

Preface

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The differences between this second *Occasional Papers* volume and the first volume, published in late 1993, reflect the changes in the *Canterbury Tales* Project over this three year period. Firstly, the number of contributors has grown. Six people were responsible for the five articles in the first volume; nine people have contributed to the nine articles in this volume. In part, this is a direct result of the expansion of the Project. In 1994, two part-time transcribers joined the Project in Sheffield: both these, Michael Pidd and Estelle Stubbs, have contributed to articles in this volume. Two of the graduate students who came to Sheffield to work on *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts in that year, Simon Horobin and Claire Thomson, also contribute material in this volume. The presence of other contributors, Beverly Kennedy and Dan Mosser, is indicative of what we hope will be an increasing interest in our work among scholars outside those working directly on the Project.

The content of this second volume also differs markedly from that of the first volume. By necessity, the first volume was exploratory and anticipatory. It outlined what we hoped to do, and the methods we might use. But it could not say very much about what we had actually done. We had done sufficient to be confident that our methods were valid, and that our aim was at least within contemplation, but no more than this. Since then, we have moved well beyond exploration and anticipation. We have completed the transcription and collation work on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, and published our first major electronic publication, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue on CD-ROM*, edited by Peter Robinson (Cambridge UP, 1996) and based on that work. Since publication of this CD-ROM, Peter Robinson and Elizabeth Solopova have been using the computer-assisted analytic tools—notably, cladistic and database analysis—described in the first volume to explore the textual tradition of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. Peter Robinson's 'A Stemmatic Analysis of the Fifteenth-Century Witnesses to *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*' outlines the results of this analysis, detailing the methods used. Where this article examines the stemmatic relations of all fifty-eight fifteenth-century witnesses, Elizabeth Solopova's 'Chaucer's Metre and Scribal Editing in the Early Manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*' concentrates on the handling of metre in six early manuscripts. Another article by Solopova, 'The Problem of Authorial Variants in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*,' focusses on the question of authorial revision in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, and particularly on the status of the so-called 'added passages' and their distribution across the manuscript tradition. These two articles, and another article by Solopova on the survival of Chaucer's punctuation in the early manuscripts (not printed in this collection; to appear in the Proceedings of the 1996 York Manuscripts conference) illustrate how closer analysis of specific aspects of the relationships between particular manuscripts can be both informed by, and can inform, wider analysis of the whole tradition.

Over the last three years, the *Canterbury Tales* Project has sought to advance towards its eventual aim, of complete transcription of all the fifteenth-century witnesses to the *Tales*, on two fronts. One front has been that of transcription of all the witnesses for a part of the *Tales*. This was the approach employed for *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, and it is also the approach now being used by the Oxford team (Elizabeth Solopova and Lorna Stevenson, directed by Peter Robinson) who are undertaking transcription, collation and publication of all the text of Fragment I with funding from the Leverhulme Trust and News International. This team is now close to completion of *The General Prologue*, and the CD-ROM of this, edited by Dr Solopova, should be published by Cambridge University Press late in 1997. In 1995, a team of transcribers at Brigham Young University, Utah, began work on transcription of Fragment VII, under the direction of Professor Paul Thomas. There are four transcribers working in the Utah team: Darin Merrill, Rebecca Johnson, Melissa Gallup, and Matt Tenney. Two junior faculty members are also to act as CD-ROM editors: Zina Petersen (*Shipman's Tale*, *Prioress's Tale*, and *Sir Thopas*) and Don Chapman (*The Tale of Melibee*.) The first CD-ROM from the Utah team, of the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, is due for publication next year, edited by Professor Thomas. The Utah work has been funded by grants from a private donor, from the Exxon Educational Fund, and from the Brigham Young University Department of English and College of Humanities. We look forward to contributions in future *Occasional Papers* volumes from members of the Utah team.

The second front of our advance has been the transcription of all the text of all the *Tales* in individual witnesses. This is the strategy of the team based at Sheffield, under the direction of Norman Blake. Four of the pieces in this volume are written by members of the Sheffield team. One of the first tasks at Sheffield was to establish a system of lineation for all the witnesses of all the *Tales*. In this system, every line, and every version of every line (including 'additional' and alternate lines, glosses, incipits and explicits), is given an identifier. This makes it possible to extract (for example) all versions of line 252 in the *General Prologue*, or all alternate forms of line 222 of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. This system had to be in place before the Project could commence transcription of all the text of any one manuscript.

In early 1994, Norman Blake devised such a system, and it has now been extensively tested by the Project. This system is described in the article 'The Project's Lineation System,' by Norman Blake. Nine complete manuscripts of the *Tales*, and substantial parts of a further two, have now been transcribed in Sheffield by the two transcribers, Michael Pidd and Estelle Stubbs, funded by the British Academy, and by graduate students. In October 1994, three graduate students began doctoral dissertations at Sheffield based on individual manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, under the supervision of Professor Blake and Andrew Prescott of the British Library. This joint supervision was made possible by the Concordat agreed between the British Library and the University of Sheffield. As part of their dissertation, each graduate student is to produce a complete transcript of the whole of the text in the manuscript. The three graduate students are Simon Horobin (working on *Ad₃*), Claire Thomson (*La*),

and Linda Cross (Ha4.) Estelle Stubbs has also now enrolled as a staff doctoral candidate, and is working on Cp and the provenance of the manuscripts of the *Tales*.

This concentration by the Sheffield team on whole manuscripts gives a different, and very fruitful, perspective to the Project's work. The most dramatic single find by members of the Sheffield team has been the discovery that important information disappeared from the Hengwrt manuscript some time between its rotographing by Manly and Rickert, in the 1920s, and its re-photographing in the 1970s. This find is the subject of the article 'The Hengwrt *Canterbury Tales*: Inadmissible Evidence?' by Michael Pidd, Estelle Stubbs, and Claire Thomson, which resurrects the name 'Stokes' on folio 85v of Hg (visible on the 1920s rotograph, but now not to be seen on the manuscript itself.) The article goes on to explore the different people of that name who might be the subject of this inscription, uncovering connections within a small group of manuscript owning families on the Suffolk/Essex/Cambridgeshire borders. This rediscovery, of the reading itself and of its possible significance, is an exemplary instance of the value of re-examination of the work of previous scholars. Without Manly and Rickert's initiative, and without the initiative of these three to look again at what Manly and Rickert saw, this reading and this information might have been lost forever.

Two of the three authors of this article, Michael Pidd and Estelle Stubbs, co-author a further article: 'A Transcriber's Tale.' This elaborates and re-examines some of the ideas about transcription broached in Robinson and Solopova's 'Transcription Guidelines,' printed in the first *Occasional Papers* volume. The lightness of tone of this article does not conceal the sheer effort involved in manuscript transcription, and the seriousness of the intellectual issues involved in the making of a computer-readable transcript of a hand-crafted manuscript. Another article by a member of the Sheffield team, Simon Horobin, concentrates again on a single manuscript, in this case Ad3. Though a very late manuscript in terms of absolute date, Horobin gives good reason to think that parts of Ad3 preserve a very early form of the text. We look forward to further articles, in future volumes, by members of the Sheffield team on aspects of particular manuscripts. The final words of Horobin's article might serve as an epigraph for the whole project: the Riverside edition is not *The Canterbury Tales*, and neither is Hg, nor El. Indeed, no one manuscript, no one facsimile, no one transcript, can be the *Tales*: it is all, and each, of these—and much else besides.

The other two articles in this volume are from scholars who are not involved, as are all the other contributors, in the day-to-day work of the project. Dan Mosser, who contributed to the first volume and also was responsible for all the 'Witness Descriptions' on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* CD-ROM, continues to give the results of his years of careful work on the manuscripts of the *Tales*, here in an article on En1. This is an interesting manuscript, for the exact localization which can be made on the basis of linguistic evidence, and for the inter-action of the two scribes who wrote the manuscript. For all the modernity of the computer methods used by the Project, at base our work must rest on exactly this careful sifting of the results of close observation. Beverly Kennedy's article returns to *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, but from a very

different perspective to that of the Robinson and Solopova articles. 'Contradictory Responses to the Wife of Bath as evidenced by Fifteenth-Century Manuscript Variants' explores the different responses to the Wife as shown by the first readers for whom we have evidence: its scribes. Kennedy examines what one might term the 'non-canonical texts' of The Wife of Bath's Prologue: the 'spurious links,' various minor and other usually unregarded variants, the 'added passages' and the glosses, for telltale evidence of scribal reaction to the text. She distinguishes two attitudes to the Wife: one informed by a negative asceticism and misogyny and the other by a more positive view of women and marriage. That some of Kennedy's findings appear to contradict views advanced elsewhere in this volume (for example, her argument that Chaucer did not write the 'added passages' conflicts with Robinson's analysis of their place in the tradition) is no bad thing: such variety challenges us, and from challenge comes advance.

A section new to this volume is reviews. This gives us the opportunity to report on work touching on matters of concern to us done by other scholars. Three books are reviewed in this section. The *Variorum Chaucer* volumes of The General Prologue are of particular relevance, as the Project's edition of this part of the *Tales* will be our next major electronic publication. John Bowers' edition of the fifteenth-century continuations and additions to the *Tales* deals with materials found in several of the manuscripts the Project is transcribing, including some dealt with in Beverly Kennedy's article. The edition of *The Legend of Good Women* by George Kane and Janet Cowen offers a model for editing Chaucer which differs in many respects from that adopted by this Project, but also reinforces the fundamental concern of the Project with exact transcription, especially with reference to metre.

It was our original intention, when we published the first of these volumes, to bring out an *Occasional Papers* volume every year. We regret that we have not been able to keep to this plan, and hope that there will be a much shorter period before publication of the next volume. On the other hand, the time that has passed since the last volume, and the many things which have happened since, means that there is much new material upon which the articles in this volume may draw. The pace of change in this Project is not likely to slow. In the next year, the Project expects to take its first steps towards Internet publication. We already have an attractive and widely-noticed Web page, managed by Michael Pidd, and we are planning to extend this towards full Internet publication of our work, in partnership with our publishers, Cambridge University Press. Also, from our work with the manuscripts and the textual tradition we have come to see how we might use our knowledge to make a new edition of *The Canterbury Tales*. There is much yet to do.