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The "minor" author and the major editor: a case study in determining the canon

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THE "MINOR" AUTHOR AND THE MAJOR EDITOR:
A CASE STUDY IN DETERMINING THE CANON

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

Christopher Andrew Healy
B.A., University of New Orleans, 1987
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these two people would not allow me to surrender to that fatalism. Calling them friends is not enough, but there is no word to fully encompass what they mean to me.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between a literary work and its printed edition in the production of reputation--the editor as gatekeeper of the reputation of a "minor" poet. That relationship is demonstrated through a case study on the effects of the nineteenth-century edition of the works of the fifteenth-century poet Thomas Hoccleve and an analysis of the lingering effects of the Foucauldian "editor-function."

The number of surviving manuscripts indicates that Hoccleve's work was well-regarded during the early fifteenth century, but his reputation fell with that of other non-Chaucerian medieval poets as later critics lost linguistic familiarity with Middle English. The Victorian-era work of the Early English Text Society was intended to reclaim the positive reception for medieval works; however, the EETS offerings achieved just the opposite result for Hoccleve's poetry and perpetuated the negative reputation the poet had acquired.

Frederick J. Furnivall's EETS "standard" Hoccleve editions, still in print, are largely unfavorable in the crucial prefatory matter, even though it is rife with transparent Victorian prejudices. Furnivall's text itself is haphazardly irregular, frequently producing--not

reproducing--the same flaws the forewords criticize. As these blemished editions have remained the standard for over a century, Furnivall's editorial irresponsibility undoubtedly slowed the critical re-evaluation of Hoccleve, which began at the end of the twentieth century.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Understanding why many of the writers who have achieved a high level of fame did so is usually not very difficult. The talents of writers like Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare, for instance, were such that their contemporaries immediately recognized the importance of what these exceptional talents had produced, and these disciples praised and revered the great writers at once. We continue to find new facets in the works of such writers, elements on which we can comment, or we reinterpret their works into a modern setting.¹ The reasons behind the amount of study on some other writers may be less obvious, for in cases like that of John Skelton, we must justify the author's position in the canon, arguing for contemporary positive reception, influence, or some other special circumstance. In any event, the writer's skills seem to be our first concern, with secondary reasons coloring our attitudes. But why a once well-received writer is not part of the accepted

¹ The 1992 movie *My Own Private Idaho*, for example, is an oddly modernized version of *1 Henry IV*, in which the basic plot is used in a modern setting, as *Westside Story* uses *Romeo and Juliet*, but in which much of the language is archaic and pseudo-Shakespearean, and in which un-Shakespearean elements, like a narcoleptic, are added.

canon is, however, not as easy a question to answer as it may at first seem.

Certainly, the change in literary tastes from the time of composition to today must play some role in an author's loss of readership, for as Richard Firth Green notes,

works which may strike the modern reader as dull (Chaucer's *Melibee*, for instance, or Hoccleve's *Regement*), or, conversely, qualities which to us may seem novel and significant, may have appeared very different to their original audiences.²

What is trite today was not always so, and we all can recognize that fact. But Green's idea that what to us is original may not have seemed so to its initial audience may strike us as provocative. Essentially, literary elements are fluid. If invention is periodic, so then must be reception.

Many literary figures are more important during the time of their literary production than they are when one considers the larger body of all English literature. For example, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning were, obviously, contemporaries, but their relative reception has not been static; in fact, at different times each of the two has enjoyed a somewhat "favored status" as

² Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980) 11.

poet, depending upon current interests and ideals of literary aims. Each writes a very different type of poetry, even if the prosody of each is skillful.

Similarly, the fiction of Stephen King is decidedly best-selling today, and yet one must have some doubt about how much he will be read in several centuries, and if he is read, which works will be in the canon. Or consider the recent removal of Chaucer-specific courses from the offerings at several universities, a curriculum change based on a belief that medieval literature is no longer pertinent to an undergraduate education and fueled by the addition of many non-English literary works to our enlarged, multicultural canon. My point is that judging a writer's talent is, we think, easy, although such a judgment can be considered suspect.

One reason there are (usually) ever-present figures in our literary canon is the continuing importance of such artists, whose works have a timeless interest stemming from their treatment of the human experience, for we generally believe what the author's of *Sounds from the Bell Jar: Ten Psychotic Authors* maintain: "The spectrum of human behaviour remains fairly constant throughout the ages. Human beliefs and activities change, feelings and

responses change hardly at all.”³ Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets are a prime example of such works, for their settings and situations, although somewhat antiquated at times, speak to continued interests in the human experience. Even if fifteenth-century England and membership in the English nobility are not in the experience of most modern readers, the struggle to meet with public and parental approval is not reserved for Prince Hal; if Renaissance culture is indeed a thing of the past, worries about aging are as valid now as when Shakespeare wrote Sonnet 73.

On the other hand, many works of literature are excluded from both popular tastes and extensive scholarly study simply because those works’ matter is considered less interesting or their quality poorer. Obviously, there are two levels of acceptance, what we might think of as the generalist and specialist canons. While *Moby Dick* and *Billy Budd* are part of the very general canon of American literature, specialists will be more conversant with Melville’s other works, such as *Typee* or *The Confidence Man*. Likewise, a Romanticist might know a fair amount about the life of John Polidori, but still not have read his “The Vampyre,” a work only those interested in

³ Gordon Claridge, Ruth Pryor, and Gwen Watkins, *Sounds from the Bell Jar: Ten Psychotic Authors* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1990) 49.

the first vampire story published in English might know. Or a medievalist and historical linguist interested in pronunciation and orthography might have waded through the *Ormulum*, while a colleague focused on ballads may have only a rudimentary knowledge of that work.

At any rate, we must remember that, at least in the case of medieval literature, the canon is somewhat clouded by such uncontrollable and unpredictable elements as survival. Consider the manuscripts containing *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Cotton Vitellius A.xv and Cotton Nero A.x, respectively)--both contain the only extant copies of these poems, and each work is a masterpiece, widely read and well-represented in anthologies. Both manuscripts were almost lost in a fire at Ashburnham House in 1731, one in which 114 books were destroyed. It is fortunate for us that these two manuscripts survived with only minimal damage. But we can only speculate about what may have been lost in that fire, or, for that matter, through other disasters, neglect, and further ravages of time. The canon, then, is not necessarily made up of the best works written, as there are instances of sheer luck involved in a work making it into the accepted canon.

In the case of a minor writer, one whose works are now little or poorly represented in standard anthologies,

our access to that writer's work is dependent on the few or single editions available. For the most part, general readers--and even scholars to some extent--are limited in their access to literature by the existence of available editions. And the reliability of the edition is of inestimable value in the reception of the text and the response of readers to the work. In essence, the major editor of such works acts as a gatekeeper, allowing readers into his or her vision of the text. If no one chooses to edit a text, readers are excluded from exposure. Consider, for instance, the thoughts of Jean-François Lyotard on the role of editors in deciding the canon:

Can you give me, says an editor, defending his or her profession, the title of a work of major importance which would have been rejected by every editor and which would therefore remain unknown? Most likely, you do not know any masterpiece of this kind because, if it does not exist, it remains unknown. And if you think you know one, since it has not been made public, you cannot say that it is of major importance, except in your eyes. You do not know of any, therefore, and the editor is right.⁴

This premise reflects the importance of editorial influence on deciding the canon, not the validity of a work's inclusion or exclusion from the canon. Likewise,

⁴ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Différend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. George Van Den Abbeele, Theory and History of Literature Series, vol. 46 (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988) 4.

if an edition is poorly done, our approach to the text is limited in its scope. Particularly in the case of medieval works that may exist in possibly one or two extant manuscripts, the importance of the editor's role of gatekeeper is ineffably pronounced. The manuscript witnesses themselves are at some level editions.

Scholars of medieval English literature are fortunate in that during the latter part of the last century the Early English Text Society set out to edit and print the greater part of the corpus of early English literature. Certainly, not all of those texts are of equal value, and many find sparse representation in recent anthologies of period literature. Hence, the Early English Text Society editions, sitting quietly on library shelves, gathering dust, are all too often the only full modern editions of some works. Yes, these works are available, but it is, more often than not, the specialist with a decided research goal in mind who seeks them out. Generally, such scholars will find whatever is needed for the footnote they are tracking down, and leave the full text virtually undisturbed. The canon does not and cannot change in this way. The actual edition of a work may play a role in the text's acceptance by critics, and thus the editor can influence the possibility of a work's entrance into the canon.

When we consider editors as "gatekeepers," first we must consider them deciding on which text to edit. The major works have been edited and re-edited, in various formats, and with different purposes in mind, often by a group of editors. Minor works are seldom edited in full or are re-edited as never-published dissertations, so such literary works do not benefit from the greater availability, ever-improving understanding, and widening base of critical response that the often edited major works do. Simply consider the history of editions of the *Canterbury Tales*: among the hundreds of editions printed in the last century, there have been several "standard" editions and a variorum in progress. We, quite rightly, feel that every few years or so we have discovered enough to warrant new editions. On the other hand, the minor work of literature remains available only in the same edition for a century or more. We have not, apparently, learned anything--or cared to try--because we have been reading the same superannuated edition and same editor's vision of the text for so long. If no textual scholar takes on the editing of a text, that text is barred from readership, because readers are, for all intents and purposes, kept from the text.

Let us suppose, however, that someone chooses to edit some lesser known work, one by John Lydgate, for example,

one that has not seen the editorial hand for a century. With a new edition, that work becomes more accessible. If its textual situation had remained static, Lydgate's poem would have become more obscure until--and only if--it might be re-edited. Obviously, readers will not necessarily run happily to read the poem simply because there is a new edition. Rather, much of the response depends upon the academy and the publisher: seldom do books that are not eagerly anticipated make an impact today without good reviews by big names, solicited by the publisher or included in popular journals, the same journals that carry the publisher's advertisements. Still, some of the reason for response to an edition must fall upon the shoulder of the editor. The job done by the editor, then, is of paramount importance to a minor work getting new notice.

So we can very readily see two factors in a work being reconsidered--that it does get re-edited and that readers have reason to re-evaluate it. Editors are gatekeepers in that they keep readers out and authors in--or vice versa. That is, the editor will admit or inhibit the two-way access of reader-to-text and text-to reader. But what if a work has not been edited in the last century, and the old standard edition is poorly done, filled with misconceptions, and hypercritical of the work

itself? It would be quite an upward battle for such a work to gain new readership, especially readers who would truly appreciate that work. Even further, the possibility that all the works of an author might all be found in standard editions only of this sort would essentially bar the author from the canon. Such is the case of Thomas Hoccleve.

This dissertation, as a case study of the minor poet and the major editor, must look at the status of both as either "minor" or "major." If we look to the theory of Michel Foucault examined in his "What Is an Author?," we see the idea that an "author's name is not [. . .] just a proper name;"⁵ it is, after all, a concept of the quality of the product produced by that author, what Foucault calls the "author function." But I would argue, in addition, that the name of the editor is also a mark of the quality of editorial work and critical value, something of an "editor function," a type of author function in itself. Hence, if the editor's name is well-apotheosized, whatever his/her commentary and the quality of his/her textual product, the edition and the critical evaluations therein are, in effect, endorsed as solid and valid. An editor/gatekeeper who has a positive editor

⁵ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984) 106.

function acting on following generations and who claims a subject author to be hardly worth reading thus creates a negative author function: the major editor creates the minor author.

When I first began studying the work of Thomas Hoccleve, I noted that those who were not Middle English specialists would almost always ask *who* he was, and Middle English specialists would frequently ask *why* I was studying him. Much of the current debate on the canon does not initially seem to apply to Hoccleve, for there is nothing on first perusal to separate him from his literary contemporaries. What Barbara Herrnstein Smith argues about an author's canonical status relying upon that writer's endorsement of dominant social ideology, that "texts that survive will tend to be those that appear to reflect and reinforce established ideologies" not those that "*radically* [. . .] undercut establishment interests, or *effectively* [. . .] subvert the ideologies that support them,"⁶ therefore, apparently does not apply to Hoccleve. Nor is the opposing argument that canonical texts are those that subversively tear down existing ideology any

⁶ Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 51.

more applicable to Hoccleve.⁷ Most of the content of Hoccleve's literary production will not appear strikingly or significantly fresh to modern readers, who ultimately decide the present canon, regardless of past response to literature.

It is, after all, the poetry itself--as it appears in the "standard" editions--apart from its content, that is the major basis for Hoccleve's exclusion from the canon during the last century. His once little-known, but respected, work was then deemed to be poor and to not lend itself to much serious critical consideration. On first perusal of his edited corpus, readers might be inclined to agree, especially with such nineteenth-century commentary ringing in their ears, for we often make our initial approach to a work with a critical preconception. Adding to Hoccleve's canonical exclusion, possibly, is the very nature of his works, for the most common theme in his corpus is self-reference, an unusual subject in Middle English literature. Although examples of medieval autobiography certainly exist--such as *The Book of Margery Kempe*--as a whole, such content is uncommon for medieval

⁷ See, for instance, Charles Alteri, "An Idea and a Ideal of a Literary Canon," *Critical Inquiry*, 10 (September 1983).

authors.⁸ As such, Louis Renza's idea that a minor writer becomes minor due to an inability to categorize the work of that writer is of some relevance to Hoccleve.⁹ Hoccleve's work, as we will see, does not fit into any particular category, even within the same work, and in many ways his writings defy modern concepts of medieval literature. In essence, this exclusion stemming from unconventionality and difficulty of categorization is also suggested by Harold Bloom in his consideration of the construction of the Bible itself. He believes that the J author in the Pentateuch has been more ignored than included, particularly in the Book of Jubilees, because that writer's content was not in line with other biblical writings.¹⁰ Still, readers respond to expectations, expectations that editors preparing texts also possess. Extra-literary elements, then, are a part of how we

⁸ Note that Kempe herself remained excluded from anthologies for quite some time, admittedly due mainly to the fact that she was not rediscovered until earlier this century. Although her work is, from a psychoanalytical stance, a fascinating disclosure of her experience and thoughts, another plausible reason she was *quickly* moved into the canon and its representative standard anthologies is probably more a result of her being an emblematic woman writer in early English literature than a product of her work's other obvious merits.

⁹ Louis Renza, *"A White Heron" and the Question of Minor Literature* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1984).

¹⁰ Harold Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truth: Poetry and Belief from the Bible to the Present* (Harvard UP: Cambridge, Mass.: 1987).

construct the canon. Foremost among these elements that we can study is the production of editions--or lack thereof--and how critics are enabled to respond to a text.

This dissertation is a case study of the gatekeeping role of the editor, analyzing Thomas Hoccleve's reception in the twentieth century and how this reception has been shaped by the nineteenth-century prejudices, both literary and personal, of Frederick J. Furnivall (1825-1910), Hoccleve's first--and to date, only--major editor, whose two Early English Text Society editions of 1892 and 1897 are the standards.¹¹

As an attempt to explain why Hoccleve failed for so long to get positive modern critical acceptance, Chapter 2 will begin by tracing the history of his critical acceptance up to Furnivall's work with the Hoccleve corpus for the Early English Text Society. Hoccleve is one of those figures who has experienced a decline in his fortunes, moving from a degree of respect from an apparently wide readership in his own lifetime to the second- or third-rate poet he has been accepted to be

¹¹ One of the EETS editions of works by Hoccleve (no. 73) was done by Sir Israel Gollancz, but it contains very minor poems and has little foreword. Gollancz did urge Furnivall to edit the poems in his own offerings, but as Gollancz cryptically notes, "with characteristic generosity" Furnivall declined. Other modern editions are either small sets of selected poems; larger, but non-critical, editions; or not readily available dissertations. Those offerings will be discussed further in this study.

until very recently. Unfortunately, Hoccleve's good reputation took a break for several centuries. Thus, we must trace a history of response to Hoccleve's work, in order to understand exactly what happened and why.

The critical history I will trace in Chapter 2 will lead up to an analysis of Furnivall's work. Furnivall, the first major modern editor of Hoccleve's work and probably the most important to date, produced the editions that even a century later remain the standards.¹² Yet Furnivall's work was directly affected by his prejudices--as are any editor's--but in a way that was distinctly unfair to his subject. Most editors are, after all, *in favor* of their author or text. Chapter 3, then, will look at Furnivall as an editor. By examining what was said, in general, about that scholar's editorial skills as well as by scrutinizing the evidence of Furnivall's prejudices against Hoccleve--both categories of information taken from his own words within his editions and from recollections of his contemporaries--we begin to see how

¹² In this dissertation, in fact, I will, unless otherwise noted, quote Hoccleve from Furnivall's editions, even while arguing the flawed nature of those editions, as these are the most complete and readily available sources of Hoccleve's writings. Although such use is seemingly at odds with my basic premise, the present situation of availability, I think, makes my point. And incidentally, my spellings of the titles *Regement of Princes* and *Lerne to Dye* will also match those of Furnivall, unless I am quoting a critic who uses a different orthography (usually *Regiment* or *Die*).

Furnivall's work might be prone to flaws. The focus of the chapter will be on explaining how Furnivall approached literature, how that approach affected his work with Hoccleve, and how Furnivall's reputation validated his work.

Next, Chapter 4 will concentrate on examining the editions Furnivall *did* produce, pointing out weaknesses and errors. The argument that the reputation of a minor poet is affected by the work of a well-known and important editor, the central premise of this case study, must examine the edition, the standing evidence. Because later critical response can be ideologically influenced by previous commentary, the first part of the chapter will look at the introductory materials that preface Furnivall's editions of Hoccleve's works. Finally, by comparing Furnivall's edition with Hoccleve's actual texts, the chapter will show the unreliable nature of what we as readers still use to approach Hoccleve's work.

Finally, the fifth chapter will trace an editorial history of Hoccleve's works after Furnivall, particularly how the EETS editions color later textual criticism and critical response to the text--more than that, shape our reception of the works. This part of the dissertation will, it is hoped, show a steady stream of over-reliance on the EETS editions of Hoccleve's works for quite some

time after Furnivall. Frequently, the texts to which literary critics had to respond--and the texts even subsequent editors often chose not to displace--were responding to Furnivall's editorial comments and emendations more often than Hoccleve's work. As such, Furnivall indeed acts as the gatekeeper. Because of Furnivall's editor function, subsequent work often was veiled mimicry or new, but long delayed.

Chapter 2

Furnivall's Forerunners

In the introduction to his 1981 collection of selected poems by Hoccleve, M. C. Seymour claims that Hoccleve and John Lydgate were vying for royal notice and noble patronage,¹ which reasserts his 1969 contention that Hoccleve "achieved a position very roughly akin to poet laureate, writing a number of 'official' poems on state occasions."² Considering Hoccleve's patronage, Sylvia Wright says in 1992 that "he is the new Gower for a new age."³ Yet it is difficult for modern readers to accept these claims, because modern critical response to Hoccleve's work has been, for the most part, marked by distaste until quite recently, leading Jerome Mitchell to generalize in 1968 that "critical opinion of [Hoccleve's] versification has almost invariably been negative."⁴ One

¹ M. C. Seymour, ed., *Selections from Hoccleve* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) xxx.

² M. C. Seymour, rev. of *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century Poetic*, by Jerome Mitchell, *Review of English Studies* 20 (1969) 483.

³ Sylvia Wright, "The Author Portraits in the Bedford Psalter-Hours: Gower, Chaucer and Hoccleve," *British Library Journal* 18:2 (1992) 200.

⁴ Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century English Poetic* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1968) vii.

gets the impression that Hoccleve has gained much of his recent attention more from critics' desire to work with a little-known--and therefore little-analyzed--author than from any deep-seated respect for his work. The publish-or-perish compulsion of the modern academy has been a boon for figures such as Hoccleve. Yet curiously, critics in the last quarter century who have turned to Hoccleve's work have more and more found it of better quality than their predecessors did. Excepting the possibility that these critics are loath to be overly negative about their subject for fear of rejection or that they are simply startled into positive comments because the poetry is not as horrid as they had been led to believe, we are left with one conclusion: Hoccleve was a fairly accomplished writer. But how can this assumption be valid when generations of earlier critics have had little good to say about his works, possibly loath to praise too highly any Middle English poet who is *not* Chaucer? This chapter will examine how and why Hoccleve's reputation changed in the centuries leading up to Furnivall's 1890s editions, illustrating the manner in which linguistic change, shifts in tastes, and unfair evaluations by major critics/historians set the stage for the Early English Text Society editions.

This history will not trace the development of the Hoccleve life-records, but rather will focus on what was said of his verse, for I want to show the way critical response can evolve--or more specifically, radically change--over time. Thus, our present attentions will turn to a chronological course in changing responses, along with some speculations about why some of the changes occurred. In addition, this history will also compare evaluations of Hoccleve's poetry to those of his contemporaries, in particular Lydgate, with whom he is frequently linked. Also of note is how those responding to these medieval authors often approach the writers by first reading their critical predecessors.

Hoccleve's Medieval Prominence

As I mention earlier, both Seymour and Wright believe that Hoccleve was a very well-received poet during his lifetime, of possible "poet laureate" status. The evidence for this contemporary positive reception is undeniable. If we look back to the fifteenth century, we can find the production of an impressive number of manuscripts that contain Hoccleve's works. In particular, the number of extant copies of the *Regement of Princes* is unignorably large, a plethora of manuscripts that is illuminating in its size. The *Regement of Princes* exists

in whole or in part in forty-four manuscripts, none of them autograph, making that work's survival the seventh highest among Middle English verse, fifth among the longer texts.⁵ Twenty-five of the extant manuscripts are specifically devoted to the *Regement* alone, another five also containing the *Series*.⁶ And Maria Marzec's stemma for the work suggests that there were at least an additional twenty-nine copies no longer surviving, excluding Hoccleve's putative fair copy.⁷ All in all, Hoccleve's *Regement* was an extremely well-read work during the medieval period.

⁵ Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943) 737. The first four of these longer texts, in descending order of manuscript survival, are *The Pricke of Conscience*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *Piers Plowman*, and *Confessio Amantis*.

⁶ Charles R. Blyth, Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes* (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan U, 1999) 14. By convention, Hoccleve's group of linked works is called the *Series*, a name first suggested by Eleanor Prescott Hammond, ed., *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1927) 69.

⁷ Maria Marzec, "The Latin Marginalia of the *Regement of Princes* as an Aid to Stemmatic Analysis," *Text* 3 (1987) 269-84. Marzec uses forty-three manuscripts in her stemma, ignoring, like most textual critics, the two leaves--one in British Library MS Harley 5977 and one in Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson D 913--that represent fragmentary remnants of a now otherwise lost manuscript. Possibly the few lines are not enough from which to postulate relationships. However, I mention the fragmentary manuscript here because it represents another medieval copy, the salient feature I am discussing.

The matter of that work, or more specifically, the part many refer to as "the *Regement* proper," was a traditional and, possibly, popular subject among medieval audiences, dealing with exactly *how* a ruler should behave.⁸ But surely if interest in comportment lessons for future kings were alone the deciding factor for such a large survival, we would see more survival of Middle English translations of this genre, and we would see more prose translations, like that of John Trevisa. Yet Trevisa's prose translation of Aegidius Romanus's *De Regimine Principum* survives in but one manuscript, Bodleian MS Digby 233.⁹ Something set off Hoccleve's work to make it so widely circulated. Unlike Trevisa's translation of *De Regimine Principum*, Lydgate and Benedict Burgh's verse translation of the *Secreta Secretorum*, or

⁸ For a discussion of such works, see Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: U of Toronto P: 1980) Chapter 5, "An Advisor to Princes," 135-67.

⁹ It should be noted that Hoccleve's *Regement* was written at least eight years after Trevisa's translation, and that Trevisa's may never have been published. See *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De Regimine Principum of Aegidius Romanus*, ed. David C. Fowler, Charles F. Briggs, and Paul G. Remley (New York: Garland, 1997) ix-xi, for the dating of Trevisa's work and speculation about its lack of contemporary circulation. See J. A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve, Authors of the Middle Ages: English Writers of the Late Middle Ages 4* (Aldershot, Hants: Variorum, 1994) for dating of Hoccleve's works.

Caxton's later English translation of Jacobus de Cessolis' *Liber de Ludo Scacchorum*, Hoccleve's *Regement* brings together the matter of all three of those works into a combined whole, his aim being, he says, to "compile" the "sentence" that "in hem thre is skatered ferre in brede" (2135). What Mitchell says of the stylistic achievement of Hoccleve's *Regement* is important to understanding the wide circulation of the fifteenth-century poet's achievement:

in the *Regement* proper the didactic element is made entertaining, partly through the poet's digressions and partly through his attempt to make the work of current interest by commenting on contemporary social problems and on the political situation in France. In addition, Hoccleve shows originality in his handling of direct discourse, often expanding parallel material in his source and heightening its dramatic intensity [. . .]. Also significant is his interspersing purely didactic material with stories and anecdotes, many of which had never before appeared in English [. . .].¹⁰

Similarly, Marzec speculates about the positive reception of the work:

it is probably Hoccleve's own additions--the autobiographical dialogue which constitutes the prologue, together with the contemporary illustrations and examples, and Hoccleve's own simple, honest style--which appealed most to fifteenth-century audiences, causing the *Regiment* to achieve a wide circulation [. . .].¹¹

¹⁰ Mitchell 30.

¹¹ Marzec 269.

It is this kind of originality (rather than "originality" in the modern sense) that made Hoccleve's work stand out. Such was the aim of any writer striving for patronage, for as Richard Firth Green observes, "serious literature of princely information left very little room for an author to express his individuality," and one way "to exploit this potentially profitable field" was to "re-work and combine recognized authorities into a new work."¹² Also, the way Hoccleve dealt with his material in a manner clearly specific to the fifteenth century and into Tudor times, what Seymour calls "his concern with practicalities and topicalities, rather than abstractions," added to the poem's popularity--not to mention the "easiness and readability of Hoccleve's presentation."¹³ Thus, all the things we see as separating Hoccleve's work from those of his contemporaries must have been recognized and appreciated by his early readers as well.

In addition to the positive reception of the *Regement*, Hoccleve's *Complaint of the Virgin*--a translation of a lyric in Guillaume de Deguileville's allegorical verse dream vision, *Pèlerinage de l'âme*--which Hoccleve produced for Joan FitzAlan, was included, during Hoccleve's own lifetime, in *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*, an

¹² Green 149.

¹³ Seymour, *Selections* xxxiii.

anonymous 1413 English prose version of Guillaume's work.¹⁴ William Caxton printed *The Pilgrimage of the Soul* translation in 1483. Another mark of his recognition as a major writer are the three portraits of Hoccleve placed within the Bedford Psalter-Hours (Add. MS 42131), as were those of Chaucer and John Gower.¹⁵ Although there are quite a few portraits of Gower, Hoccleve's three representations matches the three portraits of Chaucer. Or we might look at what is said in *The Book of Courtesye*, also printed by Caxton, a 1477 work giving a young person advice on how to conduct himself. In that work, the writer tells the "Lytle childe," among other things, to occupy himself "in redyng / Of bokys enournede wyth eloquence" (309-10).¹⁶ The work itself is about how to be a well-mannered, proper gentleman, and the authors he discusses are the four with whom a well-educated person

¹⁴ For a discussion of the debate over Hoccleve's sometimes suggested authorship of all fourteen lyrics within--or even the entirety of--*The Pilgrimage of the Soul*, see Rosemarie Potz McGerr, *The Pilgrimage of the Soul: A Critical Edition of the Middle English Dream Vision*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland, 1990) xxvii-xxix.

¹⁵ See Sylvia Wright.

¹⁶ See *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS e.s. 3 (London: Milford, 1868).

should be familiar.¹⁷ The author lists four authors, Gower, Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Lydgate, saying of them,

thes good faders Aunnient
 Repide the feldis fresshe of fulsumnesse,
 The floures feyre they gadderid vp and hent,
 Of siluereus langage the tresoure and richesse;
 Who wolle hit haue, my litle childe, doutelesse
 Must of hem begge, ther is no more to say,
 For of oure tounge they were bothe locke and key.
 (400-06)

The author of *The Book of Courtesy* recommends Hoccleve's *Regement*, giving its sentence and style high praise:

Beholde Ocklyff in his translacion,
 In goodly langage and sentence passing wyse,
 Yevyng the prince suche exortacion
 As to his highnesse he coude best devyse.
 Of trouthe, peace, of mercy, and of Iustice,
 And odir vertuys, sparing for no slouthe
 To don his devere, and quiten hym, as trouthe

 Required hym, aneneste his souereyne,
 Moste dradde and louyd, whos excellent highnesse
 He aduertysede by his writing playne,
 To vertue perteynyng to the nobles
 Of a prince, and berith wyttensse
 His trefy entitlede "of regyment,"
 Compyled of most entier true entent. (351-64)

In essence, the writer of this treatise places Hoccleve within the canon of English literature. We have here a clear contemporary critical evaluation of Hoccleve's work and an early attempt at canon-forming.

Other textual evidence indirectly attests to later favorable medieval appraisals of Hoccleve's compositions.

¹⁷ The work speaks of Gower for one stanza, Chaucer three, Hoccleve two, and Lydgate, whom he calls "laureate," for an interesting five.

For example, the compilers of the Christ Church Oxford MS 152 version of the *Canterbury Tales*, copied c. 1460-70, included, without attribution, Hoccleve's "Miracle of the Virgin" as a tale for the Plowman, to whom Chaucer had not given a tale. That use of Hoccleve's poem suggests that someone felt it was good enough to pass off as Chaucer's and that readers would accept Chaucerian authorship. Moreover, there is speculation that aside from his own literary production Hoccleve was more than simply a hired copyist for such other works--like his place as Scribe E on the Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.2 of the *Confessio Amantis*¹⁸--but also had something to do with the organizing of Chaucer's papers into the *Canterbury Tales* after the older poet died.¹⁹ Being called upon to act as

¹⁸ A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, "The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century," *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and Andrew G. Watson (London: Scolar, 1978) 163-210. Also, see A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, Paleographical Introduction, *The Canterbury Tales, Geoffrey Chaucer, A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript, with Variants from the Ellesmere Manuscript* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1979) xlvi, which suggests that scribe *F* of the Hengwrt MS may be Hoccleve.

¹⁹ For instance, David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985) 127-129, presents an argument based on style and content that Hoccleve possibly composed some of the linking material in what has come down to us as Chaucer's work. Likewise, Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwood, 1992) 289 and 338, n. 9 simply mentions the possibility that Hoccleve was an editor of the *Canterbury*

a sort of literary executor must indicate a level of respectability as one who understood literature better than the average reader.

Furthermore, Hoccleve had several important patrons during his lifetime, including Prince Henry; John, Duke of Bedford; Edward, Duke of York; Joan Beaufort, Countess of Westmoreland; Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester; Joan FitzAlan, Countess of Hereford, and related to the Earls of Arundel; and Robert Chichele, Lord Mayor of London and brother to Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury. Even after his death, probably in 1426, Hoccleve was apparently well enough respected as a writer that his works continued to be copied, as in the copying of the *Regement*, all the extant manuscripts of which date to 1425 at the earliest. For instance, in 1469 William Ebesham was paid a penny a leaf to copy the *Regement*, a salary he says is "right wele worth."²⁰ It is worth noting again that it is Hoccleve's work with the extended introductory self-referential material that gets copied. If only the information on the governance of rulers was desired, another, less *literary*,

Tales, perhaps even the editor of the important Ellesmere. Moreover, if Doyle and Parkes' conjecture is correct that Hoccleve was scribe *F* on the Hengwrt, there also we see an editorial function, as scribe *F* predominantly aims to fill in the blanks left by scribe *A*.

²⁰ Salcolner Madan, *Books in Manuscript: A Short Introduction to Their Study and Use*, 2nd ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, & Trübner, 1920) 52.

more cost-effective text could have been chosen.

Hoccleve's *Regement* has over two thousand lines that do not directly present the matter of royal action: 2,016 for the prologue and 24 for the envoy within the 5,463 line work. What is more, as a matter of practicality, poetry takes up much more room on a page than simple prose.²¹

Evidently, Hoccleve was being copied here because readers wanted to read Hoccleve, not another advice book.

Another copy of the *Regement*, that found in the Oxford Bodleian Library MS Dugdale 45, also indicates the medieval reception of the work. As Stephen Partridge has observed, the *Regement*, a "major Middle English literary text," preserved in this manuscript was written by the same scribe who wrote the Oxford New College MS 314 copy of the *Canterbury Tales*.²² As Partridge points out, although

This scribe cannot be described as top-class, as can those scribes who produced some of the best-known manuscripts of these texts [. . .] the consistency of the hand and of the decoration, however modest, the use of vellum, and the presence of a fine 15th-century binding for

²¹ Note, however, that Hoccleve's *Regement* is not a full poetic translation of *De Regimine Principum*. Trevisa's translation, for example, takes up 180 folio pages. But even at five seven-line stanzas per page, the *Regement*, without its envoy, would take up over 155 pages. Some manuscripts use four stanzas per page.

²² Stephen Partridge, "A Newly Identified Manuscript by the Scribe of the New College *Canterbury Tales*," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700* 6 (1996) 229-36.

Dugdale 45 argue that this scribe was paid for his work.²³

The decoration Partridge mentions is the time-consuming and expensive use of red ink for many first letters and to highlight glosses, which suggests that this manuscript was not a cut-rate production, as does the fact that, as Marzec proposes, this manuscript may have been directly copied from the one Hoccleve presented to John, Duke of Bedford.²⁴ Or by analogy, since the New College 314 is "the 'best' representative of the *b* group" of the *Canterbury Tales*, we can infer that a healthy price was paid when this particular scribe was set to work.

Hoccleve, we must conclude, was a quite well-received and respected poet in his own age, surprisingly so in light of his later reputation. One might assume that such a poet's place in the canon would retain some semblance of its initial preeminence, but literary history is littered with poets whose reputations do not retain their former glory.

Early Modern Acceptance

By the sixteenth century, Hoccleve was not read as widely as he had been a century earlier, indicated by the fact that even for the *Regement* there survive "no

²³ Partridge 234.

²⁴ Marzec 271. See further Partridge 235-36, n. 13.

printings to indicate interest in the work prior to the 1860 Roxburghe Club edition by Thomas Wright."²⁵ But this loss of readership should not surprise us too greatly, for that is the fate of many writers, especially of the medieval period. Still, in his 1559 *Scriptorum Illustrum maioris Brytannie, quam nunc Angliam & Scotiam vocant*, John Bale says of Hoccleve's style, "Præter alia literatorum hominum studia, poesim ipse amore summo coluit, in quo exercitii genere lepidus ac facundus & ille tandem curasit."²⁶ Even if Hoccleve's work may not have been as much a part of the everyday material of readers at this point, calling his style "elegant and even eloquent" is undeniably high praise. At this time, the English language had changed from that of Hoccleve's period, so Bale's adulation is no small thing, suggesting his ability to judge the older form of the language and his understanding of the way these changes had to be taken into account. Furthermore, note that Hoccleve is even included in this catalog of literature from "great" writers. And yet, Hoccleve remained during the Renaissance one of many forgotten authors from an earlier age, or at best a source for medieval culture studies, as

²⁵ Marzec 269.

²⁶ John Bale, *Scriptorum Illustrum maioris Brytannie, quam nunc Angliam & Scotiam vocant: Catalogus*, (Basel, 1559) 537.

he is when John Stow quotes the *Regement* on dress.²⁷ Thomas Speght's edition of Chaucer contains short commentary on Hoccleve, but critically little new, save his observation that the *Letter of Cupid* is in fact Hoccleve's rather than Chaucer's, for most of what he includes is simply quoted from Bale.²⁸ Of interest, however, is Speght's desire to present Chaucer as a "serious" poet, and so attributing "The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse" to Hoccleve because, as Derek Pearsall interprets Speght's motive, "a learned and serious poet does not write comically self-deprecating appeals for money."²⁹ If Brewer is correct, Speght was assigning Hoccleve to a qualitatively different level than the sanctified level at which Chaucer was held. In a later chapter we will see Furnivall do the same.

In the seventeenth century, just before two centuries of poor times for medieval studies, John Pits would, for the most part, follow--as later would Thomas Tanner--Bale's comments in his own 1619 biographical catalogue of

²⁷ John Stow, *A Summarye of the Chronicles of Englande, from the first comminge of Brute into this Lande, vnto this present yeare 1570* (London, 1570) 252r-252v.

²⁸ Thomas Speght, "Life of Geffrey Chaucer," *The Workes of our Antient and Learned English Poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly Printed* (London, 1598).

²⁹ Derek Pearsall, "Thomas Speght (ca. 1550-?)," *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984) 86.

English writers, *Relationum Historicum de Rebus Anglicis*³⁰, which serves also as an enumerative bibliography. In the next year, the poet William Browne of Tavistock published his 1614 *The Shepherd's Pipe*. In that work, he uses Hoccleve's *Tale of Jonathas* from the *Series* as the major part of Eclogue 1. As Mitchell says, the reproduction is mostly an orthographic modernization, an important distinction from a retelling, for rather than using just the plot, available elsewhere--in the *Gesta Romanorum* itself or even from Hoccleve's text itself--Browne uses Hoccleve's poem, not just the narrative structure.³¹ Although the modernization does indeed play poorly with Hoccleve's meter, a point Mitchell recognizes, Browne follows Hoccleve's presentation of the poem, its structure and narrative development.³² In Browne's work, after Roget the shepherd tells the tale, Willie praises it highly as "so quaint and fine a lay," and Roget the

³⁰ John Pits, *Relationum Historicum de Rebus Anglicis* (Paris, 1619) 587.

³¹ In fact, Browne uses the holographic Durham, a manuscript discussed further in Chapter 4.

³² See also A. S. G. Edwards, "Observation on the History of Middle English Editing," *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987) 35-36 for a brief discussion of Browne's approach to editorial function and his treatment of Hoccleve's works.

pastoral poet recognizes possible shortcomings in the work. He does, however, say that the work is "Not so deck'd with nicety / Of sweet words full neatly choosed / As are now by shepherds choosed" (741-43). He criticizes the language as only not as high as that of the shepherds, whose poetic talents are a great focus of Browne's poem. While such debate is a commonplace in the pastoral tradition, Browne must have believed these points at some level, else why select the poem?

Roget goes on to claim that the poet--Hoccleve is not named--"did quench his thirst / Deeply as did ever one / In the Muses' Helicon" (750-52). As Roget's laudatory comments continue, the unnamed poet (Hoccleve) is elevated to a favorite of the fairies, who wake Roget to hear the anonymous poet's songs. Also, the nameless poet is called a scholar, and the section concludes that

Many a one that prouder is,
 Han not such a song as this,
 And have garlands for their meed
 That but jar as Skelton's reed" (787-90).

Although we might today find a favorable comparison to Skelton not too complimentary, in the early seventeenth century, such an analogy was no small bit of praise. To Browne, a prolific and popular early Renaissance poet, one who influenced the likes of Milton and Keats, Hoccleve is a recognizably gifted poet, and Browne even contemplated

an edition of Hoccleve's poems.³³ But following Browne, few read or appreciated Hoccleve's poetry for quite some time.

After Browne, we have more formally critical commentary. Edward Phillips says, quite rightly, that Hoccleve was "a very famous English Poet in his time" and that the *Regement* is "the chiefly remember'd of what he writ in Poetry and so much the more famous he is by being remember'd to have been the Disciple of the most fam'd Chaucer."³⁴ The brevity of Phillips's comments on Hoccleve are in no way indicative of any lack of emphasis on the poet, for the nature of Phillips's work was that of a collection of short entries on English writers, more a reference tool than a literary commentary. His comments on Gower, for instance, are similarly brief, if not inflated in their estimation of that poet's talent, saying Gower is "counted little inferiour, if not equal to Chaucer himself."³⁵

³³ See A. S. G. Edwards, "Medieval Manuscripts Owned by William Browne of Tavistock," *Books and Collectors 1200-1700: Essays Presented to Andrew Watson*, ed. J. P. Carley and C. G. C. Tite (London: British Library, 1997) 441-49.

³⁴ Edward Phillips, *Theatrum Poetarum, or a Compleat Collection of the Poets, Especially the Most Eminent of All Ages*, pt. 2, suppl. (London, 1675) 233.

³⁵ Phillips 233.

Also, in the seventeenth century, Richard James copied from manuscript Hoccleve's Address to Sir John Oldcastle.³⁶ What is interesting is that the poem is an indictment of Oldcastle's Wycliffite heresy. James, as a staunch anti-Catholic, would not have agreed with the content of the work, yet his notes do not criticize Hoccleve's verses. That is, James does not criticize the prosody or the structure of the poem itself, but rather, seeks to set aright, as James sees it, the fallacious matter of the work. Thus, while disagreeing with Hoccleve's religious convictions, the poetic talent of Hoccleve is not disparaged.

Eighteenth Century

By the eighteenth century's onset, Hoccleve was being read less, in part at least because Middle English itself was becoming less popular and more difficult reading material. George Sewell published a translation of Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* in 1718, prefacing it with this statement: "This Poem is generally admired by those who can taste it in the obsolete Language of the Author."³⁷

³⁶ Richard James, *The Poems, etc., of Richard James, B.D. (1592-1638)*, ed. Alexander B Grosart (London, 1880) 135-188.

³⁷ George Sewell, "The Preface," *The Proclamation of Cupid: or, A Defence of Women. A Poem from Chaucer*, printed in Thelma S. Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler,

What is most interesting about the words of Sewell is his high praise of the matter of the work, prompting him to say that "Language indeed, and the Forms of Address may alter, but Nature cannot, She is never out of Fashion."³⁸ In addition, Sewell was also convinced that the poem was by Chaucer because it mentions Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and the *Romaunt of the Rose*, which he had translated. And this attribution is despite the fact that Sewell is aware of what he calls "the common Story of Occleve's Recantation."³⁹ We might observe that Sewell does not differentiate on the grounds of talent, making, in fact, no comment on the abilities of Chaucer or of Hoccleve.

Later, when Elizabeth Cooper published the *Muses Library* in 1741, she says of the works she includes, "What has given me Pleasure in my Closet, I have undertaken to recommend to the Publick [. . .] endeavouring to preserve what is valuable."⁴⁰ Admittedly, Cooper does not aim at

Poems of Cupid, God of Love: Christine de Pizan's Epistre au dieu d'Amours and Dit de la Rose; Thomas Hoccleve's The Letter of Cupid: Edition and Translations, with George Sewell's The Proclamation of Cupid (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990) 222.

³⁸ Sewell 222.

³⁹ Sewell 222.

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Cooper, *The Muses Library, or, a Series of English Poetry* (London, 1741) vii.

presenting in her book only those writers she holds in high regard. For instance, she includes Lydgate because she had heard others rank him only slightly below Chaucer, but after reading some of his poetry, Cooper agrees with the poet's own self-effacing commentary.⁴¹ Of Hoccleve, she makes no judgement, pointing out only that "By some he is highly applauded, by others not so much as mentioned."⁴² If we take what Cooper says at face value, it means there was at this point still fair readership of Hoccleve's corpus, enough that there were varying opinions. Possibly most germane to the present study is her comment that she could not lay hands on a copy of the *Regement*, even with the large number of extant manuscripts. Many of those manuscripts were held in private collections. As we will see, it was Furnivall's aim with the Early English Text Society to rectify difficulties such as these.

Soon after Cooper, Thomas Tanner calls Hoccleve a good disciple of the type of eloquence that followed Chaucer and Gower,⁴³ which we might see as a high

⁴¹ Cooper 30

⁴² Cooper 31

⁴³ Thomas Tanner, *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica: sive, de Scriptoribus, qui in Anglia, Scotia, et Hibernia ad saeculi XVII initium floruerunt, literarum ordine juxta familiarum nomina dispositis Commentarius* (London, 1748) 557.

estimation of not only Hoccleve, but the fifteenth century in general. Tanner also says that for his patron Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, Hoccleve produced frequent "*carminibus mirifice*," that is, astonishing poems. Although there are several biographical inaccuracies in Tanner's commentary, his regard for Hoccleve's poetry is high. Evidently, Tanner is of the school mentioned by Cooper that favored Hoccleve's work.

Finally, at the close of the eighteenth century, a century before Furnivall's work, George Mason put out an edition of poems from the Phillipps MS 8151 (today the Huntington Library MS HM 111, one of three holograph manuscripts). Mason reads previous references in much the way I have in the earlier part of this chapter: close readings of exactly what was said and what it meant. For instance, he mentions Browne's use of Hoccleve and the praise of the medieval poet within the fiction of Browne's poem, saying that Browne "cannot well be supposed an incompetent judge."⁴⁴ Or he points out that Thomas Warton, Jr. in his *A Dissertation on the Gesta Romanorum* takes exception to Hoccleve not embellishing the *Tale of Jonathas* (the poem used by Browne) from the *Gesta Romanorum* rather than Hoccleve's "mode of embellishment,"

⁴⁴ George Mason, *Poems by Thomas Hoccleve, Never before Printed* (London, 1796) 6.

and Mason observes that Hoccleve does indeed embellish it "in various places by judicious insertions of his own."⁴⁵ Mason further points out that a remark Warton had made about Hoccleve's "coldness of genius" could suggest a pre-existing prejudice, which, after all, is part of what the present study seeks to examine.⁴⁶ In all, Mason is an even-tempered and fair-minded critic, more so than many of his predecessors or followers, one who approached literature as a work to be judged on its own merit and who saw real merit in Hoccleve's poetry. Finally, aside from any critical commentary by Mason, this edition was the first printed edition of Hoccleve's work that was published as a stand-alone volume of his poetry, not a compilation.

The Downward Spiral

Up to this point, we have seen very little that reveals an unfavorable reaction to Hoccleve's work; however, roughly contemporary with the last few critics, a shift in response was beginning. Linguistic change was a major stumbling block for the critics of the eighteenth century. Even in the century before, John Dryden had

⁴⁵ Mason 7.

⁴⁶ Warton's work will be more fully examined later in this chapter.

confessed to hearing no poetic music in Chaucer's verse, which he thought was incorrectly metered, based on his lack of understanding of Middle English pronunciation. The language had changed, so those ignorant of the specifics of that linguistic development interpreted metrical flaws. And seeing faulty prosody or even defects in the language itself also reinforced the idea of change: coming out of the Enlightenment, critics needed to see "evolution" and "progress." Thus, Middle English itself was under fire, and those authors who had written in such a brutish language were necessarily seen as poorer artists than later writers. Further, the same desire to see progress influenced many critics of this period to look at the works they were reading and to perceive an inferior level literary tastes and interests. The ability employ all of these perceptions to differentiate the medieval from the modern fed the desire to see evidence of the "triumphant rise" of English poetry out of barbarism.

It is not surprising, then, that at the close of the eighteenth century, we see the first negative formal commentary on Hoccleve's work, a turning point, and it is important that this response is in Thomas Warton, Jr.'s once highly important body of criticism, his 1774 history of English poetry, *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh Century to the Commencement of the*

Eighteenth Century. Warton's work was one of those seminal in the makings of our English literary canon, and particularly that of Middle English. As David Matthews claims, "Warton had culled a vast amount of material from manuscripts few had seen, to create the single greatest resource of Middle English poetry [then] in existence."⁴⁷ Readers who had yet to have access to the works of Middle English writers now had a tool that was a guidepost for what to read, what was ultimately worthy. In the dichotomous spectrum that Cooper had earlier set forth as the reaction to Hoccleve's poetry, Warton is on the far on negative end, maintaining that "Occleve is a feeble writer, considered as a poet."⁴⁸ For Hoccleve, this negative evaluation signals a certain fall from grace--at least *in print*: as we have seen, his poetry was, for the most part, much respected in print prior to Warton's analysis, even if Cooper had pointed out that there was a general variance of opinion.

Warton's comments do seem somewhat ill-founded. Take, for example, his position that "The titles of

⁴⁷ Matthews 31.

⁴⁸ Thomas Warton, *The History of English Poetry from the Close of the Eleventh Century to the Commencement of the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Tegg, 1840) 258. For a discussion of Warton's idea that poetry was a social/historical construct, see Chapter III of Ralph Clayton Baxter's unpublished dissertation, "Thomas Warton, Jr.: Historiographer of English Poetry," Wayne State, 1964.

Occleve's pieces [. . .] indicate a coldness of genius."⁴⁹ The most obvious objection to this remark is that medieval works, when they were named at all, do not usually show the great creativity for which modern writers and publishers strive. Rather, medieval "titles" were more like newspaper headlines--that is, they briefly indicated the matter of the work. There are exceptions, of course, but Hoccleve's titles suffer more than anything by comparison to the titles printers *assigned* to the texts they produced, for as Warton notes, most of Hoccleve's works had not at that time been printed. Hoccleve's "titles" are roughly as creative as Chaucer's, and surely no worse than Shakespeare's, yet we would not fault either of these canonical authors on a "coldness of genius" that Warton ascribes to Hoccleve. But such a perception of poor creativity is just the kind of thinking that is necessary to show the heightening of English literary talent.

Interestingly enough, the same kind of linguistic change that made Middle English literature problematic for Warton and many of his contemporaries can be seen in the illustrative way in which critical response can change in meaning with the passage of time. In Warton's commentary, he says of Hoccleve's lines on the passing of Chaucer that

⁴⁹ Warton 259.

they are "pathetic." Warton certainly meant that the lines brought forth *pathos*, not that they were ridiculous or contempt-inspiring, for the pejorative sense of the word is a product of the twentieth century. But that meaning, still listed as colloquial by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has become, one might strongly argue, the primary sense of the word. Modern readers who have not read Hoccleve's lines might assume from Warton's remark that the statement is a comment on the quality of the lines' prosody, rather than an observation of the lines' emotional force. In just the same way today's reader might not accurately comprehend Warton's meaning, Warton himself was prone misunderstanding the effects of his temporal distance from the language and tastes of the medieval period.

Although now dethroned by newer, more reliable such histories, Warton's work, as David Nichol Smith points out, "survives as a work of scholarship"⁵⁰ well into the twentieth century. The work was, after all, the first narrative history of English poetry, and as it had no predecessor, it was immediately important. Still, although he himself was poet laureate, Warton's analysis

⁵⁰ David Nichol Smith, *Warton's History of English Poetry*, Warton Lecture on English Poetry, Proceedings of the British Academy (London: Humphrey Milford Amen House, 1929) 20.

of a poet such as Hoccleve is difficult to accept. First, as J. W. H. Atkins points out, "His treatment of individuals is often out of perspective, Lydgate for one receiving more attention than either Spenser or Shakespeare; and in general there is a lack of discrimination in assessing relative values."⁵¹ In addition, remember that Warton admits that few of Hoccleve's poems had been printed, so his evaluation of the overall body of Hoccleve's works is the first such evaluation of the corpus. Warton relies--as he frequently does--on the manuscripts to which he has access. After pointing out that Warton disliked some recognizably respectable works, such as *The Owl and the Nightingale*, Smith observes that

We are bound to admit that we sometimes wonder how proficient he was in reading manuscripts, and suspect that he relied too much on a Bodleian or a British Museum copyist. The texts he prints are notoriously bad, and again we wonder if the cause was indolent proof-reading or linguistic insufficiency.⁵²

Now, if Warton were indeed ignorant of the grammar and pronunciation of Middle English, would not his evaluation of Middle English poetry be inherently flawed?

Considering this problem and possible others, we must at

⁵¹ J. W. H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: 17th and 18th Centuries* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1951) 215.

⁵² Smith 22.

some level question the validity of Warton's comments, even more so in regards to medieval literature, and while we cannot but respect the instrumental push Warton's *History* gave to medieval studies, we must also recognized the possible flaws in the work. As Matthews points out, Warton felt--and almost necessarily so, in order for his narrative of literary development to make sense--that medieval poetry was "barbarous": "if [a] poem were a modern English one, there would be nothing wrong with it; however good Warton finds [a] medieval poem to be, it is really better as something else."⁵³ And yet, despite its deficiencies, the *History* would remain a standard reference until another scholar undertook the tremendous labor involved to replace Warton's popular, standing work, a major reference for many of Warton's followers. And yet, as Matthews observes, while "the *History* was bitterly complained about by succeeding scholars [. . .] no one seemed disposed to replace the work."⁵⁴ Warton's *History* thus continued to be determining factor in literary evaluation.

From the enormously influential work of Warton, we move directly into another monumental work of literary criticism. Joseph Ritson's 1802 *Bibliographia Poetica: A*

⁵³ Matthews 33.

⁵⁴ Matthews 31.

Catalogue of English Poets, of the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth, Centurys, with a Short Account of Their Works says, regarding the initial approximate two thousand self-referential lines of the *Regement*, which Ritson lists as a separate work, that "though sufficiently prolix, [it] serves as prologue" to the *Regement*.⁵⁵ Remember, Marzec has suggested that the "autobiographical" content of the *Regement* was quite possibly what made the work so popular in the Middle Ages, but from here on for over a century that element and the *Regement* prologue would be seen as extraneous. Ritson's use of the word "prolix" in relation to the prologue is clearly pejorative, and he also applies it to Gower and Lydgate, further--and famously--calling Lydgate a "poetaster" and a "voluminous, prosaick, and driveling monk." The extremely negative words Ritson applies to Lydgate and his poetry, in fact, are more damning than anything he says of Hoccleve, commenting on Lydgate's poetry:

these stupid and fatiguing productions, which by no means deserve the name of poetry, and their still more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer, are neither worth collecting

⁵⁵ Joseph Ritson, *Bibliographia Poetica: A Catalogue of English Poets, of the Twelfth, Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth, Centurys, with a Short Account of Their Works* (London, 1802) 60.

[. . .], nor even worthy of preservation [. . .] manifest in almost every part of his elaborate drawlings, in which there are scarcely three lines together of pure and accurate metre."⁵⁶

In contrast to these comments on Lydgate, the most negative words Ritson says of Hoccleve are that the poems printed by Mason six years earlier are "six of peculiar stupidity." But Ritson, referred to later by Henry Morley as "Critical Joseph Ritson," was not given to praise his subjects, calling Chaucer himself only a "famous and venerable bard." Yet Ritson's approach to literature was not substantially different from his peers, particularly, as we have seen, Warton:

Ritson's critical methodology was completely in accord with that of his contemporaries. For Ritson, too, medieval poetry presented pictures of life and manners and was useful for historicist purposes. [. . .] The political radicalism for which he was so well known was not often translated into an aesthetic or critical stance.⁵⁷

Nonetheless, Ritson, before his eventual insanity, challenged the merit of Warton's prior History "either on misinterpretations of medieval words by Warton or on bibliographic inaccuracies that result, in Ritson's probably accurate opinion, from Warton's lack of familiarity with the texts with which he is dealing."⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ritson 88.

⁵⁷ Matthews 42.

⁵⁸ Matthews 37.

Ritson, at least, recognized the importance linguistic change could have on the interpretation of the texts. On the other hand, we should recognize when reading his comments that what was of no use in understanding the culture of medieval England was extra verbiage to Ritson, and thus, most medieval poets were necessarily "prolix." However interesting Hoccleve's self-awareness might be to us today, such inward-looking commentary was too concerned with the individual instead of the whole of society to hold value in Ritson's opinion.

Oddly, after these two major figures in the history of criticism who strongly denounced Hoccleve, in 1825 Sharon Turner, an important literary historian, particularly of the Anglo-Saxon period, asserts that three authors of the fifteenth century--John the Chaplain, Hoccleve, and Lydgate--are "of considerable importance to the improvement of the English heroic verse, and to its establishment in our higher style of poetry."⁵⁹ His praise of Hoccleve is great: "Another poet, who has not had his share of reputation, is Thomas Occleve, whose compositions greatly assisted the growth and diffused the popularity of our infant poetry."⁶⁰ Yet while Turner's

⁵⁹ Sharon Turner, *The History of England During the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (London, 1825) 334.

⁶⁰ Turner 335.

idea here fits in with the desire to see a development of quality in literary production, the claim may have struck some of his contemporaries as suggesting too early a literary sense of discernment and improvement-- particularly so closely on the heels of Warton and Ritson, when the prevailing concept of an evolutionary theory literature and thought held that the medieval period was mostly barren. Turner further flouts the Warton's and Ritson's ideals of literary history and use when he avers that Hoccleve "frequently applies his poetry to record his feelings, and in so doing gave it a direction to one of its highest sources of excellence," and that "The reader may be pleased to peruse some passages" of Hoccleve's verse that Turner quotes.⁶¹ And yet, the power of what Warton and Ritson wrote is quietly evidenced by the way Turner slightly mitigates his praise of Hoccleve's poetry by the use of a litotes, saying, "His tales are not unworthy of notice,"⁶² in essence shying away from a direct claim of artistry and settling for a gentle dispute of earlier, major critics' dismissals. Interestingly, Turner's only slight adulation here relates just to the tales in the instructional portion of the *Regement*, not to the original prologue or to Hoccleve's other works.

⁶¹ Turner 336-37.

⁶² Turner 340.

Evidently Turner liked best the self-referential material, the part of Hoccleve's body of work that is most interesting to readers today, but what so angered other critics. In addition, Turner mentions no problems with the language, perhaps due to his familiarity with the Anglo-Saxon period.

We should also note that while Turner's comments on Lydgate are not always so positive, his estimation of Hoccleve's contemporary is, in general, quite high. Although Turner says that Lydgate "is another of our ancient poets who has been oftener abused than read," he also observes that the poet is "often as dull as the worst-natured critics have not been displeased to find him." These words contain the suggestion of an extremely pertinent issue of early critical appraisal--and unfortunately much of later criticism: that negative commentary and actual readership are not always equivalent, the poor response to the literature occurring "oftener" than the perusal of it. Still, Turner claims Lydgate's poems are

curious [. . .] for their true poetical feeling, or for the vigour and harmony of their versification. In the latter quality he is superior to Chaucer [. . .] [and] has sometimes a greater condensation of expression, if not of

thought, and in general better rhythm in his versification.⁶³

Of particular interest to this study of critical appraisal of Hoccleve are the comments Turner applies to why readers might find Lydgate dull. He blames this finding to the subjects of much of his verse, that the classical accounts most readers will have read of Troy and Thebes prejudices them against retellings of those same stories. This point is interesting for our investigation into the creation of the canon: what we read before approaching an author, particularly an established critical evaluation, has decided ramifications on our response to the writer. Turner is unwittingly pointing out the development of poor critical response to Hoccleve and other fifteenth-century poets, a situation that would persist and intensify.

The continuing distaste for the works of Hoccleve and his contemporaries in this period should not, however, surprise us. Turner was something of an anomaly at the time, valuing and recommending as he did Hoccleve's expression of individual experience. As we have seen already, Ritson was particularly annoyed by that kind of content. Warton felt writers in the Middle Ages lacked true genius. Only a few decades after Turner, in 1866,

⁶³ Turner 340-41. In the footnote on 341, he observes that Ritson's comments are "the most angry abuse" of Lydgate.

Henry Hallam is critical even of the state of the English language as a whole during the fifteenth century. He says the "language was slowly refining itself" during this period, "But, as yet, there was neither thought nor knowledge sufficient to bring out its capacities."⁶⁴ Note that this statement not only calls the quality of Middle English into question, but also the ability of its medieval users to see the linguistic shortcomings. In contrast to this view of Middle English, Warton, while also seeing Hoccleve's poetry as poor, felt it at least indicated a linguistic step toward improving the language.

In strictly literary evaluation, Hallam calls the period after Chaucer's death "a dreary blank," a characterization of the fifteenth century that would be often repeated. We might wonder how Hallam felt Chaucer achieved such greatness using what Hallam estimated as a flawed language at a time of limited "thought and knowledge." At any rate, Hallam's remarks on Hoccleve and Lydgate are, albeit short, indicative of what would become the accepted view of Hoccleve, and would represent a singularly unusual view of Lydgate. Hallam says that "The

⁶⁴ Henry Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*, 4th ed., vol. 1 (New York, 1866) 140-41. Note that while I am quoting the 1866 edition, that work is revised from what was originally published in 1839, a version not available to me.

poetry of Hoccleve is wretchedly bad, abounding with pedantry, and destitute of all grace or spirit."⁶⁵ He then calls Lydgate an "easy versifier"--something few critics at this period or since have thought--and Hallam even claims that although Gower had a superior mind, Lydgate had "more of the minor qualities of a poet."⁶⁶ Hallam's estimation of literature must be, today, held suspect. He too often displays a dislike for early poetry--for example, saying Anglo-Saxon verse is "often turgid and always always rude." Again we see the overt disparagement of early literature, relying on the cornerstone belief in the clumsiness of fledgling artistic endeavor. Hallam's dislike for Hoccleve should, then, be carefully weighed against his other opinions. He, like others, had an agenda when reading medieval literature, an agenda not easily seen in his idiosyncratic evaluation of Lydgate. But while much later response to Hoccleve's work would echo Hallam's, his praise of Lydgate's talent would remain a singular oddity.

Later, in 1840, Isaac Disraeli published his *Amenities of Literature, Consisting of Sketches and Characters of English Literature*. Although the work is another literary history, Disraeli also acts as a sober

⁶⁵ Hallam 141.

⁶⁶ Hallam 141.

analyst of previous critics. He speaks of Ritson's "rabid hostility" and "constitutional malady," then goes on to remark on other critics who followed Ritson, not only temporally, but ideologically: "Critics often find it convenient to resemble dogs, by barking one after the other, without any other cause than the first bark of a brother, who had only bayed the moon."⁶⁷ Disraeli, on the other hand, takes exception with the nasty comments that some of his predecessors had made about the poetry of Hoccleve. He says that Warton "passed sentence," that "the verses printed by Mason are [Hoccleve's] least interesting productions," that Ritson's words were a "sharp snarl," that George Ellis (an important commentator) actively ignores Hoccleve, and that Hallam sat in judgment.⁶⁸ Disraeli then praises Turner's comments, calling him "more careful than Warton, and more discriminate than Ritson," further saying Turner's remarks come from "honest intrepidity." Disraeli himself says that "Occleve was a shrewd observer of his own times," and "even a playful painter of society."⁶⁹ This literary portrayal of society and social ideology that Disraeli

⁶⁷ Isaac Disraeli, *Amenities of Literature, Consisting of Sketches and Characters of English Literature*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1864) 228.

⁶⁸ Disraeli 222.

⁶⁹ Disraeli 224.

sees is the type of content Warton and Ritson revered, but never saw in Hoccleve's work. If Disraeli had that same criterion, his ability to find such content in Hoccleve's work would necessarily produce a more positive response.

Still, for all the seeming attention to salvaging Hoccleve's plummeting reputation that Disraeli appears to attempt, he tempers his comments in a way that shows that Hoccleve's poetry was quickly going into a downward spiral of critical reputation. For instance, even when praising Turner's assessment of Hoccleve, Disraeli says that Turner "confessed" that opinion.⁷⁰ Or consider this heavily mitigated compliment: "Hoccleve seems, however, sometimes to have told a story not amiss."⁷¹ Though such litotes are common in his writing, Disraeli's use of them does more than act as simple understatement, but in many ways is a detraction from his ostensibly praised subject, suggesting a possible apprehension at acclaiming a poet such important previous critics has severely faulted. But Disraeli's prejudice, as with some of his predecessors, is at times more against Middle English in general than Hoccleve specifically, showing, as had Hallam, a misunderstanding of the language: "To us he [Hoccleve]

⁷⁰ *Confess*, it should be remembered, does not always refer to the revealing of some ill, but often only to some prejudicial item.

⁷¹ Disraeli 225.

remains sufficiently uncouth. The language had not at this period acquired even a syntax."⁷² Disraeli, as others before him, had a faulty understanding of the language, seeing it as primitive and therefore less able to support higher thinking.

Still, Disraeli is generally sympathetic, but acts more as an apologist than as a celebrator of Hoccleve's verse, and in Disraeli's own words, "apologies only leave irremediable faults as they were."⁷³ True, Disraeli is here speaking of apologies for Lydgate's verse and finds him still languidly dull, yet note that much of what Disraeli used as fodder for his apologies is insightful, much more so than that of his predecessors, as when he suggests that patrons had a great deal to do with what a medieval writer produced. Notably, Disraeli is very astute when, while speaking of Hoccleve's praise of Chaucer and commission of a Chaucer portrait, he observes that had Hoccleve given us personal insights into Chaucer's character, more positive responses to the younger poet's verse would have followed.⁷⁴ So generally, while Disraeli is more positive toward Hoccleve, marks of the worsening reputation of the fifteenth-century poet can

⁷² Disraeli 225.

⁷³ Disraeli 233.

⁷⁴ Disraeli 226.

be seen, and Disraeli's work never found the popularity and lasting importance of Warton's and Ritson's works.

A well-received poet at the time herself, Elizabeth Barrett Browning compiled commentary on English poetry in her 1842 *The Book of the Poets*. She comments on the two major immediate English followers of Chaucer, comparing Hoccleve and Lydgate, saying "we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two" even if Lydgate "does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics," saving his "flashes of genius."⁷⁵ Browning ranks Lydgate higher, even allowing him moments of great skill, but nonetheless perceives Lydgate to be generally a poor poet, thus by extension making Hoccleve quite bad. If we consider that a widely read poet at the time would produce verse that reflected contemporary tastes, then Browning's dislike of the poetry of the fifteenth century would represent more than a personal response, but rather a judgment of the age.

Another prominent critic who made comments about Hoccleve was Thomas Wright, founder of literary societies, editor of numerous literary texts, and author of *Biographia Literaria*. In the preface to his 1860 edition

⁷⁵ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The Book of the Poets*, included in *Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, vol. 6 (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1900) 249-50.

of the *Regement*, Wright recognizes that the poem "was one of the most remarkable and most popular works of the earlier half of the fifteenth century,"⁷⁶ which, as we saw earlier in this chapter, is testified to by the number of manuscripts. But Wright also acknowledges the shifts in interest that affect response to literature, so the overriding Victorian interest in history and philology regarding medieval literature is reflected in his observation that the same poem "would have little interest for us but for the frequent allusions to the events and feelings of the age in which it was written."⁷⁷ The feelings he refers to here are not those held specifically by Hoccleve, but rather cultural ideals, the sort the *Regement* is filled with, the sort that Warton felt was the true purpose of poetry and that Ritson had sought to find. While we have seen up to this point, except for rare exceptions, a growing dislike in the modern age for the self-referential content of Hoccleve's works, the shift is here further evidenced. That is, for Wright Hoccleve might best be studied as the common man, but not as the individual. Such an approach de-emphasizes the poetry, laying all interest on tangential elements of the content.

⁷⁶ Thomas Wright, Preface, *De Regimine Principum, a Poem by Thomas Occleve, Written in the Reign of Henry IV*, Roxburghe Club (London: B. Nichols and Sons, 1860) xiii.

⁷⁷ Thomas Wright xiii.

Just as interest in medieval literary content was changing in regard to Hoccleve, so too was some of the evaluation of the poetic productions of his age becoming harsher. In reference to English literature in the fifteenth century, George L. Craik says in his 1861 *A Compendious History of English Literature, and of the English Language, from the Norman Conquest*, "The most numerous class of writers in the mother-tongue belonging to this time are the poets, by courtesy so called."⁷⁸ The only two English poets of this period named by Craik are Hoccleve and Lydgate, and he relies heavily on Warton and Ritson for his information, maintaining that this period was filled with "a crowd of worthless and forgotten versifiers."⁷⁹ In fact, most of the single paragraph Craik devotes to Hoccleve is a repetition of his critical forbears' judgments, adding nothing new, but continuing the progressing ill-repute given Hoccleve's work:

All that Occleve appears to have gained, however, from his admirable model [Chaucer] is some initiation in that smoothness and regularity of diction of which Chaucer's writings set the first great example. His own endowment of poetical power and feeling was very small.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ George L. Craik, *A Compendious History of English Literature, and of the English Language, from the Norman Conquest*, vol. 1 (New York: Scribner, 1866) 402.

⁷⁹ Craik 402.

⁸⁰ Craik 402.

Craik also maintains that Lydgate, "though excessively diffuse, and possessed of very little strength or originality of imagination, is a considerably livelier and more expert writer than Hoccleve."⁸¹ Thus, Craik, like Browning before him, strongly abuses Lydgate, and yet maintains he is better than Hoccleve, suggesting an almost total lack of talent on the part of Hoccleve.

While a marked decline in evaluation is apparent, if representation in print is any indication, the ranking of Hoccleve's skills had not become all bad, at least among the Germans. In the 1870s in Richard Paul Wülker's *Altenglisches Lesebuch: Zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen und zum Selbstunterricht*, it being an anthology, there is not much commentary.⁸² What should interest us, however, is what pieces are chosen for inclusion, as this tome is intended as a general introduction for newcomers to medieval English language and literature. Not surprisingly, Chaucer is well represented, in both the poetry and the prose sections. Other authors like William Langland and the *Pearl*-poet are included in the collection, as they would be today. The one Gower piece is from *Confessio Amantis*, while Lydgate's *Siege of*

⁸¹ Craik 403.

⁸² Richard Paul Wülker, *Altenglisches Lesebuch: Zum Gebrauche bei Vorlesungen und zum Selbstunterricht*, vol. 2 (Halle, 1879).

Thebes, written as a beginning to the return of Chaucer's pilgrims from Canterbury, is likewise included. Strikingly, there are two pieces by Hoccleve, taken from the *Regement* and from *La Male Regle*. As Gower's only English work, even if Wülker thought Gower a major writer, the *Confessio Amantis* is the only option for inclusion. Nonetheless, Wülker clearly considered Hoccleve a more important or representative poet than Lydgate, whose oeuvre is so very much larger than Hoccleve's. Today's anthologies of Middle English literature, if they include Hoccleve at all, would usually have but one extract, taken from the *Regement*. Wülker's decision to have more pieces by Hoccleve than anyone but Chaucer must suggest a higher opinion of the poet's ability than we today possess, for even when included, extracts from the *Regement* are most commonly those lines that praise Chaucer and accompany the famous portrait found in some manuscripts--as, for instance, the forty-two lines in Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes' *Middle English Literature*.⁸³ But Wülker has a less common section of the didactic portion of the

⁸³ *Middle English Literature*, ed. Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes (New York: Garland, 1990) 509-10. Another popular anthology, *Medieval English Literature*, ed. Thomas J. Garbáty, (Lexington, MA: Heath, 1984) has nothing by Hoccleve.

poem.⁸⁴ Let us not forget, however, that the German critics of English literature were then most interested in historical linguistics and metrical analysis, so Hoccleve's dialect would have been easier to read than earlier and more northern ones, making him an obvious inclusion in an introductory reader. But that same linguistic interest would have also helped the German's understand and pronounce Middle English better than some of their English contemporaries, which almost certainly would foster greater appreciation of the poetry.

Like Browning before him, another poet, Thomas Arnold, examined earlier poetry. His prefatory comments to the extract from the *Regement* found in Thomas Humphrey Ward's 1880 collection of various early English writers' works offers nothing new to critical opinions of Hoccleve. However, Arnold, while refraining from making negative comments on Hoccleve's poetic style, claims the prologue to the *Regement* is "considerably more interesting than the work itself,"⁸⁵ reflecting what is certainly, at least, modern tastes. But afterwards, discussing the matter of that same prologue, Arnold says, "The poem is not

⁸⁴ The *Regement* extract is taken from two manuscripts, while *La Male Regle* is taken from Mason's edition.

⁸⁵ Thomas Humphrey Ward, *The English Poets: Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers and a General Introduction by Matthew Arnold*, vol. 1 (London: MacMillan, 1880) 124.

interesting." Taking these comments together, one can recognize that Arnold found the whole of *Regement* very boring indeed. Still, Arnold, unlike many of his Victorian contemporaries--Wright, for instance--was looking at the *Regement* in a way that was more attentive to Hoccleve's self-referential content. Rather than focusing on the historically and culturally instructive didactic portion of the work, Arnold values more highly the part that we today would find more interesting. On the other hand, Arnold does see the so-called prologue as a separate entity, as did his contemporaries.

While many of the critics of this later modern period have had a paucity of commentary to make, Bernhard ten Brink has much to say on Hoccleve in his important 1874 *Geschichte der englischen Literatur*, translated in 1883 into English as *History of English Literature*. First he gives a section of biographical matter, taken in large part from Hoccleve's poetry, but not in as judgmental a vein as many commentators. Overall, one can discern an attempt at fairness in ten Brink's work, but more in the role of an apologist, as for example, when after speaking of Hoccleve's financial worries Brink says, "Such straightened circumstances [. . .] could not conduce to the development of his talents, which did not, indeed,

rise above the average."⁸⁶ While believing the autobiographical verity of the self-referential matter of Hoccleve's verse, ten Brink uses it to partly excuse Hoccleve's "average" talents. We should not ignore, nonetheless, that although not apparently high praise, ten Brink's remark places Hoccleve's level of poetic skill among the average, not below, as many other critics had-- in any event, far from the poet laureate status Seymour claims. However, if ten Brink thought of Hoccleve as average, he must indeed have thought of "average" in very high estimation, saying Hoccleve had "the gift of easy poetic composition, and a decided talent for form."⁸⁷ And by comparison, "In the clearness of his diction, and occasionally in the excellent choice of his expressions in the construction of his verses and stanzas, he comes nearer to the great model [Chaucer] than almost any of the poets of the fifteenth century."⁸⁸ Still, ten Brink rates Lydgate, for the most part, as the better poet:

As a poet the monk of Bury excelled the writer to the Privy Seal in London, not only in fertility, but also in many other qualities, and was inferior to him in only one point, though a

⁸⁶ Bernhard ten Brink, *History of English Literature*, trans. William Clarke Robinson, vol. 2, pt. 1 (New York: Henry Holt, 1893) 214-15. Incidentally, this history is dedicated to Furnivall, who numbered ten Brink a friend.

⁸⁷ ten Brink 215.

⁸⁸ ten Brink 215.

very essential point. His sensitive faculty was more powerfully developed, his perception stronger and more general, his productions more spontaneous. On the other hand his taste was less refined.⁸⁹

Thus, ten Brink does not simply dismiss either of the fifteenth-century poets, for he is capable of recognizing both strengths and weaknesses.

Nevertheless, not all of ten Brink's evaluations can predominantly be called flattering; his comments temper occasional high praise with cold damnation. For instance, ten Brink refers to Hoccleve's "lyric productions" and "so-called ballads," saying Hoccleve "seldom knows when he has said enough, or when to stop" and that these works "pay as little regard to the inner laws of lyric poetry as to the conventional rules of art."⁹⁰ Most importantly, however, just as ten Brink read the self-referential elements as factual autobiography, he used this information to understand the poet and the poetry. Recalling the youthful misconduct Hoccleve writes about, a certain "regret he felt for his past life," ten Brink sees the moralistic didacticism he reads in Hoccleve, and which "on the whole injured his work," as not only a product of Hoccleve's time, but also something that "suited his own

⁸⁹ ten Brink 221.

⁹⁰ ten Brink 215-16.

individuality."⁹¹ Furthermore, ten Brink maintains, without what we might today call evidence, that Hoccleve's "strength lies [. . .] in the representation of things and circumstances which he has seen with his own eyes," at times rising "into real eloquence."⁹² So it is that ten Brink, like a few others, sees the prologue to the *Regement* as the best part of that work. For a poet like Hoccleve whose reputation was falling, any evaluation by ten Brink would have been extremely important, as ten Brink's work is influential enough to be cited still today. Unfortunately, any positive comments made by ten Brink were too weak to raise the level of acceptance of Hoccleve.

Meanwhile, Stopford A. Brooke, the author of several works on literary history, says of the time following Chaucer, that "There was then a considerable school of imitators, who followed the style, who had some of the imaginative spirit, but who failed in the music and the art of Chaucer."⁹³ He originally found Hoccleve "a bad versifier," and the two sentences devoted to him deal chiefly with his praise for and "fond idolatry" of

⁹¹ ten Brink 216.

⁹² ten Brink 216.

⁹³ Stopford A. Brooke, *English Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1897) 73.

Chaucer.⁹⁴ He goes on to state that Lydgate "was a more worthy follower of Chaucer [. . .] though [a] long-winded poet." But in his revision two decades later, Brooke, although referring to Hoccleve as a "monotonous versifier," admits that the poet "had a style of his own," mirroring what ten Brink had said during the interim.⁹⁵ Nonetheless, while Brooke says that in his balades and devotional verse Hoccleve sometimes "reached excellence," Brooke's evaluation is that Hoccleve's "didactic and controversial aims finally overwhelmed his poetry."⁹⁶ Still, we must wonder what Brooke found so "controversial" in Hoccleve's work, certainly in light of the popularity Hoccleve enjoyed in his own century. And as far as didacticism is concerned, although calling Hoccleve's work didactic had, as we have seen, become a tradition, the works themselves, other than the *Regement*, are overall not overtly moralistic of themselves, but only implicitly so.

⁹⁴ Stopford A. Brooke, *English Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1880) 51. The study originally appeared as *A Primer of English Literature* in 1876 and was praised by, among others, Matthew Arnold.

⁹⁵ Brooke (1897) 73. It is interesting to look at Brookes' poem written in memory of Furnivall, in *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*, ed. Henry Frowde (London: Oxford UP, 1911) 15-16. The poem is strikingly poor, especially in terms of meter if one is looking for straight iambic pentameter, as many critics then did with Hoccleve and other fifteenth-century English poets.

⁹⁶ Brooke (1897) 73.

And again, if we look at much medieval literature, a certain didactic vein does run through it. We might conjecture that the social structures Hoccleve supports did not appeal to Victorian critics, so although someone like Brooke calls Hoccleve "didactic" in a pejorative way, he probably would have approved of Brownings didacticism. At any rate, Brooke, like ten Brink, ultimately gives reasons why what he sees as the potential for great poetry does not flower in Hoccleve.

A year later, in his *Englische Metrik*, Jakob Schipper refers to what he perceives as a major flaw in Hoccleve's versification, "schwebende Betongen," or the placing of stress or no stress on the wrong syllables.⁹⁷ He criticizes both Hoccleve's and Lydgate's meter, compared to that of Chaucer and Gower, placing the fifteenth-century poets behind the masters of the previous century both in genius, and in virtuosity with the treatment of poetic form. In particular, Schipper criticizes the hovering of stress around the caesura. Schipper's claims of Hoccleve's "thwarted stress" will become as much a set idea of the poet's prosody as would that of Lydgate's "broken-backed line."

⁹⁷ Jakob Schipper, *Englische Metrik*, vol. 1 (Bonn, 1881) 489.

Yet with all the increasingly poor estimation of Hoccleve's versification, an edifying list of mis-attributions of Hoccleve's poems to Chaucer remained intact for quite some time.⁹⁸ Walter W. Skeat in 1883 writes in reference to one of Hoccleve's balades (Furnivall V and VI) that had at times been attributed to Chaucer:

It consists of eight eight-line stanzas, skilfully written. [. . .] Moreover, the lines are fairly smooth and free from Lydgate's jerks; and the imitation of Chaucer is fairly good. These considerations at once suggest Hoccleve for the Author of the poem.⁹⁹

Skeat is making several important points, namely that Hoccleve's versification is better than his contemporary, Lydgate, and is, in fact, closely similar to that of Chaucer. Furthermore, he is saying that a well-wrought poem of the period, if not by Chaucer, must, in all probability, be by Hoccleve. Skeat, one of the best and most erudite critics of his time--and one, like ten Brink, still quoted today--appears to hold Hoccleve in considerably higher regard than did many of his Victorian counterparts, and higher, it would seem, than he did Lydgate. Note, however, that Hoccleve is not truly being

⁹⁸ One such erroneous attribution will be looked at in the next chapter.

⁹⁹ Walter W. Skeat, "A Poem by Hoccleve," *The Academy* 33 (1888) 325.

considered as a poet in his own right, but only inasmuch as he can imitate Chaucer.

Henry Morley offers modernized-spelling versions of some of Hoccleve's poetry in his 1876 *Shorter English Poems*, and he calls the prologue to the *Regement* "an ingenious introduction."¹⁰⁰ The decision to include Hoccleve's poetry in such an anthology can be seen as a sort of statement of quality. Still, in his 1890 literary history, Morley says little of Hoccleve's skills as a poet over the twelve and a half pages devoted to the poet, most of the content of those pages being taken up with biographical information and a summarization of the prologue to the *Regement*, with quoted passages. However striking the paucity of critical response, Morley does say of Hoccleve's rhetorical style that the sources of the *Regement* are "digested into practical counsel," and that the additional content by Hoccleve "deals so boldly with the actual life of its own day."¹⁰¹ It is by no means a remark upon Hoccleve's poetry that Morley does not discuss elements of Hoccleve's style in greater detail, for he does little such analysis in his multi-volume work. For example, all he says of Lydgate's style is that Hoccleve's

¹⁰⁰ Henry Morley, ed., *Shorter English Poems* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin, & Co., 1876) 56.

¹⁰¹ Henry Morley, *English Writers: An Attempt Towards a History of English Literature*, vol. 6 (London, 1890) 131.

contemporary "wrote clear, fluent verse," but that "Sometimes he was as prolix, and he always was as musical, as the old romancers who had been satirized by Chaucer in 'Sir Thopas.'"¹⁰² Remarkably, the closest thing to a negative comment on Hoccleve in Morley's work is in an earlier volume discussing the *Gesta Romanorum*, where he says simply that the poem praised so much by William Browne is "so literally from the 'Gesta Romanorum' [. . .] that the original inventor deserves most of the praise,"¹⁰³ a comment that reiterates an opinion expressed earlier by Warton, one disputed, as we have seen, by Mason.

One poem that has a long history of mis-attribution to Chaucer is Hoccleve's *Ad Beatam Virginem* (sometimes called *The Mother of God*). In his 1891 note arguing for Hoccleve's authorship, Charles H. Ross discusses both arguments against attributing the work to Chaucer as well as matching arguments for assigning it to Hoccleve. He neither directly praises nor derides Hoccleve. Still, there is indirect criticism implicit in his words. For instance, point 2 against Chaucerian authorship revolves around what Ross calls "faulty rime."¹⁰⁴ He bases this

¹⁰² Morley, *English Writers* 124.

¹⁰³ Morley, *English Writers*, vol. 1 (1866) 727.

¹⁰⁴ Charles H. Ross, "Chaucer and 'The Mother of God,'" *MLN* 6 (1891) 387.

point on the rhyme of *honour* and *curë*, found in two of the three manuscripts. He does say that the rhyme is better if the Phillipps MS spelling--and subsequent grammatical change--*honurë* is used. Ross admits that the Phillipps is "the best and the oldest" manuscript, and remember, we today know the Phillipps as the holographic Huntington HM 111. Further, Ross adds that while Chaucer does rhyme *aventure* and *honoure*, it is something Chaucer "admitted." Such rhymes, which do appear in Hoccleve's works, are point 2 of the argument for Hoccleve's authorship. Here is an argument of stark dichotomy between reception of Chaucer and Hoccleve: even though Chaucer admittedly might make such rhymes, Ross finds such rhymes poor, and so feels a poem with such rhymes must, of course, be Hoccleve's.

The preceding pages have shown that Hoccleve did not fare well with the passing centuries. I have traced the course of falling regard for his work, and explained why this growing ill-repute may have come to pass.¹⁰⁵ In

¹⁰⁵ Note that this chapter deals only with those critics who specifically mention Hoccleve, but that there is more that could be said about those critics who do not mention him. For instance, Hoccleve is not mentioned by the poet Thomas Gray--who had abandoned his own plans for a history of English poetry upon learning of Warton's enterprise--in any of his critical works or letters, although Gray did write an essay *On the Poems of John Lydgate*.

particular, we surely must recognize the significance of the severe derision of such still-potent figures Warton and Ritson, who were writing at the dawn of literary criticism as we know it and thus have far-reaching influence. Also, such simple elements as the changing language caused rather large problems with commentators' understanding of Hoccleve's work, particularly his versification. What we further must note, however, is that Hoccleve is not the only of his contemporaries who suffered the reversal of fortunes in his literary reputation. As some of the comparisons have shown, Lydgate, for example, was subject to wavering critical response. Still, we are left with the question of why Hoccleve's reputation in the last century became worse than that of, for instance, Gower or Lydgate. The next chapter will begin examining just that question.

Chapter 3

The Gatekeeper Positioned: Furnivall as Editor and Reader

Chapter 2 shows the course of a gradual change in critical evaluation of Hoccleve's works, with a pronounced negative turn following Warton's and Ritson's work. Thus, there was already a certain degree of increasing negative appraisal of the medieval poet's work before Furnivall began editing Hoccleve's oeuvre. So when Furnivall took on editing Hoccleve's work, he probably would have been familiar with what his immediate critical predecessors had said--that is, the increasingly more negative commentary--than with earlier criticism.¹ In a sense, we might not be surprised that Furnivall, like many of his contemporaries, was highly critical of Hoccleve's poetry, even if, as we have seen, Furnivall's respected contemporary, Skeat, did have some favorable things to say of the poet and his work. Still, as we will see, Furnivall's reaction to the corpus seems rather excessive. This chapter will first

¹ Aside from a thorough reading of all Furnivall's notes and introductory commentary, particularly his *Trial-Forewords to My "Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems" for the Chaucer Society*, Chaucer Society Second Series 6 (London, 1871), a quick survey of what he had consulted can easily be found in the forewords to his edition of *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, rev. ed. Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, EETS, es 61, 73 (London: Oxford UP, 1970) xlii-xliv.

examine Furnivall's editorial skills and show some of the biases he had about literature in general, and then show how these weaknesses in textual scholarship and very strong literary prejudices may have directly affected the work he did with Hoccleve specifically. The chapter's focus will examine what Antonia Ward calls "Furnivall's virtues and faults (for they are always thus intertwined)" and show how these traits may have affected his work.²

First, let us consider Furnivall strictly as a textual scholar, for although the editorial process is indeed a critical act, Furnivall is remembered more as an editor than as a commentator. Initially, then, our attention will focus on what Furnivall, in theory, did to the textual material he set out to edit, ignoring at first any extra-textual influences on the work. Later, we will look at ways in which Furnivall as a reader may have been influential on the textual practice of Furnivall the editor.

As a starting point, some of what Donald C. Baker said in 1984 about Furnivall's work with Chaucer for the Chaucer Society, which I shall quote at length, is extremely relevant to all the nineteenth-century editor's work:

² Antonia Ward. "'My Love for Chaucer': F. J. Furnivall and Homosociality in the Chaucer Society." *Studies in Medievalism*, 9 (1997) 48.

Furnivall's contribution to the history of Chaucer's text as an editor may not be easily assessed. The Six-Text edition and the subsequent editions of Harleian 7334 (H⁴) and Cambridge Dd.4.24, as well as the texts of *Troilus and Criseyde* and of the minor poems, are perhaps not editions as we would use the term normally. Furnivall's chief contributions must be said to have lain in the selection of the texts, seeing to it that they were well copied, printed (Furnivall raised the money), and well proofread (most of which work Furnivall did himself). Furnivall was clearly not a textual scholar, in the sense that Henry Bradshaw was, but he was fully aware of this, and at every step he generously gave credit to his chief advisors, Bradshaw, Morris, Ellis, and others. But, however regretfully one must assess the genuinely editorial capacities of Furnivall, one must not [. . .] be led into the assumption that Furnivall was merely an ignorant enthusiast. On the contrary, he was an extremely learned man in certain ways, and part of the reason for our dismissal of his more narrowly textual abilities can be found in the readiness with which he admitted his own mistakes; surely no editor has ever been so willing to admit his own error and seize upon a correction by another instead of stubbornly clinging to error and only grudgingly and silently admitting mistakes by quiet emendation in subsequent printings. Furnivall fell upon accurate scholarship with enthusiasm and gratitude [. . .] It is owing to Furnivall's own blunt honesty that we are aware of his imperfections as we are. His works are sprinkled with footnotes almost gleefully announcing that his conclusions or facts have been challenged and corrected by another scholar.³

³ Donald C. Baker, "Frederick James Furnivall (1825-1910)," *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul G Ruggiers (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1984) 158. See also an anecdote about Furnivall admitting to flaws in one of his own editions as told by Henry Bradley in *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*, ed. Henry Frowde (London: Oxford UP, 1911) 6.

Later in this study, we will see that the points Baker notes as Furnivall's most important contributions--that is, the choosing of texts, their careful copying, and careful proofreading of the transcriptions/proofs--will bear directly on his work with Hoccleve. Meanwhile, Baker's claim that the Chaucer Society work was not editing as we might think of it is indeed true. Baker further makes a crucial observation about Furnivall, that "As an *editor* [. . .] his work cannot really be evaluated, for he never, in a sense, *edited* anything."⁴ In fact, the Chaucer Society work, in general, was not what many scholars of Furnivall's own time considered editing, either. Henry Bradshaw, referring to Furnivall and certain other Society members, for instance, writes in a letter to Furnivall, "And what I insist on is that until some of you begin *to edit* books there is no chance for any of us learning something."⁵ What Bradshaw means by *edit* appears to be what modern textual scholars do: finding the manuscript that the editor feels is closest to the author's idea, by long, intense, and careful comparison with other extant witnesses, and producing a text that fairly reflects what the original work might reasonably have been.

⁴ Baker 168.

⁵ Qtd. in Baker 164.

Furnivall's own publishing philosophy, which he expressed in a letter to *Gentleman's Magazine*, is based on his belief in the principle that Victorian scholars "demand imperatively the very words of the manuscript," afterwards possibly consulting "any retouching and additions of editions, clever or foolish, but not before."⁶ While Furnivall may not have always agreed with Ritson--for instance, when he uses the cautious phrase "a judicious antiquary (unlike Ritson)"⁷--his proposed editorial approach bears striking similarity to Ritson's "main methodological principle, fidelity to the manuscript."⁸ Perusal of Ritson's theory of editorial function shows that it indeed bears some resemblance to Furnivall's hope to print the "exact words" of the manuscript, except that Ritson seems theoretically to allow for more freedom in emendation: "To correct the obvious errors of an illiterate transcriber, to supply irremediable defects and to make sense of nonsense, are

⁶ *Gentlemen's Magazine* 222 (1867) 87, qtd. in William Benzie, *Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983) 138. Curiously, Furnivall had used the exact same words the previous year in *Bishop Percy's Ballad Manuscript: Proposal for Its Publication* (London: 1866) 1, with the exception that there it reads "editors clever or foolish," recognizing there that bad editions are ultimately the product of bad editors.

⁷ Furnivall, *Bishop Percy's Ballad Manuscript* 1.

⁸ David Matthews 44.

certainly essential duties of an editor of ancient poetry; provided he act with integrity and publicity."⁹ And while Furnivall shared some editorial philosophies with Ritson, he also like Ritson committed certain acts of emendation, often without clear indication, as we will examine in the next chapter.¹⁰ At any rate, Furnivall's proposed editorial approach led him into disagreements with those of his contemporaries who "insisted on critical editions, and Furnivall would not hear of them--'doctored editions' he called them."¹¹

Furnivall's Goals and Practices for the Early English Text Society

Because Furnivall was most interested in simply making medieval literature available to readers who had limited access to the manuscripts that contained the works, he founded the Early English Text Society for that purpose. Part of his motivation for forming this society was what Skeat called the discovery of Furnivall's life, "that many highly important manuscripts had been incorrectly printed and insufficiently glossed, and many

⁹ Joseph Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romances Selected and Publish'd by Joseph Ritson* vol. 1 (1802) cix.

¹⁰ See Edwards, "Observation" 44, for a brief discussion of Ritson's ill-defined approach to noting emendations.

¹¹ Frowde 14.

more had never been printed at all, and were practically unknown."¹² The same thinking would later guide the goal of another society, for Furnivall wanted the Chaucer Society "to let lovers and students of him see how far the best unprinted manuscripts of his works differ from the printed texts."¹³ The reader best served by his goals are, in Furnivall's words, "ordinary students of Early English, whose spare minutes for Museum work (if he lives in town) are few, and his guineas to buy texts with fewer."¹⁴ The aim of the EETS was, again in Furnivall's words,

to print all that is most valuable of the yet unprinted MSS. in English, and also to re-edit and reprint all that is most valuable in printed English books which, from their scarcity or price, are not within the reach of the student of moderate means.¹⁵

But the attempt--based on Furnivall's previously quoted philosophy, and wholly justifiable before microfilm--to simply make the exact words of the medieval manuscript appear in print, as a series of diplomatic transcripts, is

¹² Frowde 177.

¹³ Frederick J. Furnivall, "Proposal for a Chaucer Society," qtd. in Frowde, xlix.

¹⁴ Frederick J. Furnivall, *Athenaeum*, January, 1865, 128.

¹⁵ Qtd. in Matthews 147 from Furnivall's papers. Notice the use of the terminology Furnivall employs: to "print" manuscripts and "re-edit" previously printed material.

not ultimately what was done overall by the EETS.¹⁶ Many of the earlier volumes are a combination of the influence of eclectic scholarship with the frequent hint of poor judgement. The 19th century EETS did indeed make texts available to modern readers, yet Furnivall's aim of making the content readily available--seemingly for an historical, rather than literary, interest--appears to have been forgotten. For while some scholars might have been "mainly concerned with accuracy of text and rhyme-investigations, Furnivall went mainly for the human and sociological interest of the matter."¹⁷ This social/historical leaning will come into play later in this chapter's discussion, but certainly defined what Furnivall meant when he referred to "what is most valuable" in terms of literature.

Some of the shortcomings of the initial EETS editions come out of Furnivall's compulsive personality and his peculiar methods of running the Society. Additionally, the EETS was not the only society with which he was

¹⁶ Note that Matthews points out that "Furnivall's stricture against the type facsimile was law for the Early English Text Society," 152, and see particularly Furnivall's comment on the subject which Matthews quotes, 150.

¹⁷ Frowde 14.

occupied.¹⁸ As Robert Bernard Martin encapsulates

Furnivall's activities:

For the Early English Text Society alone, Furnivall edited thirty-nine volumes, and they were undertaken in his spare time when he was not practising at the bar, teaching at the Working Men's College, serving as secretary to the Philological Society, acting as editor and coordinator of The New English Dictionary (to which he contributed some 30,000 exemplary quotations culled from his reading), founding and directing seven literary societies, walking, boxing, cycling, dancing, still sculling fourteen miles on Sundays after he was eighty and much more frequently when he was younger, working for women's suffrage, speaking without notes at endless meetings, holding forth at daily literary levees in the ABC tearoom nearest the British Museum, or employing the vigour of ten in his favourite of all recreations: wrangling with other scholars.¹⁹

K. M. Elisabeth Murray observes, "Furnivall as an editor worked with more enthusiasm than order."²⁰ And Peter Faulkner adds that,

¹⁸ The societies founded by Furnivall are, in chronological order, the EETS (1864), the Chaucer Society (1868), the Ballad Society (1868), the New Shakespeare Society (1873), the Browning Society (1881), the Wyclif Society (1881), and the Shelley Society (1886).

¹⁹ Robert Bernard Martin, "The philologist as rock-blaster," *The Times Literary Supplement*, Jan. 13 1984, 27. Even this brief listing, however, leaves out other activities, such as acting as president of the Furnivall Cycling Club and founding the Furnivall Sculling Club for Girls, not to mention that for all his societies Furnivall edited over one hundred texts.

²⁰ K. M. Elisabeth Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words: James Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977) 138.

it was characteristic of his enthusiasm--and impatience--that he decided that the process of publication needed to be much swifter than the existing organizations allowed and so created, largely by his own efforts, though sweeping many others along with him, the Early English Text Society.²¹

Unfortunately, while Furnivall's "zeal never wearied,"²² it "sometimes outran his discretion."²³ A problem soon arose out of Furnivall's enthusiasm: his rush to bring studies of medieval English language and literature to fruition made him strive to get everyone involved. For instance, T. Gregory Foster recalls of Furnivall's work with the Philological Society that "a new recruit to English studies, however young and untried, [. . .] must undertake a piece of work."²⁴ Furnivall set new scholars and untrained friends to work for his various societies. Remember, the goal was to publish quickly the multitude of texts that had not yet been printed in the way Furnivall believed they should be. But as Murray points out, there was a problem:

It was very difficult to find editors at a time when England was backward in textual criticism

²¹ Peter Faulkner, "'The Paths of Virtue and Early English': F. J. Furnivall and Victorian Medievalism," *From Medieval to Medievalism*, ed. John Simons (New York: St. Martin's, 1992) 146.

²² Frowde 28.

²³ Frowde 104.

²⁴ Frowde 58.

owing to the lack of English studies in the older Universities. Furnivall had perforce to resort to amateurs, many of whom had only very vague ideas on how to edit a text preserved in several manuscripts or to organise a glossary and were non-plussed when dealing with deviations from modern English usage because they lacked a thorough grasp of Anglo-Saxon or medieval English. For the superficiality of some of the editing Furnivall's impatience is also to blame. He had a remarkable knowledge of the material and where it was to be found, and his practice was to get hold of the most accessible copy of the text and employ someone--often a clerk with no great expertise--to make a transcript. This was rushed into print and the proofs handed out to other scholars or clerks as available, to check with the various copies of the work. The official editor then cleared off the whole business of editing in the process of correcting the proofs, added a few notes and sometimes a glossary.²⁵

The result was, in Baker's words, that

Many of the early [EETS] editions were slipshod, for which Furnivall frequently did not himself even read proof. The appearance of careful typesetting is particularly annoying when the material itself is shoddily presented, and some of the introductions are not only frivolous but downright wrong.²⁶

Baker also observes "that some Early English Text Society volumes were tossed off with little or no supervision or care by Furnivall."²⁷ These last two comments by Baker are at some variance with what he himself says about

²⁵ Murray 91.

²⁶ Baker 164. Note also Furnivall's lack of supervision to sub-editors under his direction, as mentioned in a letter from Walter W. Skeat to Furnivall, Nov. 17, 1865 (King's College, London).

²⁷ Baker 165.

Furnivall's strengths in the lengthy first quotation of this chapter.

The EETS became a project inextricably linked with Furnivall's hand, his idiosyncratically vacillating dictatorial and laissez-faire management, to the point that his difficult nature affected how texts were produced and who was doing the work, leading Edward A. Freeman to call him "the Society's madman," asking why the "sane members of the Society" did not simply "chain him up" or "gag him."²⁸ Furnivall had ideas about how he wanted early English literature to be presented, but unfortunately, he was not as diplomatic at times as he might have been in discussing these editorial ideas: "He was a hopeless club chairman, letting everyone speak at once and forever if they were in agreement with him, and silencing those who weren't."²⁹ Nonetheless, his overbearing nature was well known, as he exhibited "high-handed behaviour--characteristic, it must be said, of Furnivall."³⁰ Furnivall's difficulty with other scholars was partially a product of his goal to get works quickly published, one of the principles guiding his activities.

²⁸ Murray 90.

²⁹ Bernard Myers, "F.J. Furnivall. Philanthropist, Lexicographer, Oarsman," *Journal of the William Morris Society* 9:4 (1992) 34.

³⁰ Myers 33.

That desire for alacrity did indeed have an impact on Furnivall's editorial decisions and practices:

Of the pieces now issued some have been printed elsewhere, and of most, perhaps better texts exist; but the time that it takes to ascertain whether a poem has been printed or not, which is the best MS. of it, in which points the versions differ, &c., &c., is so great, that after some experience I find the shortest way for a man much engaged in other work, but wishing to give some time to the Society, is to make himself a foolometer and book-possessor-meter for the majority of his fellow members, and print whatever he either does not know, or cannot get easily, leaving others with more leisure to print the best texts. *He wants some text, and that at once.*³¹

In a footnote to this statement, he adds that "This excuse is not intended as a justification for an Editor to take no trouble about his work. It only says that he may be allowed to judge how the trouble he can, and must, take can be supplied." Again, Furnivall's aim seems to be quick production in quantity, with only cursory consideration of quality. And yet, Furnivall's seeming lack of scholarly vigor should not be seen as sloth or apathy, for as Faulkner remembered, "Furnivall himself [. . .] always aimed to be part of a group activity. He excelled as what is now called a facilitator."³² Skeat recognized this trait when he says of Furnivall, "He

³¹ Frederick J. Furnivall, Preface, *The Complaynt of Criste: Political, Religious and Love Poems*, EETS o.s. 15 (London, 1866) ix.

³² Faulkner 156.

discovered and inspired the best editors."³³ Furthermore, as Bernard Myers has pointed out, "With Furnivall's guidance and active participation, new standards of editing and exegesis were applied to Early English texts, with an expertise that had been hitherto reserved for ancient and classical texts."³⁴ For all the EETS's imperfections, it accomplished something great, owing much to Furnivall.

Nevertheless, we also owe much of the poor quality of the standard Hoccleve editions to this rush to publish. The final section of the forewords to the first EETS edition begins, "The writing of these forewords takes me back nearly ten years," and it goes on to speak of sculling, walks along the river, and the death of Teena Rochfort Smith, a young woman with whom Furnivall was involved.³⁵ Furnivall was at times not focused in his work, and he does admit to the forewords for the *Regement* suffering for it: "I am sorry that these forewords are so

³³ Frowde 178.

³⁴ Myers 34.

³⁵ Incidentally, although Furnivall says at the end of his forewords that ten years have passed since the Phillipps was copied sometime in "the autumn of 1882." (*Minor Poems* xlvii), he must have been working on Hoccleve since at least 1872, when he inquired about access to the manuscript. See Spevack 127. Also, Furnivall says that he had, while pursuing a manuscript of Robert of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne*, first seen the Durham in about 1871, *Minor Poems* xliv.

slight and scrappy; but they have been written at intervals, other work or laziness coming between the bits, and putting the details of this text out of my head."³⁶

Furnivall was *not* lazy, but he uses the same false modesty Hoccleve does, without recognizing it, apparently. More importantly, we need to observe that while admitting to faults in the preliminary material, there is no such admission that the edited Hoccleve text itself might be subject to the same type of influence. Furnivall confesses to the types of things that occupied his time, from work for the OED, "so pleasant and easy, that it makes one neglect work that needs effort," to "Socials, dances and classes."³⁷ While discussing how easy it was for him to ignore the work with Hoccleve, Furnivall describes, rather quaintly and charmingly, how the distractions affected his work:

Last August I took my bundle of Hoccleve papers down to the pleasant farm in which we spent our holiday month [. . .] But, alas, I never untied the string. There was the nice soft lawn to walk on barefooted, or lie on, all the morning; beautiful lanes and cross-country paths to stroll over in the afternoon or evening; songs and pieces to listen to at nightfall; crops and cattle to look at and chat about; a grand view around three-fourths of the horizon to see from our hill; visits to pay, churches to inspect, neighbours' stories to hear;--bother Hoccleve! where could he come in, with the sunshine,

³⁶ *Regement* xix.

³⁷ *Regement* xix.

flowers, apple-orchards and harvest about? But here, in his London--his, and yet how different from his,--the present scraps have been put together, mainly under the electric light in the British Museum.³⁸

One recent scholar commiserates with these comments by Furnivall, saying, "I imagine most editors and scholars will smile at this frank account of a project neglected."³⁹

And well we might, but Furnivall's next sentence points unmistakably to the sometimes unintended consequences of a major editor's impact on a minor poet's access to canonical status. Furnivall, after characteristically admitting fault with his forewords, says, "Let them serve till the old poet's next editor treats him thoroughly."⁴⁰ Easily discernable is the Furnivall push to simply get a text out, but his Hoccleve editions are to date arguably the most thorough. In other words, that next editor never fully came into being, and Furnivall himself remains the starting point for students

³⁸ *Regement* xix. Furnivall's idea that Hoccleve had nothing to do with life outside London can also be seen in the forewords to *Minor Poems*, xxxv: "There is so little of the country in Hoccleve's works, that he was no doubt a cockney. I see no evidence that he had ever crost a horse."

³⁹ Thompson 139

⁴⁰ *Regement* xix.

of Hoccleve.⁴¹ Furnivall never thought of his own work as definitive--and he self-admittedly did not focus his time and effort accordingly--but we have in many ways accepted the edition as if it were definitive.

In fact, in the final section of his *Minor Poems* forewords is a discussion of the editing of Hoccleve's works, with Furnivall remarking of the then as yet unpublished *Regement*, "If any one will volunteer for the editing of this poem, it shall be committed to his charge, for I haven't time for it. Still, if no one else will do it, I will."⁴² Remember, Furnivall wanted to make much of the body of early English writings be printed and available, for works like those of Hoccleve and Lydgate were "wanted by students at once." Since the simple printing was more of Furnivall's concern, he had had a "good friend" transcribe the Durham, and felt "bound to try and see Hoccleve cleared."⁴³ The hastiness some had

⁴¹ This issue will be taken up in a later chapter.

⁴² *Minor Poems* xlvii. A comment in Gollancz's foreword on the poems contained in his edition may be enlightening here: "I wished Dr. Furnivall to add the contents of the volume to his projected edition of Hoccleve's works, but with characteristic generosity he would not accept my suggestion," v. Whatever Gollancz means by "generosity" here, ultimately Furnivall's refusal puts the burden on someone else's shoulders and leaves his own edition incomplete, resulting in a decades long delay until the entire Hoccleve oeuvre was finally printed.

⁴³ *Minor Poems* xlvii.

noted in Furnivall's editing came of age with Hoccleve. He did not take the time to be a careful editor, and approached the preparation of the edition as a distasteful necessity, one which allowed for whatever shortcuts he deemed acceptable.

Contemporary Evaluations of Furnivall

Furnivall states in the preface to his edition of *The Complaynt of Criste: Political, Religious and Love Poems*, as a response to a criticism by a contemporary scholar, which will here serve to illustrate his thinking on the editorial process, that the flawed scribal copy should "be left as an instructive instance to readers in general, and a caution to careless people like myself, of how one of the scribes to whom we owe almost all our knowledge of our forefathers' minds, had chanced to go astray."⁴⁴ But while Furnivall brought to editing "his typical blend of overachievement and carelessness of detail,"⁴⁵ Furnivall the textual scholar not only made mistakes, but he also seemingly reveled in such errors, as he did those of medieval scribes. Notably, "despite Furnivall's anger at the mistakes of his editors, his own

⁴⁴ Furnivall, *The Complaynt of Criste* 138.

⁴⁵ Matthews 146.

work was not at all times flawless and meticulous,"⁴⁶ and "Furnivall was less painstaking in his work than he demanded that others be, but at least he was frank in acknowledging his shortcuts."⁴⁷ Furnivall's "rapid, impatient way of working upset his more painstaking, and usually more scholarly, editors."⁴⁸

In retrospect, Furnivall's comment on how we access medieval literature is particularly interesting in relation to Hoccleve studies: much of the poet's work exists in holographs, rather than scribal copies; however, Furnivall did not always choose these manuscripts as the basis for his editions, and yet we owe almost all our knowledge of Hoccleve's poetry to Furnivall.⁴⁹ Furthermore, Furnivall's selection of a basis for his text when no autograph exists is also questionable, as D. C. Greetham observes, saying that "Furnivall could be a remarkably idiosyncratic editor, as when he selected Harley 4866 as his copy-text for his edition of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* because it had 'the best portrait of

⁴⁶ Benzie 150

⁴⁷ Martin 27.

⁴⁸ Benzie 151

⁴⁹ Of course, there are later editions, but remember, Furnivall's remains the standard.

Chaucer.'"⁵⁰ At times, Furnivall himself admits to not examining available witnesses and selecting the best extant copy, as he acknowledges in one of his EETS editions: "There are, no doubt, better MS copies of the poem than that printed here; but I had not time to hunt for them, and Mr George Parker had this Laud one."⁵¹ And yet, the recollections of some of Furnivall's contemporaries are quite at odds with how we might see his editorial practice:

Without having ever been to *seminar*, he yet guessed instinctively the necessity for obtaining all available manuscripts for a given work, printing from the best, and carefully sifting the errors of the various groups. How angry he could be and what bolts he would hurl in his Fore-words at the luckless editor who chanced to base his text on an inferior manuscript.⁵²

The fact that evaluations of Furnivall's editorial skills vary and change is important to this study. Many scholars just after the time of publication believed all the EETS editions to be carefully prepared, or they felt the texts at least closely matched what was found in the best extant manuscripts if they did not represent a genuinely collated and edited presentation. This misplaced reliance can be

⁵⁰ D. C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1992) 331.

⁵¹ Frederick J. Furnivall, *Forewords, Queene Elizabethes Academy*, EETS es 8 (London, 1869) xxii.

⁵² Frowde 12.

seen when W. P. Ker notes of Furnivall that, "No doubt his work had many of the faults which are prevented in the best regulated schools, but [. . .] the strict and well-trained academic scholars [. . .] were among the first to applaud and thank him."⁵³

Furnivall's death in 1910 was soon followed by the 1911 *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*, a collection of the remembrances of those who knew him, and that book is filled with the highest of praises for him, reminiscent of what followed the deaths of Chaucer and Shakespeare, whose societies he was instrumental in founding. One of the acquaintances whose recollections are presented in the work goes as far as to liken Furnivall to a "prophet," who has "but little honour in his own country."⁵⁴ Even as this claim seems amusingly out of place in a volume solely dedicated to honoring Furnivall, it is also somewhat untrue. In the same volume of tribute, Ker observes that the "unprofessional" quality of Furnivall's "work had many of the faults which are prevented in the best regulated schools," yet "the strict and well-trained academic scholars, instead of being jealous and looking with suspicion on this privateer, were

⁵³ Frowde 94.

⁵⁴ Frowde 194.

among the first and the readiest to applaud and thank him."⁵⁵

And yet, there was, of course, some contemporary recognition of weakness in Furnivall's scholarship. For example, Skeat says that the fact Furnivall was not "believed in at the Universities" arose "from his odd prefaces, etc., & modes of expression."⁵⁶ Note, however, that Skeat says nothing about the texts themselves, but rather, only the prefatory material. While it seems that Victorian *scholars* may have had mixed feelings about the validity of Furnivall's editions, and a degree of hesitancy and doubt about his commentary, what worked to the advantage of Furnivall's reputation was the very goal of his editorial philosophy: printing unprinted and not readily available manuscripts. Scholars were thus forced to rely on these editions, and as a result, their hesitancy about the reliability of any part of the Furnivall editions probably became less pronounced. Possibly overzealously harsh, but still essentially factual, is Hans Aarsleff's observation that although Furnivall "never wrote a book or even a first-rate article," but rather "prefaces that have probably done more than anything else to keep his name alive, owing to

⁵⁵ Frowde 94.

⁵⁶ Letter to James A. H. Murray, qtd in Murray 148.

their often uncontrolled discourse on irrelevant subjects," there is a "tradition which has made a great figure of an intellectually undistinguished and uninteresting man."⁵⁷ Furthermore, Furnivall himself did not present a straightforward diplomatic or judicious version of medieval manuscripts in his own editions--or at the very least, as we will shortly see, definitely not in his Hoccleve edition. He made mistakes, he took it upon himself to silently emend, and he was quietly selective in what he had others prepare. Ironically, possibly more than any single other of his contemporaries, even the better trained textual scholars, Furnivall shaped the future of Middle English scholarship by his editorial practice, as may be seen in microcosm in this case-study's focus on one poet.

Furnivall's Critical Approach

Furnivall's purely editorial talents are, then, questionable at best. However, it was not only Furnivall's skills in producing a valid text based on surviving manuscripts that we must consider, but also his ability to view a work in light of its milieu. Remember, Furnivall's profoundest interest was in the historical and

⁵⁷ Hans Aarsleff, review of Benzie, *Victorian Studies* 29 (1985) 175.

sociological content of texts. An editor's failure to see the period in which a work is produced, outside of an idealized concept for the stereotyped qualities of that age, disables the editor from making valid decisions in developing the text. Faulkner says Furnivall "was not a detached historian, but a man who could be 'surprised' (and disturbed) by what he found out about the past."⁵⁸ In practice, Furnivall's interest in the past was highly selective, as evidenced by his desire to omit the historical introduction from one of his contemporary's published papers, because it "bored" him,⁵⁹ even if Leonard A. Magnus recalls that Furnivall was "never bored by anything."⁶⁰ If Furnivall had indeed been printing the "exact words" of the manuscripts, as was his frequent claim, his viewpoint on history would be a moot point. An editor must retain a certain semblance of detachment in order to produce honestly a text that is not only a genuine representation of what is found in the surviving manuscripts, but is also a fair reconstruction of what may not be found in the witnesses, which leads us into the hazardous area of ascertaining authorial intent. Whatever an editor's personal feelings about an author or the work,

⁵⁸ Faulkner 151.

⁵⁹ Murray 82.

⁶⁰ Frowde 111.

the textual scholar's detachment is what facilitates the production of a text that allows *readers* to evaluate the work. Furnivall was not capable of such separation,⁶¹ and his editorial offerings suffered. There is no doubt that Furnivall was incapable of separating Hoccleve, his poetic persona, and the poetry itself.

For all his strictly philological work, Furnivall, like Warton before him, saw literature as a social/historical document, one that would shed light on the beliefs and customs of the English past. Myers points out that "Furnivall had early shown a strong social conscience."⁶² Let us recall that Furnivall was once part of the Christian Socialist movement, and that type of social ideology was indeed part of his lifelong thinking, for even "If not a Socialist, he always remained a reformer"⁶³. He did not support the Victorian class structure, and as part of his efforts toward reform we can consider his instrumental work at establishing the Working Men's College. What Furnivall chose to teach at the college is sufficiently enlightening at times as to his agenda. For instance, he taught *Piers Plowman* "because of

⁶¹ See Frowde 182 & 186.

⁶² Myers 32.

⁶³ Frowde 161.

its sketch of working men in the fourteenth century."⁶⁴ Renate Haas has suggested that Furnivall's intention here was "to reflect his students' own situation" and that *Piers Plowman* was chosen "above all because of its criticism of the upper classes."⁶⁵ Further, Haas claims that Furnivall's interpretation of Chaucer's *General Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales* is likewise marked by the Victorian scholar's own leanings toward social criticism.⁶⁶ Furnivall's desire to change the world was "why he wished to publish everything that might enable Englishmen of [his day] to understand the England of Shakspeare and Chaucer."⁶⁷ So in many ways, Furnivall looked to literature for not only what it could teach us about the past, but also about how our ancestors themselves criticized their own times. Like Warton before him, then, Furnivall believed that English literature was to be valued chiefly because it provided information about social ideology in the past, and judged by its adherence to or criticism of contemporary accepted cultural norms,

⁶⁴ Qtd. in Frowde xxxvi.

⁶⁵ Renate Haas, "The Social Functions of F. J. Furnivall's Medievalism," *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Medieval English Literature and Its Tradition: A Festschrift for Karl Heinz Goller* (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989) 320.

⁶⁶ Haas 320.

⁶⁷ Frowde 114.

and "he grew more and more convinced that these forefathers' voices should be made audible and significant to modern men."⁶⁸

However, as mentioned in the introduction, there are two ways (at least) of thinking about how the social content of a work of literature can affect a work's canonical standing. That is, radical, effective, and undercutting criticism of the social *status quo* will either make a work canonical, or it will bar the work from the canon. If we are to see Furnivall as one of these canon-makers in his gatekeeping role of editor, then his attraction to literature that sharply criticizes the upper class and the class system in general becomes pertinent to our present considerations for one chief reason: Hoccleve's poetry contains no such social criticism. Quite to the contrary, rather, Hoccleve portrays his persona as a social hanger-on, desperately begging the rich upper class for notice and support, but at the same time not working at what one might see as a laborer's employment.⁶⁹ In fact, more than simply neglecting to criticize the upper classes, Hoccleve portrays himself as

⁶⁸ Frowde xliii.

⁶⁹ Actually, Hoccleve complains in the *Regement* (988-1029) that working men (artificers) are fortunately able, when working, to "Talken and syng, and make game and play / And forth hir labour passith with gladnesse," while he, "a writer," must be quiet and suffer stomach and backaches and eye-strain.

attempting to emulate them, or at least wanting to be treated like he were of a class higher than his own. For example, in his *La Male Regle*, Hoccleve first presents himself as paying taverners and cooks freely so that they would count him "a verrey gentil man" (184), then as paying high fares to take boats so that the boatman would call him "maistir" (201). Such activities are the sort that would have harshly grated on the social reform-minded Furnivall.

The Autobiographical Fallacy and Furnivall's Attitude toward Hoccleve

Because Furnivall valued literature as a tool for gaining access to the past and to the way people in the past thought about their times, literature was for him what it had been for Warton, primarily a social and historical document. But the matter of Hoccleve's work is most frequently tinged by seeming self-reflection, and arguably touches on social issues only inasmuch as they directly affect the Hoccleve persona himself. Thus, it would be difficult to believe that Furnivall came to his editor's task bearing a great deal of respect for Hoccleve's poetry. On the contrary, his introductions to the editions are filled with derision for the works he was editing. And more often than not, he exhibits strong feelings of dislike for the poet himself. Furnivall at

one point proclaims himself a "foolometer,"⁷⁰ but if he applied that approach toward Hoccleve, he was apt to be wrong, for Faulkner calls Furnivall's ideas about the life of Hoccleve "undeniably romantic."⁷¹ So we must here consider what has been arguably the most important element in Hoccleve's poetry, the so-called "autobiographical" element.

Furnivall read his authors carefully, and felt, based on what he read, that he knew the person. Interestingly, he was not alone in having a strong faith in his innate ability to read through to the author. For instance, in the 1911 volume dedicated to Furnivall, Cino Chiarini praises Furnivall's *Shakespeare, Life and Work*:

His shrewd and wise knowledge and his sympathy put him in a position to reconstruct Shakespeare's life with an artist's creative instinct. In fact, he summoned up the past from the shadows with a stagecraft effective and delightful. [. . .] he describes [Shakespeare's] family life, the family table, [and] boyish games.⁷²

Most of us today would agree that such details of Shakespeare's everyday home life are something we cannot know. But Furnivall felt he knew Shakespeare, and he

⁷⁰ F. J. Furnivall, Preface, *Manners and Meals in Olden Times*, (London: Trübner, 1868) lxvii. He also says that being a "foolometer" is the function of an editor in Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., Preface, *The Complaynt of Criste* ix.

⁷¹ Faulkner 156.

⁷² Frowde 28.

thought "that people would benefit by being brought into closer touch with Shakespeare by getting to know how and where he lived, what he did and said in ordinary everyday life."⁷³ Such a reading style of "discovering" the writer behind the text was how Furnivall related to his authors, and he brought other critics along with him. Remarking on Furnivall's identification with the authors he sought to study and edit, Alois Brandl recalls

With Chaucer he literally lived on terms of personal friendship: Chaucer's character, indeed, was perhaps most closely analogous to his own. Of Shakspeare he used to talk as if he had known him. Lydgate was for him a worthy neighbor, always industrious and always duly reverent towards his master Chaucer--which last quality sufficed to entitle him in Furnivall's eyes to the privilege of a separate society for the printing of all his works, though this society never materialized.⁷⁴

Furnivall's contemporaries saw only positive aspects resulting from his identification with particular authors and from his equating presumed personality with talent, even as his supporters ignored the bias such a habit might produce. J. J. Jusserand remarks that Furnivall

⁷³ Frowde 63-64.

⁷⁴ Frowde 11. Notice, incidentally, that Hoccleve is not mentioned here, although what is said of Lydgate, with the exception of Furnivall thinking him to be a worthy neighbor and an industrious person, can be said of Hoccleve. The proposed Lydgate Society was actually to be the "Lydgate and Occleve" Society, so the omission of Hoccleve's name in the quoted recollection indicates the ignoring of him as a poet. (See *Minor Poems* xlviiii, where Furnivall makes mention of his proposal for that Society, dated 14 March, 1872.)

spoke with authority on his subjects, and what "a rare delight it was to listen to that evocative voice, the voice of a man who had, it seemed, personally known Chaucer, [and who] had heard Wyclif's sermons."⁷⁵

Furnivall's interest in the perceived writer of a text is also expressed by John Munro:

It was the individual, the play of character, that interested him. In his work on the life and literature of Old England he went straight to the human side of it all. It was the *man* he loved; and the heart rather than the brain of a man that he counted. [. . .] and by reason of it he himself got near to his beloved Chaucer and Shakspeare.⁷⁶

Furnivall's own words bear out this type of thinking in his approach to literature:

any one who reads the Canterbury Tales, and gets to know the man Chaucer, must delight in and love him, and must feel sorry that so little has been done for the works of the genial bright soul, whose humour and wit, whose grace and tenderness, whose power and beauty, are the chief glory of our Early Literature.⁷⁷

So although Harold Spender claims it was Furnivall's intent "to make men talk about books instead of persons,"⁷⁸ that type of discussion is, in fact, what Furnivall did, particularly in Hoccleve's case. His

⁷⁵ Frowde 92.

⁷⁶ Frowde 118-19.

⁷⁷ Frederick J. Furnivall, *A Temporary Preface to the Six-Text Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (London: Chaucer Society, 1968) 2.

⁷⁸ Frowde 181.

considerations of Hoccleve are inextricably linked to his reactions to and understanding of the man he perceived Hoccleve to be.

Here, then, is the heart of Furnivall's influential disdain for Hoccleve, his literalistic belief in the "life" Hoccleve presents. How could an intelligent scholar so naively believe that all self-reference was indeed biographical fact? For one thing, he was not alone, but a product of his critical heritage: the previous chapter showed how many of Furnivall's predecessors accepted Hoccleve's first-person accounts as autobiography, and theories of autobiography are a construct of this century. Furnivall also wrote in an age when literary criticism was not well developed and to a great extent philological. As Gerald Graff illustrates in his book on the development of the profession of literary study, approaches to literature before the nineteenth century had been largely focused on the rhetoric, oratory, and forensics of Greek and Latin,⁷⁹ and philological criticism continued to be a main focus of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars of medieval literature.⁸⁰ And while Greetham points out that "the philological bent

⁷⁹ See Gerald Graff, *Professing Literature: An Institutional History* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987).

⁸⁰ See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 27-30.

of men like F. J. Furnivall [. . .] affirmed vernacular textual criticism as an essentially historical activity,"⁸¹ Furnivall himself is quoted as having said, "I never cared a bit for philology; my chief aim has been throughout to illustrate the social condition of the English people in the past."⁸² Mackenzie Bell observes "that Furnivall was a lover of cold matters of fact,"⁸³ and William Benzie sees Furnivall's tenacious reliance on facts as a result of his scientific and mathematical training, resulting in a hatred for artificiality.⁸⁴ Thus, as Benzie further claims, "Furnivall and many other philologists were only mildly interested in questions of evaluation and criticism," and Furnivall "could never accept the premise that art was truer than reality."⁸⁵ As a reader, Furnivall would look for depictions of reality, not for verisimilitude. And here is where Furnivall's approach to reading literature juxtaposes with his editorial approach, leading Greetham to remark about early editorial practice that "it was inevitable that undocumented (and undefended) conjecture should be the

⁸¹ Greetham 320.

⁸² Frowde 43.

⁸³ Frowde 103.

⁸⁴ Benzie 140.

⁸⁵ Benzie 139.

prevailing practice in the editing of vernacular texts."⁸⁶
 As such, Furnivall's feelings on philology are in line with what we have already seen to be his feelings on literary value generally.

The most telling statement Furnivall himself may have made on the subject was when he wrote of a critical essay by Browning that:

The interest lay in the fact that Browning's "utterances" [. . .] are *his*, and not those of any one of the "so many imaginary persons" behind whom he insists on so often hiding himself and whose necks I, for one, should continually like to wring, whose bodies I would fain kick out of the way, in order to get face to face with the poet himself, and hear his own voice speaking his own thoughts, man to man, soul to soul. Straight speaking, straight hitting, suit me best.⁸⁷

Such a naive response to the poetic characters would not have been surprising to Browning, who, in fact, wrote irritably a few years before Furnivall's comments, "There would seem to be no sort of perception extant as to what dramatic writing means: my silly friend of *The Spectator* sees myself speaking out my own speech in this and the other character, and blames accordingly."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Greetham 320.

⁸⁷ *Browning Society Papers*, 1 (1881), qtd. in Benzie 139.

⁸⁸ Robert Browning, "To Miss E. Dickinson West," 4 January 1876, letter 1876:1 of *Letters of Robert Browning, Collected by Thomas J. Wise*, ed. Thurman L. Hood (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1933) 168. Later, in a letter to the same recipient, Browning wrote of Furnivall,

Consequently, if Furnivall--and some of his contemporaries--so adamantly believed Browning the man was behind each of the very different poetic personas--that they were, after all, really Browning in mild disguise--is it any wonder that Furnivall would accept everything Hoccleve says about his life as undeniable fact? It is fairly incomprehensible that a reader could believe that the speaker in Browning's dramatic monologues, such as those in "Porphyria's Lover," "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister," or "My Last Duchess," is really the voice of a single entity, in this case Browning.⁸⁹ Hoccleve seems lucky that Furnivall only offered him mild imprecations for a reaction, in lieu of threats of physical violence, as Furnivall does with Browning's personae. How much easier it must have been for Furnivall to identify the speaker of Hoccleve's works--who bears the names either "Thomas" or "Hoccleve"--with the poet Thomas Hoccleve. In addition to Furnivall's simple belief that literature is more fact than fiction, much of what Hoccleve describes in the self-referential portions of his work is verifiable from existing documentary evidence. Hoccleve was indeed a

"I think him most warm-hearted, whatever may be the mistakes about me of which his head is guilty" (12 November 1881, letter 1881:11, 202).

⁸⁹ See Frowde 172 for a list of some of Furnivall's favorite Browning poems, none of which are Browning's dramatic monologues.

clerk at the Privy Seal; people named in his poems are real, often other clerks; and his payments were, as he claimed, often delayed. For Furnivall, who saw the voice of Browning in that poet's works, which have no marks of Browning's life, the "Thomas Hoccleve" who shares so much that is real, verifiable biography with the real-life Hoccleve, and who is found in the medieval poet's work, must have *been* the poet.

A brief instance of Furnivall's whole-hearted belief in the essential verity of the authorial self-reference found in the poems of Hoccleve is clearly evidenced in the second paragraph of his forewords to his edition of Hoccleve's works. He says,

The chief authorities for the life of Hoccleve are his *Male Regle* in the Phillipps MS, his *Dialog with the old Beggar* in his *Regement of Princes*, his *Complaint* and his *Dialog with a friend* in the Durham MS, and the entries about him in the Privy-Council Proceedings and the Patent and Pells-Issues Rolls.⁹⁰

Notice that Furnivall does not say the chief sources are documentary evidence corroborated in some ways by portions of the poet's literary output; rather, he claims the poems are of primary importance with some corroboration from official sources.

In light of Furnivall's ideas, we can understand why he characterizes Hoccleve as a "weak, sensitive, look-on-

⁹⁰ *Minor Poems* viii.

the-worst side kind of man [. . .] we wish [. . .] had been a better poet and a manlier fellow,"⁹¹ for Furnivall was a lifelong sportsman, sculling even into his eighties,⁹² while Hoccleve says he would sometimes hire a boatman instead of walking. Or consider the fact that Furnivall had at one time practiced boxing, which may have led him to look ill upon Hoccleve's self-proclaimed "manly cowardyse" toward and avoidance of physical altercations. For instance, on June 4, 1842, Furnivall writes in one of his extremely detailed diaries, "Had a row with Young and a few blows."⁹³ So, according to Furnivall, he was not of a kind with Hoccleve. Compared to what we find in *La Male*

⁹¹ *Minor Poems* xxxviii. Furnivall was prone to such insulting personal attacks, as, for instance, his famous and nasty *ad hominem* quarrel with Algernon Charles Swinburne as part of their New Shakespeare Society interaction. For an interesting account of Furnivall's inability to let matters alone, even when it was to his benefit, if doing so meant keeping mute on his opinions, see William S. Peterson, "Outram vs Furnivall: Dissension within the Browning Society," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 71 (1967) 93-104. Furnivall talked a jury initially favorable to him into finding him guilty of libel and fining him £500, after which a great many supporters more than funded his fine. Events such as these are what probably led Bernard Shaw to say "He could not behave himself in a controversy, always making such a fool of himself that it was impossible to feel angry with him"-- qtd. in Ann Thompson, "Teena Rochfort Smith, Frederick Furnivall, and the New Shakspeare Society's Four-Text Edition of *Hamlet*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 49:2 (1998) 126-- or that a "scandal could not make his friends dislike him" (Thompson 136).

⁹² Frowde 141 and 160.

⁹³ Qtd. in Frowde xi.

Regle, Furnivall's "manly" handling of such disagreements is one clear indication of why he would make a statement like the earlier one about wishing Hoccleve had been "manlier." For Hoccleve himself says

I was so ferd with any man to fighte
 Cloos kepte I me, no man durste I depraue
 But rownyngly I spak no thyng on highte.
 And yit my wil was good, if þat I mighte,
 For lettyng of my manly cowardyse,
 Þat ay of strokes impressid the wighte,
 So þat I durste medlen in no wyse
(*La Male Regle* 170-76).

So while Alfred W. Pollard admits, "I have known him [Furnivall] hit a man,"⁹⁴ no such statement of pugilistic brashness could be spoken for the narrator of Hoccleve's first-person verse.

Also of relevance to this study is the fact that Furnivall was a lifelong teetotaler.⁹⁵ In one instance, he did not get along with a fellow faculty member at the Working Men's College, based in part on their disagreement over this issue.⁹⁶ As Furnivall would have gathered from reading *La Male Regle*, the Hoccleve persona was not an abstainer from strong drink, for in that poem Hoccleve writes of his youthful excesses:

The outward signe of Bachus & his lure,
 Þat at his dore hangith day by day,
 Excitith folk to taaste of his moisture,

⁹⁴ Frowde 150.

⁹⁵ Benzie 13.

⁹⁶ Myers 33.

So often þat man can nat wel seyn nay.
 For me, I seye, I was enclyned ay,
 With-outen daunger, thidir for to hye me
 (121-26).

And later, he admits, "And to the cuppe ay took I heede & cure" (309). Furnivall would have read such passages with disapproval.

Hoccleve, as Furnivall perceived him, was not, then, the type of man for whom Furnivall would likely have had respect, even though the older Hoccleve says only forty lines later that excess in drink is a dangerous vice. Still, Furnivall, as a hater of artificiality in literature, as well as someone against sloth and drink, would not have been able to like Hoccleve as he read the poet, for as several of Furnivall's contemporaries noted, he was unable to separate his life and literature.

So when Furnivall speaks of the task of editing Hoccleve, exclaiming, "bother Hoccleve!"⁹⁷ it is not the complaint of a lazy or weary man dreading the intense work presented by the production of an edition; rather, it was the result of the contempt that sprouted from Furnivall's belief that what Hoccleve said of himself was fact, with no embellishment. As Jessie Currie, a member of the Furnivall Sculling Club for Girls, notes, there were "people for whom he [Furnivall] seemed to have little

⁹⁷ *Hoccleve's Works: The Regement of Princes and Fourteen Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, EETS, es 72 (1897; rpt. Millwood, NY: Krauss Reprints, 1978) xx.

mercy--a lazy man or woman, a drunkard, or a 'whiner.'"⁹⁸
 Hoccleve's assumed persona is self-admittedly slothful,
 prone to overindulgence in wine, and perpetually
 complaining.

An almost comic instance of Furnivall's prejudice
 against Hoccleve might best be seen by looking at the
 introductory comments he makes to *Hoccleve's Works: The
 Minor Poems*, where he says of his earlier mistaken
 attribution of the *Mother of God* to Chaucer that

When I did so, I hadn't seen the Phillipps MS,
 in which this poem appears in Hoccleve's own
 hand among other pieces--undoubtedly his--in the
 MS. Nor did I then feel the importance of the
 false ryme in the poem 54/64-6, [. . .] I gladly
 gave up the poem as Chaucer's and accepted it as
 Hoccleve's. It was a relief in this way, that
 the *Mother of God* had no mark or seal of Chaucer
 on it; [. . .] On the other hand it seemd too
 good for Hoccleve, judgd by Wright's print of *De
 Regimine*, which he took from a second-rate
 complete MS [. . .] But Hoccleve's poems to the
 Virgin--poor tho they be--are, I think, better
 than his other productions, and in the *Mother of
 God* he undoubtedly did his best.⁹⁹

One must wonder if Furnivall's reason for placing the
 quality of the *Mother of God* above that of Hoccleve's
 other poems to the Virgin may in part be due to his prior
 attribution to Chaucer: it would hardly do for the poem he

⁹⁸ Frowde 33.

⁹⁹ *Minor Poems* xxxix-xl. It is, incidentally, amusing
 to read Furnivall's complaints on Wright's edition, in
 light of what we have seen and will see of his own
 editorial practice.

once thought to be Chaucer's not to be head and shoulders above Hoccleve's other Marian pieces. The faulty rhyme he discusses is that which Ross had discussed in his argument for Hoccleve's authorship.¹⁰⁰ Note that Furnivall says that when he thought the poem was Chaucer's, he did not "feel the importance of the false ryme": that is, he did not notice it or did not think it mattered. Furnivall also says in a footnote to the above statement that, "The Virgin's teats too [. . .] didn't look like Chaucer's good taste." Critics have the ability to change their minds as far as the analysis of a work goes, but Furnivall's comments for once exhibit pronounced backpedaling, claiming a reevaluation of the talent evidenced by the poem's structure and content.¹⁰¹ These comments are from 1892, fourteen years after his 1878 parallel text edition of the poem, where he directly and pointedly says, "No one can suppose that poor Hoccleve had the power of writing his Master's *Mother of God*."¹⁰² The theory on the

¹⁰⁰ See the previous chapter.

¹⁰¹ Note that Furnivall's desperate attempt to reconcile his previous praise of the poem with his newfound condemnations seems to be at odds with what Baker says in the long quotation at the beginning of this chapter, where Baker speaks of "the readiness with which he [Furnivall] admitted his own mistakes." But Baker was there speaking of Furnivall's easy admission of errors in his editions, not errors in evaluation.

¹⁰² Frederick J. Furnivall, *A Parallel-Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems* (London: Oxford UP, 1878) 137. Chaucer Society series 1 #57, part 2. Furnivall had been

functioning of an author's name expressed by Foucault, mentioned in the introduction, causes Furnivall to have a negative response to Hoccleve's name in evaluating of the poem, just as profoundly as Furnivall's own name would play a role in generations of other scholars' reliance on his editions. That is, if name is equivalent with quality, a respectable poetic work cannot, in Furnivall's ideology, be by Hoccleve. Rather than re-evaluating the poet--that is, reconsidering the author function--Furnivall re-evaluates the poem.

Furnivall, then, came to editing Hoccleve with a strong degree of personal prejudice. The *Mother of God* example is indicative of Furnivall's approach: a poem has great merit, beyond that of anything by Hoccleve, when it is thought to be Chaucer's; the same poem has many flaws, both of style and of content, when it is known to be Hoccleve's. One does not find Furnivall accepting Chaucer's claims of being a poor, unskilled poet, while such traditional claims of *humilitas* in Hoccleve serve as proof that the poet was downright bad and knew it.¹⁰³

familiar with the poem for at least five years, for in a letter to James Orchard Halliwell dated April 2, 1873, Furnivall mentions seeing the poem, see Marvin Spevack, "James Orchard Halliwell and Friends: X. Frederick James Furnivall; XI. William Aldis Wright and William George Clark," *Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 20:2 (1998) 127.

¹⁰³ It is interesting that while Furnivall's introductions are littered with references to picnics,

From much of what we have seen in this chapter, we can see that many of Furnivall's aims were laudable. His success in making early literature more accessible, with a wide variety of genres and large volume of output, had to have been a boon to the Victorian scholars at the time. Truly, the EETS volumes are beneficial sources even today. But as we have also seen, some of Furnivall's ideas were not as worthy of praise, and those misjudgements and prejudices had an effect on his editing. What, then, were the effects Furnivall's ideas had on the editions he produced? To evaluate the way Furnivall's work was influenced, we can only rely on what evidence we have, since he left no line-by-line account of his actual thoughts. The sheer volume of the texts Furnivall prepared is impressive, and to be fair, we cannot expect an even level of quality in such a broad corpus. Still, while Furnivall would readily admit to errors in his own work, such admissions are dependent upon someone examining the edition carefully and knowledgeably enough to note the flaws in the text. In a case like Hoccleve's, where the poet and his fifteenth-century contemporaries had already attained poor reputations and a resulting lapse into minor status, an EETS edition that brought out works not readily or widely available before could simply slip by with

country walks, and dinners, Furnivall so objected to Hoccleve's self-referential commentary.

flaws, without anyone noticing. The next chapter will concern itself with looking at the holograph manuscripts, and with comparing those with the EETS volumes Furnivall edited.

Chapter 4

Manuscripts and Editorial Product: Furnivall's EETS Editions

An edition is not a direct one-to-one link between the original author and the present reader: even though the materials for editorial work themselves do not change, what the editor has experienced or conceived or read plays an integral part in what the reader experiences, conceives, and reads. While the last chapter looked at some of the idiosyncratic ideas Furnivall had about literature, and how these views were integrated into his approach to Hoccleve, this chapter will look at how these notions significantly influenced Furnivall's EETS editions of Hoccleve's work, and by extension, a century of readers.¹ To test the quality of textual work Furnivall performed when he dealt with Hoccleve's works, part of the present chapter will be a detailed analysis of the text, using one tale from the *Series*, the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife," as an example.²

¹ Because this study focuses more specifically on Furnivall and his influence in effectively barring Hoccleve from the canon, I will not examine the *Minor Poems from the Ashburnham MS. Addit. 133*, ed. Israel Gollancz, EETS, es 73 (1925; rpt. Millwood, NY: Krauss Reprints, 1970).

² I choose this poem partially because I have, for another project, already transcribed and collated against all the extant manuscripts, but also because it is the first section of the *Series* that exists in Hoccleve's hand

Editors of medieval literature face a specific problem when they set out to produce a text, treading with mixed feelings into theorizing about authorial intent. Such attempts at reconstruction are problematic when dealing with materials produced in a manuscript culture more than with printed material--although certainly an issue there--due in large part to *mouvance*, the haphazard way in which a copied text changes as a result of the nature of hand-copied material.³ Hence, it is a remarkably fortunate element in Hoccleve studies that he was a professional scribe, working for the better part of his life as a clerk of the Privy Seal.⁴ Hoccleve used his pen to support himself, and was a skilled copyist. As a poet, he thus did not need a scribe, one unfamiliar with the composition, like Chaucer's Adam Sciveyn; rather, Hoccleve made presentation copies of his own manuscripts,

in its entirety. Note, however, that I am dealing with only the narrative *Gesta Romanorum* portion of the poem, not the *Series* links, nor am I considering the prose moralization.

³ The term *mouvance* was first proposed by Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiéval* (Paris: Seuil, 1972). An excellent discussion of *mouvance* can be found in Robert S. Sturges, "Textual Scholarship: Ideologies of Literary Production," *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 3:1 (1991) 109-31.

⁴ As mentioned in Chapter 2, Hoccleve also worked as a contracted scribe for other literary works.

some of which survive today.⁵ As noted by Greetham, "except for the notoriously idiosyncratic Orm and his *Ormulum* Hoccleve is the only author writing in Middle English verse for whom there is a substantial body of material extant in the author's own hand."⁶

There are three extant manuscripts containing holograph versions Hoccleve's works: Durham Cosin MS V.iii.9, Huntington HM 111, and Huntington HM 744.⁷ These manuscripts, written in Hoccleve's Secretary hand, contain all of Hoccleve's known works except the *Regement of Princes*, the *Complaint*, and less than one third of the *Dialogue*.⁸ Identification of Hoccleve's hand is

⁵ Hoccleve would, of course, have contracted artists for the illuminations in those manuscripts.

⁶ D. C. Greetham, "Challenges of Theory and Practice in the Editing of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*," *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature: Essays from 1985 Conf. at Univ. of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987) 60.

⁷ For descriptions of the Huntington manuscripts, see C. W. Dutschke, *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, vol. 1 (San Marino, 1989) 144-47; 247-51. For a description of the Durham, see either J. A. Burrow, Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, EETS 313 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) x-xi, or Burrow's source, A. I. Doyle's currently forthcoming descriptive catalogue of Durham manuscripts. In his edition of Hoccleve's *Minor Poems*, Furnivall says he had changed his mind about these manuscripts and no longer thought, because of "carelessnesses," that they were holographs (xlix). He does not give specific examples of what these carelessnesses might be.

⁸ *Lerne to Dye*, the only repeated piece, appears both in the Durham and in HM 744.

relatively easy because one of his last official undertakings was the *Formulary*, a reference book of sample documents for Privy Seal clerks-in-training. In that work, like so much of his poetry, he refers to his own name in some of the samples included in that text. It is, then, a certainty that the identical hand that exists in the *Formulary* and other Privy Seal documents of the period is the same as that of the copyist on these literary manuscripts that, in essence, serve as a "collected works."⁹ As John Burrow observes of the Huntington manuscripts:

Certainly together they represent a novelty in the record of English poetry: a single-author collection of poems gathered, ordered and copied by the poet himself. Like the earlier lost holograph copy of shorter poems made for the Duke of York, the lost holograph of the *Regiment* made for Bedford, and the *Durham Series*, the Huntington manuscripts testify to the poet's direct involvement in the propagation of his writings as a distinct and individual literary achievement.¹⁰

Thus, we are in a uniquely fortunate state when it comes to contemporary witnesses of Hoccleve's work.

In light of this textual good fortune, one would think that the editing of the greater body of Hoccleve's

⁹ For a comparative analysis of the hands used in these manuscripts, see H. C. Schulz, "Thomas Hoccleve, Scribe," *Speculum*, 12 (1937) 71-81.

¹⁰ J. A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve, Authors of the Middle Ages: English Writers of the Late Middle Ages 4* (Aldershot, Hants: Variorum, 1994) 31.

works would be a dream come true given the near ideal situation in which textual critics would find themselves. Except for Hoccleve's most famous work, the *Regement*, and part of his next most well-known, the *Series*, one can consult the poems as Hoccleve himself saw them--at least in the moment of copying them. And that part of the *Series* that did not survive in the Durham Manuscript does survive in the hand of the sixteenth-century antiquary John Stow.¹¹ In theory, one would be able to simply transcribe the holograph with minimal comparison to other extant manuscripts, the exemplar for which presumably was at some point Hoccleve's own.

Even with this unique access to a medieval author's manuscripts, in practice Hoccleve editorial work proves not so simple a thing, for Hoccleve was not above touching up his own work as he copied. For example, as John M. Bowers points out, the two holographic copies of *Lerne to Dye*--Durham and HM 744--have between them several instances of variance.¹² Most of these differences do not

¹¹ A discussion of the possible origin of Stow's source and its closeness to Hoccleve's original can be found in Mary Ruth Pryor's unpublished dissertation "Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*: An Edition of MS Durham Cosin V iii 9 (UCLA 1968) 116-18.

¹² John M. Bowers, "Hoccleve's Two Copies of *Lerne to Dye*: Implications for Textual Critics," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 83:4 (1989) 437-72. See also J. A. Burrow, "Excursus I: The Two Holographs of *Learn*

substantially change the matter of the poem, for they often represent instances of the use of synonyms--*ful* versus *right* in line 74--or word order--*I weery am* versus *Y am weery* at line 193. Still, at times a line can look quite different from one manuscript to the other, such as at line 483, where the Durham reads "Þat thee mighten the blisse of heuene reue," while the Huntington reads, "Þat heuenes blisse mighten thee byreue." Compounding the difficulties for the editor of *Lerne to Dye*, neither manuscript's readings are consistently better than the other's, both of them having strong and weak points. And even if conjecture that the Huntington was written after the Durham--possibly even copied from the Durham-- is taken to be reason enough to select the Huntington as copy-text, the editor would be, in essence, choosing the later manuscript as representing the author's final intentions, except, of course, where obvious errors in the Huntington would suggest emendation from the earlier Durham.¹³ This contradictory feature leaves us with a situation that is not as ideal as it might have first

to Die," Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue, EETS 313 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) 111-118, which speaks of "five slips of the pen" and "69 substantive variants."

¹³ See Roger Ellis, Introduction, *"My Compleinte" and Other Poems* (Exeter: U of Exeter P, 2001) 19-22, for a discussion of the two versions. Bowers 449, points out two places where the Durham apparently shows instances of scribal, albeit authorial, blunder.

seemed, even if one need not be troubled too much with *mouvance*. As Judith A. Jefferson points out, "although Hoccleve, even when copying his own works, would be bound to make errors, they would not be the sort of errors which resulted from a lack of knowledge of the author's language or intention."¹⁴ We would say instead that changes, for the most part, represent Hoccleve's on-going revision, a way of seeing the line differently at that moment of writing.¹⁵

Minor authorial revisions aside, we possess nevertheless the major body of the Hoccleve corpus preserved in the author's own hand. We can represent not only the matter of the work, but usually the actual form; that is, we have

the possibility of the consistent editorial recreation not only of the 'meaning' of a text (i.e., its lexical, substantive status), but also of the so-called 'accidentals,' the surface

¹⁴ Judith A. Jefferson, "The Hoccleve Holographs and Hoccleve's Metrical Practice," *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature: Essays from 1985 Conf. at Univ. of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1987) 96.

¹⁵ For *Lerne to Dye*, at least, a facing-page edition of the two holograph copies would probably be the best format, allowing readers to directly compare the differences. But such an edition for so minor a poem is hardly likely to be published. Burrow (Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, xvii-xxi) discusses how the differences between the Durham fair copy and the other witnesses may represent similar revision from a variant original.

features (primarily spelling, but also including punctuation and capitalization).¹⁶

Additionally, in examining these accidental features, we find Hoccleve's orthography is very regular. A diplomatic transcription of these works could be readily, confidently, and justifiably produced. As such, scholars would be in the comfortable position of gaining access to a text reproduced from these witnesses that could allow the study of the literary content of the poetry *and*--extremely rare in medieval literature--the exact orthography, and thereby possibly the prosody of a Middle English poet.

These are the excellent materials Furnivall had at the outset of his editorial work, much different than the textual situation to which he and his contemporaries were accustomed. The holograph manuscripts--containing the entire Hoccleve oeuvre save those works already mentioned--were known and available to the Victorian editor. One would think that with this accessibility to not only the manuscripts of a work, but also to the authorial copies, an editor would be substantially assisted in the production of reliable texts, ones that would validate their being the standard editions a century later, as is the current case with Furnivall's nineteenth-

¹⁶ Greetham, "Challenges," 60-61.

century EETS editions. But how do these editions compare to the manuscripts?

Autobiographical Fallacy from Preface to Text

In each of Furnivall's editions, there are two parts that we must examine: the forewords and the text itself. The forewords act as statements of critical response; that is, Furnivall goes beyond simply describing the sources and his editorial process, but additionally includes commentary on the works of Hoccleve. The text itself is the final product of Furnivall's concept of editing as well as his opinions about Hoccleve and the poet's work. One of the problems we might consider in Furnivall's approach to Hoccleve is the unstated, but quite apparent, assumption on Furnivall's part that he was more in touch with the poet's final intent than was the poet himself. The last chapter discussed some of the ways Furnivall and his contemporaries felt he was capable of such judgements.

We need to consider the comments Furnivall makes about Hoccleve the poet. Furnivall allows his biographical fancies to create a probably exaggerated relationship between Hoccleve and Chaucer, one picked up by later critics. For instance, he says that "The chief merit of Hoccleve is that he was the honourer and pupil of

Chaucer."¹⁷ Such a remark denotes that our interest in Hoccleve is not in what he did as a poet, but rather, what he wrote about Chaucer, the major author; or at best, however we might rate him as a poet, Hoccleve's strongest recommendation is that he speaks as a disciple of Chaucer. But to be strictly accurate, Hoccleve does not actually write very much about Chaucer. There are only three passages in all of Hoccleve's poetry that refer directly to Chaucer, and those all appear in the same work, the *Regement*. At lines 1958-74, Hoccleve bemoans that "þe honour of Englyssh tonge is deed"; at lines 2077-107, Hoccleve once again laments the death of Chaucer and his own lack of learning from the older poet; and at lines 4978-98, there is a third expression of loss for Chaucer, accompanied by a picture of him. These sixty-nine lines are a fractional percentage of the 5463 lines of the *Regement*, not to mention the full body of Hoccleve's works, and clearly not the "three long passages" Furnivall calls them.¹⁸

Furthermore, Furnivall makes sweeping assumptions from the content of these lines. Furnivall saw lines

¹⁷ *Minor Poems* xxx.

¹⁸ We might speculate on how the picture of an older Chaucer that accompanies the *Regement* affected Furnivall in this matter and his belief that the two authors were well acquainted.

1065-66, "Allas! þat þou thyn excellent prudence, / In þi bed mortel mightist naght by-qwethe," as an indication of a personal relationship between the two poets: "and I think we may fairly conclude [. . .] that Hoccleve was either with Chaucer when he died, or saw him on his 'bed mortel' just before his death."¹⁹ It is Furnivall's contention that "surely his [Hoccleve's] naming of 'þi bed mortel' means something more than death in the writer's absence." Furnivall constructs from these lines and contemporary records that because the two men lived and worked in the same general area of crowded London, Hoccleve must have had more than a simple sight recognition of the more famous poet, that "Surely the pupil must have often visited his Master before the latter's death." For one who claimed to be concerned with "facts," Furnivall did a fair amount of fanciful biographical extrapolation on Hoccleve's life, just as the previous chapter discusses his life-constructing of Shakespeare and others.²⁰

¹⁹ *Minor Poems* xxxi

²⁰ If the suppositions about Hoccleve working to organize and prepare the *Canterbury Tales* after Chaucer's death, possibly alongside Thomas Chaucer, are correct, maybe Hoccleve did know the family. Still, there is no basis for Furnivall's claim as it is presented. For a recent argument that Hoccleve *did* know Chaucer, see Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 10-11.

In fact, throughout the biographical sections of Furnivall's forewords, we see evidence of his belief in the literalness of all first-person literature. To gain much of the information Furnivall presents as biography, one need only read Hoccleve's works. What Furnivall does is juxtapose documentary evidence with what the poet says in his oeuvre about his first-person narrator, presenting as fact a personal life for which there is little genuine evidence. Over several pages, Furnivall offers this life as the genuine biography of the Middle English poet Thomas Hoccleve. While some details mentioned in the poetry can be verified in medieval civil records, Furnivall had no sound reason to feel he had an insight into the inner-life of Hoccleve. Nonetheless, his forewords present the material in that manner.

For instance, consider this passage from the forewords:

The same weak, sensitive, look-on-the-worst side kind of man is shown in his *Complaint* and his *Dialog* with his friend in the Durham MS [. . .] And when quite old, Hoccleve is still too vain--proud, he calls it [. . .]--to wear spectacles, tho he is losing his sight, and injures it by not wearing glasses.²¹

Admittedly, one might argue the ambiguity of a word like "shown," claiming that Furnivall means the character presented, and not strict autobiography. Such commentary

²¹ *Minor Poems* xxxviii.

would, however, be out of character with comments Furnivall made about his ways of interpreting first-person narrative. What is interesting about Furnivall's approach, particularly here, is the footnote to the first sentence. He says that "Hoccleve has an occasional touch of humour." The examples he gives of this trait, however, are in contrast to the sullen man he has just described. It seems that Furnivall was unable to make the leap to at least considering that the total character of Hoccleve, as presented in his poetry, might also be intended to be humorous.²²

Also of interest in the forewords to Furnivall's edition of the *Minor Poems* is how he rates--or berates--the quality of the poems. As I have already discussed, after belatedly finding that his attribution of *Mother of God* as Chaucer's was incorrect, Furnivall carefully finds much fault with that poem, still maintaining it better than other poems to the Virgin, and that these works, "poor tho they be," are "better than his other productions." As such, if the better works are poor, the greater body of Hoccleve's work must, by extension, be

²² Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 14, notes that the autobiography in *La Male Regle* is done "no doubt with a great deal of humorous exaggeration," closer to a French *dit* tradition. Thus, such a persona might have been the "selling point" to get the notice of medieval patrons.

bad. Not all of Furnivall's criticism of Hoccleve was so indirect or tentative, however.

Furnivall says outright that "Hoccleve's metre is poor,"²³ offering numerous reasons for this assessment. For example, Furnivall believed iambic pentameter to be the regular meter for which Hoccleve strives, but fails to produce. This conviction is the basis for Furnivall's indictment that "So long as he can count ten syllables by his fingers, he is content." We consequently see a daft, inept poet counting on his fingers, not the best image of a writer one might imagine. To back up his estimation of poor quality of meter, Furnivall turns to what he believed to be the honest and verifiable self-reference integral to Hoccleve's verse. On the one hand, when Hoccleve claims innocence for offending women with the *Letter of Cupid*, claiming to be simply a reporter of what was said, Furnivall sees Hoccleve as following Chaucer's example.²⁴ On the other hand, in Hoccleve's self-deprecating musings on his own abilities as a versifier, Furnivall sees no

²³ *Minor Poems* xli.

²⁴ *Minor Poems* xxxiv. Note that Furnivall presents what he feels would have been a better disclaimer, by the poet simply claiming he was translating from Christine de Pisan. Chaucer, nonetheless, uses the same reporter excuse when he could also have claimed to be translating, but did not do so in order that the fiction of the work remain intact. To an extent, Hoccleve is likewise keeping the fiction of his work--even from within another poem--similarly intact.

such echoing of Chaucer, whom Furnivall finds ever-present as an influence on Hoccleve. Furnivall's distress at what he sees as poor meter is pointed out in numerous comments. He says that Hoccleve "constantly thwarts the natural run of his line by putting stress on a word that shouldn't bear it, or using a strong syllable as a weak one."²⁵ Furnivall maintains that Hoccleve "turns the pronoun *hirë* her, into two syllables," basing this perceived shortcoming on Furnivall's own imperfect understanding of Middle English grammar and ideas of pronunciation.²⁶

Almost everything Furnivall says about Hoccleve's poetry is negative, filled with at best back-handed compliments, an attitude predominantly traceable to the prejudices and misconceptions we have already seen. For example, he praises the Durham manuscript--the *Series*, that is--by saying that "The best parts [. . .] are

²⁵ *Minor Poems* xli. Interestingly enough, Furnivall finds this same weakness in Browning, whose first-person soliloquies Furnivall also disliked. Note also that Furnivall's objection to Hoccleve's thwarted stress calls to mind what Schipper had said a few years earlier.

²⁶ *Minor Poems* xli. Furnivall is speaking of the genitive and dative case here, and although by the fifteenth century many inflectional endings were being dropped, there is no reason to believe that those on frequently used words such as pronouns would not remain intact longer than on nouns. For discussions of Middle English pronunciation and grammar, see Fernand Mossé, *A Handbook of Middle English* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1968) or J. A. Burrow and Thorlac Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

Hoccleve's englishings of the two stories from the *Gesta Romanorum*.²⁷ Furnivall's praise is thus based somewhat on his appreciation of the *Gesta Romanorum* itself and its usefulness for studies of early English literature. Additionally, much of the rest of the *Series* is the self-referential type of writing of which Hoccleve is so fond and which Furnivall so hated. Today's critics apparently feel the opposite of Furnivall's evaluation is true, for, as I have already said, much of what today's critics comment on is the first-person content of Hoccleve's works.

But it is the self-referential material that most affected Furnivall. We first see this consequence evidenced in the forewords to the *Minor Poems*, where, after a discussion of Hoccleve's marriage and his attitudes toward women, Furnivall suggests an emendation to the holograph Durham. Taking at face value the poetic discussion of Hoccleve's prior madness, and then seeing in the *Series* a reference by the persona to his wife, Furnivall believes that Hoccleve's wife must have cared for a mentally compromised poet during a period of instability. Subsequently, Furnivall points to stanza 57 of the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife," and although Furnivall acknowledges that Hoccleve "says nothing about his wife's

²⁷ *Minor Poems* xlv.

care of him," Furnivall still feels this stanza applies. In that stanza, Hoccleve mentions the love a wife exhibits toward her child and toward her spouse.

Furnivall suggests that line 396 would read better if instead of "To hir chyld namely / & as I gesse" it were emended to "To hir chyld / and namely as I gesse," claiming that if such a change were made, "the line runs better, and the testimony to the wife's affection is more emphatic."²⁸ Such a change does indeed put greater emphasis on a wife's love of her husband mentioned in the next line, but it disastrously reverses Hoccleve's stated emphasis, in effect changing the priority of a woman's affection from her child first to her husband first. But such an alteration does not work even if one were to take Furnivall's advice, for the next line begins "To hire housbonde also." It does not make sense to say "especially also;" it seems Furnivall ignores the next line's meaning when he argues for the emendation, trying too single-mindedly to alter the text to reflect what he believes to be the biographical reality of Hoccleve's life. In this instance, Furnivall apparently felt he knew Hoccleve's meaning better than did the poet himself.

²⁸ *Minor Poems* xxiii. At this point, I am only speaking about Furnivall's word-order suggestion, not the orthography of the printed lines, which will be considered later.

Admittedly, the final text of Furnivall's edition does not make this particular change. Observe, however, that in the forewords when Furnivall quotes line 394 he offers:

"In al the world / so louynge tendrenesse."

Hoccleve's holograph, however, reads,

"In the world / so louynge tendrenesse,"

while the edition itself reads,

"In [al] the world / so louynge tendrenesse."²⁹

So another problem we might begin to observe is that Furnivall begins adding, here obviously, syllables to fix the meter or possibly the sense. Yet neither reason for the suggested change is applicable for this line. The line makes sense without the addition. And whether or not we think of the final -e on "louynge" as pronounced, the line has enough syllables--Furnivall's added syllable, in fact, produces a hypermetric line. Furnivall must have felt that the inserted "al" improved the meter by making the line more strictly iambic. Still, the line is, again, just fine without the emendation, a predominantly iambic line with a beginning stressed foot.³⁰

²⁹ The word *all* is found only in two of the extant manuscript witnesses, the Royal and the Digby. The witnesses of this work will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

³⁰ When I argue the line's pentameter rhythm here, I am speaking of Middle English prosody from Furnivall's and

The Edited Texts

So far, we have looked at what Furnivall says about Hoccleve and his work, seeing how his opinions about literature and life influenced his readings of Hoccleve. And while what is said in introductory material is surely influential on readers, it is debatably not as important as the actual text that readers are given. We must primarily look at the editions to get an idea of the manner in which Furnivall prepared them. So now let us turn to his preparations of Hoccleve's texts themselves.

First, there is the recurring problem of the vagueness of Furnivall's editorial principles. A few years prior to the publication of the Hoccleve editions, in the introduction to her edition of the "Address to Sir John Oldcastle," Lucy Toulmin Smith says, "In printing I expand most of the contractions, & into *and*, the final *r* often though not always has a curl, which I print *e*. *p^t*=*pat*, and *ll* I print *lle*."³¹ So nineteenth-century editors could indeed indicate their editorial practices. But Furnivall never gives us such an indication of his

his contemporary's concept of regular, invariable pentameter in Middle English verse. More recent scholarship has convincingly argued that many Middle English poets, like their French contemporaries, counted syllables, without attention to stress.

³¹ Lucy Toulmin Smith, "Ballad by Thomas Occleve, Addressed to Sir John Oldcastle, A.D. 1415," *Anglia* 5 (1882) 21.

editorial practice, even the simplest statement that in the printed poem, thorns are retained, but the one yogh, at line 903, is printed as a z, in the word *sanz*.³² Such a lack of information is, unfortunately, common in Furnivall's editions so that reconstructing his plan or the text itself is frequently impossible. At times, however, his decisions are stated and even more distressing.

Editorial vagaries are evident in Furnivall's edition of the *Regement*, for which there is no autograph copy. I have already mentioned Greetham's observation on the questionable basis for Furnivall's *Regement* copy-text, of which Furnivall says, "I have printed the text from the Harleian MS. 4866, because it has the best portrait of Chaucer, and fewer superfluous final es, and some older readings."³³ The often hasty carelessness that so characterized Furnivall's editing, as well as his aim of simply making something--anything--available to the public is exemplified when he says in regard to the aforementioned final -es, "No doubt I ought to have put-in

³² Note Murray 94 relates that Furnivall had in 1870 reprimanded James Murray for including a "beastly big 3" in something he had been asked to edit, specifically because using a yogh would cost more money to design and print.

³³ *Regement* xvii. Furnivall does not say *precisely* what he means by "superfluous." He does, however, admit that "The absence of many final es may be due to a partly-Northern scribe."

more of these final es, [. . .] but any one who likes can do this for himself."³⁴ Furnivall considers the final -e a simply convenient element of metrical tinkering, not as an inflectional ending. As Furnivall says, he is "on the side of those sensible scribes who didn't sound the e at the end of the line in their own reading." He never says why he doesn't think those es are not sounded at the end of the line, particularly if he thought of those es as metrical devices--an extra final unstressed foot would not change internal pentameter.

But he is being selective, as always, in his choice. Furnivall, as a rule, does not like final -es, and bases his copy-text selection partly on that point, even though he does have other problems with the manuscript nonetheless: "The Harleian man's dropping of e where it is wanted metrically inside the line, and of syllables and words now and then, I cannot defend." This statement is possibly an explanation of what Furnivall means by "ought to have put-in more;" that is, he would simply put the syllable wherever he thought it would bring the meter to be what *he* thought it should be, and not for any stated grammatical reason. In other words, Furnivall thought of

³⁴ *Regement xvii.*

final -e as a metrical convenience more than as an inflectional ending.

Still, while there is no extant holograph of the *Regement* and different editors will have different reasons for preferring one manuscript as base-text over another, we can gain from briefly examining Furnivall's editorial decision. The manuscript Furnivall chose, the Harleian, is minimally two generations older than the Royal 17 D. vi, which Thomas Wright had already used for his 1860 edition thirty-seven years earlier.³⁵ But the relationship of the manuscripts--the "older readings" Furnivall mentions--is not the primary basis for copy-text selection. First, that reason is tertiary, following the valuation of the Chaucer portrait's quality, then the issue of final -e. Remember, Furnivall was fond, on the whole, of comparing various witnesses, as with something like the six-text Chaucer edition. After all, such comparisons are indeed edifying, and even if he had felt the Royal was better, Furnivall would quite probably have chosen another manuscript for his own edition. One thing we might consider here is that the Royal manuscript's readings for part of Furnivall's edition of the *Series* at times take precedence over those in the Hoccleve

³⁵ See Marzec for how these two manuscripts, both in the α branch, are related. Furnivall had looked at the Royal for part of his earlier *Minor Poems* edition.

holograph, as we will see shortly. As such, Furnivall did not, at least for that part of the manuscript, feel the Royal was a "bad" witness, even if he did choose to print from another. Instead, he may have had some unstated agenda beyond the reasons he offers in the forewords.³⁶

In contrast to the *Regement*, autograph copies of the greater body of the Hoccleve corpus do exist,³⁷ so while the scope of this dissertation does not allow for a line-by-line comparison of the entirety of the Furnivall *Minor Poems* against the poems still available in Hoccleve's hand, the final portion of this chapter will examine one tale from the *Series*, the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife."³⁸

³⁶ See Charles Blyth, "Editing the *Regiment of Princes*," *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Christine Batt (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996) 11-28. In particular, see pages 13-14 where Blyth looks at three lines from Furnivall's *Regement* and suggests a better understanding and representation of those lines.

³⁷ As was discussed earlier in relation to the two holograph copies of *Lerne to Dye*, Hoccleve did make some scribal blunders when copying his own work for the Durham *Series*. See Burrow, Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, xvii, for a list of scribal error or omission in the Durham holograph section of the *Dialogue*, ten in the surviving 574 lines.

³⁸ I choose this poem partially because I have, for another project, already transcribed and collated against all the extant manuscripts, but also because it is the first section of the *Series* that exists in Hoccleve's hand in its entirety. Note, however, that I am dealing with only the narrative *Gesta Romanorum* portion of the poem, not the *Series* links, nor am I considering the prose moralization.

That work survives, in whole or in part, in nine manuscripts: Durham University Library MS. Cosin V.iii.9 (Hoccleve's holograph);³⁹ Bodleian Library MS. Bodley 221;⁴⁰ Bodleian Library MS. Laud misc. 735;⁴¹ Bodleian Library MS. Arch. Selden supra 53;⁴² Yale University, Beinecke Library MS. 493;⁴³ Coventry City Record Office MS. Accession 325/1;⁴⁴ British Library MS. Royal 17 D. vi;⁴⁵ Bodleian Library MS. Digby 185;⁴⁶ and Bodleian Library MS. Eng. Poet. d. 4.⁴⁷ Furnivall says that his edition of the Durham for the *Series* is "Collated in part with MS. *Arch. Seld. Supra* 53 (Bodleian Library)."⁴⁸

³⁹ ff. 26v-49r. These leaf numbers match those listed in Burrow's *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, xi, which quite probably follow the contents table provided with the manuscript. However, the poem begins on the *recto* that in the manuscript is numbered 25. The leaf numbering for the manuscript in the microfilm I consulted is difficult to follow, due, for instance, to such issues as the presence of two leaf 21.

⁴⁰ ff. 15v-28r.

⁴¹ ff. 15v-27v.

⁴² ff. 98v-115r.

⁴³ ff. 16v-28v.

⁴⁴ ff. 49r-56r.

⁴⁵ ff. 102r-118v.

⁴⁶ ff. 145r-156r.

⁴⁷ ff. 4r-18r.

⁴⁸ *Minor Poems* 93. The Selden manuscript represents the best of the non-holograph copies. See Burrow

However, much later in the volume, Furnivall also supplies "Some Various Readings from MS. Reg. 17 D 6, leaf 99 &c." for "Jereslaus's Wife," and the additional comparison is for only that item of the *Series*.⁴⁹ Consequently, this tale will make a satisfactory exemplar of Furnivall's practices when dealing with an autograph and later manuscript versions.

Quite naturally, there are a few instances of what we might interpret as simple mistakes, the sort that would be easily made, that could be missed by a quick and cursory proofreading, and that do not make a substantial textual impact. For instance, in line 203 where Hoccleve writes "lenge," Furnivall prints "longe," mistaking an e for an o.⁵⁰ Likewise, there are several other errors that are

(Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, xxiv): "my critical apparatus to the holograph section shows S[elden] varying from V[ariant] O[riginal] rather less than once every five lines" and "Selden is distinctly the most reliable, as well as the best spelled." In fact, M. C. Seymour, *Selections* xxxvi, calls that manuscript "the earliest surviving 'collected works,'" by which he must mean compiled by someone other than the author, as the Huntington holographs of the minor poems pre-date the Selden. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 246, n. 15, points out that during the Middle Ages there was a "perceived unity to the Hoccleve corpus" evidenced "by the several attempts at manuscripts of 'collected works.'"

⁴⁹ *Minor Poems* 255.

⁵⁰ Admittedly, Hoccleve's o and e are at times extremely similar in appearance, and although I believe that the letter is indeed an e, it could, in fact, be an o. At any rate, Furnivall does read the e or o in other constructions the same as I do, for Hoccleve varies the

only one letter: in line 334 Furnivall prints "com" for manuscript "cam,"⁵¹ in line 577 he prints "treecherous" where Hoccleve wrote "treccherous,"⁵² in line 706 "wreeche" for manuscript "wrecche,"⁵³ in line 674 "master" for "mastir," and line 883 in the Durham has the word "voide," which Furnivall prints "voyde." Another such mistake is in lines 703 and 917: Hoccleve's spelling of the first-person nominative personal pronoun vacillates between "I" and "y" throughout his works, and in these lines Furnivall prints "I" for manuscript "y," a change he does not make elsewhere. Additionally, in several places Furnivall makes mistakes with doubled letters: at line 234 Furnivall uses "heng" where the manuscript reads "heeng," a mistake seen twice in the word Furnivall prints as

spelling of Modern English *long*--except when it denotes belonging, where it is always spelled with an o. Note, however, that Hoccleve does not employ the e spelling between lines 381-921. Nonetheless, in line 203 Furnivall's spelling matches that of the Selden, Royal, and all other extant witnesses.

⁵¹ All extant witnesses save the Digby use a *cam*-spelling.

⁵² While several manuscripts do not have doubled c spellings, none have doubled e.

⁵³ Even though Hoccleve's c and e can at times be difficult to differentiate--similar to the occasional difficulty differentiating o and e (see n. 78 above)--in this poem Hoccleve's spelling of *wrecche* is regular in the other three appearances (253, 843, and 939) and the only time an -eec- combination appears is in the word *byseeche* (144 and 665).

"demynge" for Hoccleve's "deemynge" in lines 347 and 362, then he doubles the single vowel to "soo" in line 753. In line 61, Hoccleve uses the word "kepte," but Furnivall follows the other witnesses, using "kepe."⁵⁴ Finally, in line 144, Furnivall prints "hy[e]" where both the Hoccleve holograph and the Selden have "hy." One other extant manuscripts has "hy," with "hye" being found in four-- among them the Royal.⁵⁵ Had these types of errors been the only kind found in the edited sample tale, we could nod to Furnivall's self-confessed carelessness through haste.

Beyond these small errors, however, Furnivall produced an edited text that possesses larger and more important variations from the original. First, the

⁵⁴ The present tense of *kepe* does make more sense, contextually.

⁵⁵ The Coventry has "high," and the English Poets contains only lines 1-107 and 418-952, so neither this line nor several of the lines examined in the following discussion is witnessed there. Incidentally, the Yale manuscript inserts "hye" with a caret. Another possible error might be in line 26. In line 18 the word *land* appears in manuscript "holy land," a spelling found there in Furnivall's text. That phrase is repeated in line 26, but the manuscript's *a/o* distinction is not so clear: the ligature is not quite as conspicuously at the bottom--as in *and* in the previous line--and is strikingly similar to *on* in line 19. Hoccleve did use the spelling *lond-* in other places. See particularly line 509, where it rhymes with *fond*--a spelling that never fluctuates--and *hond*--whose spelling vacillates with *hand*.

crossed *l*, *ʒ*,⁵⁶ in line 2 appears singly and word-internal nowhere else in the 952 line poem, but rather, it is always doubled and word-final in the other twenty-seven instances where it is used.⁵⁷ For the most part, Furnivall leaves the crossed doubled *l* as it is found in the holograph, with three exceptions: lines 74, 320, and 844. In all three instances, where Hoccleve had written "aʒʒ," Furnivall interprets the crossed letters as an abbreviation denoting final *-e*:

74 - And alle weyes / serchid he & soghte
 320 - Loueres alle / fro myn herte shoue
 844 - Ðat our lord god / which for vs alle deide

⁵⁶ Certain scribal flourishes and tails cannot be represented in print, nor can I reproduce some of the characters the EETS editions use to represent those marked letters. Throughout this chapter, close approximations will be used as necessary. The following characters will denote flourished letters: *ḋ*, *ḡ*, *ḅ*, *ḥ*, *ṫ* and *ṹ*. Crossed or underscored letters will represent themselves, as will those with macrons.

⁵⁷ Lines 12, 72, 74, 190, 192, 245, 266, 300, 301, 320, 341, 569, 571, 572, 719, 734, 764, 779, 810, 815, 821, 823, 824, 844, 902, 903, and 925. This section need not discuss those letters treated justifiably. The crossed *h* is quite rightly always maintained as *h* after *g*, *s*, and *t*, where it most often appears. There are three word-initial uses, all in *hte[s]*, where Furnivall expands it to "herte[s]," and such a construction is undeniably more of a common scribal mark of abbreviation; there are twenty instances of a form of the word fully written. There are also two appearances in generally frequent scribal *Ihu*, which Furnivall expands to "Ihesu," and while there are no spelled out instances of that word in the poem, surely Furnivall's decision here is sound.

If the addition of the final -e suggests pronunciation of the final unstressed medial vowel--as we might assume from what we have just seen in the *Regement* forewords where Furnivall speaks of places where final -e is "wanted" and where he expresses his opinion on the lack of pronunciation of line-final -e--the lines all are decasyllabic. Note that while each of the three words ending in -~~ll~~ to which Furnivall adds the final -e is in each case a line-internal *all*; in the poem there are ten total instances of the "a~~ll~~" spelling, all line-internal. Thus there are seven that Furnivall ignores. And of the fourteen times Hoccleve ends a word with -*lle*, only once are those letters preceded by a.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, there are no instances of the word being spelled either *all* or *alle* in Hoccleve's holograph of this poem, and so while neither is clearly preferred by the poet, Furnivall expands the letters in only three instances, for no explicitly stated reason.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ That word is *falle* in line 827, a verb rather than the adjectival *all*. Most of the thirteen others are preceded by an *e*, five of them being the word *telle* (59, 545, 559, 567, 782, 798, and 911, all verbs), one *belle* (a noun in 61), *selle* (566), and *swelle* (913). There are also three preceded by *i*, all rhymelines in a stanza: *fulfille* (639), *kille* (641), and *wille* (542).

⁵⁹ Another, much less frequent, tailed letter is the flourished *d* found in line 5, which appears only one other time in Hoccleve autograph version of the poem, at line 49. The first appearance Furnivall marks with a flourish,

There are other characters that prove edifying in regard to Furnivall's editorial activities. For instance, the common scribal vowel topped by a macron, which generally denotes an ensuing voiced nasal *m* or *n*, is well-represented in Hoccleve's manuscript.⁶⁰ For twenty of its twenty-three appearances in Hoccleve's holograph manuscript, overstruck *o* (*ō*) is found in the construction "-*ōm*-" and expanded to "*m*" in Furnivall's edition.⁶¹ But

leaving the reader to decide what, if any, meaning it may have. The second is not marked at all. Admittedly, the flourish on the letter in line 49 is not as prominent as that in line 5, but it is tailed unlike other final *-ds*, and the mark itself is midway in length between the usual final *-d* and the flourished *d* of line 5. Furnivall does not notice or note this ambiguity, although his leaving the word as *lord* is well justified, as that word in its singular use in Hoccleve's manuscript is always spelled that way.

⁶⁰ I am examining here only irregularities, but there was a minimal degree of standardization in some instances. Each of Hoccleve's three overstruck *es* (*ē*) appears as "*hē*" in the Durham, and each is expanded in every case to "*hem*" in Furnivall's text (lines 441, 741, and 902). Similarly, the more common overstruck *i* (*ī*), appearing twelve times, is always found in "*hī*" and is regularly expanded to "*him*." (lines 17, 147, 179, 275, 367, 400, 586, 759, 819, 842, 935, and 940). Finally, the overstruck *u* (*ū*) is found only once in the poem, at line 194, in "*chaūce*," and Furnivall expands it to "*chance*," the word it surely must be, based on context.

⁶¹ See lines 8, 9, 13, 29, 123, 159, 280, 290, 366, 367, 404, 420, 488, 623, 677, 707, 722, 731, 737, and 828. The overstrike in some of these constructions could be over either the *o* or the *m*, but for this study it is only pertinent that in these lines Furnivall regularly expands the construction to an added *m*, although which of the two *ms* is italicized does change. The nine in lines 280, 366, 367, 404, 488, 707, 722, 731, and 737 are the second of the two. Incidentally, the macrons in 420 and 722 are faint,

the other three macroned o's all appear within the word-final construction *-ōn*: at line 176 Furnivall does not mark a macron nor add any character; in line 601 "occupaciōn" is expanded to *occupacioun*; and line 662's "polluciōn" is represented as "pollucioñ." The actual placement of the macron as over the vowel or over the consonant may be ambiguous in 601 and 662, but what is here important is the different way the two are represented, particularly Furnivall's interpretation of the scribal mark as representing a vowel in 601, evidenced by the italicized *u*. Line 14 might be considered a special case, where the entire word *renon* is overstruck, and Furnivall prints "renoñ." At any rate, in line 66 there is a macron unquestionably over an *n*, and there Furnivall neglects to indicate any mark, simply printing the word *noon* as if it had appeared as such in Hoccleve's original.⁶² So while Furnivall was for the most part regular and standard in his treatment of the macron, there

but they both appear in either *woman* or *women*. When Hoccleve writes out a form of the word *woman*- in other places (lines 77, 172, 278, 395, 414, 484, 631, 750, 752, and 755), he always doubles the *m*, except at line 466, where he writes *womanlyeste*.

⁶² Note also that the rhymes at 799/801 and at 834/836 have the first of each rhyming pair ending with *-ñ*, and the second rhymeline ends with a character that resembles a fusion of *ñ* and *n̄*; that is, the tail curves up from the bottom and horizontally covers the letter.

are several instances where he neglects to indicate the scribal--in this case, authorial--representation, or even where he makes an unusual expansion.

Another instance of irregularity can be seen with the tailed final -k (ꝥ) which Hoccleve uses fifty-one times.⁶³ That letter's representation is static in Furnivall's printing except for the seven at lines 102, 298, 307, 430, 509, 646, and 721. Of these instances, lines 102, 298, 307, 430, and 721 have the letter expanded to "-ke." Lines 509 and 646, however, are incorrectly indicated, showing a simple k where Hoccleve tails it.⁶⁴ These representations indicate carelessness as well as Furnivall's editorial idiosyncracies.

For instance, at line 263, Hoccleve's line reads,

⁶³ See lines 61, 70, 102, 114, 176, 179, 192, 199, 218, 235, 261, 263, 264, 298, 307, 352, 254, 255, 360, 363, 364, 365, 376, 399, 403, 422, 428, 430, 448, 467, 509, 526, 646, 655, 690, 713, 714, 721, 769, 772, 778, 796, 821, 824, 841, 843, 861, 863, 886, 922, 938.

⁶⁴ Line 189 in Furnivall has a tailed k where the tail is not as pronounced as other places in the Durham, and may not be an actual flourish in Hoccleve's hand. Again, not all flourishes are marked by similar idiosyncratic handling. The flourished c appears only once in Hoccleve's manuscript, at line 440, and Furnivall justifiably interprets it as representing *er*, thus printing "Officers." The tailed f appears seven times in Furnivall's edition (lines 22, 51, 53, 54, 91, 219, and 781). That character is never expanded, and, in fact, some of Furnivall's fs are questionable as far as the flourish is concerned in the Durham. The most pronounced manuscript flourish is in line 781, where it is found on the word *of*, which would not take a final -e. Tailed g appears only once, at line 241, and is printed with a tail in the EETS edition.

I woot wel / and þ^t w^t bold face and look,
while Furnivall prints

I woot wel / and *with* bolde face and look.

That line in the EETS edition follows the Durham, to an extent, with spelling mainly from Hoccleve, except *bolde*, which is found in both the Selden and the Royal.

Furnivall deletes *that* (found in six manuscripts) and makes up the syllable by using a spelling for *bold* from other manuscripts--never marking his emendation.⁶⁵ The fact that the words *that* and *with* are adjacent, both in their similar abbreviated form, may have caused Furnivall to miss one.⁶⁶ But even if we assume such an error took place during transcription, Furnivall still goes outside the autograph manuscript for the tenth syllable, rather than adding the syllabic final -e to a final tailed *k*, as he had in five other instances.

But Furnivall's approach is more than simply idiosyncratic, for he handles some elements of Hoccleve's orthography with careless irregularity in his edition. David Matthews relates that there were certain regular rules for EETS editions: "from the beginning, all

⁶⁵ This line has several substantive differences at this middle section among the extant copies. The English Poets is missing this line.

⁶⁶ Of course, if that were the case, it would be a more common error of eye-skip to miss the second, the *with*.

manuscript contractions were expanded, but italics were used to highlight the letters derived from the expansions."⁶⁷ The handling of the common scribal abbreviation for *quod*, a *q* with a curved tail crossing the descender, is perhaps indicative of some of the irregularity of representation, or at least a carelessness of proofreading. Furnivall's edition normally represents the expansion as "*quod*," except in three occurrences where he prints "*quod*."⁶⁸ It seems unlikely that Furnivall himself is completely responsible for this change of representation, for the different use of italics in line 326, for instance, appears above a regular appearance in line 327. Because these two abbreviations are precisely the same in the manuscript, and directly above each other, the change is most probably a printer's error. Nonetheless, these variances do indicate poor proofreading. And there are other instances of careless representation. For example, the flourished *u* that is always expanded to "*uer*" normally italicizes the *-er*, giving readers the correct concept of the abbreviation. However, line 218 neglects to italicize, thus not marking the abbreviation. Admittedly, this lack of indication likely makes no difference to most readers. But to

⁶⁷ Matthews 152.

⁶⁸ See lines 326, 793, and 806.

textual scholars, such differences can be important--if, for instance, a scholar were attempting to study Hoccleve's use of abbreviation and assumed the printed text to be an accurate representation of Hoccleve's autograph manuscript. More importantly, such carelessness is indicative of the entire editorial process.

So far we have looked at some of the more minor differences, but one of the more problematic letters we find in the Hoccleve holograph is the flourished final *-r*, problematic in that we are not sure of what it might represent. If the flourish represents an abbreviation for a syllabic final *-e*, such an addition is of great metrical importance. Line 565 is the only instance in the poem where the flourished final *-r* appears as the last character in a line *and* where it is also a rhyme for words ending in *-re*. Furnivall, quite expectedly, expands the flourish to represent final *-e*. But there is otherwise no regularity to his expansion of the letter. Of the 159 flourished final *-rs* in Hoccleve's original, Furnivall's edition has twenty-three that remain static.⁶⁹ Interestingly, all of these instances of unchanged orthography are in the first 246 lines, after which Furnivall expands all flourished final *-rs* to "*-re*."

⁶⁹ These twenty-three appear in lines 40, 53, 54, 57, 63 (2), 79, 80, 90, 134, 144, 150, 153, 173, 182, 191, 205, 229, 233, 234 (2), 235, and 246.

There is no indication of why Furnivall chooses not to expand some of these letters.

For example, let us look at the first line in which the flourished *r* appears, line 40. Hoccleve's line appears as

Wole the shorte~~r~~ abood / the~~r~~ make

while Furnivall prints

Wole the shorte~~r~~ abood, / there make.

One might surmise that Furnivall elected to expand only the second instance because the first precedes a vowel, so no final *-e* would have been pronounced due to elision. And yet, in sixty-four other instances the final *-e* is added before the ensuing vowel.⁷⁰ Thus, Furnivall's avoidance of expansion before a vowel cannot be seen as a regular "rule." The closest we can come to ascertaining a commonplace for expansion is the preference shown in lines 365, 463, 861, and 863, which expand flourished final *-rs*

⁷⁰ See lines 101, 242, 274, 280, 285, 292, 299, 308, 317, 331, 336, 338, 357, 365, 385 (2), 386, 392, 397, 410, 411, 416, 426, 458, 461, 464, 469, 471, 474, 500, 515, 518, 521, 540, 584 (2), 585, 604, 649, 652, 666, 673, 685, 687, 691, 752, 754, 761, 766, 773, 777, 816, 829, 861, 863, 872 (2), 875, 882, 900, 926, 933, 934, and 936. These sixty-four occurrences include neither those appearances that precede initial *h-*, most of which were quite likely not pronounced, nor initial *wh-*, before which final *-e* was probably not pronounced, regardless of stress. Also, eleven of these doubled vowels are separated by a virgule, but recent understanding of Middle English prosody calls for elision across the caesura (101, 292, 299, 410, 461, 515, 518, 584, 685, 691, and 900).

(two in 365), but do not expand the tailed final *-ks*. And as in other cases we have seen, problems in the edition's printed representation are discernable: at line 97 of Furnivall's text, the flourished final *-r* is converted to "*-re*," with no italicizing, as is one of the two in 882, one of those preceding a vowel. In addition, the manuscript flourished *r* at line 930 is printed in Furnivall's edition as if it had no tail. One might jump to the conclusion that Furnivall did not intend his expansions of this manuscript orthography to denote a pronounced final *-e*. But that assumption leaves the questions of why approximately one sixth of the occurrences of that letter are not expanded, why in some lines one but not the other of those letters is expanded, and why the unexpanded instances are found in only the first 246 lines of the poem.

Beyond just scribal abbreviations, however, Furnivall had to face word variances in the witnesses he compared, as must today's editor, and here his choices are not always regular or logical. There are several lines where Furnivall inserts extra-textual words. For instance, to Hoccleve's line 53,

he hi^r yaf wordes confortatyf',

Furnivall inserts "[to]" between Hoccleve's "he hi^r."

Seven of the eight other manuscripts have "to," while the

Digby has "unto." But the very next line in all eight non-holograph manuscripts have an extra *now[e]*, and Furnivall makes no addition there. Or consider line 163 in Furnivall's edition,

Seide / if [pat] I wiste pat of thy folie,

which has an inserted pleonastic "[pat]" where Hoccleve has none. The Royal and Digby do have "that," the Coventry, "p^t," but the Selden does not, meaning the insertion is--if we take at face value Furnivall's claim about which manuscripts he collated--solely from the Royal. Interestingly, Furnivall uses the spelling more commonly found in Hoccleve's holograph, the one found, in fact, later in the same line. Note also that Hoccleve's original has "wiste" in that line, which Furnivall uses, but several manuscripts, including the Royal and Digby, lack the final -e on that word. We have already seen that Furnivall had doubts about the pronunciation of final -e, so his insertion may be an instance of him silently "correcting" a line: the pleonastic *that* serves not only to keep the syllable count at ten if the final -e on *wiste* is not pronounced, but also makes the meter more iambic.

There are other ways the issue of final -e comes into play. By using a diacritic, Furnivall denotes--we must assume--his belief that two final -e's in line 187 should be pronounced:

The hert to suë / ther leftë no man.

If these letters are pronounced, the line is indeed decasyllabic, but the iambic meter Furnivall thought the lines should have is thrown off. Lines such as this one bring to mind Furnivall's comment about Hoccleve being happy when his fingers counted ten syllables, disregarding meter; in this case it is Furnivall insisting on ten, even if it breaks his own idea of the meter. Aside from these two *ë*'s, there are nine other times when Furnivall uses that character to define pronunciation: lines 265 (2), 268, 269, 271, 278, 396, 729, and 932. What we might observe here is that over half of Furnivall's use of this symbol are in a cluster between lines 265-78. That occurrence in those few lines could possibly suggest that Hoccleve wrote short lines at that point, but more probably it indicates an idea that came upon Furnivall that was just as quickly dropped--interrupted, perhaps by picnics and boating exercise. First, there are other "short" lines in the Hoccleve autograph. Yet mainly, we can take into account both this cluster and the change of editorial opinion that the discontinuance of unexpanded final *-r* exhibits: Furnivall must have changed his mind at certain points during his editorial process, and due to his rush to publish, never gone back to regularize.

Another major editorial irregularity is Furnivall's capricious use of square brackets to insert elements not

found in the holograph. For instance, line 281 in Hoccleve's manuscript,

Of fer parties / how in to this place,

shares the exact spellings of the Royal manuscript, except on the second word. Hoccleve writes "fer" and the Royal scribe writes "ferre."⁷¹ Furnivall publishes the word as "fer[re]." Furnivall uses the same method of bracketing non-Durham readings in quite a few places. But lines 370 and 371 in Furnivall's EETS edition are an excellent example of the selectivity and limitations of this system:

The knyf fil out of hire hond in the bed[de]

And shee byheeld the clothes al bybled[de] /.

Both lines--rhyme-lines--end the final words -[de]. In line 370, the ending does suggest the difference between Hoccleve's *bed* and the Selden and Royal *bedde*, a spelling the manuscripts are divided between. What a reader does not see is that both the Selden and Royal possess other final -es--not all in the same places--that are not reflected in the edition, or that a flourished final -r in the line that Furnivall expands to "-re" is from the

⁷¹ Of the six other manuscripts that have this line, only one, the Selden, shares Hoccleve's three-letter spelling, a spelling that unequivocally denotes a single syllable. Three have either "ferre" or "fere," while the other two reflect these two spellings with a flourished final -r rather than a final -e.

Durham, not the two collation manuscripts. Furnivall's printed line is eleven or twelve syllables, Hoccleve's ten or eleven; that is, Furnivall creates a line that is hypermetric, although readers might ignore the bracketed syllable.⁷² Additionally, the last word of Furnivall's line 371 is a conflated blend: Hoccleve has "bybled," the Selden and the Royal, "forbledde," and the EETS "bybledde."⁷³

Or consider the EETS line 586,

He had[de] y not what / the deuel him speede,
 where for the second word Furnivall prints "had[de]." As one might assume, the Durham has only the three-letter *had*, but the spelling suggested by Furnivall is found solely in the English Poets manuscript, while the Royal has "hade." All the others have a three-letter *had*.⁷⁴ Thus, this reading is from the Royal, but because

⁷² Furnivall himself would not have pronounced the final -e of the line because, as we saw earlier in this chapter, he agreed with "those sensible scribes" who also did not.

⁷³ All the non-holograph manuscripts possess some spelling of *forbled*, as one or two words, while it is only the Durham that has the *bybled* form. That form mirrors the *byheeld* earlier in the line, and might even reflect a copying error on Hoccleve's part.

⁷⁴ Remember that Furnivall never mentions looking at the English Poets copy, and probably did not, but it is interesting that he stumbles upon reflecting the orthography of this manuscript, probably the worst of the witnesses.

Furnivall did not consult the English Poets, the second *d* is an example of the editor silently altering the spelling to fit his desires.⁷⁵ Likewise, in EETS line 726,

In swich[e] wyse / þat it yow shal affraye,

Furnivall uses the word "swich[e]," adding the final -e found in both the Selden and the Royal, although both of the scribes who copied those manuscripts spell the word *suche*.⁷⁶ Furnivall does not, however, change the word order later in the line: Hoccleve uses "yow shal," and all the other extant copies reverse that word order. And we find other letter additions in the EETS edition. At line 795,

ffor he maad haath / noon hool[e] shrifte ne
pleyn

we can again see a syllabic addition from the Royal, where Furnivall prints "hool[e]," using the Durham (and Selden) spelling with the final -e found on the Royal's *hole*.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Furnivall's EETS use of "sharp[e]" in line 848,

⁷⁵ Incidentally, we can also see from this line a clue that the Durham was not the direct parent of any of the other manuscripts: in the Durham, Hoccleve uses "deuel," while all the other witnesses have some form of the word *fiend*.

⁷⁶ In fact, all the manuscripts other than the Durham use a *such[e]* spelling.

⁷⁷ The printed line does not reflect that the Durham has a unique word order: "maad haath" against all other witnesses' reversed order.

And ther-to eek / as sharp[e] punisshement,
 is an instance of a syllabic addition strictly from the
 Selden, for the final -e is not found in the Hoccleve
 holograph or in the Royal.⁷⁸ Furnivall uses the word
 "about[en] in his EETS edition at line 767, but neither
 the Hoccleve holograph nor the Selden and Royal manuscript
 copies use that spelling, agreeing, rather, on "about[e]."⁷⁹
 And we can also see Furnivall's line 591, which has

But if it lykid hire / to bye[n] aght,
 using "bye[n]," a spelling found in none of the
 manuscripts. This editorial decision is also odd in that
 if Furnivall truly felt the line needed another syllable,
 rather than going outside the witnesses, he could have
 used "for" between *hir* and *to*: none of the other
 manuscripts has "hir to," using instead "for to."⁸⁰

Because of the number of bracketed readings that come
 from the Royal, one might venture to posit that Furnivall
 uses brackets for additions from that manuscript.

⁷⁸ Again, the witnesses' use of final -e is divided. There is an -e in the Digby, but the word is *harde*. The Digby, like only otherwise the Royal, inverts Hoccleve's word order for "ther-to eek."

⁷⁹ None of the extant manuscripts, in fact, has the -*en* ending, all having a spelling of *about* either with or without the -e.

⁸⁰ Interestingly, the Yale manuscript scribe has before *forto* a crossed out *h*, possibly suggesting an exposure to a manuscript with the Durham's reading.

This denotation would presumably suggest that the lines were left incomplete and Furnivall is supply readings from another manuscript, and inspection of the manuscript shows that line 245 does indeed lack the final word, *Amen*. It appears that Hoccleve made an error of dittography, then scraped the erroneous word, neglecting to come back and write the right one. All the other manuscripts agree on *Amen*, except the Yale manuscript, which has *men*, certainly a scribal mistake.⁸³ Furnivall's selection of *Amen* seems to be well-founded, and the edition has the insertion well-marked. However, line 259 is likewise marked with the final word in brackets. But upon looking at the manuscript, one can clearly see that the word *hid* is present in the author's hand. What seems to have happened is that Furnivall was marking the previous line with the added *-de* on *betid* from the Royal manuscript.⁸⁴ Obviously, Furnivall would mark the next line the same way, but either he or the printer made an error, putting the entire word *hidde* in brackets, thus suggesting the entire word was missing. In the next chapter, we will see how this minor mistake would have later impact.

⁸³ Because the Durham was not the parent of any of the extant manuscripts, I am not calling the Yale difference a "fix" to the missing word in the Durham.

⁸⁴ The Selden's spelling is exactly like that of the Durham.

Unfortunately, not all of the changes Furnivall made are as easily detectable. We can observe in his line 480,

ffor profre of meede / ne for faire preyeere

for instance, that Furnivall prints a final -e on the word *fair*, just as it appears in the Royal. The entire word is missing in the Selden. The Durham's orthography is very clear, however, and the spelling is indeed four letters:

ffor profre of meede / ne for fair preyeere.

The final -r is not flourished. And yet, there is no indication with either brackets or italics that the final -e in the printed text is an editorial addition.

Furthermore, line 616 in the EETS edition is an example of an unmarked change that Furnivall imposes. Hoccleve's line is written

And p^t in haaste hi^f he to the ship ledde

but Furnivall prints

And pat in haaste he to the ship hire ledde.

The expansion of *that* is unremarkable, as might also be the conversion of the flourished final -r to "-re."

However, the printed edition moves the word *hire* to the position it occupies in all the other manuscripts, without marking the change.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Incidentally, the Selden deletes the definite article, while the Royal and Digby change demonstrative *that* to adverbial *then*.

As a final example of Furnivall's editorial irregularity, let us consider what he could do to a single line. In the Durham manuscript, line 385 is written as

Slee hi† as blyue lat nat hi† asterte.⁸⁶

Furnivall claims he collated against the Selden, and there the line appears as

Slee hir as blyue ne lat hir not a sterte.

Notice that neither of the final *-rs* on the pronoun *hir* is flourished, but that disparity in itself is a fairly minor difference compared to the insertion of "ne" and the word-order reversal "nat hi†."⁸⁷ All other differences are accidentals. Remember, however, that for this tale Furnivall also compared to the Royal manuscript, which reads,

Slee hir as blive lete hir not astert.

This manuscript also does not flourish the *-rs* and also inverts the order of the same two words. The only other possibly substantive difference is the spelling of *lete*, which could represent an added syllable there. Finally, we can look at Furnivall's representation of the line in his edition:

Slee hire as blyue lat nat hire asterte.

⁸⁶ All of the four examples of this line omit any marks of punctuation, be they medieval or modern.

⁸⁷ All the extant witnesses reverse the Durham's order of these two words.

The line follows the Durham almost exactly, save expanding the flourished -rs. Most interesting, nonetheless, is the fact that only the first -e is italicized, indicating an expansion, while the other is printed in a way that indicates a manuscript spelling, one that actually does not appear in any of the three Furnivall says he examined.⁸⁸

The preceding pages have presented a close look at the EETS Hoccleve editions Furnivall prepared. The first problem with Furnivall's work that we can note is that the edition has no apparatus, so we really have no statement by him in those volumes of how he was handling his sources. In the words of Charlotte Brewer, "it is virtually impossible [. . .] to turn up any explicit statement by Furnivall of his views on editing that fully acknowledges his position relative to those of others."⁸⁹ While Matthews maintains that the EETS editors were

⁸⁸ For comparison, I include here the line as it appears in the other manuscripts, excluding, of course, the English Poets, which lacks this line:

Laud: Slee he† as blyve ne lett he† not stert
 Yale: Slee he† as blyve ne lett he† not astert
 Bodley: Sle hir as blive ne lett hir not stert
 Coventry: Slee her as blive let her nat astert
 Digby: Scle hi† asbliue lete hi† not astertt

⁸⁹ Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) 88, qtd. in Matthews 215, n. 7.

reluctant to change the readings they found in manuscripts, but rather made commentary suggestions of what a better reading might be, we have seen Furnivall silently making such emendations in the Hoccleve text. Remember, Furnivall says he was concerned with offering the exact words of the manuscripts he edited, yet with Hoccleve at least, he made unnoted alterations, changing what he found--that is, the "exact words" he says that readers want. The only discernable reason there is no indication in the Hoccleve editions of how Furnivall is handling his sources, even down to orthography, is that the EETS had the general rules Matthews mentions, laid out for members of the society. Unfortunately, any reader approaching the EETS editions today does not have the familiarity with the Society's editorial principles Furnivall's Victorian readership did. In any event, we might wonder how the critical commentary and the editorial changes made by Furnivall might continue to affect later critical response. The next chapter will look at how the editions are still influencing our approach to Hoccleve's work.

Chapter 5

Unlocking the Gate

From what we have seen in the last chapter, we can safely say that much of the negative commentary made by scholars in the last few years regarding the dubious reliability of Furnivall's EETS editions of Hoccleve's work is more than defensible: it is verifiable, even quantifiable. For example, Catherine Batt observes that "Hoccleve's care, [. . .] and with it his reputation for technical accomplishment as a poet, have not been best served by his nineteenth-century editor," a result of what she calls Furnivall's "whimsical approach."¹ More directly, Charles Blyth says, "The need for a new edition of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* is evident when one reflects on the date of the last edition (1897) and the identity of its editor."² Or even more specifically, Ethan Knapp says that "Despite [. . .] new interest [. . .] the study of [Hoccleve's] verse has been hampered by the aging and inadequate Early English Text Society volumes that remain the only source of complete texts for

¹ Christine Batt, Introduction, *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Christine Batt (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996) 7.

² Blyth, "Editing" 11.

his major works.”³ These critics are calling attention to Furnivall’s gatekeeper role. Yet while critical acceptance of the trustworthiness of Furnivall’s editions has begun to waver, what exactly has happened to the textual situation of Hoccleve’s works since the EETS editions, and how have scholars reacted to the flawed texts? The present chapter will look at questioning of the EETS editions and at attempts to re-edit the Hoccleve corpus to alter the lingering effect of Furnivall’s editing.

The Enduring EETS Editions

In the previous chapter’s examination of the EETS Hoccleve editions, we have already seen a representative sample of inaccuracies and irregularities in the EETS text. After Furnivall’s editions (and Gollancz’s equally unreliable edition) were released, very little editing was done to improve the textual status, despite continuing suspicion of these editions. As early as 1916, J. H. Kern questioned how accurate the EETS editions were. His “Zum Texte einiger Dichtungen Thomas Hoccleve’s” was an attempt

³ Ethan Knapp, rev. of *Thomas Hoccleve’s Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. J. A. Burrow, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 23 (2001) 529.

to find errors in Furnivall's edited texts.⁴ Unfortunately, Kern rejected the idea that the Durham and Huntington 111 (then still the Phillipps) were Hoccleve's holographs. His comparisons look at variant readings in printed editions and in lists of scribal differences. His reconstructed lines for Hoccleve are--like those changes Furnivall made--based on his linguistic and metrical misconceptions. So while Kern's article marks an early voice of doubt for the validity of Furnivall's EETS Hoccleve editions, it does not aim to replace or formally fix the textual problems.

Many of the anthologies that appeared in the years following the 1890's publication of the EETS volumes and that included pieces by Hoccleve are based on the Furnivall texts.⁵ By reprinting from the EETS, the compilers of these anthologies are further disseminating the faulty texts contained in Furnivall's editions. Still, even if the anthologies contained some re-editing--like that of Hammond--small snippets of large works or full texts of short poems do not encourage reevaluation of a poet's work. Only sizeable new scholarly editions of

⁴ J. H. Kern, "Zum Texte einiger Dichtungen Thomas Hoccleve's," *Anglia* 39 (1916) 389-494.

⁵ See Mitchell, Appendix II.C, indicating that eight of the fourteen items listed there are based on "Furnivall's text."

the bulk of a single author's corpus, editions that actually get substantial attention, can spur on that kind of new consideration so soon after the complete works are edited and appraised by a well-known and still respected major editor.⁶ In the two or three decades following the EETS editions' publications, no such comprehensive or new work was done. More telling is that less than two decades after Furnivall's Hoccleve editions, the poet had often dropped from mention, as when John Munro refers to medieval English literature's "great men like Wyclif, Chaucer, and Lydgate."⁷

The 1925 reprint of the *Minor Poems* was just that: an exact duplicate of Furnivall's 1892 EETS 61 publication, attaching Gollancz's pamphlet-sized EETS 73 bound along with it in one volume. Again, no change in text--particularly so soon after the last major edition--means no change in critical reaction. In fact, the very act of reprinting the original texts is a valorization of those

⁶ We know Furnivall was for the most part still highly regarded by looking at the praise he enjoys in Frowde's *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*. Although the authors who share recollections of Furnivall are a cross-section of his varied interests (the A. B. C. Teashop or the sculling club), several of the contributors (Skeat, Ker, etc.) were important scholars. Thus, we know that in 1911 when the book was published--the year after his death--Furnivall was still a respected figure.

⁷ John Munro, "Biography," *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*, ed. Henry Frowde (London: Oxford UP, 1911) xlviiii.

texts, especially when the EETS is behind the reprint. The reprints were, in this case at least, more detrimental to Hoccleve's reputation than an aid to improving critical evaluation. Rather than drawing attention to a new edition's possible changes--the type of thing that draws critics to reread and reevaluate--the reprinting of a three-decades-old text suggests its reliability. But Furnivall's and the text's reputation alone are not the sole elements affecting the persisting reliance on the EETS editions.

Confronting the variations of a text from a manuscript culture is difficult, and as M. L. West points out, most readers

are content to leave [textual criticism] to the editor of the text they are reading and to trust in his superior knowledge. Unfortunately, editors are not always people who can be trusted, and critical apparatuses are provided so that readers are not dependent upon them. Though the reader lacks the editor's long acquaintance with the text and its problems, he may nevertheless surpass him in his feeling for the language or in ordinary common sense.⁸

So a contributing factor to the continued use of the outdated EETS editions is that they offer access to the text in a readily available, easy-to-read format.

⁸ M. L. West, *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique*, qtd. in Jerome J. McGann, "The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary Works," *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985) 186-87.

Furnivall's goal was make difficult-to-access manuscripts available to "ordinary students of Early English" literature, but the editions ultimately served to provide readers with easier access to the work. T. H. Howard-Hill notes that

The painful truth is that modern readers require mediated texts [. . .] Modern editions are consulted most often by readers who require access to a received or acceptable text, who are not competent to assay an editor's textual arguments, and who have no time or desire to sort through the complexities of conflicting original witnesses.⁹

And so, when readers seek a text for entry into the poetry of Hoccleve, the outdated Furnivall editions remain the first choice. Those volumes, although not standing up to our scrutiny of their reliability, do indeed more than exceed the requirements for being sufficiently "mediated," and they have no "textual arguments" for readers to confront--in much the same way the common reader will prefer *The Riverside Chaucer* to the various volumes of the *Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. And more than being simply intellectually accessible, the editions have other qualities that ensured their continued prominence.

⁹ T. H. Howard-Hill, "The Dangers of Editing, or, the Death of the Editor," *The Editorial Gaze: Mediating Texts in Literature and the Arts*, ed. Paul Eggert and Margaret Sankey (New York: Garland, 1998) 61.

As Matthews point out, "the EETS rapidly achieved near official status as purveyor of medieval literature."¹⁰ These editions were often the first available--or at least, first *widely* available--printed editions. And rather than being separate volumes of individual works, printed for small clubs or in short-lived, limited number editions of part of the works of a single poet, the EETS texts as a body of editions were extensively purchased by university libraries, making these books the most commonly available editions, each somehow also valorized by mere circumstance of being part of the series, even if the quality of individual volumes varied broadly. Because of the significance of the series, the lasting importance of individual volumes has often been elevated in the common opinion. Moreover, the very printed stamp of "Early English Text Society" on the spine of the books lent a degree of importance, acceptability, and reputability to *all* the volumes of the series, despite varying dependability and quality of scholarship in the series. Thus, the EETS name itself became a validation--a popular "brand name," if you will--marking the shelves of similar looking volumes as reliable.

¹⁰ Matthews 158.

In a sense, Furnivall's EETS plan for easing access to early literature worked perhaps too well in cases like Hoccleve's where there are no newer editions. When Furnivall proposed the series goal of providing texts for those "whose spare minutes for Museum work [. . .] are few," he did not intend the same type of time constraint Howard-Hill speaks of when he observes that most readers "have no time or desire" to do careful consultation of varying manuscript witnesses. The ease of access the printed texts provide, along with the EETS editions' lack of daunting apparatus, leaves, as Greetham notes, "the frequent misunderstanding by non-textuists" of the *critical* nature of textual criticism, leading them to remain unaware that preparing an edition involves "a speculative, personal, and individual confrontation of one mind by another."¹¹ So not only did the EETS editions initially allow scholars to access the works, but Furnivall's lack of textual apparatus also ensured that those poorly edited editions gained acceptance, blurring the line between editor and author.

Finally, a bit of a vicious cycle eventually led to the continued importance of the EETS editions of Hoccleve's works. The editorial and critical offerings Furnivall published might be flawed, but they are

¹¹ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 295.

ostensibly complete. Furthermore, these two EETS volumes,¹² by virtue of their errors and negative comments, have helped keep Hoccleve a minor figure--even in the specialist canon--through their unfair disparagement, and because he was a minor figure, no one felt a need to reconsider and re-edit the body of work. Critics shied away from a major re-editing of Hoccleve's oeuvre, further lending credence to the reliability of Furnivall's work, and that pushed Hoccleve into an even more minor status. Still further, not only did Hoccleve's continuing slide into increasingly minor status reduced readers' call for better editions.

Another factor detrimental to study of Hoccleve's work can be extrapolated from Julia Boffey's remarks in her review of a recent edition of Lydgate's *Troy Book*. Speaking about the textual status of the works by Hoccleve's contemporary, Boffey writes that "their confinement in ancient [. . .] editions poses problems for those who might wish to use them in graduate courses."¹³ This problem is more than simply an annoyance to professors planning syllabi. If a purchasable edition--

¹² I say two because although Hoccleve's poetry originally is in three of the EETS volumes, the *Minor Poems'* gathering of 61 and 73 in the reprint makes for two bound books on the shelf.

¹³ Julia Boffey, rev. of *Troy Book: Selections*, ed. Robert R. Edwards, *Speculum* 76:1 (2001) 191.

one not simply currently in print, but one reasonably priced enough for seminar use--is not available, that situation determines the reading matter of the graduate course, thereby influencing the textual exposure of the next generation of critics. Moreover, if those younger critics are not exposed to a text, there is a tacit understanding of value. Finally, Boffey notes that the new Lydgate edition's publication following the "edition for the Early English Text Society makes a valuable text readily accessible and highlights in it features that justify in a variety of ways Lydgate's claims to attention."¹⁴ That is, an EETS text can be a hindrance to study of Hoccleve's contemporary, both because the older edition is unavailable for classroom use, making the works difficult for students "to explore them for themselves," and because the availability in an poor but apotheosized edition affects evaluation.

So the Furnivall EETS editions forged a lasting negative response by creating a reputation. Thus far, we have considered the importance of the name of the series--*The Early English Text Society*--and the continued respect for Furnivall. But beyond the series name or the editor's reputation, there is, of course, the author. Foucault proposed that an author's name becomes a product, a

¹⁴ Boffey 191.

signification of quality because it is recognizable--or sometimes, due to its obscurity. The basic principle at work here is that the past experience of the current reader with an author and with previous readers who have reported experience with that author--readers who also have encountered previous readers--shapes a certain expectation of quality. Let us assume that this "author function" is operating. The first characteristic trait of author function which Foucault sees is that an author owns his/her text and, therefore, is punishable for any perceived transgressions within it. But in the case of the Hoccleve text and much of the unfavorable judgments--particularly metrical--that have stemmed from it in the last century, the *edition* is what is being used, not Hoccleve's holograph.¹⁵ In this sense, Hoccleve has lost ownership of the text, but is still considered punishable for any perceived metrical and stylistic transgressions. If we say that the number of changes Furnivall makes to the Hoccleve text constructs that editor as "part-owner"--that is, as a type of co-author--then some of the perceived transgressions critics have noted, certainly at least metrically, are equally the offense of Hoccleve *and* of Furnivall--sometimes more of one, sometimes the other.

¹⁵ Additionally, the EETS editions--like almost all modern editions--have the reputation-producing pre-evaluation built in as introductions and forewords.

But while literary critics do not gain access to a work until a textual critic has affected the work, rarely is any culpability set upon the editor's shoulders. And in the case of Furnivall and Hoccleve, the recognition of editorial influence only comes decades after the texts have been accepted and critical opinion has begun to solidify. So the EETS status, Furnivall's reputation, and Hoccleve's subsequent notoriety are all facets of a triad that produced the poet's author function, but only Hoccleve has been blamed for the shortcomings perceived in his works. And because any real reevaluation has come only long after the reputation has gelled, that reputation is hard to modify.

An Attempt at Critical Recovery

After the 1890s EETS editions were published, the texts as printed there were read as Hoccleve's work, not as Furnivall's edited versions. H. S. Bennett's important 1947 *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, for example, says its "Texts are normally quoted from first or from authoritative modern editions [. . .],"¹⁶ and that the "standard collected edition of Hoccleve's works will be

¹⁶ H. S. Bennett, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (New York: Oxford UP, 1961) vi.

found in the EETS."¹⁷ Although he had read a great deal of the prior scholarship on Hoccleve's work, Bennett ultimately is basing his quotations and assumably his judgments on the faulty work of Furnivall. So when Bennett says

Hoccleve, then, cannot claim any high place in the poetic heavens. [. . . and] survives mainly for two reasons. First, because his devotion to Chaucer endears him to all lovers of poetry. [. . .] Secondly, Hoccleve's work is full of interest for the student of social history¹⁸

we should not be surprised that his observation sounds like a paraphrase of Furnivall. The important EETS editor remains in his position of determining readers' entry to the text, in this case by coloring the appraisal of Hoccleve's work by affecting an important literary history. Further, for Bennett as for other commentators of the first half of the twentieth century, Hoccleve is looked at as one of many low-importance fifteenth-century authors.

Richard D. Altick maintains that

The largest body of evidence bearing on an author's critical fortunes in later years is found in the books and articles that deal with or simply mention him. [. . .] Prominent among

¹⁷ Bennett 286.

¹⁸ Bennett 150.

them are books specifically about him--critical and interpretive studies and biographies.¹⁹

Mitchell's 1968 *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century Poetic* began a serious re-evaluation of Hoccleve's poetry. That text was a purposeful attempt to change the set opinion of Hoccleve's literary value. For instance, while Furnivall and many other critics were content to believe Hoccleve's self-disparagement and use it as evidence of the poet's lack of skill--a critical practice that would become *de rigueur* for dealing with Hoccleve--Mitchell points out that Hoccleve was employing the figure of thought *diminutio*. Accepting that instances of self-deprecation in Hoccleve are not the poet's confession of inadequacy but are rather the application of a literary device represents a post-Furnivall critical about-face. Mitchell observes that

Hoccleve's disparagers have taken great delight in pointing out passages such as these [self-criticisms]. One should be aware, however, that similar passages can be pointed out in the works of Ashby, Bokenham, Scogan, Walton, Lydgate, and even Chaucer. The question that arises is

¹⁹ Richard D. Altick, *The Art of Literary Research*, rev. John J. Fenstermaker, 3rd ed. (New York: Norton, 1981) 113. Working from this assertion, I have chosen not to discuss those studies that deal with general Middle English literature and metrics and that include sections on Hoccleve along with other writers of the period. Similarly, the present chapter will consider neither Burrow's *Thomas Hoccleve*, which, while containing important information, is not truly a "book" on Hoccleve, nor Fenster and Erler's, *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, which is a study of a poem, not Hoccleve.

whether the frequent verses of self-deprecation in Middle English poetry are sincere expressions of regret or, rather, pure convention. Probably none of the passages should be taken at face value. [Ernst Robert] Curtius examined self-deprecation from the time of Cicero to the end of the Middle Ages, concluding that the almost countless protestations of inadequacy are affected, that they are conventional rhetorical formulas, and that they constitute one of the many *topoi* at the disposal of ancient and medieval writers. Hoccleve's verses of self-deprecation, then, should not be examined in isolation but approached in the context of a tradition that extends from classical times to his own day. One simply cannot dismiss him as a poet of no importance simply because he *pretends* to certain shortcomings, metrical and otherwise.²⁰

For Chaucer, at least, such statements are read as convention, but with Hoccleve, the statements are taken to be confessional and proof of Furnivall's claims of poor craft. And the above statement on *diminutio* represents only one facet of Hoccleve's rhetorical style that Mitchell attempted to redeem.

Further, Mitchell provided the first modern re-evaluation of Hoccleve's meter. In line with the *topoi* of *diminutio*, Hoccleve himself criticizes his own "meetrynge amis," a claim often used by critics to lend validity to their harsh condemnations. For example, Mitchell reports that Franz Bock's 1900 dissertation, *Metrische Studien zu*

²⁰ Mitchell 63-64. For Mitchell's reference, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953) 83-85.

Thomas Hoccleves Werken, finds Hoccleve's verse characterized by "schwebende Betonung."²¹ Bock's claim of thwarted stress neatly combines Furnivall's understanding of Hoccleve's meter and the poet's own self-disparagement.

But Mitchell begins the chapter on meter like this:

If one had to pick the aspect of Hoccleve's poetic technique that has most caused his reputation to fall into low repute, it would certainly be his meter--or rather his meter as understood by the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century critics.²²

In this initial sentence, Mitchell calls attention to the main problem Furnivall and many subsequent critics--as well as some prior ones--did not themselves know they had: a too single-minded belief that most non-alliterative Middle English verse is intended to be iambic. Mitchell calls attention to Furnivall's comment about Hoccleve counting syllables on his fingers as evidence of this kind of metrical presumption. And even though Mitchell's chapter is an excellent overview of other approaches to understanding Middle English meter, our main focus in this

²¹ Mitchell 133.

²² Mitchell 97. We might here note the words of James G. Southworth, *The Prosody of Chaucer and His Followers: Supplementary Chapters to Verses of Cadence*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1978) 73: "Hoccleve spoke of Chaucer as his master, and scholars have in general granted his claim. Having granted it, however, they proceed to make of him a completely tone-deaf poetaster. I maintain that the basic rhythmical pattern will be more apparent in a disciple than in the subtler work of the master."

chapter is to see how the text itself--the reader's access to the literature--has been affected by Furnivall and his EETS editions.

At the beginning of Mitchell's chapter on meter, he makes an illuminating comment in a footnote: "As usual, all my quotations follow Furnivall's and Gollancz's texts; but in this chapter I have called attention to editorial emendations wherever they might have an effect on the meter."²³ Mitchell's remark suggests he was aware that Furnivall was one of those late nineteenth-century critics who did not understand Middle English meter, that Furnivall emended the text to sometimes fit with his own notions how the metrical line should run, and that we have, therefore, a flawed text. There are only two of these editorial emendations that Mitchell discusses, both of them involving lines where Hoccleve wrote "a~~ll~~," *Compleynte of the Virgin* (87) and *Lerne to Dye* (421).²⁴ In both cases, Furnivall expands the crossed double *ls*--in the first to "all~~e~~," the second to "alle."²⁵ What is

²³ Mitchell 97, n. 2. In a sense, this dissertation evolved out of that statement, for as a new graduate student knowing little of textual criticism, I became intrigued by the idea that the text we read is not necessarily that of the author.

²⁴ See Mitchell 105, n.16 and 108, n.21.

²⁵ Recall from the previous chapter that of the ten identical instances in the poem discussed there that Furnivall adds the -e on three only.

possibly most interesting, however, arises from comparing an observation on the crossed final double *l* Mitchell makes in the chapter he wrote on meter for his book with the text of the revised edition of the EETS *Minor Poems* that Mitchell and A. I. Doyle published in 1970. Mitchell says in the first of these footnotes in his earlier study--the other simply refers readers back to the prior note--that "If Hoccleve did not intend that there be a syllabic final -e, the line would read less smoothly; but there would be no thwarted stress. The line would then resemble Lydgate's broken-backed line."²⁶ In the revised EETS, however, only a slight modification to the two expansions is made: Furnivall's diacritic over the final -e he attaches for the line in *Compleynte of the Virgin* is a definite sign he wants readers to pronounce the syllable, and all Mitchell and Doyle do is remove the diacritic. Since Furnivall's expansion of what he reads as possible abbreviation is, as the last chapter illustrated, haphazard, one must wonder why Mitchell and Doyle left any expansions. Let us consider, then, the Mitchell and Doyle revised EETS volume.

²⁶ Mitchell 105, n. 16.

The Revised Edition

Seeing that the volume is a "revised edition" might lead readers to believe that some important change has been made, that the introductory material is little altered while the literary text itself is *at the very least* corrected if not more thoroughly improved. In the case of the EETS revised Hoccleve edition, the forewords are, in fact, left intact, but with several additions. First, Mitchell and Doyle provide an addenda and corrigenda to the forewords, which contains references to more recent scholarship, an acknowledgment of the changed name for one of the manuscripts, and a few corrections--in all, a page and a half of new material.²⁷ The revised edition also includes very useful additions to Furnivall's appendix of Hoccleve documents, containing seven references to Hoccleve in contemporary documents that had not been found at the time of Furnivall's earlier publication.²⁸ Finally, the new edition contains two additional notes to part I.²⁹ Other than these minor modifications, Furnivall's forewords--with all the derisive remarks we examined in the previous chapter--remain intact. Certainly, Mitchell and Doyle do not have

²⁷ *Minor Poems* xlix-1.

²⁸ *Minor Poems* lxxi-lxxii.

²⁹ *Minor Poems* lxxiii.

the right to alter the printed opinions and observations Furnivall made. If the text is not re-edited, the introductory material of the original editor is necessarily attached to that editor's product. And the few pages of additional material are there merely for rudimentary updating of factual material. Thus the real revision of the introductory matter is far from a revision of critical response, for that type of *revision* would suggest more than the inclusion of minor additional, more current materials. Our interest might, then, be focused rather on the decision *not* to re-edit and therefore make new commentary.

At any rate, when we see that an edition is labeled "revised," we assume that the revisions are substantial. Otherwise, why would one go to the trouble of revising in the first place? We find the text preceded by an addenda and corrigenda to the text that consists of three items: one, a reference to later scholarship; the other two, corrections to Furnivall's footnotes on marginalia.³⁰ But on the following page is an illuminating note on the text. Mitchell and Doyle were indeed aware of the types of inconsistencies and inaccuracies we examined in the last chapter, for they begin the note on the text thus: "Many errors in the original printing have been corrected before

³⁰ *Minor Poems* lxxiii.

photography. It was not practicable, however, to correct all errors in this way."³¹ Following that acknowledgment is a list of six types of error that are not corrected. Since our main focus here is the literary text itself--specifically Furnivall's long-lived effect upon it--we need only concern ourselves with the initial two.³² First, Mitchell and Doyle tell us that "Furnivall's punctuation has been retained unless it obscures the sense of a passage" and that "Missing virgules have not been supplied."³³ What some readers will fail to recognize is that any modern punctuation is an editor's concept of meaning, but not necessarily exactly the one intended by the author. Thus, supplying editorial punctuation thereby steers the modern reader in a predetermined direction of

³¹ *Minor Poems* lxxiv.

³² The third is in reference to the handling of marginalia, the fourth justifies why one piece was not corrected at all, and the other two are specifically about the Gollancz EETS 73.

³³ *Minor Poems* lxxiv. While Mitchell and Doyle use the blanket term *virgule*, Hoccleve uses the three levels of medieval punctuation discussed in Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 223. Note also Ian Robinson, *Chaucer's Prosody: A Study of the Middle English Verse Tradition* (London: Cambridge UP, 1971) 190, which observes of the *Series* as found in the Durham, "The manuscript is probably the poet's autograph and certainly a very good text, which did not prevent Furnivall from altering the punctuation frequently and without note."

interpretation.³⁴ Leslie A. Marchand has pointed out this imposition of meaning in relation to Byron's letters and the poet's inability to punctuate them: "most editors [. . .] have imposed sentences and paragraphs on him in line with their interpretation of his intended meaning. [. . .] often arbitrarily impos[ing] a meaning or an emphasis not intended by the writer."³⁵ If such control can be exerted over the prose of a modern writer's letters, might not the same restraint be exerted over a medieval poet? And while Mitchell and Doyle say their alterations of the original EETS 61 punctuation come only where "it obscures the sense of a passage," their presumption is, of course, that they are better attuned to so-called authorial intent than was Furnivall.³⁶

³⁴ See Burrow and Turville-Petre, *A Book of Middle English*, 65, for an excellent example of how editorial punctuation can impose two very distinct and divergent possible meanings on the opening seven lines of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Another related example is biblical translations. For instance, because New Testament Greek has no commas, editorial understanding of the text will determine a certain punctuation that will itself force readers to follow. So an unpunctuated sentence like that found in Luke 23:43, "I say to you today you will be with me in Paradise," takes on different meanings in different translations, depending on if the editorial decision is to put the comma before or after *today*.

³⁵ Leslie A. Marchand, "In my hot youth": *Byron's Letters and Journals*, qtd. in G. Thomas Tanselle, *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1990) 258.

³⁶ Keep in mind, also, that modern editors seem not to entertain the notion that a medieval writer might have

Of further interest is the decision not to supply missing medieval punctuation. To say that the missing marks are not restored is to say that *some*, then, are in the text, but not *all*. One wonders what the purpose of retaining the 1892 edition's idiosyncratic and selective representation of the manuscript's marks might be. Furnivall often would substitute a modern punctuation mark for a manuscript punctuation mark. One can criticize the combined use of both medieval and modern punctuation, because such use tries, but ultimately fails, to perform simultaneously two tasks, making a medieval text readable for modern audiences and indicating the original medieval indications of punctuation. Certainly, a text might be intended for a readership striving only to follow the narrative and relying on familiar punctuation--the type of mediated text we discussed earlier. But that audience is not the same group as scholars who might be striving to gather information from the poet's marks. Rather, a printed edition with only the medieval marks could be a useful tool, for studies might strive to learn from the fact that Hoccleve "evolved for himself a particularly rigorous system of orthographic distinctions."³⁷ If the medieval punctuation marks are more indicative of

intended certain ambiguities.

³⁷ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 224.

intonation than they are strictly grammatical, an edition that will allow researchers to see the precise way the author marked his lines would be an extremely useful tool.³⁸ But an edition that combines medieval and modern punctuation does nothing useful, so the Mitchell and Doyle "revised edition" does not *revise* the problems of punctuation.

The second class of errors that Mitchell and Doyle do not seek to correct is also of some import. The note on the text says "There has been no attempt to straighten out inconsistencies in the handling of final manuscript letters with hooks, strokes or flourishes, capitalization, or in the expansion of abbreviations."³⁹ The last chapter showed the abundance of such errors Furnivall made, at least the lack of regularity he had in dealing with such orthographic features. And yet, Mitchell and Doyle are content to let such flaws remain intact, to produce a revision that will reproduce known errors. They willingly acknowledge Furnivall's edition as textually suspect, but willfully allow that flawed edition to stand with little change as the only available full edition of Hoccleve's works.

³⁸ A discussion of medieval punctuation as a guide to metrical value can be found, for instance, in Robinson, Chapter 7, "Manuscript Punctuation," 132-47.

³⁹ *Minor Poems* lxxiv.

How close is the revised edition to the original 1892 EETS edition? Let us use the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife" from the *Series*--the tale we examined in the previous chapter--as a touchstone. Mitchell and Doyle make only thirteen changes to the 952 line poem.⁴⁰ Of these "revisions," most are extremely minor alterations of spelling. For example, in both lines 347 and 362 the spelling "demynge" used by Furnivall is corrected to Hoccleve's double-voweled spelling of "deemynge." Other than the quality of the vowel's length and an arguable resulting change in the metrical stress, this revision is in actuality a correction of Furnivall's misrepresentation. We see the same type of change in line 234, where Furnivall's "heng" is changed to manuscript "heeng," as well as in line 753, which substitutes "so" for Furnivall's "soo," and line 577's Mitchell/Doyle restoration of Hoccleve's "treccherous" for the 1892 edition's "treecherous." Final among these relatively incidental spelling corrections are in line 703, where the corrected edition restores Hoccleve's spelling of the first-person personal pronoun to "y" from Furnivall's "I," and in line 760, where Furnivall prints "Dignitee" for

⁴⁰ As with the last chapter, I do not take punctuation into account for such comparison, except in one instance, line 813, which is more a matter of word-division than one strictly of punctuation.

manuscript "dignitee." Still, none of these variations would be considered anything more than accidentals if they were found in two manuscript witnesses. These changes are, after all, simply correction, restorations of the original author's orthography. Yet these types of changes could not truly be called *revision*.

On the other hand, the remaining six changes represent a distinct modification in meaning or in meter. Consider, for instance, line 480: by removing the final -e Furnivall adds to *fair*, Mitchell and Doyle regain Hoccleve's syllable count and a smoother meter than is found in the earlier EETS version.⁴¹ The same is true of line 848, where Furnivall's added, albeit bracketed, final -e on *sharp* is deleted.⁴² Similarly, where Furnivall prints "herd[e]" in line 732, Mitchell and Doyle remove the brackets around a letter clearly present in Hoccleve's holograph, but absent in the Royal manuscript. The 1970 revision also fixes the substantive spelling error in line

⁴¹ This final -e is found in the Royal Manuscript. But compare the way the lines appear in the Durham and the Royal manuscripts:

D: ffor profre of meede / ne for fair preyeere

R: ffor profre or meede / or for faire prayere

Although Furnivall's use of a final -e matches the Royal, he follows the Durham everywhere else in the line. When I speak of smoother meter, I mean for those who think, as did Furnivall, that Middle English verse was composed of intentionally placed stressed syllables.

⁴² The *p* on *sharp* has a macron in the Royal.

334: Furnivall prints the present tense *com* where Hoccleve--as throughout the tale's narration--uses the past tense, *cam*. Mitchell and Doyle likewise correct line 767 to use *aboute*, rather than the Furnivall use of *about[en]*.⁴³ Finally, in one instance, line 813, a punctuation change by Mitchell and Doyle can be considered an actual revision. There, the holograph reads,

Ther with al / was his brothir herted weel.

Furnivall hyphenates the first two "words" to render the line

Ther-with, al was his brothir herted weel.

Furnivall's line, which seems to ignore the placement of Hoccleve's *virgula suspensiva*, means something like *Then, his brother was entirely glad-hearted*. Mitchell and Doyle's revision, however, links the first three words into one:

Ther-with-al / was his brothir herted weel,

giving a meaning of roughly *Then his brother was glad-hearted*. In this instance, Mitchell and Doyle are making a fresh editorial decision to alter slightly the meaning of the line as it was understood by and printed by

⁴³ As pointed out in the last chapter, Furnivall's reading does not match any of the manuscript witnesses. What is important here is that while we might debate the pronunciation of final -e on line-internal words in Hoccleve's time, Furnivall's -en necessitates an added syllable.

Furnivall, a true act of revision. In addition, the hyphenation of the three words matches their handling by Furnivall in the other two occurrences in the poem, lines 343 and 621.

So for the most part, the Mitchell and Doyle revision is a confusing text. It is not broadly a revision, nor is it overall a corrected edition. Rather, it perpetuates all the ill effects of the original 1892 edition because ultimately it *is* the same edition--the same commentary and the same textual unreliability. We know Mitchell and Doyle consulted the holograph manuscript, so why did they not actually re-edit, unless they still stood by the Furnivall edition? That faithfulness to the original EETS volume speaks much about a general attitude toward minor poets in general and Hoccleve specifically: "Good enough--for Hoccleve."

Still, readers of this dissertation might be inclined to wonder how an unsound edition can possibly change the scholarship that follows. Let us consider again, then, an example from the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife," the piece that has been our point of comparison in previous chapters. As we saw in Chapter 4, Furnivall uses square brackets in his 1892 edition where he inserts material from the other manuscripts he consulted for this tale, the Royal and the Selden. Because of these undefined

bracketed insertions, two lines of the poem, in particular, have a rather interesting story to tell. For reasons we will see in a moment, however, we will look at the entire stanzas that contain those lines, Furnivall stanzas 35 and 37. These stanzas appear in Hoccleve's holograph Durham MS in this manner:

And whan he had his felawshipe atake
 He bleew and blustred / and made heuy cheere
 And a strong lesynȝ / he gan to hem make
 He seide allas / þ^t I neȝ on my beere
 So wo is me / for þ^t my lordes feere
 My lady is me reft / by force of men
 God yeue him soꝛwe // and aȝ swiche

[.]

O cursid feendly wrecche / why hast thou
 Deceyued & betrayed Innocence
 What wilt thou seye / & how wilt thou looke how
 Whan thou comest / to thy Lordes presence
 And art opposid by his excellence
 How þ^t it w^t his lady hath betid
 I am seur / þ^t the trouthe shal been hid

Essentially, from an editorial standpoint, the only remarkable feature in these two stanzas is that the last line of stanza 35 is two syllables shorter than the other decasyllabic lines and breaks with the rhyme scheme of the other stanzas in the poetic parts of the *Series* (*ababbcc*). Clearly, something is missing, and, as Chapter 4 mentioned, almost all the extant witnesses agree on "Amen" for the missing word where in the Durham it appears Hoccleve scraped away a possible error of dittography.

So Furnivall's path would seem clear: he needed only add the holograph's missing word. However, the same stanzas in the Furnivall EETS edition are printed like this:

(35)

And whan he had his felawshipe atake,
 He blew and blustred / and made heuy cheere;
 And a strong lesynȝ / he gan to hem make;
 He seide "allas / þat I nere on my beere,
 So wo is me / for þat my lordes feere,
 My lady, is me reft / by force of men."
 God yeue him sorwe // and aȝȝ swiche [Amen]!

[.]

(37)

¶ O cursid feendly wrecche / why hast thow
 Deceyued & betrayed Innocence?
 What wilt thow seye / & how wilt thow looke,
 how,
 Whan thow comest / to thy Lordes presence,
 And art opposid by his excellence,
 How þat it with his lady hath betid[de]?
 I am seur / þat the trouthe shal been [hidde].

For Stanza 35, the only differences between Furnivall's edition and Hoccleve's holograph--other than the addition of the missing *Amen*--is the expansion of a common scribal abbreviation ($p^t \rightarrow \text{þat}$ in lines 242 and 243), the interpretation of a flourished *r* as indicating a final *-e* (242), the omission of a macron (245), and the addition of some modern punctuation. The only emendation in that stanza we might argue with is the added syllable on "nere" in line 242.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Note that the "aȝȝ" in line 245 is not expanded to "alle," as were the two Mitchell remarked upon in his

Stanza 37, on the other hand, while possessing the same kinds of minor editorial modernizations, again has bracketed material. But in this stanza, the use of brackets is greatly different. In stanza 35, the brackets enclose a word that has been added where Hoccleve has none--a word necessary to both syllable count and to rhyme-scheme, a word well attested to in other extant copies, and a word it seems Hoccleve intended to be in the Durham. Conversely, stanza 37 uses brackets quite dissimilarly. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Furnivall was adding the bracketed *-ed* from the Royal manuscript onto Hoccleve's final word of line 258, *betid*. What precisely Furnivall's reason may have been is unclear--whether he was simply trying to show manuscript variation or whether he preferred the meter with the unstressed final *-e*. But we can conjecture that the intended identical use of brackets as at the end of the previous line somehow shifted to enclosing the entire Durham word with the additional Royal syllable because either Furnivall misplaced the bracket or he did not notice the typesetter's error on a galley-proof. Such an error should be of little import; in fact, one might expect readers to capably assume the mistake.

chapter on meter.

However, three quarters of a century later, Mary Ruth Pryor re-edited the *Series* from the Durham manuscript for her dissertation.⁴⁵ She collated against three other manuscripts, but as the notes to her edition suggest, she also had access to Furnivall's edition. If we look at the pertinent lines in her edition, we see that line 245 has *Amen* in handwritten brackets.⁴⁶ But line 259, interestingly enough, has the word *hid*, in Hoccleve's spelling, in typewritten brackets. In all probability, Pryor was consulting Furnivall when she made this error. At any rate, one might feel that the typewritten brackets mark the items as missing in a stronger way than the handwritten brackets. We can almost trace Pryor's steps in editing the text, and we can rather safely conjecture about the source of her mistakes. Furnivall's edition must have affected Pryor *at the very least* during her proofreading. And while she claims to have edited from the Durham with comparisons to other manuscripts, she unquestionably somehow collated against the EETS. Furnivall, Hoccleve's first major modern editor, produced

⁴⁵ This edition is not more fully discussed because, as a dissertation, the edition would not be widely available enough when compared to the ubiquitous EETS edition to displace Furnivall's as a standard.

⁴⁶ Note also that manuscript *swiche* in line 245 appears in Pryor's edition as *siche*.

an edition rife with errors. Seventy-six years later, another editor reproduces some of the same flaws.

However, this mistaken bracketing did not exclusively affect a later editor, but also had an impact upon a succeeding study. Bowers's 1989 article comparing the two holograph copies of *Lerne to Dye* is a fascinating analysis of the types of errors an author and professional scribe can make when copying his own work from his own fair-copy. However, to illustrate the fallibility of Hoccleve when copying his own work, Bowers says:

As originals, not postulated but real, the Hoccleve autographs serve as evidence that the author was perfectly capable of making his own scribal blunders as well as leaving his own loose ends. For instance, the Durham MS's *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* contains two stanzas (nos. 35 and 37) in which the poet simply neglected to complete the final lines.⁴⁷

Bowers is only half wrong and is making an honest mistake, a mistake that is a direct result of his reliance on the EETS edition's faithfulness to the Durham manuscript. But his error stems from the assumption that an edition is unaffected by the editor. Also, consider the language Bowers uses, perhaps unwittingly, to tell other readers that Hoccleve "neglected to complete the final lines" of "two stanzas." Hoccleve, in reality, left one word off one line. Furnivall, on the other hand, indicated two

⁴⁷ Bowers 448.

lines as incomplete. But subsequent readers of Bowers's article might get the impression that even more than one word of each final line is absent--might, in fact, assume that Hoccleve's error was more than a line in each stanza. And all this confusion can ultimately be traced back to Furnivall's EETS edition, which can still lead scholarship into error.

Later Editions

Thus, the opportunity for a new Hoccleve edition was wasted, and by default Furnivall's remained unchallenged because an ostensibly "new" edition was printed in 1970--even though the revised edition is not substantially different from that of the prior century. No more recent scholar has taken up the task of producing a full critical edition of Hoccleve's works. The early 1980s saw, nonetheless, the publication of two minor editions of selected poems. First, M. C. Seymour produced *Selections from Hoccleve*, and for his edition, when there are extant holographs, his text "necessarily followed these manuscripts, [with] the collated readings of other copies where they exist [. . .] recorded only in those very few instances where Hoccleve's text seems to include

mechanical copying errors."⁴⁸ For those items in the *Series* that have been lost in holograph, Seymour chose to follow not Stow's version which is included in the Durham, but rather the Selden, while for the *Regement*, he chose British Library MS Arundel 38. The selection of non-holograph Selden as the copy-text where no holograph exists is justified by Seymour because it is "a carefully made posthumous copy c. 1430," one which he collated "with four other manuscripts."⁴⁹ Seymour's objective "to introduce Hoccleve to a wider audience than it now enjoys"⁵⁰ is of most interest here, for that goal is a pointed attempt to get modern readers to confront the text away from the EETS and Furnivall's commentary. To make the edited text accessible to modern readers, however, Seymour did have to allow for certain editorial tampering: "With some hesitation, modern punctuation has been adopted as more suitable than scribal punctuation."⁵¹ But Seymour

⁴⁸ M. C. Seymour, *Selections* xxxv. See Bowers for a discussion of Hoccleve's copying errors in his own poetry.

⁴⁹ Seymour, *Selections* xxxv. The Selden itself is a good choice because of its reliability (see n. 48 in the previous chapter) and because it is the oldest and best manuscript on the *Series* branch that almost certainly descends from a lost, alternate Hoccleve holograph, one that possessed the kinds of variations seen in the two extant holographs of *Lerne to Dye*.

⁵⁰ Seymour, *Selections* xxxvi.

⁵¹ Seymour, *Selections* xxxvi.

does proceed to specify where readers can find the original punctuation, offering more textually-minded readers the opportunity to pursue what the modern-reader oriented edition cannot.

Further, Seymour's introduction is less disparaging than are those of Furnivall. The sorts of harshly critical statements that pepper the editorial front-matter in the EETS editions, including the previous decade's revised edition, are not to be found in Seymour's. Granted, Seymour does not offer an overly laudatory reevaluation, but consider--recalling Furnivall's accusatory remarks--the manner in which Seymour comments on Hoccleve's meter:

Most of Hoccleve's verse remains within the modest technical control of the line, and it was probably his real awareness of this limitation compared with Chaucer's sureness of foot, as much as any conventional modesty, that led him to confess his *meetrynge amis*. None the less, his metrical competence is an accomplishment. [. . .] Hoccleve's critical judgment is recognizably that of a serious, albeit minor, poet who has thought about his art."⁵²

Seymour's acknowledgment of some limited metrical ability evidenced in Hoccleve's verse surpasses Furnivall's, even though it includes a denial that the poet's self-criticism is a *topos*. Most notably, while it supports Hoccleve's status as a minor literary figure, it also implies the

⁵² Seymour, *Selections* xxi.

poet's inability to remedy the shortcomings he himself observed.⁵³

The other 1980s edition of selections is Bernard O'Donoghue's *Thomas Hoccleve: Selected Poems*. Although this slim book is by no means a *study*, O'Donoghue does touch briefly upon the problems in the EETS editions. While considering Hoccleve's meter, O'Donoghue points somewhat obliquely to the important and pervasive differences between the manuscript and the printed edition:

Here I shall give only a single example to suggest why Hoccleve seems not to be failed iambic pentameter. Furnivall amends line 31 of the *Regement* from

'For she knewe no lowere discension',

to

'For that she knewe no lowere discension', supplying a 'that' which is found in none of the manuscripts to make the metre, as Furnivall saw it, correct. But surely, to use a simplified version of Robinson's argument, if such a simple stratagem would make a wrong metrical line right, the poet himself or one of the early scribes (who adapted very freely) would have adopted it. It is better to revise our definition of correctness in the metre, which

⁵³ We might question Seymour's idea of minor poet, although he certainly may have altered his view of Hoccleve's ability in the decade since he had called Hoccleve's position "roughly akin to poet laureate." Perhaps Seymour's idea of poet laureate relies solely upon producing what he calls "'official' poems on state occasions" than it does upon a mark of contemporary evaluation. For this statement, see Seymour's review of Mitchell's book, 483.

can perhaps only be deducted from the text anyway.⁵⁴

By pointing readers to Furnivall's editorial alterations, O'Donoghue succeeds in introducing readers to the fallibility of the standard editions, although by choosing an example from the *Regement*, O'Donoghue does not show that the same changes were made to the texts taken from the holographs. Further, O'Donoghue is questioning here specifically only the reliability of the EETS *Regement* for metrical analysis, not the overall reliability of all the EETS texts.

But even more important is O'Donoghue's call for reevaluation of Hoccleve's work. Essentially, O'Donoghue bids readers to shun previous critical commentary and judgments in favor of a fresh reading:

There is, then, a powerful weight of traditional opinion against Hoccleve. And yet the curious thing is that, at least to the modern taste, he is far from dull. Readers who have approached him with circumspection, often by way of Lydgate, are almost invariably pleasantly surprised. This may well be attributable to a change in literary taste, because Hoccleve's tendency towards autobiographical reminiscence [. . .] is to the modern taste [. . .].⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Bernard O'Donoghue, Introduction, *Thomas Hoccleve: Selected Poems* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1982) 17. See also Jefferson 99-100, which shows that Hoccleve did, indeed, make use of the pleonastic *that*.

⁵⁵ O'Donoghue 9.

O'Donoghue then goes on not only to defend Hoccleve's claim to new appraisal, but also to gather some of the basic support for such a new assessment--predominantly Hoccleve's distinction from Chaucer, his originality. And the texts that O'Donoghue prints lean toward "the 'autobiographical' passages because they are the most interesting to us and the most typical of what is unusual in Hoccleve."⁵⁶ In all, O'Donoghue's edition is aimed at bringing a new generation to Hoccleve's poetry, and bringing them there with fewer of the old pre-damning expectations.

On the other hand, O'Donoghue's comments make little of the fact that most of Hoccleve's verse is extant in holograph. In fact, he seems guarded about accepting that both Huntington HM 111 and HM 744 and the Durham are all in the poet's own hand.⁵⁷ There is little mention of that fact--only incidentally in O'Donoghue's notes, such as a parenthetical remark about the Durham "which Schulz believes to be the author's own."⁵⁸ But although

⁵⁶ O'Donoghue 17.

⁵⁷ The Huntington HM 135 that O'Donoghue consulted for the *Regement* is not, of course, a holograph.

⁵⁸ O'Donoghue 100. Much the same phrase is used for HM 111, again parenthetically, on 101. For HM 744, on 102, O'Donoghue does not use parentheses and adds Furnivall's name to Schulz's as previous scholars who believed the Holographs are indeed in Hoccleve's hand.

O'Donoghue does not make much of the holographs as authorially dependable sources, we might guess that the holograph versions are of some importance to him, for his text is based on those manuscripts except for works that do not exist in holograph.⁵⁹ Curiously, the holographic status is never used as a defense of manuscript choice nor as a claim for accuracy, and the revolutionary nature of his edition is obscured.

While both of the 1980s editions are predominantly based on holograph, in no way can either edition be a new standard, for they are both only selected and fragmentary. The editions would fail, possibly, to change opinions. In the case of O'Donoghue's edition, the failure would be because the editorial endeavor for brevity bars most of the longer, more interesting, and stylistically more mature works--at least enough of them for readers to see the greater structure. For example, O'Donoghue says that the size of the book demanded omission of "the *Epistle of Cupid*, some of Hoccleve's most elegant and masterly writing."⁶⁰ The same constraint of size is the major shortcoming--as far as a canonical reevaluation is

⁵⁹ The *Complaint* and the excerpt from the *Regement* are based on, respectively, the Selden and HM 135. The *Dialogue* is based on the Selden, but is compared with the Durham from line 253, where the holograph begins.

⁶⁰ Introduction 17.

concerned--of Seymour's edition. As later editor Roger Ellis observes, "since both editions were aiming to introduce the whole of Hoccleve's works to readers, they were forced to include extracts from both the *Regement* and the *Series*, which gave no satisfactory idea of either work."⁶¹ And that brevity of both editions is the main reason neither could reverse the failing reputation of Hoccleve, if for no other reason than that the full EETS editions necessarily remained the standards. Next, we will look at the most recent work done over the last few years--trying to see if any real textual change is evident.

The New Millennium

Thus, despite some critical reevaluation and two minor editions in the quarter century after Mitchell's pioneering study, Furnivall's edition remained the standard. What was needed was a new edition with an associated name as readily recognizable as Furnivall's in his time and with the same strength of reputation. And so, when a new Hoccleve volume edited by Burrow, a widely respected medievalist, came along from the EETS in 1999, that publication promised to be a possible tool to

⁶¹ Ellis 7.

recovery.⁶² The edition, unfortunately, while important generally, may not serve to greatly alter the reliance of critics upon the older editions.

First of all, the contents are limited. Rather than a new edition of all the pieces in the original Furnivall *Minor Poems* or of even of the *Series* alone, Burrow's EETS o.s. 313 contains only the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, the two portions of the *Series* that are no longer extant in holograph. As Burrow puts it, the "edition confines itself to the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* because its prime concern is with restoration of the text," and "The need for such restoration arises, in those two pieces only, from the state of the Durham MS."⁶³ The Durham, remember, lacks the leaves containing the holographic versions of the entirety of the *Complaint* and the first 46 stanzas of the *Dialogue*, having instead a copy Stow made from an unknown source. Because this edition contains only a portion of the *Series*, it clearly cannot serve as the new version of that work, one that might become a new standard. In fact, Burrow did not intend to "replace" the

⁶² Note that while this edition was published in 1999, I count it here as a text in the new millennium: because the edition appears so late (November) in that year and because its real consequence could not be realized for at least a year, bring the textual impact to 2001. The same argument applies to the next edition discussed.

⁶³ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* ix.

standing supremacy of the earlier EETS edition. Rather, Burrow's text chiefly questions the accuracy of Stow's Tudor-era transcription, claiming that for this section

an original text can be restored with considerable confidence, from two sources: the other five scribal copies, one of which (Selden) is distinctly superior to Stow, together with the Hoccleve holograph corpus, which extends to some 7000 lines of verse.⁶⁴

The idea of using the holograph material to reconstruct a text with Hoccleve's orthography is not new. In fact, Seymour had suggested such an edition of the *Regement* in 1975.⁶⁵ But while such an edition is an exciting concept, it is experimental enough that one might question Burrow's assurance of "considerable confidence," and I would be wary of overconfidence that the "restored" text is "an original text." Instead, the Burrow edition is how the text *may* have looked, or even, we might say, *probably* looked. Actually, Burrow does note that--except for the ten places where Hoccleve miswrote in the extant holographic section of the *Dialogue*--"there can be no question of these [scribal versions] presenting any general challenge to the authority of [the] holograph."⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* ix.

⁶⁵ See M. C. Seymour, Introduction, *On the Properties of Things*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) xii, n. 1.

⁶⁶ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* xxviii.

In fact, Burrow goes into great detail in his introduction to point out that the scribal copies are not descended from the Durham, but from a variant original (VO). Burrow even notes that a "Full collation of the rest of the *Series* [. . .] would provide more evidence" about the interrelation of the manuscripts.⁶⁷ Possibly I am putting too fine a point on this, but by basing the text of the non-holograph section on readings from a descendant of another, lost fair-copy, Burrow is creating a text that never existed. We know Hoccleve revised as he copied, and those differences inform the postulation of a variant original. Combining two artistic visions, however close they may be, creates a text that Hoccleve did not intend at the moment of copying. The text may be his words, the spellings may reproduce his orthography, but can we legitimately call the overall product Hoccleve's?

More importantly, Burrow purposefully does not seek to replace the earlier EETS text. As we saw at the outset of this chapter, critics have recently begun to voice their recognition of the unreliability of Furnivall's original EETS editions. And yet, even with such current questioning of the dependability of Furnivall's work,

⁶⁷ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* xviii.

Burrow says in the introduction to his new EETS edition that

For the latter and greater part of the Series this careful holograph copy [the Durham] provides an authoritative text, challengeable only on the rare occasions where Hoccleve miswrites; and the text can be read in the revised Furnivall edition, where it is reproduced with sufficient accuracy.⁶⁸

The question, then, is what we might consider to be "sufficient accuracy." Burrow's comment could be read as either an acceptance of the text's reliability or a recognition of its flaws--that is, either a statement that the text is *good* or that it is *close enough*. If we suppose, as Burrow does, that Hoccleve's holograph is "an authoritative text," we might then argue that Furnivall's altered version is not. Certainly, from what we saw in the last chapter, we can contend that Furnivall's *Minor Poems* is not truly representative of what is found in Hoccleve's Durham. So while Burrow says that "The text of the holograph section must be the holograph,"⁶⁹ he is nonetheless willing for now to accept Furnivall's text as a rendering of the manuscript possessing "sufficient accuracy." Yet most readers will not have looked as closely at Hoccleve's holograph in comparison with the

⁶⁸ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* ix.

⁶⁹ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* xvii. Burrow goes on to point out "ten places where the scribal copies clearly correct a scribal error or omission made by Hoccleve himself in copying out the Durham text."

EETS, not as carefully as the last chapter's comparison of manuscript and printed text versions of the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife."

So while the longevity of the old EETS edition as the standard and the re-issuing of a so-called revision has lent credence to the reliability of Furnivall's work, the publication of a new edition that presents only a new version of the non-holographic matter further valorizes the Furnivall edition, assuring the literary world of the dependability of the text as transmitted through the EETS. Rather than questioning Furnivall's textual handling of the holograph, this edition doubts how much we can rely on Stow, and rather than attempting to get the holographic section of the *Series* fairly represented as Hoccleve wrote it, the new edition speculates on what the lines might have looked like if we had what Hoccleve wrote.

However, although the new EETS edition does not substantially challenge or alter the existing text of Hoccleve's corpus, it does, unlike the 1970 revision, offer a significant critical reevaluation in new introductory material. For example, while Furnivall contemptuously commented that "Hoccleve's metre is poor" because "So long as he can count ten syllables by his fingers, he is content," Burrow's section on meter in the holograph says that "there can be little doubt that the

prime metrical rule for Hoccleve, as for his French contemporaries, concerned the number of syllables, not the distribution of stresses."⁷⁰ In a strange way, these two statements are not completely at odds: if the newer understanding of Hoccleve's prosody is correct, then yes, Hoccleve was happy with counting out ten (or eleven) syllables, and yes, his meter is poor because he is not trying to be metrical. In fact, if we look at the metrical aim to be simply a decasyllabic line, then we find that

Hoccleve observed the syllable-count with quite remarkable consistency, not only in the Durham but also in the two Huntington holographs, the contents of which, though composed over a period of some twenty years, exhibit no change in the poet's metrical practice.⁷¹

Taking Mitchell's argument for the *diminutio* into account, such a regularity of metrical practice suggests that Hoccleve's "meetrynge amis" claim is indeed a *topoi*. But at any rate, the shift in metrical expectation imposed upon the reader initially approaching the text marks, in itself, a complete turn-around in the way the front material sets up a reader's expectation of the text. This new metrical commentary--as with other commentary--

⁷⁰ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* xxviii.

⁷¹ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* xxviii.

reverses the longstanding printed EETS introduction of the last century.

But Burrow's EETS volume is too limited in scope and too costly for use in graduate seminars. However, the 1999 new edition of the *Regement* is, in fact, part of the Consortium for the Teaching of the Middle Ages (TEAMS), a piece in their Middle English Texts Series, whose "goal" according to the back cover "is to make available to teachers and students texts which occupy an important place in the literary and cultural canon but which have not been readily available in student editions." Note that if we take this series claim at face value, the *Regement* suddenly has canonical status. Further, even if one downplays such a claim by putting the *Regement* into the specialist canon I spoke of in the introduction, the series' goal states that the texts chosen for printing "occupy an important place" in that canon. If we take the publication of the *Regement* as a part of this series as tantamount to a claim, TEAMS is then postulating that Hoccleve's work is an important part of the canon. Certainly, the *Regement* has been the most popular item in the Hoccleve corpus and has often been called Hoccleve's "best" work, but much of that kind of statement of quality often has had the qualifier--even if *sotto voce*--of "for Hoccleve." This new edition represents something of a

change in thinking. By claiming the *Regement* to be a part of the literary canon, and attaching the claim to a text intended for student use, TEAMS is quite possibly affecting the future status of that work specifically and Hoccleve generally. But we should not forget that classroom use does not necessarily denote newfound positive reception. As John Guillory observes, "The noncanonical is a newly constituted category of text [. . .] reception, permitting certain authors to be *taught* as noncanonical."⁷²

However, in line with the series' goal of making texts available for classroom use, the edition is a relatively inexpensive paperback, affordable for students. And as a result, the edition is, in the words of editor Blyth, "not offered as a critical edition," even though it is "based on a comprehensive study and full collation of all the extant manuscripts."⁷³ Thus, while students do not need critical editions for classroom use, the scholar wishing to examine the textual variations found in the *Regement* still cannot consult a critical edition, and the only option is to consult all the extant witnesses. Still, while the textual scholar preparing an edition,

⁷² John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 9.

⁷³ Blyth, *Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes* 15.

working on a stemma, or doing some other large-scale, full-text study must necessarily perform such consultation of all the manuscripts, the scholar wishing to consult the variations in a particular line or stanza has no access to that information--other than the prohibitive kind of manuscript review I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter. The TEAMS edition may derive from the careful analysis collation represents, but other than the resulting textual decisions Blyth makes for the printing of the *Regement*, readers do not otherwise benefit from that work.

The edition has severe limitations as a textual edition: the text is not representative of what we might find, for instance, in an edition of the *Series*, which survives (mainly) in holograph whereas the *Regement* has no surviving authorially penned witness. Nor does this edition rely fully on an extant copy. Rather, Blyth's edition "takes the unexpected step of turning to another manuscript source"⁷⁴: this edition, like Burrow's EETS edition, looks at the usual spellings found in Hoccleve's own holograph orthography and constructs the spellings in the *Regement* to mimic them.⁷⁵ Albeit fascinating, the

⁷⁴ Blyth, *Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes* 17.

⁷⁵ For the genesis and basis of idea of recovering a Hoccleve-like version of the *Regement* for this edition, see D. C. Greetham, "Normalization of Accidentals in Middle

resulting text is not, strictly speaking, a medieval witness of the *Regement*; it is, again like Burrow's edition, a modern construction of what Hoccleve possibly wrote--a "maybe text." So while Blyth's edition is an important addition to the "recovery" of Hoccleve as an English literary figure, it still does not fulfill all the necessary niches in making the poet's work studiable in all its facets. What it principally represents is a step forward in allowing access to the matter of the poem for the next generation of critics--if, indeed, the present generation sees fit to use the text in the classroom, that is.⁷⁶

As far as the introductory commentary about Hoccleve is concerned, limiting ourselves again with the discussion of meter is illuminating. While Burrow spoke of the regularity of Hoccleve's decasyllabic line, with no intended pattern of stress, Blyth concerns himself most with word order. He agrees that in holographic lines there is a tendency toward the "decasyllabic, not counting an unstressed eleventh syllable (the final -e) at the end

English Texts: The Paradox of Thomas Hoccleve," *Studies in Bibliography* 38 (1985): 121-50, and "Challenges of Theory and Practice in the Editing of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*."

⁷⁶ In this respect, the availability for classroom use is the only consideration, for the matter of the poem is already in the EETS edition.

of [a] line, a feature familiar to the reader of Chaucer's poetry."⁷⁷ Unlike Burrow, however, Blyth believe that Hoccleve's verse is characterized by a pattern of stress--even of varying force of stress. But at several points in his discussion, Blyth further remarks on the awkwardness of the "unnatural word order" that Hoccleve uses at times. Blyth observes that

these irregularities come not in passages of narrative or dialogue but in passages of moral discourse where it is difficult for Hoccleve's characteristic colloquial speaking voice to sound. One suspects in such passages Hoccleve is struggling to transfer or translate a prose passage into verse [. . .].⁷⁸

In many ways, Blyth's comment is reminiscent of what Hoccleve says of his prose moralization for the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife":

And to this moralyzyng I me spedde,
In prose wrytyng it / hoomly and pleyn (24-25).

Hoccleve is speaking of quickly finishing his work, without the expenditure of time that carefully converting to verse will take. Blyth's statement, however, calls into question Hoccleve's abilities as a metricist and translator. So while the edition as a whole does indeed make the *Regement* available for student use, the text itself is experimental in a way not necessarily called for

⁷⁷ Blyth, *Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes* 25.

⁷⁸ Blyth, *Thomas Hoccleve: The Regiment of Princes* 25-26.

in a classroom context, and the introductory material is arguably harsh in the way it discusses Hoccleve's abilities.

Even more important is the 2001 edition of "*My Complaunte*" and *Other Poems*, edited by Ellis, because it is, unlike the single-title TEAMS edition, a collection of poems divided into two main sections, minor verse and the *Series*. In a sense, we might think of the two editions as equivalent in content to Furnivall's two EETS volumes. The Ellis collection, however, is not so pointedly aimed at student use. Nonetheless, the book is available in both a hardback and a less expensive paperback, qualifying it as a possible course text. Ellis, in fact, amended his original plan for an edition of the *Series* alone, "add[ing] a number of minor poems, in response to requests for a volume which could better introduce the poetry of Hoccleve to students."⁷⁹ More distinctly unlike the *Regement*, the works in Ellis's edition exist in holograph, except the first parts of the *Series*.⁸⁰ The other two recent editions we have already considered were both trying to reconstruct Hoccleve's text as it theoretically would have been spelled had holographic copies survived.

⁷⁹ Ellis 1.

⁸⁰ Ellis also follows the Selden where the Durham is missing parts of the *Series*. See Ellis 49, number 1.

Ellis, on the other hand, has holographic copies to transcribe rather than to reconstruct.

So let us look closely at this new edition. In the introductory matter of his edition, Ellis provides a page of editorial principles.⁸¹ For our purposes, the second of the three principles is of the most interest:

The texts have been edited with modern capitalization, but the original spelling. Punctuation is also modern, and occasionally as a result simplifies ambiguities of phrasing in the original. Except for Roman numerals, abbreviations are expanded silently, in accordance with Hoccleve's practice with uncontracted forms, so far as this can be determined. Paragraphing of Hoccleve's prose is also modern.

This principle of modernization is fairly standard editorial practice today. One might question Ellis's and other's decision to alter manuscript punctuation to reflect modern conventions--for just the reason Ellis so carefully sidesteps, that there are "ambiguities" of meaning the editor will decide for the reader. As we saw earlier, punctuation locks the possibility of alternate meanings into the editor's chosen reading. At any rate, if an editor is modernizing punctuation, the capitalization of the first words of the sentences must have initial capitals. On the other hand, those initial capitals on Modern English common nouns that Ellis chooses

⁸¹ Ellis 49.

to change to lower-case may be questionable. A glance at modern printed editions of the poetry by, for example, William Wordsworth or Emily Dickinson shows a retention of idiosyncratic capitalization--not to mention punctuation--probably based on the editors' belief that the poet's capitalization reflects some possible authorial nuance of meaning. Might not the same be true of a medieval poet? Like Ellis, however, most editors choose to use modern rules of capitalization for their editions, assuming the sole divergence is an altered medieval use of capitals. But for a work that survives in holograph, seeing the exact orthography of the poet might prove enlightening. Still, scholars with a specific interest in such capitalization can consult the original holographs, even though doing so, as we have seen, is not always convenient.

At any rate, we have in Ellis's edition a printed text derived from holograph, and because the edition includes the *Series*, we can again use the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife" as a point of comparison. Of course, any editorial undertaking is apt to have errors, and Ellis's is no exception. Comparing the "Tale of Jereslaus's Wife" in the holographic Durham against Ellis's printed text, I find nine actual transcription

mistakes in the Ellis version.⁸² But most of the errors are fairly minor. For example, in line 203 Ellis prints *longe* for manuscript *lenge*--as is found in both the original and the revised EETS editions.⁸³ In fact, almost half of these mistakes involve the substitution of only one letter for another in a word: the other three are manuscript *seyn* printed as *sayn* (490), manuscript *blisse* printed as *blysse* (532), and manuscript *thus* printed as *thvs* (567).⁸⁴ Most of the other mistakes are similarly minor: a metathesis in manuscript *stynkyng* giving *styknyng* (247), manuscript *shee* printed as *she* (449), manuscript *cursid* printed as *curside* (788), and manuscript *a11* printed as *al* (815). The only truly substantive mistake is that found in line 618, where the manuscript reads

Vp gooth the sail / to the top of the mast
while Ellis changes the position of the sail with his

Vp gooth the sail at the top of the mast.

⁸² The 952 lines contain over seven thousand words. And while I refer to these errors as transcription faults, the mistakes might be typesetting inaccuracies that were not detected during the review of galley proofs.

⁸³ See Chapter 4, n. 50, of this dissertation.

⁸⁴ While the EETS versions--both the original and the revision--print *lond* in line 26, Ellis uses the *land* spelling of line 18. See Chapter 4, n. 55, of this dissertation.

These mistakes do not come close to the types of textual problems we saw in the Furnivall edition.

However, somewhat troubling is Ellis's handling of flourishes. Just as Furnivall was eclectic in dealing with some of the scribal flourishes, Ellis seems to pick-and-choose how he will deal with those marks. For instance, the flourished final *-r* is normally printed by Ellis as a simple final *-r* with no flourish or additions. But of the 159 occurrences of that flourished letter, Ellis chooses for his edition to print five with an added *-e*.⁸⁵ Two of these additions (97 and 773)--if taken to be syllabic--do create decasyllabic lines. The addition at line 242 seems to have no such metrical purpose, for the line is already eleven syllables and the next word's initial vowel would silence--or at least elide with--the added final *-e*. Perhaps the addition is there simply so that modern readers do not become confused: the addition is on a contracted negation of the subjunctive *were* into manuscript *ner*, although we might find it curious that the same added final *-e* appears on that word in Furnivall's EETS version of the line. The last line where an expansion occurs (882) has two occurrences, and in this case both follow a consonant cluster rather than the usual

⁸⁵ These expansions are in lines 97, 242, 773, and two in 882.

vowel. Similarly, Ellis's treatment of crossed doubled *l* is irregular. Of the twenty-seven occurrences, sixteen add a final *-e*, for some reason never explained and not marked.⁸⁶ Twelve of those sixteen are possibly of no consequence, as they are line-final.⁸⁷ If, then, we ignore those end-line added final *-es*, we have four internal instances in which the *-e* is added and ten where an *-e* is not added.⁸⁸ But again, as with the treatment of flourished final *-rs*, nowhere in the notes or editorial principles does Ellis explain the handling of these letters, but rather silently changes them for some unstated reason. And finally, the macron over letters that in medieval orthography indicated some abbreviation or suspension is likewise not handled with regularity. Most notably, we see such unpredictable treatment lines

⁸⁶ The lines where the added final *-es* appear are 190, 192, 266, 300, 301, 320, 569, 571, 572, 734, 810, 821, 823, 824, 902, and 903. See Chapter 4, n. 57, of this dissertation for a list of all holograph occurrences. Note also from the previous chapter that the places where Furnivall adds a final *-e* to crossed doubled *l*--lines 74, 320, and 844--do not correspond to any of the places where Ellis adds the a final *-e*. Also note that the two lines Mitchell speaks of in his chapter on meter--the two he feels would run metrically better without a syllabic final *-e* on *all*---have the final *-e* in Ellis's edition.

⁸⁷ These instances are lines 190, 192, 300, 301, 569, 571, 572, 821, 823, 824, 902, and 903.

⁸⁸ The numerical discrepancy here exists because, remember, Ellis's line 815 shortens the word to *al*.

825 and 826. There, each line ends with the same construction--an *-ion* in which the *n* has an upward curving tail and a macron--but the supposed rhyme-words are printed in the Ellis edition, respectively, as *disposicioun* and *impression*.⁸⁹ So the new edition is not without fault. But by comparison with the EETS edition, the Ellis offering is much closer to the holograph. And just as importantly, Ellis's introductory material is decidedly more fair-minded.

If nothing else, the three latest editions mark an attempt at a reclamation of reputation for the medieval poet. And that attempt--whether through reconstruction of orthography or through presentation of a re-edited holograph--is aimed at repairing the textual status stemming from the century-old Furnivall EETS editions.

⁸⁹ The final *-ns* possessing identical tail/macron in lines 601, 799, and 801 are, like that in line 826, printed as a standard *-n*. The tailless but macron topped final *-ns* in lines 785 and 819 also print a simple *-n*. The tailless but macron topped final *-ns* in lines 745, 833, 834, and 836, however, are like line 825 in that they add a *u* before the *n*. While *n* and *u* can sometimes be similar looking orthographically in Hoccleve's hand, line 836's is most assuredly an *n*, for while it does not have the upward curling tail, it does have a descending one. See also Chapter 4, n. 62 of this dissertation. The macrons over *os* in the manuscript are also printed with and added *m*, although Ellis does not interpret the faint marks (see Chapter 4, n. 61, of this dissertation) in lines 420 and 722 as macrons.

Yet to come is the soon to be published facsimile edition of Hoccleve's holographs, itself an EETS volume. As I said earlier in this chapter, currently the only access to these important documents is travel to their repositories or purchase of microfilms. And microfilms have their own drawbacks. Those who are required--as I am--to use microfilms to analyze the holographs' punctuation, should note the words of James G. Southworth:

It is useless to attempt to develop or substantiate a theory of prosody on anything but the manuscripts themselves. Although the Xerox copies made from microfilms of the original manuscripts, and the microfilms themselves are useful and often necessary, they are by no means infallible. Many of the notations so valuable for substantiation of a theory do not reproduce.⁹⁰

If the forthcoming facsimile is clear and accurate enough, consultation of the holographs will become possibly more precise and certainly more easily accomplished. Using that tool will also allow a wider range of readers to compare the EETS *Minor Poems* against the manuscripts on which it is based. Thus, further studies will be facilitated, and the textual situation of the currently standard printed editions will become moot for certain types of scholarship. Unfortunately, a facsimile will have no effect on classroom use, and the recent paperback

⁹⁰ Southworth xi.

editions must serve as the influential entry-point for students.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

According to Ethan Knapp, "the study of the poet and Privy Seal clerk, Thomas Hoccleve, is now undergoing a minor renaissance"¹ And this "minor renaissance" for a "minor" poet is characterized by the recent appearance in greater numbers of new editions and new studies, but so far we have not fully seen the effects of recent editions on new studies. To witness that, we will have to wait to see if those newer editions can be widely available and used enough to displace the longstanding prominence of the EETS editions. Such displacement of the old and imperfect EETS editions is needed because, as Seymour has observed, Furnivall's editions are part of "the basis for modern understanding" of Hoccleve's corpus. But even if Burrow is correct that Hoccleve's "reputation as a poet has profited from the current reassessment of fifteenth-century literature"²--a recent move away from seeing the period between Chaucer and the Renaissance as a literary gap--that new reputation is still being based upon the outdated texts. To be fair, Furnivall never intended his

¹ Knapp 529.

² Seymour, *Selections* xxxiii.

editions to become anything like a standard, for at the end to his forewords for the *Regement*, having gotten Hoccleve "cleart" before his death as he had hoped, Furnivall says of his EETS editions, "Let them serve till the old poet's next editor treats him thoroughly."³ But as yet, no one has undertaken that task, at least not in the comprehensive and combined manner Furnivall did--and not in a critical edition. Thus, the EETS volumes--as imperfect and unthorough as they are--remain our access to the Hoccleve corpus.

Perhaps part of the problem was Furnivall's success at "what E. Talbot Donaldson has referred to as the 'editorial death-wish,' the desire to pretend that one's handiwork as editor is invisible."⁴ And the pretense plays well when the reading population is so willing to oblige the editor by ignoring that the text is *prepared*--an accommodation not just in the case of Furnivall, but with any editor. Further, when the edited text for a medieval work comes from a holograph manuscript, the reader feels confident that the transmitted text must be exactly the text the author intended to be his final product. But each act of reading is an act of interpretation, even an editor's reading of an autograph

³ *Regement* xx.

⁴ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 296.

manuscript. And that act of interpretation on the part of the editor is crucial, because the editor, as Greetham tells us, is in an "interposition, [. . .] standing between author and reader, [. . .] interpreting one to the other."⁵ From what we have seen of Furnivall's approach to literary criticism and editorial practice and his reaction to Hoccleve's persona and Hoccleve's works, Furnivall could not have been the kind of textual critic Greetham here describes:

Being a critic means being sensitive to another person's quirks and peculiarities; it means that a critic must by an almost phenomenological leap, "become" that other person while preparing the text for publication. And this is true whether the other person is the author or one of the text's transmitters, scribe, compositor, printer, proof-reader, or publisher's editor. It means using a critical attitude to all evidence that a text brings with it, not taking anything merely on faith and not believing that anybody is completely free from error.⁶

While this description of the textual critic may initially seem like good advice that Furnivall needed to hear, we might ourselves also take it as an admonishment that none of "the text's transmitters," even the modern textual critic and the modern printed edition, "is completely free from error." Perhaps the misplaced trust of readers

⁵ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 295.

⁶ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 296.

explains why a century passed before any great amount of questioning of the EETS editions occurred.

Furnivall's editorial impact has affected much of the following scholarship on Middle English texts, possibly in no quarter as great as in Hoccleve studies. Greetham has noted that while Furnivall might have had a "cavalier" approach to his textual scholarship, other nineteenth-century editors did very careful work. Greetham lists, as one would expect, Macaulay, Bradshaw, Madden, and Skeat, to "demonstrate the sense of discrimination and adjudication which characterized much editorial work in the century."⁷ But Greetham also observes that "much of this work has (inevitably) been superseded." Similarly, Baker has said of Furnivall's work with Chaucer texts that "Furnivall performed Herculean labors which cleared the way for better editors."⁸ Taken in relation to Hoccleve, this point shows the major stumbling-block for Hoccleve studies: Furnivall's often flawed editorial work has not, unlike the careful work of some of his contemporaries, been replaced by newer, better editions, the kind Furnivall himself anticipated. Furnivall's editions remain the standard, no one yet having produced a comparably full edition of Hoccleve's works.

⁷ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship* 331.

⁸ Baker 165.

From what we have seen, it is undeniable that the edition Furnivall produced has many and various flaws. In his defense, however, we should remember that much of the problems we have with this edition should at some point rest upon our own shoulders. We have taken it as a full scholarly edition, of the type we today might like produced. This study forces us to question the validity of Furnivall's EETS Hoccleve editions. But that enquiry must extend to all of Furnivall's editions. More, it also must extend to all EETS volumes, for as Matthews observes, "the dominating figure of Furnivall is never far away in any EETS edition."⁹ For Hoccleve, at least, Furnivall's treatment led to further ill-repute for the Middle English poet, rather than an understanding of his medieval high-regard.

⁹ Matthews 151.

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