

CHAPTER III

THE ORDER OF THE TALES

This chapter focuses on the problem of tale-order in the witnesses of the *Canterbury Tales* and pays special attention to the differences in the order of the tales in Cx1 and Cx2. A brief history of the problem of tale-order is offered first, since it is likely that that was what prompted Caxton to change the order of Cx1 was that ω presented a different tale-order. Although the tale-order in Cx2 is unique and probably conflated, this new order should partly reflect the order of the lost manuscript, and might offer new information about it.

The three main points which have interested scholars concerning the problem of the order of the *Canterbury Tales* are: the lack of geographical realism; the lack of temporal consistency; and the uncertainty regarding Chaucer's intention.¹ These three aspects are closely interrelated: Chaucer left the work unfinished thereby giving rise to inconsistencies in the text as a whole, and obscuring his intentions. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the Man of Law offers a tale in prose or that the Shipman tells a tale which scholars assume was first assigned to a woman, or that the Second Nun refers to herself as if she were a man (Hammond 1905-6). These elements, in

¹ Although it is difficult to know what exactly is their objective when critics refer to Chaucer's intentions, scholars seeking to discover them appear more or less consistently to be referring to his final intention, i.e. they attempt to reach the state of the text which they think Chaucer was moving towards. Examples of this can be found later in this chapter.

conjunction with others, raised difficulties for editors who have attempted to find solutions to what might seem insolvable problems.²

1. TEMPORAL CONSISTENCY

Lack of temporal consistency is one of the most evident aspects of the incompleteness of Chaucer's work. During the nineteenth century, scholars frequently started editing the *Canterbury Tales* by asking themselves how long it would have taken to go to Canterbury in the Middle Ages.³ For example, in the appendix to *A Temporary Preface to the Six-Text Edition*, Furnivall printed a series of medieval documents which describe journeys to Canterbury, and he also describes a journey of more than forty miles that was completed in a single day in 1331 (1868, 39). Furnivall's research showed interesting results: during the Middle Ages a trip to Canterbury could have lasted between one and four days, depending on the speed of the means of transport, the number of stops, and if one was travelling alone or in a group.⁴ This has been considered a very important factor in regard to the "realism" in the *Canterbury Tales*. The 'Six-text edition' presented the tales in the following order:

GP KT MI RE CO ML SH PR TT TM MO NP PH PD WB FR SU CL ME SQ FK

² It seems a remarkable fact that these "inconsistencies" did not seem to trouble the scribes or their supervisors in the same degree as they irritate nineteenth and twentieth century scholars. Although, this did not prevent scribes and their supervisors from changing the position of the tales to make them agree with the links, and modifying the links to adapt them for use with different tales, their attitude towards the text appears to have been less inclined to the introduction of major changes than that of nineteenth and twentieth century editors.

³ The documents in question include a journey made by John of France starting the 30th of June and reaching Canterbury on the 4th of July; also a diary showing Queen Isabella's expenses of her pilgrimage from London to Canterbury and back to Ospringe, which lasted from June 6th 1358, to June 12th (she arrived in Canterbury on the 10th). A journey such as that would require a change of horses halfway (Rochester), a possibility which Furnivall dismisses because he thinks it unlikely that 30 fresh horses could have been hired since this would have implied the existence of an enormous business in one place (See Furnivall 1868, 42-3).

NU CY MA PA RT. The movement of the so-called fragment VII (SH PR TT TM MO NP) to immediately after ML is what is known as the 'Bradshaw shift.' The shift is named after Henry Bradshaw who suggested in a letter to Furnivall that SH should follow ML.⁵ Although this order, with ML followed by fragment VII, cannot be found in any manuscript, Furnivall adopted it for his edition. He went further and also changed the place of PH and PD and put these tales immediately after fragment VII. The reasoning behind this change was the Pardoner's allusion to his intention to eat a cake and this in combination with his research on the duration of the journey, made Furnivall think that this was the right position for PH and PD. Although the Bradshaw shift is still discussed, the change in position of PH and PD was not accepted by later Chaucer editors (Baker 1984, 161).⁶

Robert Kase called into question the validity of Furnivall's arrangement of the tales by pointing out that it relied partly on his speculations about the duration of the journey. Kase synthesises the critical positions on this issue as follows:

On this point [the duration of the journey] scholars have failed to agree. Professor Koch argued for a pilgrimage of three days. Henry Morley spoke of the journey as of one day. Professor Skeat seemed to admit the one-day theory in his notes to Group B,... Both Tyrwhitt and ten Brink suggested that some of the tales were intended for a return journey. So long as the duration of the pilgrimage itself continues to be an unsettled matter, the determination of the position of any group on the basis of a

⁴ For example, a young man travelling alone on a fast horse --perhaps changing it for a fresh one on the way-- would be much quicker than a large group mounted on slower animals.

⁵ This suggestion is based on L8 --the Man of Law's Endlink-- which names the pilgrim who would tell the next tale. There are several variants in the witnesses at this point and many of them have either the reading Squier or Summoner. Only one manuscript --Se-- has the reading Shipman, which might suggest that SH should follow ML. See the discussion of Eleanor Hammond's hypothesis below.

decidedly vague allusion to time must be even more a matter of speculation. (1932, 11-2)

Conjectures derived from speculation concerning the duration of the journey, as pointed out by Kase, are no more than guesses which should not influence the manner in which the text should be presented.⁷ One example of Furnivall's speculation is what Kase calls the "decidedly vague allusion" --which he referred to in the preceding paragraph-- to the Pardoner's mention of his willingness to eat and drink before starting his tale. Furnivall interpreted this as a sign that it was early morning, before breakfast. Such an ambiguous statement, however, might indicate anything from afternoon tea to the Pardoner's gluttony and his wanting to eat at any time. It seems, indeed, a weak reference on which to base a temporal scheme.

2. GEOGRAPHICAL REALISM

The second factor which has been widely discussed by critics and editors is the lack of realism in the geographical references. The concrete references are the mention of Rochester, Sittingbourne and Boughton-under-Blee,⁸ which are geographically in that order on the way from London to Canterbury, but are not found in that order in the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*. Figure 1 shows a map of the route from London to Canterbury. It is curious that scholars have been so worried about the references made in the text and not about those which have been left out

⁶ A discussion of this can be found later in this chapter.

⁷ By the same token, we would not take seriously anyone who proposed to add the tales that are obviously missing. What we face, in cases like this, is a high degree of speculation which only leads to misrepresentation of the text. An example is J. F. Harvey Darton's children's version, in which not only do we have a complete version of the *Tales* until they reach Canterbury, but also tales told on the way back: John Lydgate's Tale, "The Destruction of Thebes", and the Merchant's Second Tale, "Beryn" (1904). A curious detail is that the introduction to Darton's book was written by Furnivall.

since as shown in figure 1, all the references are to places situated in the second half of the journey.

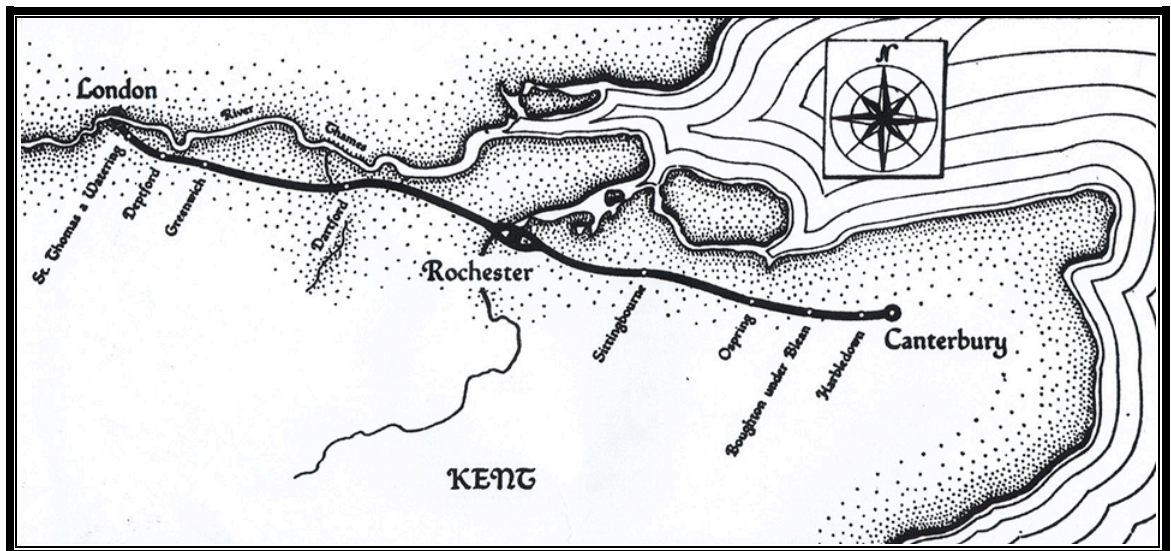


Figure 1⁹

Furnivall's research on the length of the journey also led him to attempt an explanation of the number of stops the pilgrims had to make and where these might have been.¹⁰

Evidently, Furnivall's proposals were not accepted. Skeat's edition of 1894 follows Furnivall's order, but by 1907 Skeat had changed his mind about it and his later editions have a different arrangement. He presents the development of the order of the tales as follows:

⁸ There are also references to Deptford and Greenwich in RE, but these have not been questioned since they comply with the realism sought by the critics, are mentioned early in the text, and correspond to the first part of the journey.

⁹ This illustration has been taken from Baugh (1963).

¹⁰ In pages 42-3, Furnivall printed a graphic which shows the distances, times and places in which he thinks the pilgrims stopped (1868). See footnote 3 in this chapter.

I shall proceed to show that the chronological order of the types of the seven chief MSS., with reference, that is to say, to their contents and arrangement, but without regard to the actual dates when these individual MSS. were written, is as follows: -- Hengwrt, an archetype; Petworth, showing the first scheme of arrangement; Corpus and Landsowne, the second, Harleian, the third; Ellesmere and Cambridge, the fourth and last. In the first three schemes, we find Chaucer himself, at work, making various experiments. In the last scheme, we find the work of a careful editor. It follows that the authoritative type, the only one which arranges the Tales as Chaucer at last left them, is the Harleian. It is anything but final, and even some obvious mistakes remain. But we have *no authority* for proceeding further. (1907, 9-10)

Skeat leaves aside the problem of geographical realism to adopt codicological studies as a basis for the understanding of the development of the different tale-orders. However, because he suggested that Ha4 was the manuscript with the most developed tale-order, at a moment in which this manuscript had started to fall into disrepute, Skeat's ideas about the matter were not successful among scholars. Instead, the geographical references still remained the centre in of tale-order discussions and were used as an argument against the Bradshaw shift. An example of this is found in Germaine Dempster's 1949 article, where she argues as follows:

The [geographical] references which concern us are three: 1) Rochester (B² 3116), situated about thirty miles from London, i.e., midway between London and Canterbury, and in sight when the Host calls upon the Monk; 2) Sittingbourne (D 847), twelve miles East of Rochester, ahead but

apparently not far when the Wife of Bath ends her prolog [*sic*]; 3) Boughton-under-Blee (G 556), six miles from Canterbury, where the pilgrims are overtaken by the Canon and his Yeomen. If B² is placed immediately before H-I, four-fifths of what we have of the *CT* precede the mention of Rochester; worse, neither Block D with its Sittingbourne nor G with its Boughton-under-Blee can be placed after B². No internal evidence of any kind opposes the geographically correct order Rochester-Sittingbourne-Boughton. Why then should this awkward B²-H sequence be present in Hg? And why in \sqrt{c} ? (1949, 1131)

Dempster's concern resides in the fact that the allusion to Rochester, halfway from London to Canterbury in the Monk's prologue (L29), if placed before NP CY and MA in Hg,¹¹ would leave only four tales to be told in the second half of the route, an imbalance she is reluctant to accept as Chaucer's. As we cannot know the number of tales that would have been part of the final work, and we cannot speculate how many should have been told before the middle of the journey, Dempster's opinion relies on the fact that she assumes that the tales that have reached us equal the total number of tales that were meant to be told before arriving at Canterbury. It is also possible that the reference was put there temporarily and that it would have been revised before the publication of the work.

¹¹ The most common arrangement is that MO is followed by NP, MA and PA. In a group manuscripts the order tends to be MO, NP, NU, CY, MA and PA. See table 2 in the printed appendix for a comparison.

3. THE 'BRADSHAW SHIFT'

Scholars have wanted the geographical references to appear in the order presented by Dempster; however, the actual order of the tales found in the different manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* does not support this hypothesis. The manuscripts present orders that differ from the ideal of such critics as Furnivall, Bradshaw and Dempster. In the first place, MO appears only before WBP and WBT in five manuscripts --if we follow Manly and Rickert's table, now the modified table 1. Two of these manuscripts belong to the **b** group (Mc and Ra1), and the other three to the **d** group (Mm, G1 and Ph3). If we follow the E1 order and move SH, PR, TT, TM, MO, NP to follow ML, we would be following the suggestion that Bradshaw made to Furnivall. The implications of the 'Bradshaw shift' are many, and apparently scholars have thought that the shift solves the question of the Man of Law's Endlink (L8), which links the ML to SQ and SH tales in different manuscripts, but presents three variant readings --Squire, Summoner and Shipman. Hammond suggested that the archetype of the tradition had the name in L8 either purposely erased or accidentally deleted and that the only trace of the word left was the initial 'S'.¹² Hammond continues her argument by suggesting that the scribes felt compelled to choose between the three possible candidates whose names would have started with an 'S' and could have been metrically acceptable: squyer, sompnour, and shipman¹³. This, if true, would explain the differences that can be found in the witnesses, since some of them have the variant 'squier' while others read 'sompnour'. However,

¹² "The question suggests itself whether the Man of Law's end-link could have been deleted by Chaucer in a working copy, the *S* alone remaining legible, so that the word was read in various ways by later scribes." (Hammond 1905-6,159-78).

¹³ The link is never used to introduce SU, even if 35 manuscripts have this reading, it links the ML with the SQ. The only exception happens with the reading "shipman," in Se, which is used indeed to link

because there are no witnesses in which SU follows L8, we have to treat Hammond's theory with care. Furnivall (1868, 1868-77) and Pratt (1951) have both made a case for the shift of fragment VII (SH PR TT TM MO NP), but this change of position is often rejected by modern editors, since they think that there is a case to be made for the Wife of Bath being the next speaker. Dempster's argument is again based on the fact that she believes that the number of tales should be more or less equally divided between the two halves of the journey --marked by the allusion to Rochester.

However, there are other implications in the Bradshaw shift, one of them is related to the question of authorial intention: that Chaucer had written all the tales he intended, and we could therefore decide the percentage to be told before the middle of the journey. Helen Cooper, in her article on the order of the tales in *El*, describes the Bradshaw shift as follows:

...it assumes that the detail of Chaucer's text is in final form despite the work's being unfinished --that the literal geographical journey so dominated the structure of the work that minutiae relating to it could never be changed. (1995, 255)

Cooper's observation against the shift is reasonable: if the work was unfinished, any part of it was susceptible to be changed. Talbot Donaldson (1970) has also rejected the Bradshaw shift. For him, the shift, no matter how geographically accurate it might be, does not reflect Chaucer's authorial intention. Donaldson does not correlate geographical realism with authorial intention.

with SH . In this sense, Hammond's argument is misleading because it suggests not only a variant in the reading of the link, but also a change in the tale that follows.

4. AUTHORIAL INTENTION

The Bradshaw shift proposes a tale order based on what Chaucer might have wanted. However, scholars such as Donaldson, who reject the shift, do so in favour of authorial intention. Donaldson's reasons are as follows:

My own conjecture concerning the Man of Law's endlink is the very old one, that it was cancelled by Chaucer, or at least laid aside until he could find a fitting place for it --which he never did. And I imagine he laid it aside as much because it no longer related to the Man of Law's Tale as because of his uncertainty as to whom he would nominate as the next tale-teller... In a less austere edition, I should do what I already have done: adopt Jones' conjecture and read *Wif of Bathe* as probably the character whom Chaucer once had in mind as the speaker of the next tale. But it seems to me, on the basis of the MS evidence, that all treatment of the Man of Law's endlink must be conjectural, and that its status is too uncertain to affect the matter of order. (1970, 202-3)

The above quotation shows that, while Dempster defends the movement of B2 based on her belief about what Chaucer wanted, Donaldson rejects it on the same grounds. He admits uncertainty as to which one of the pilgrims the next speaker could be, but also already has an answer which is based on the authority of E1 and the manuscripts of the **a** group. A detailed comparison of the arguments put forward by Donaldson and Dempster shows that their ideas are clearly opposed, even though based on the same premise. The reference to Sittingbourne --in D, fragment III--, has to come after the one to Rochester --B2, fragment VII--, therefore it specifically contradicts Donaldson's proposal of placing WBT immediately after ML. Both decisions are

explicitly based on Chaucer's authorial intention. Supporters of the 'Bradshaw shift' use the evidence in the Selden manuscript --a very erratic one-- and are convinced that Chaucer intended to follow the geographical allusions as they have reached us. Donaldson, however, subscribes to the theory that Chaucer had given the tale originally assigned to the Wife of Bath to the Shipman, and that this implies that he was planning to move WBT to follow immediately ML.

All this complicated entanglement and speculation is just part of the vast number of conjectures which arise when we attempt to determine Chaucer's authorial intention. This, however, has not kept other scholars from arguing for their own point of view regarding the matter. For example, Larry Benson makes a case for the EI order, but he bases it on his idea that Chaucer himself was responsible for this order (1981, 117) and considered the *Canterbury Tales* finished, since he had written RT. The basis for the argument that Chaucer is the author of the EI order is that:

The creator of the Type a order had an intimate knowledge of the contents of the tales, by which he knew that D, E and F came in that order. Moreover, he had a sophisticated literary sense that enabled him to get the right order even when there were no clear signals: he knew that B¹ followed A, that C followed F, and that G came before H. This is not the sort of accomplishment that one associates with scribes or their directors. (1981, 111)

Benson has attempted to show how the a order is the best possible one, and then dismisses the idea of this order being scribal. His reason is clear: he does not associate this "sort of accomplishment" with scribal behaviour. He argues --and concludes--

that both orders, that found in E1 and that seen by him as an alternative, are Chaucerian:

The mss show that from the very beginning the work circulated in but two orders, both of which can be attributed to Chaucer; one may be an early version, in which case the Type a-Ellesmere order is the final arrangement, or it might be derived from the Type a by scribal error, the accidental misplacement of the leaves containing G, in which case Type a is the only order attested by the mss... (1981, 117)

Benson presents half a dozen hypotheses, some of them contradictory, that attempt to cover all possible explanations:

- a) Chaucer is responsible for both orders.
- b) Chaucer might be responsible for both orders.
- c) Chaucer is responsible only for the Type a order.
- d) The Type a order is a later version of the order and, therefore the final arrangement.
- e) The Type a order is an earlier version and the other types derive from it.
- f) There is only one order in the manuscripts: Type a.

This set of conclusions gives some idea of the character of Benson's article; the only possibility he has not included is that the order found in manuscripts of the **a** group might be scribal. But even though Benson is not convincing in his conclusion, he makes an interesting analysis of scribal behaviour:

The scribes, as we have seen, were willing to tamper with the order, but the mss show no instance of a scribe changing the order of the tales on the basis of anything other than the most obvious clues in the links --"seyde the Squyer" and such. Most scribes were apparently interested only in smooth transitions from one tale to the another, and they were not above making such transitions by adding spurious links or changing readings when this seemed necessary. No scribe was ever influenced by internal evidence within the tales --allusions by one speaker to another tale, or geographical allusions to the Canterbury Road, which apparently no one ever noticed until the nineteenth century. (1981, 111)

While attempting to show the valuable aspects of Benson's thought, we should first take notice of the language he uses. Phrases such as 'willing to tamper,' 'interested only in,' 'adding spurious links,' are all demeaning and tend to present the scribes as irresponsible workers who wanted to change the text, to 'corrupt' it. The last sentence strongly affirms that no one 'noticed' the internal references until the nineteenth century, which could be interpreted as a consequence of the vogue of Realism in literature. We should keep in mind that perhaps before Realism was in fashion readers did not find the lack of geographical accuracy as disturbing as we might find it now. Perhaps they did not think about the length of the journey either. It is conceivable that scribes were compelled only to keep the links between the tales and were trying to get the right tale and link together.

5. THE UNFINISHED STATE OF THE TEXT

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the realist geographical interpretation of the *Canterbury Tales* was superseded by a different interpretation as expressed by Blake: "The places mentioned are best understood as provisional and without significance as far as a final tale-order is concerned" (1981, 51). The change resides in the fact that Blake is not concerned with the accuracy of the references in the text. Instead, he proposes to understand the circumstances of this particular work, that is, to take into account that Chaucer died without finishing the *Tales*. Thus, Blake does not try to justify or explain the situation, but accepts it as a reality, at the same time that he recognises the fact that originated it.

In essays on tale-order, words such as 'Chaucerian', 'unChaucerian', 'Chaucer's intention', 'positive artistic advantages' etc, are frequently found. Furnivall, Skeat, Pratt, Benson, Kase, Hammond, Moore, Dempster, in one way or another, call upon authorial intention as the ideal by which the order of the *Canterbury Tales* should be measured. This 'authorial order' however must have been very obscure, since there is considerable disagreement as to what Chaucer really wanted. Furnivall, Skeat¹⁴ and Pratt accepted Bradshaw's proposal of moving group B2 to follow B1. Manly thought that Chaucer might have been moving away from this shift rather than towards it.¹⁵ Benson, as quoted above, considers the **a** order to be Chaucer's intentions. On the

¹⁴ Skeat, at first, accepted Furnivall's order only to reject it in his later work (1907).

¹⁵ "It is further quite certain that Block B2, with its allusions to Rochester, should precede Block D, with its allusions to Sittingbourne. Block B2 should not, however, be connected with Block B1, for it is clear that the ML Endlink belongs to an early stage of the development of Chaucer's plan and that he finally did not intend it for introducing and connecting the MLT with any tale now extant." (Manly and Rickert 1940, 2: 491).

other hand, Samuel Moore, however, rejects the Bradshaw shift, the Se order, the Chaucer Society order, and concludes:

If we accept this internal evidence as supplementary to the external evidence of the MSS., we must conclude that the best arrangement of the *Canterbury Tales* is A B1 C B2 D E F G H I. Tho [*sic*] it is not known to exist in any MS., it expresses better than any other Chaucer's intentions, so far at least as his intentions were ever expressed in literary form. (1915, 122-3)

After several pages in which Moore cites the evidence found in manuscripts, he reaches the conclusion that he cannot only come up with a better order for the tales, but also the one that Chaucer intended.

The problems that arise in the pursuit of authorial intention are intensified by the fact that the *Canterbury Tales* was never finished, or rather, that its different parts were finished to varying degrees. To determine the intentions of someone who could not, or would not, complete his work is an impossible task, no matter how many clues are provided the manuscripts and the texts that they hold. Moreover, perhaps, medieval readers did not grant the same degree of importance as nineteenth and twentieth century ones to the apparent lack of internal coherence.¹⁶ Even if Chaucer was concerned about what we see as inconsistencies, he certainly did not have time -- or did not want-- to revise the text.

These elements, which have given so much ground for speculation, are evidence of the incomplete state of the work. Chaucer would have noticed them in the revision process and would have made the appropriate changes --if he had

acknowledged them as inconsistencies. Moreover, there is no way to tell that he would not have changed his mind once more and would have modified again the tale assignment or any other features. When we put all of these issues together we would see that it is pointless to speculate about what the possible order of the tales as Chaucer intended it. As Blake presents it:

Many critics allude to the possibility that Chaucer may not have had a final order, though few, if any, discuss the matter in detail. But if Chaucer had no final order, there is little point in discussing what his order might have been. By the same token there is no point in claiming that the scribe of El had access to a Chaucerian order if Chaucer never had an order.
(1981, 48)

I agree with Blake about the aridity of discussing Chaucer's final order since he did not complete his work. Instead it might prove more fruitful to examine the differences in tale-order and the possible relationships between the various witnesses of the *Tales*. An important characteristic of the text of the *Canterbury Tales* is that it presents different degrees of completion in different parts. For example, Fragment I, up to the CO appears to be more finished than other sections: all scholars and editions agree that GP is meant to be first, followed by the KN. Then we have the interruption of the drunken Miller whose tale is a parody of the Knight's, and offends the Reeve by making fun of a carpenter. Then, naturally, the Reeve wants --and has-- a chance to answer by telling a tale about a tricked Miller. It would seem hardly justifiable to describe this, since the sequence is very well known (Cooper 1995, 247). However, it serves to illustrate the intricate complexity of Chaucer's plan, which cannot be

¹⁶ See Edwards (1984, 180).

compared to that of any other Fragment. The Fragments are finished to various degrees. Scholars have not taken into account their own observations, i.e. that Chaucer worked separately on the different tales and on their group distribution so that some would be more complete than others.

6. THE ORDER OF CAXTON'S EDITIONS

In theory it should be possible to trace the relationship between the different texts considering the placing of the tales in combination with the changes introduced into the links to make them agree with the following tale. Even if this proved to be impossible, we could, at least, learn about the reception of the text and the issues that were considered important by medieval readers.

Earlier I have shown how we should not interpret the order of the tales, now I indicate a more practical and effective method to study the different orders.

Hammond's essay "On the Order of the Canterbury Tales: Caxton's Two Editions" showed the evident differences in order between Cx1 and Cx2. She decided that the only way to understand how these arose was to have both texts printed in parallel (1905-6, 159). She was able to point out obvious layout differences, such as signatures, running titles and divisions between the tales, as well as the obvious difference in the tale order, as shown in the following figure:

Cx1 L-ML-sq-Sq L-Me WB-L-Fr-L-Su L-Cl-b Fk SN-L-CY Ph (...) NP L-Mc
 Cx2 L-ML L-Me sq-Sq-L-Fk WB-L-Fr-L-Su L-Cl-b SN-L-CY Ph (...) NP-L L-Mc
 El L-ML WB-L-Fr-L-Su L-Cl-b-Me-L-L-Sq-L-Fk Ph (...) NP SN-L-CY L-Mc
 Hg WB-L-Fr-L-Su L-ML Sq-2-Me-4-L-Fk SN L-Cl-b Ph (...) L-NP L-Mc¹⁷

Figure 2 (Taken from Manly and Rickert, volume 2).

There is a change of position of SQ and FK. These were separated in the first edition but joined in the second. SQ and ME have been interchanged, and FK was moved from its position to follow SQ, not CL. This is immediately noticeable just by comparing the two texts. Hammond points this difference out in her article. Less evident is the fact that the change brought with it a new link that appears between SQ and FK (Blake 1985, 4), constituting, possibly, the most interesting difference between the order of the tales in Caxton's editions. In table 1 the link is not present in any of the **b** group manuscripts, and we know that Cx1 was set up from a manuscript that belonged to this group. However, this same link --L20-- is present in El, as well as in the other **a** group manuscripts. Since the link was not present in the first edition - or any other **b** manuscript--, we must assume that it comes from ω . Manly and Rickert pointed out that L20 is not present in either groups **b** and **c**, or in several manuscripts that do not include SQ or that have lost the leaves which might have included it (1940, 2: 298). They consider that L20 is normally used to link the Squire and the Franklin, so any other function is thought of as abnormal.¹⁸

¹⁷ This figure illustrates the difference in tale-order between Cx1 and Cx2, it does not show fragment I --GP, KN, MI, RE and CO or PA because there are no changes on these between the two editions. Figure 2 has been taken from table 1, which is based in Manly and Rickert's (1940, 2), with colors added to make clearer the different groups. Table 1 has deep limitations, that are overcome with a modified version of it --table 2. Please see the printed appendix for both tables 1 and 2.

¹⁸ This is discussed below in reference to Hg.

Some changes are not so obvious in table 1, but become more evident if we compare Cx1 and Cx2 side by side:

The Nun's Priest's endlink is also included. What is today known as the Man of Law's endlink was clearly regarded as the Squire's headlink and goes with SqT when that is put later in the order. Many of the additions within the tales in Cx76 have been eliminated, though the two editions are alike in which tales have divisions into books. The rubrics are in English, though a few are in Latin. The printing of the lines as stanzas in those tales which have them, the spacing out of the rubrics and the introduction of woodcuts set a standard of excellence in the presentation of this edition which was not to be matched for some time. (Blake 1985, 4)

The movement of L8 is interesting because it shows that it was not perceived by Caxton as it is today (Blake 1985, 4). Caxton saw it as the prologue to SQ, whereas it is now often referred to as the Man of Law's Endlink. The inclusion of the L31 (the Nun's Priest's Epilogue) is of greater interest, since this, along with L20 (the Squire-Franklin link), must come directly from the second manuscript. L31 shares with L20 the fact that it appears only in the **a** group, En3 Ch and Ry1, which makes it a perfect candidate to have had its origin in ω (Manly and Rickert 1940, 2: 422). Robinson, in his article "Can we Trust the Hengwrt Manuscript?," refers to the change of position on ME, SQ and ME in Hg and El, and states:

We find this order in the *a* manuscripts and (most striking of all) in Caxton's second edition, which introduces this [ME SQ FK] order rather than that found in his first edition [SQ ME WB FR SU CL FK],

presumably on the model of the 'better' manuscript he used in preparing this second edition... (1999, 206)

This order, the one in E1, is the one he considers 'correct,' and in this Robinson agrees with many other critics, but the prevalence of the E1 order is due to its presence in the exemplar that gave origin to the tradition --O. As many other scholars before, however, he finally concludes that this order is the one that best represents "Chaucer's conception."¹⁹ Manly and Rickert have pointed out, concerning NP that:

The ancestor of the a group is shown by several facts to have had an independent origin and descent in NPT. There are a number of instances in which its descendants and their adherents seem to have the correct reading as against the testimony of the other MSS... In a number of other instances the reading of the group seems to be a first effort later rejected for a better. There are two lines found only in members of this group which it is certainly unsafe to reject as not by Chaucer. (1940, 2: 423)

The independent line of descent could account for the presence or absence of L31. This passage appears mainly in manuscripts belonging to the **a** group, but is also present in Ch Ry1 and Wy, and although we can assume that in Cx2 it came from ω , only further research could explain how it came to be included in this manuscript. Undoubtedly many other passages will share these characteristics, but these can become evident only in the word by word collation. The testing of Manly and Rickert's theory about the "independent origin and descent" of NP and L31 might yield interesting results.

¹⁹ In private conversation, Dr Robinson has clarified that the order that he refers to, is the one of the CL, SQ, ME, FK section only.

Table 2 has been obtained by changing the nomenclatures in table 1 to those of the Canterbury Tales Project, and by making some of the names of the links more specific. If we look at table two, it is much easier to see the differences between the texts. On it, not only the differences between Cx1 and Cx2 are evident, but also, a whole set of subtle agreements with other manuscripts can be perceived. Especially interesting are the relationships with El and Hg:

Cx1 ML L8-SQ L15-ME WB-L10-FR-L11-SU CL-L13-L14 FK NU-L33-CY PH (...) NP L36
Cx2 ML L15-ME L8-SQ-L20-FK WB-L10-FR-L11-SU CL-L13-L14 NU-L33-CY PH (...) NP-L31 L36
El MLWB-L10-FR-L11-SU CL-L13-L14-L15-ME L17-SQ-L20-FK PH (...) NP NU-L33-CY L36
Hg WB-L10-FR-L11-SU L7-ML SQ-L20-ME-L17-FK NU CL-L13-L14 PH (...) NP L36²⁰

Figure 3 (From the modified Manly and Rickert table)

For example, the form of L20 present in Cx2 is not that in Hg (as the link in Hg was modified to link ME and FK rather than SQ and FK), but the one in El.²¹ As I have said, L20 is definitely the same link found in El and other a manuscripts in which it is used to unite SQ and the FK. However, there is more to it, since the same link is present in Hg but it links different tales:

One problem that faces textual critics of *The Canterbury Tales* is that what in Hengwrt appear as the Squire-Merchant and the Merchant-Franklin links appear in Ellesmere (and hence in most modern editions) as the Squire-Franklin and the Merchant-Squire links respectively. (Blake 1985, 39)

²⁰ For a complete version of table 2 see the printed appendix.

²¹ The manuscripts that have this use change the reading "Frankeleyn" to "Marchant" in several lines -- 675, 696, 699 (Manly and Rickert 1940, 2:298).

Other scholars have addressed this problem and showed that the difference between Hg and E1 can be accounted for if we assume that the Hg scribe received the tales without the links and when he received them he had to change the names, so making some lines metrically irregular (Robinson 1999, 204-5). E1's L20 (SQ-FK) corresponding to Hg's L20 which links SQ and ME, was the one that Caxton added from his second manuscript source. However, the other link, L17, that is, E1's ME-SQ, and Hg's L17, which links ME and FK, is replaced in Cx2 by L8, the Man of Law's endlink, which is present in the **b** group²² with the readings "summoner" or "squire".²³ Cx2 has no endlink for the ML, or rather, it has been moved together with SQ, making it evident that Caxton thought of them as a block, not necessarily related to ML.²⁴

Interestingly enough, when Dunn makes the assessment of the line agreements between Cx1 and Cx2 he takes into account L20 --F 673 to F 708-- but he does not explicitly acknowledge these lines as coming directly from ω . All Dunn points out concerning L32²⁵ --which is not present in Cx2-- is that probably ω did not have it, since "Had Caxton seen these lines it is likely... that he would have adopted them" (1939, 38). Later in his chapter about the agreements of Cx2 and other manuscripts he shows some interest in what he calls the Squire's Epilogue. He then proceeds to point out the variants and their agreements with other manuscripts. He does not emphasise that a new link has been introduced to Cx2, and that it could come from its manuscript source. Something similar happens with L31, which he only mentions (Dunn, 1939:72) to point out its agreements with other texts. His only significant

²² This link, with the readings "summoner" or "squire", is also present in the **d** group, but this is irrelevant since we know that the manuscript for Cx1 belonged to **b**.

²³ See the discussion about Hammond's hypothesis above.

²⁴ See figure 3 in this chapter.

comment is that: "Dd and Ma are... sufficiently close to be considered as possible sources of this link in Cx2, but other evidence makes it appear that the actual source was a closely related manuscript" (Dunn 1939, 72). If Dunn had looked at Cx1 and Cx2 side by side he would have seen that L31 clearly had its origin in Cx2's manuscript source. If he noticed its importance, he does not say so. This fact suggests that he never looked at both editions side by side, but that he was using Manly and Rickert's collation cards only. It would only be fair to point out, however, that he mentions Hammond's article in his bibliography, even if he does not draw any conclusion from it.

But even if Dunn overlooks these links, Manly and Rickert have given some attention to L20. They think of it as differing from its normal use when it links the Squire and the Merchant's tales, as is the case of Hg. They also conclude that all the manuscripts which have the variant "Marchant" must descend from Hg. And, as many critics accept today, they think that the Hg scribe wrote the tales leaving the space for the links that he had not yet received, and that he did not copy the tales in their proper order:

At some later date (at the end of his work?) he [the Hg scribe] did find a link beginning "In feith Squier thow hast thee wel yquyt", and naturally enough he inserted it on f.137b to follow SqT although he had to change "Frankeleyn" to "Marchaunt" in three lines to adapt the link to introducing MeT. At the same time apparently (for he wrote with the same yellow ink) he found a link beginning with the Host's comment on MeT ("Ey goddes mercy seyde oure hoost thoo") which clearly should follow MeT,

²⁵ This link is a five-lines addition to L31. It is found in some a manuscripts (Ad1 Cn En3 Ma).

although some tinkering of the text was necessary to adapt the link to the following tale. (Manly and Rickert 1940, 1: 272)

These assumptions --and some others-- are based on the colour of the ink in which the text is written, which is the same as that used to make a few corrections and to add L30, NP, L36, MA, L20, L17, etc. However, Robinson has pointed out that, because the order of ME, SQ, FK and their altered links as are found in Hg, appear in the same order in manuscripts that belong to Manly and Rickert's **d** group, and that because this group cannot descend directly from Hg then, as Manly and Rickert thought, we must conclude that:

The only possible explanation is that the text of the links was not altered just in Hengwrt. It was altered, probably by the scribe's supervisor, in the exemplar, that is, in *O* itself. The three tales were then placed in the exemplar in the same order as they are copied in Hengwrt, with the now-altered text of the links connecting them. This newly reshuffled *O*, then, in turn became the exemplar not only of the type *d* copies but also of Manly and Rickert's *c* group, and the additional group I label *f*. (Robinson 1999, 207)

This hypothesis seems reasonable, and would explain the apparent relationship between the Hg order and the **d** group order; it also shows that, if this was the case, there must have been another manuscript earlier than Hg, which would not have had the changes in these tales, that originated the remaining orders --including that of El (Robinson 1999, 207 and ff.).

From all the changes and shifts between the two Caxton editions, a few inferences can be safely drawn. Firstly, L20 in Cx2 has to come directly from its

manuscript source, and that this was firmly related to the **a** group, the only group in which L20 is present linking SQ with FK. Secondly, L31, also found only in the **a** group, but not present in E1, must have had a similar origin in Cx2, and probably comes from ω . An important clue to unlock the source of Caxton's second edition might lie in passages such as L20 or L31 which are not present in the first edition and therefore one can presume have their origin in ω . The collation of L20 and L31 could confirm characteristics of ω and, because of the theoretical lack of conflation, the textual affiliations should be more evident.