reading, against all other witnesses. The problem with this goes to the heart of the editors' treatment of this important manuscript. It is well known that Gg 4.27 preserves a different authorial version of the Prologue to that found in all other witnesses: the editors acknowledge this by printing the Gg version of the Prologue separately. The existence of this distinct authorial version of the Prologue in Gg then raises a question about the status of the rest of the text in Gg: does the authorial revision cease in the Prologue? or does it continue throughout? In particular: if we accept that Gg represents a distinct authorial version, in whole or in part, then are we dealing with one manuscript tradition or with two manuscript traditions?

The answer to this last question is crucial to the editing of this text. If we consider that this is a single manuscript tradition, despite the evidence of authorial revision, then one might use readings in Gg to emend readings in the other recension; and vice versa. But if one believes there are two manuscript traditions, then one cannot use the readings in the one tradition to emend the readings in the other. The editors ask explicitly, on pp. 39-40, whether there are one or two manuscript traditions. Their answer is uncharacteristically ambiguous: yes, Gg does represent a distinct version and so a distinct tradition; but no, it is only distinct in precisely those places where there actually is authorial revision. The editors then introduce the notion of 'correction' rather than revision: they assert that where Chaucer 'corrects' (say, in Gg) an error in the other version, then that correction should actually be imported back into that other version. Not only must the editors distinguish author from scribe, but they distinguish the author as reviser from the author as corrector. This distinction of 'reviser' and 'corrector' leads them to the conclusion that 'for practical purposes' Gg 'belongs to the main tradition,' except in just those relatively few places—all of them in the Prologue—where 'revision' rather than 'correction' is clearly present. Thus, they feel free to use readings in Gg to emend those in the other version, except where there is clear revision.

In the course of this argument, the editors do not consider the evidence of their own analysis of the witness relations within the tradition, presented on pages 20 to 42. This analysis points to a different conclusion. According to the editors, all the manuscripts fall into two groups—except Gg, which belongs to neither group (p. 38.) This conclusion is not based on the evidence of revision in Gg, but purely on the absence from Gg of the introduced readings which

characterize these two manuscript groups. On the face of it, this sharp distinction between Gg and all the other manuscripts is consistent with there being two manuscript traditions, not one. There is no sign that the editors saw this implication, or let it influence their argument. From the separation between Gg and the other manuscripts, it is likely that Chaucer issued two distinct fair copies. One of these was the ancestor of the version contained in Gg, and Gg alone; the other was the ancestor of the version contained in all the other witnesses. It is possible that one might have a manuscript tradition in which there is authorial revision, but that this revision never resulted in the issuing of two distinct and complete authorial copies. Rather, the author might have made revisions, as corrections, deletions, marginal alterations, etc., within the one copy, and various scribes then might produce various versions based on this one copy. If this were the case for the *Legend of Good Women*, then the editors' hypothesis of all the witnesses including Gg belonging to the one tradition, albeit one rather complicated by revision, might be correct. But this is a case which has to be argued from evidence. The editors produce no evidence and no argument.

Indeed, from our analysis of The Wife of Bath's Prologue it appears that this second revision scenario, by which there is only one authorial copy itself containing both the revised and unrevised text, is true of that tradition. We drew this conclusion from the analysis of the so-called 'added passages' and their distribution across the tradition. We suggest that these were present in O, Chaucer's own copy, but were marked for deletion. Most scribes respected these marks of deletion: but at least one scribe, the scribe of the Dd/A ancestor we call the α exemplar, chose to ignore the deletions and to include the passages. Further, apart from the 'added passages' there are no other signs of revision in manuscripts closely related to this α exemplar and it appears that this α exemplar is in all other respects identical with O, from which all other witnesses in The Wife of Bath's Prologue tradition descend. Accordingly, there appears to be one ancestor only and so one tradition only for The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The sporadic instances of authorial revision in the tradition result from changes made in that one ancestor, and not from the issuing of distinct and complete authorial copies.

The importance of this is that it teaches that stemmatic analysis can cast light on the nature of the earliest stages of the tradition. The distribution of authorial revisions can illuminate the nature of the ancestor, and whether we have to do with one ancestor or several. From the editors' own evidence, it appears that we have to deal with two ancestors in the *Legend of Good Women*, one for Gg 4.27 and another for all the other witnesses. Accordingly, every one of the sixteen readings given on page 40, where the editors prefer the reading given by Gg alone against that given in every other witness, is suspect. In most of these cases, the reading of the other witnesses could be defended, or the difference is marginal: thus those in lines 3, 10, 1275, 1330, 1405, 1449, 1514, 2170, 2388, 2408, 2496, 2612 and 2632; in the others, the emendation is probable, but need not depend on Gg for authority.

Particularly revealing is the editors' treatment of line 2612. This reads 'Thencence oute of the fyre reketh soote' in all but Gg; Gg has 'Thencence oute

of the fyre out reketh soote.' The majority reading is perfectly satisfactory, and there is no reason to doubt that this was the reading in the ancestor of these manuscripts. But on p. 65 one discovers that the editors have included this line among instances of error 'induced by following copy': that is, they believe that the original reading was 'Thencence in the fyre out reketh soote' but the scribes substituted 'out of' for 'in' by anticipation of the following 'out' and then omitted the 'out' in 'out reketh' later in the line. But the only evidence for 'out reketh' is Gg. If one disregards this text, as one should if it belongs to a different tradition, then there is no 'out' later in the line to influence preceding copy, and no reason to unsettle the majority reading. Indeed, one could explain the reading in Gg much more easily, as a simple case of the Gg scribe being influenced by the preceding 'out' in the line. This presumes only one error in the single manuscript Gg, rather than two in all the other manuscripts as well as an error in Gg earlier in the line.

Fundamental to the editors' difficulties with Gg is their assumption that at each point of the text there will be one, and only one, correct and original reading. Their method permits little space for authorial revision. Revision implies the substitution by the author of one 'original' reading for another. The editors concede that there is authorial revision in *The Legend of Good Women*. Despite this, again and again they feel bound, where the two versions both have perfectly plausible readings, to insist that only one of the two readings is 'original,' and then emend the other reading out of the other version. This practice affects far more than just the sixteen readings noted above. In the very first line all the non-Gg witnesses except B have 'tymes' ('A thousand tymes I haue herd men telle') where Gg has 'sithes.' On p. 141 the editors assert that 'tymes' results from 'modernization' and so emend the non-Gg text to 'sithes.' But one could as easily argue that 'sithes' results from archaization, and emend in the reverse direction. It would be much better to accept that both readings are authorial, and that Chaucer simply changed his mind between one perfectly acceptable reading and another. Later that line, the editors decide that non-Gg 'haue I' is preferable to Gg 'I haue,' and this time import the non-Gg reading into Gg. After these changes, neither first line corresponds to what is in the manuscripts: you have to read the apparatus, and not the texts, to deduce the two versions of the line Chaucer probably wrote. In line 3, all the non-Gg witnesses read 'I acorde wel that it is so'; the editors alter 'is' to 'be,' as in Gg, arguing on p. 141 that 'is' is the 'easier' reading and so is to be rejected; but 'is' gives acceptable sense and grammar. In line 4 Gg has 'this wot I wel also' where non-Gg has 'yit wot I wel also': this time the non-Gg reading is preferred, though once again the Gg reading gives good sense.

The effect of these changes is to render the two texts identical, except in those few cases where the editors admit revision. So far as I have been able to discover, the editors do not regard any single-word variant as a revision, and 'correct' all these out of existence: thus most of those listed in page 40. Logically, there seems no reason why single-word variants cannot be revisions: Chaucer surely might have altered single words, as well as phrases. But the editors seem to regard all such single word variants as 'corrections' by definition, and emend them away even when both versions give perfect sense.

Their practice appears to vary for longer variants: they accept that the variation 'That tellen' (non-Gg) / 'And trowyn' (Gg) in line 21 is revision, and here permit the texts to differ. But they emend 'God forbede' (non-Gg) in line 10 to 'Goddis forbede' (Gg), arguing on page 141 that 'God forbede' is the 'easier' reading. Indeed, this reviewer finds 'Goddis forbede' so much the harder reading that he is unable to make any sense of it. The Riverside editors gloss it as '(by) God's prohibition (?),' and the question mark is judicious: the construction appears unparalleled, and the sense demands a verb. If this is correction, one would suppose it to be from the nonsense of 'Goddis forbede' to the sense of 'God forbede'; but the editors see it differently.

There is an odd paradox about this edition. The uncompromising original spelling presentation of the text encourages expectation that this is a conservatively-edited text, which will reveal with the greatest clarity the differences between the two versions. It is no such thing. The text here presented is an editorial construct, where the differences between the two versions—so clear from the manuscripts themselves—are levelled in accordance with an editorial theory which finds it very difficult to accommodate authorial revision. Because of this levelling of the two texts, the scholar who wishes to use this edition of *The Legend of Good Women* to explore Chaucer's habits of revision will find it very frustrating. He or she will learn, if prepared to dig long and hard through the apparatus and introductions, a great deal about what the editors saw as revision, what as correction, what as scribal alteration. But for knowledge about the actual differences between the Gg and non-Gg versions the scholar will actually find it easier to use the Riverside edition.

The editors' confidence in their ability to distinguish 'original readings' has other consequences. Several of the examples above reveal a tendency in the editors to prefer an elaborate or ingenious explanation when a simple one might be available. At times, this leads to over-emendation, as in the instance of line 2612 discussed above. A similar instance is in lines 1681-3, reading as follows in Tanner 346:

> Nowe mot i sayn the exilling of kynges
> Of Rome for her horrible doynges
> Of the last· kyng Tarquineus

Reading all three lines together, it is clear that the 'horrible doynges' are those of Tarquineus, in the third line, not of the 'kynges' in the first line. Thus, the second line should read 'for the horrible doynges,' looking forward to the mention of Tarquin in the next line. But it would be very easy for scribes to think the 'horrible doynges' related back to the 'kynges' of the first line, and so change original 'the horrible doynges' to 'her horrible doynges.' One need do no more than change 'her' to 'the' to give excellent sense, and there is no cause for any further explanation or alteration.

The editors have a more complex explanation. They argue that the scribal 'her' in the second line results from 'inducement of following copy' (p. 63): to reach this conclusion, they must presume that the third line originally read

> Of her last· kyng Tarquineus

Yet, no manuscript actually reads this: every one has 'the' not 'her,' and 'the' gives excellent sense. There is no need to alter this third line. But the editors feel they have to alter it, in order to explain a variant in the preceding line, even though there is a different and simpler explanation available. This preference for the complex explanation reaches a kind of apotheosis in the editors' discussion of lines 127-138 of the Gg text (pages 136-7.) The editors give an impressively elaborated account of the sequence of errors, line after line, which might have lead to the corruptions here in Gg. Again, a simpler explanation is possible. It is notable that most of the difficulties in this passage arise at the beginning of lines, and it is possible that the Gg scribe simply had a damaged exemplar, with the beginnings of lines being particularly affected, and that the corruptions arose from the scribe's attempts to mend matters.

It is a particular difficulty with this edition that the editors' decision to remove all discussion of textual variation from the apparatus into the introduction makes it very difficult to discover the reasoning behind each individual change they make in the text. Typically, one sees a square bracket in the text; goes to the apparatus to find out what change has been made; and then has to leaf through nearly a hundred pages of classifications of variants to find out why the editors made this change. In some cases (as in the change 'haue I' to 'I haue' in the first line of Gg) one finds, after looking through the whole introduction, that no explanation appears to have been given. If after all this searching one finds the explanation and then is dissatisfied with the editors' reasoning, as in the cases noted above, it is difficult not to feel disenchanted.

For all this, it is striking, on looking through this edition as a whole, how infrequently the editors emend substantively: the intense modification of the opening lines in the two texts, commented on above, is not typical. Given that they have deliberately chosen Tanner 346 as copytext for the whole *Prologue* and *Legend* for linguistic rather than textual reasons, this might be surprising. In itself, this suggests that the manuscript tradition is rather sounder than (for example) the first sentence of page 43 ('all the manuscripts ... are corrupt to a greater or lesser extent') suggests. It is striking too how successful the minimal punctuation supplied by the editors is: by comparison, the Riverside punctuation seems fussy and intrusive. One might wish the editors had been yet more conservative. However, the lesson of this text—that a readable version of Chaucer can be made with minimal editorial intervention in punctuation and wording, and with close attention to detail of spelling and metre—is most valuable.

It is, indeed, in this attention to detail of spelling and metre that this edition is most innovative. The editors have seen very clearly that editorial treatment of spelling and metre cannot be separated. In particular, they have seen that the importance of final -e and the variety of scribal abbreviations for final -e must dictate an exact and rigorous policy of transcription. Thus, their corpus of variants records all cases where scribes use a terminal suspension where a sounded final -e is possible. Further, the editors ask a simple question: what sort of verse was Chaucer writing? From a study of the very few lines (nine only) where all witnesses agree, and where no ambiguities of final -e affect the

metre, they conclude that the prevailing metrical pattern is of a ten-syllable line of five stresses with a predominantly rising rhythm.

With this model in mind, they then carefully correlated all the cases where metrical function requires sounding or otherwise of a final -e against the grammatical function of the final -e. They found, as earlier had Burnley, that monosyllabic adjectives in weak position and monosyllabic adjectives in the plural all required sounded final -e, with the exception of some instances of al / alle. In many other grammatical situations, they found that sounded final -e was sometimes necessary, sometimes not. While the editors do not themselves spell out the easy conclusion, that Chaucer himself took advantage of the variation within the language, it appears from their summary on pages 121 to 122 that this was actually Chaucer's method. Thus, an editor must choose in these uncertain cases whether final -e is to be sounded or not on the basis of 'other variables in the line,' and not by following a simple grammatical rule. The editors also examine three kinds of variant line form which have been argued as acceptable metrical variants on the normative five-stress rising rhythm ten syllable line, among them 'headless' lines. They accept, tentatively, that Chaucer wrote 'headless' lines in this text, but leave open the verdict on the other variant line forms.

The extent to which an editor might have to emend Chaucer verse texts for metrical reasons is likely to be a source of editorial contention for years to come. Perhaps the most useful lesson of this edition is that Chaucer did have a clear sense of what was metrically acceptable, and what was not, and it is part of an editor's duty to discover Chaucer's metre for himself or herself, and to use this knowledge in editing the text. This knowledge can only be gained by the method the editors have here adopted: exact transcription, followed by close line-by-line analysis of the text in all the witnesses, based on sound understanding of the metrical and grammatical factors affecting each word.

This edition is likely to have as great an effect on subsequent editions of Chaucer as Kane's work on *Piers Plowman* has had on subsequent editions of Langland. That does not mean that Chaucer editors will slavishly follow the methods of this edition, any more than Langland editors have followed the methods of Kane's editions. Indeed, the methods of classification of the witnesses and of determination of original readings in advance of such classification avowed in this edition seem deeply flawed, to this reviewer, and should not be used by Chaucer editors. However, even here the clarity and force of the editors' presentation demands that we rethink our own methods, and what we are doing as editors. This, the scrupulous approach to metrics and spelling, and the uncompromising accuracy of the whole, render this edition a profound contribution to middle English textual scholarship.

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