

A Stemmatic Analysis of the Fifteenth-Century Witnesses to The Wife of Bath's Prologue¹

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This article presents the results of a stemmatic analysis of the fifty-eight fifteenth-century witnesses to *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. This analysis is based on the transcripts and collations of these witnesses published on my CD-ROM of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, and uses the techniques outlined in my article (with Robert O'Hara) on computer-assisted stemmatic analysis published in the first volume of the *Canterbury Tales Project Occasional Papers* (Robinson and O'Hara 1993; Robinson 1996.)

The aim of the Canterbury Tales Project is to determine, as thoroughly as we can, the textual history of *The Canterbury Tales*. The rationale of the Project is twofold. First, the computer methods now at our disposal, for discovering, storing, sorting, and filtering all the information in all eighty-eight witnesses to the text of the Tales, may enable us to travel further towards this goal than previously possible. Secondly, the magic of hypertext and the spaciousness of computer publication, whether on CD-ROM or network, may permit us to provide other scholars with the most complete and convenient access to all the materials (transcripts, manuscript images, collations, databases of spellings, descriptions of manuscripts.) The published CD-ROM represents our first attempt at the second part of this rationale. This article, offering the stemmatic analysis of the four percent of the text of all the witnesses to the whole *Canterbury Tales* contained in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, represents our first substantial endeavour towards our overall aim: the reconstruction of the textual history of all the witnesses to the whole Tales.²

The choice of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* as the first analyzed

The Canterbury Tales Project began, in 1989, as an experiment (funded by the Leverhulme Trust) to test techniques of transcription, collation and analysis which I was then developing. There was not, then, any thought of extending this work into the whole *Canterbury Tales*. The processes by which this modest experiment grew into the full Project are described in my 'Editor's Introduction,' on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* CD-ROM. I chose *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* for this experiment, in 1989, primarily for rather pragmatic reasons: there were the right number of witnesses (fifty-eight) with about the right amount of text (830 lines, about 7000 words in each) for transcription, collation, and analysis to be demanding but not overwhelming. In addition, there was already in existence a complete collation, and an intensive effort at analysis, of the witnesses to this text in Manly and Rickert 1940. This could provide a useful springboard—and possibly a corrective, or a foil—to my own

efforts. Further, it appeared from Manly and Rickert's discussion that the textual tradition of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* contained, as if in miniature, all the problems one might ever meet in stemmatic analysis: extensive scribal alteration, widespread coincident variation, shifts of exemplar, contamination, and—perhaps—authorial revision. One would also have to cope with many different kinds of variation: in spelling, in metre, in the ordering, absence and addition of lines and even whole passages, in the presence or absence of glosses, rubrication and ornamentation. If the methods I was developing could cope with this tradition, they could cope with most traditions. Most tantalizingly, Manly and Rickert's discussion asked more questions than it answered. There seemed a possibility that the computer methods might prove themselves by taking analysis further than Manly and Rickert were able to do.

To some extent, the choice of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* was a matter of chance. But it was a fortunate chance, for two reasons. The first reason is that the problems of the textual tradition of the whole *Canterbury Tales*, of which *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* is part, are fundamental. The question of settling just what readings in what witness have the most authority is not a matter of antiquarian curiosity, but radically affect the way we read this, the most-read and best-known of all works of English literature before Shakespeare. Establishment that these methods worked for the section of the Tales contained in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* would promise that they might work for the whole *Canterbury Tales*, and help towards a solution of the wider problem: which text of *The Canterbury Tales* is nearest to what Chaucer might have written?

The second reason why this chance was fortunate is that the most clearly-defined single problem (as it appears to modern editors) in the textual tradition of *The Canterbury Tales*—whether an edition should be based on the Ellesmere or Hengwrt manuscript—is presented most dramatically in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*.³ El contains twenty-six lines, distributed over four passages, not present in Hg. The effect of these, and of a different reading in line 46, quite alters our perception of the Wife—and with it our understanding of medieval attitudes to women, as this text is so influential in modern discussions of these. Even without the signal difference made by the presence or absence of the twenty-six lines, there are a host of differences of wording, presentation, and (especially) metre between the two manuscripts which are cumulatively sufficient to make reading Chaucer in Ellesmere a very different experience from reading him in Hengwrt. Even if this Project were to go no further than *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, a better understanding of how these differences arose between these two manuscripts within just this section of the whole *Canterbury Tales* would be valuable in itself.

The methods used in this analysis

This stemmatic analysis uses the techniques outlined in the article 'Computer-Assisted Methods of Stemmatic Analysis,' published in the first volume of the Occasional Papers (Robinson and O'Hara 1993.) These methods have been

elaborated and refined, in order to meet the special problems encountered in this large and complex tradition.

The two computer tools on which this analysis is built are cladistic analysis and variant database analysis. These tools are discussed more fully in the 'Computer-Assisted Methods' article. Briefly, cladistic analysis is a technique developed in evolutionary biology to reconstruct the history of objects which are related in a tree of ancestry and descent, by study of the characteristics they share and do not share. Our confidence that cladistic methods might be useful in textual stemmatics is based on their successful application to the tradition of the forty-six manuscripts of the Old Norse narrative sequence *Svipdagsmál*. For this tradition, cladistic analysis was able to replicate the overall shape, and much of the precise detail, of a table of manuscript relations constructed by me using traditional methods of analysis, and especially using firm information about what manuscript was copied from what provided by the copyists themselves (Robinson 1991; Robinson and O'Hara 1996.)

The demonstrated success of cladistic methods gave reason for confidence that cladistics could point to the existence of groups and sub-groups of manuscripts united by descent from a common ancestor. Cladistic methods also appeared able to cope successfully with random coincident variation: the tendency for different scribes, working on unrelated exemplars, to introduce the same reading. Where such coincident variation really is random, it will have no effect on the trees of descent hypothesized by cladistic methods. By definition, cladistics will only hypothesize trees of descent when variants fall into distinct, non-random patterns. In addition, because cladistic methods may create 'unrooted' trees of descent (that is, trees where the groupings are valid however they are rooted) one does not need to establish the originality of readings before commencing grouping of witnesses. Using cladistics, one may make an unrooted tree on the basis of all the variants, deferring judgement on just what readings are ancestral to the whole tree until one has this tree. One may also scrutinize all the variants introduced at each hypothesized sub-ancestor for evidence that they might be authorial, so coping (in theory) with the possibility of authorial revision.

However, cladistic methods on their own provided no means of dealing with contamination (the deliberate combination of readings from distinct exemplars), with non-random coincident variation (two scribes, perhaps of the same dialect or training, consistently making the same error), and with shifts of exemplar (a scribe moving from one exemplar to another.) In itself, as one should expect from what is fundamentally a method of blind counting, cladistics is a rather brutal technique. It can, for any one run, allocate a witness to one family and only one, where in fact different parts of the witness might belong to different families.

One might provide a partial route past these difficulties by running the cladistic programs over different selections of variants: see below. However, one needs to know exactly what readings are characteristic of what families, and then use this information both to test the broad classifications offered by cladistics and to explore the nature of the readings introduced at the different points of the tradition. This is the function of the second tool used in this work:

database analysis of the variants. Using a sophisticated database, one can most rapidly identify just what readings appear characteristic of what group of witnesses. Then, one can test hypotheses about contamination, or shift of exemplar, by studying the movement of groups of readings from witness to witness; or test hypotheses about possible authorial revision by examining the quality of the readings apparently introduced at a particular point.

In summary: the two methods complement each other. Cladistic analysis may provide, very quickly and conveniently, a ‘road-map’ of the relations of the witnesses of *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue*. Database analysis may then be used to test, refine, and extend the preliminary groupings offered by cladistic analysis.

Contamination, coincidence and shifts of exemplar

The most difficult task in stemmatic analysis is distinguishing readings which have arisen in a group of witnesses by shared descent from a single common ancestor and so indicate their shared ancestry, from readings which might appear in unrelated witnesses either by contamination, or by the simple coincidence of similarly-minded scribes producing identical variants. Shifts of exemplar will further complicate analysis. Unless these problems are anticipated and addressed, analysis must be unsafe: groups will be hypothesized as genetic which are actually the product of chance or of contamination.

Contamination, coincidence, and shift of exemplar can all be dealt with if we are able to identify, as the first stage of analysis, the underlying family groupings of witnesses. Once this is done, it is actually quite easy to isolate cases of contamination and shift of exemplar. Contamination will be visible by the presence in the one witness of a significant number of readings otherwise characteristic of two (or more) distinct groups of witnesses. Shifts of exemplar will similarly be visible: up to a given point in the witness, readings characteristic of one group will be present; after that point, readings characteristic of a second group will appear. In the case of coincidence, one must rely on the simple improbability—unless special circumstances apply—of different scribes over a long text introducing the same new readings in significant numbers.

Filtering the body of variants

In practice, two procedures were adopted to deal with contamination, coincidence, and shifts of exemplar, so as to give the best chance of identification of the underlying family groupings. The first procedure was to filter out from the body of variant readings all those which seemed particularly likely to arise from coincidence or liable to spread from witness to witness by contamination. In the case of variants arising from dialect differences or linguistic change, in the form of spelling and morphological variants, this had already been done for us. As part of the preparation for publication of the CD-ROM, Elizabeth Solopova and I produced two collations of the graphemic

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transcripts of the witnesses, using the machine collation program Collate.⁴ These were an unregularized collation and a regularized collation; both are published on the CD-ROM. Before analysis, one had to remove all variants reflecting only dialect differences or linguistic change, in the form of spelling and morphological variants. Accordingly, the analysis was based on the regularized collation published on the CD-ROM. In this regularized collation, all variation which seemed likely to be 'accidental' and not 'substantive' was smoothed out: thus, the twenty different ways of spelling 'Experience' in line 1 were regularized to one reading only.

Because we provided elsewhere on the CD-ROM a wealth of material providing analysis of witness spellings, we felt no need to preserve any information relating to dialect or linguistic change in the regularized collation. On the CD-ROM all this information is available word by word in the unregularized collation and, much more conveniently, in the spelling databases where it is collected and sorted by witness, headword, and part of speech across all the witnesses. Thus, we were able to eliminate variant verb forms, or variant spellings relating to final -e, rather ruthlessly from the regularized collation and use this as the basis for the cladistic and database analysis.⁵ We believed that this would increase the likelihood of successful identification of the substantive witness families without loss of information elsewhere.

Similarly, we filtered out from the body of variant readings all punctuation variants. Our transcription preserved all occurrences of the virgule in all witnesses, as we believed that this might give valuable information about usus scribendi, and might also cast light on Chaucer's own punctuation.⁶ Our confidence in this was justified by an extraordinary accident. In the early stages of experiment and before I had realized that punctuation variants should be removed from the variant corpus, I ran the cladistic analysis program over the whole body of variants including the punctuation variants. To my surprise, the analysis appeared to show that the five manuscripts Ad¹ En³ Dd Lc Mg were very closely linked. This was surprising, as Manly and Rickert classified these five into three unrelated groups: Dd with the A group, and the constant pairs Ad¹/En³ and Lc/Mg apart from one another and from Dd, and I knew no reason to doubt their analysis in this. Why did these five appear so closely together? I then used the variant database to find out what it was in the body of variants that led cladistic analysis to place them so near one another. I asked the variant database to find all variants occurring in any four or five of the group Ad¹ En³ Dd Lc Mg, not in Hg, and in less than twelve witnesses in total. The database informed me that there were 112 variants satisfying this criteria, thus:

112 reading(s) found satisfying those conditions

| |
|---|
| L11 / added] Ad1 Dd En3 La Lc Se |
| L16 / added] Ad1 Dd En3 Ht La Lc Mg Se |
| L28 / added] Ad1 Dd En3 Lc Mg Se |
| L29 / added] Ad1 Dd En3 Lc Se Si1 Si2 |
| L30 / added] Ad1 En3 Ha2 Ht Lc Mg Se |
| L34 / added] Ad1 Dd En3 Lc Si2 |

Figure 1. Variant database output for search on Ad¹ En³ Dd Lc Mg variants

It appeared, from the first six of the 112 shown in this window, that these five manuscripts frequently insert a virgule at the same point in the line, and at a point where Hg does not have a virgule. In fact, 108 of the 112 readings satisfying this condition are of this type: better than one line in eight of the 830 lines of the text. If one removes these punctuation variants, there are only four variants possibly suggesting the existence of this as a genetic group (in lines 197, 212 and 610, counting the variation in line 197 as two variants): so few variants might have arisen out of simple chance.

However, one could not use simple chance to explain the extraordinary coincidence—in around one line in eight—of these punctuation variants in these manuscripts. Elizabeth Solopova studied these variants in these manuscripts, as part of her work on punctuation in the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, and concluded that the explanation for this identity of punctuation in these and a few other manuscripts, and the difference between this punctuation and that in Hg, lay in the tendency of different scribes to insert punctuation in exactly the same place, and further in a different place to that of the punctuation in Hg. From study of the punctuation itself, she determined that the highly-distinctive punctuation found in Hg is very likely to be Chaucer's own punctuation. Thus, the failure of these manuscripts to reproduce this system, substituting instead a more mechanical system and one therefore likely to lead to exactly this coincidence of variation in independent manuscripts, is evidence of the personal nature and special status of the punctuation found in Hg.⁷ Even if our analysis were to proceed no further, this one discovery might make our work worthwhile. In a somewhat perverse way, this instance increased our confidence in our methods. There was indeed significance in this group of variants, though not the genetic significance that cladistics alone might suggest; using the database we were able to extract the variants and decide their actual status.

This example also confirmed that punctuation variation is highly subject to systematic and convergent coincident variation, and that cladistic trees including punctuation variation are likely to be unstable and misleading. Thus, all punctuation variants were removed from the body of variants submitted to cladistic analysis.

I sought also to reduce the incidence of variants possibly arising from contamination by removing all the variants to do with addition, deletion, or ordering of lines within the text. In particular, all variants relating to the 'added passages' were removed. It is clear from Manly and Rickert's discussion that the distribution of these added passages cuts across other textual affiliations, and that contamination is at work: in some cases, scribes appeared to know of the existence of additional lines which were not in their exemplar and copied these into the text they were copying. If this could occur with these 'added passages,' it might also occur with other variants involving addition, deletion, or ordering of lines. Thus, all such variants were removed from the variant corpus before analysis.

Filtering the body of texts

Removal of variants of spelling, morphology, and punctuation should minimize the influence of coincident variation on analysis. One could not expect to eliminate coincident variation; but one might reasonably be able to reduce it to a level where it would not confuse identification of the fundamental groupings. Beyond the rather special case of the 'added passages' and similar, this first technique—filtering of the variant corpus—could do little to cope with contamination, and nothing to cope with shift of exemplars. It did not seem possible to identify in advance the variants likely to be subject to contamination, and still less those variants subject to shifts of exemplar.

Therefore, a second technique was used to deal with contamination and shifts of exemplar. In theory, contamination and shifts of exemplar should appear in only a minority (perhaps, a sizable minority) of the witnesses. One must presume that the majority of texts are the result of a scribe copying a single exemplar, without deliberate import of readings from other witnesses and without shifting from one exemplar to another part-way. If this is not the case, analysis is not likely to be possible. If one could identify just those witnesses which showed no evidence of contamination or shift of exemplar, one could then identify the underlying groupings among just those witnesses. One could then use this information to place the other witnesses which did show contamination and shifts of exemplar, fixing exactly what groups they were contaminated by and where exemplars changed.

Thus, the witnesses which showed evidence of variation and shift of exemplar needed to be filtered out from the body of witnesses for analysis. How could this be done? For shift of exemplar, this would actually be quite straightforward. One could run the cladistic analysis program over different parts of the text. If a witness shifted exemplar from (say) group 'X' in one section to group 'Y' in a second section, then it would appear close to the witnesses making up group 'X' in the first section, then move from them to the witnesses which make up group 'Y' in the second section.

It seemed likely that one could use the same technique to identify witnesses which contained contamination. Presume that a witness is based on an exemplar of group 'X,' but imports readings from a witness of group 'Y.' It is probable that over eight hundred lines the scribe will in some sections import many readings from 'Y' into the text; in other sections the scribe may import very few; in yet other sections the scribe may actually shift exemplars entirely to the 'Y' witness, perhaps now importing readings from 'X.' Once more, running the cladistic analysis program over different sections should show this, as the witness will move closer to or further away from the witnesses of groups 'X' and 'Y,' according to the actual base text and the degree of contamination in each part.

Therefore, the following procedure was adopted:

- The body of variants (filtered, as above) was divided into eight sections: one for each hundred lines up to line 700, and an eighth for 701-830;
- Cladistic analysis was carried out for each of the eight sections;

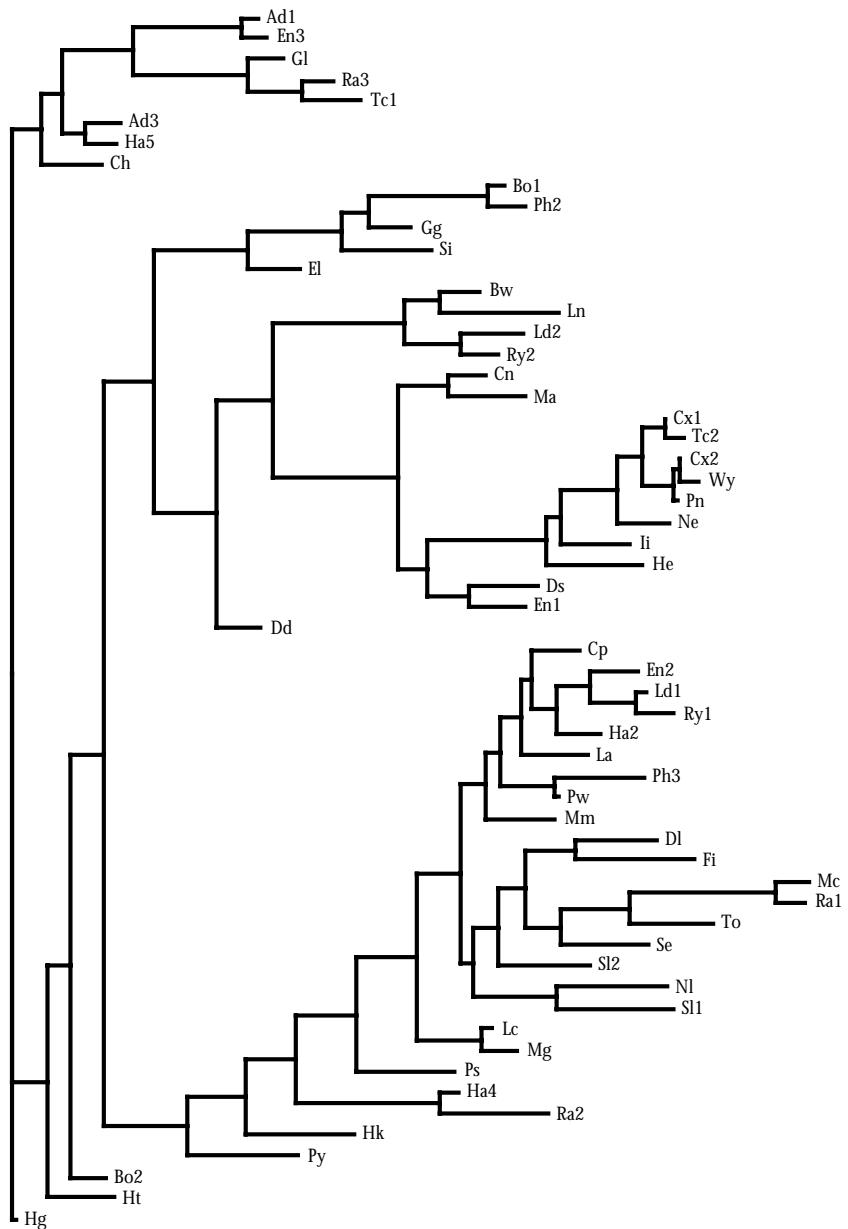


Figure 2. The cladogram for all witnesses, lines 301-400

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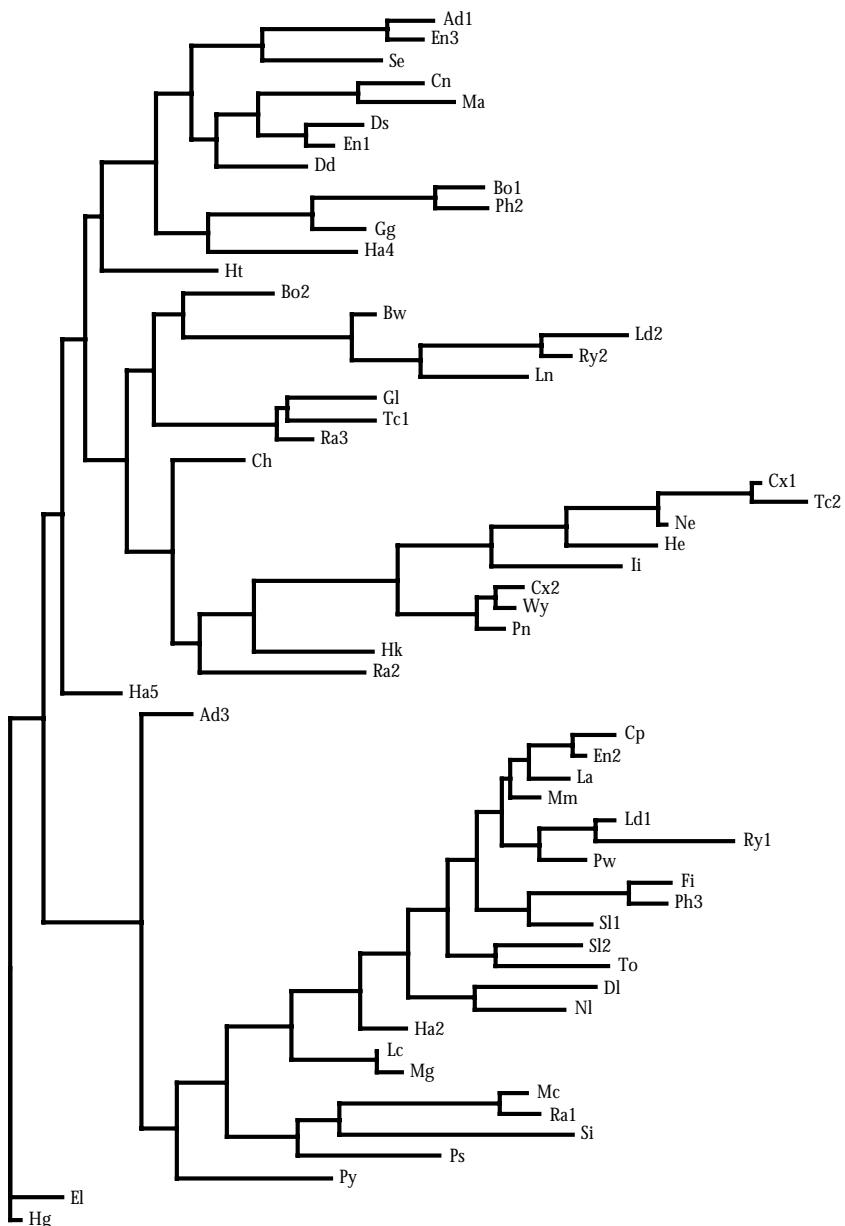


Figure 3. The cladogram for all witnesses, lines 401-500

- The resulting cladograms were compared. The witnesses which appeared to shift in affiliation in different sections, whether from shift of exemplar or contamination, were identified;
- These witnesses were then removed from the body of witnesses subjected to cladistic analysis. The cladistic analysis was then run over the body of variants for the whole 830 lines of the text, for the witnesses remaining;
- The witness groups identified by this cladistic analysis became the basis of further analysis.

For example, compare the cladogram given in Figure 2, for lines 301-400, with that in Figure 3, for lines 401-500, on pages 76-7.

A word of explanation is needed on how to read these cladograms. The trees have been notionally rooted next to Hg. As explained above, this rooting is an arbitrary procedure and the witness groupings are not dependent on this rooting. As is usual in cladistics, the root of the tree is placed at the left, and is represented by the vertical line at the extreme left. The horizontal distance of each witness from this line, relative to other witnesses, represents the comparative closeness or distance of each witness from the presumed root. For example: Hg is very close to this root in both trees; in the first tree (Figure 2) Ch and Bo₂ are the next nearest; in the second (Figure 3) El is the next nearest.

One can also use the length of the lines to and from each branching point ('node') in the trees to estimate the level of support for each grouping. For example: in both trees a comparatively long line leads down to the node from which Mc and Ra₁ branch, while there are comparatively short lines from this node down to Mc and Ra₁ themselves. The length of the line down to this node suggests that there are a substantial number of readings shared by Mc and Ra₁, and introduced into the tradition by their common ancestor. The shortness of the lines from this node to each of Mc and Ra₁ suggests that each witness is a close copy of their common ancestor: that is, the two manuscripts are very similar, and share many readings not found elsewhere.⁸ In contrast, in both cladograms the line down to the node linking Py with the manuscripts in the group headed by Cp is comparatively short, indicating that Py is only weakly attached (if at all) to this group.

The most striking difference between these two cladograms, covering consecutive sections of The Wife of Bath's Prologue, is the position of El. In Figure 2, the cladogram for lines 301-400, El is close to the group Bo₁ Ph₂ Gg Si, as indeed it is for all of lines 1-400. In figure 3, the cladogram for lines 401-500, El has moved right away from this group and is now very close to Hg, where it stays throughout the rest of the Prologue. On the face of it, this suggests that around line 400 El changes from an exemplar close to Bo₁ Ph₂ Gg Si to an exemplar close to Hg.

Other shifts between the two cladograms are:

G1 Ra₃ Tc₁: in 301-400 this group is near Ad₁/En₃; in 401-500 it is near the group headed by Bo₂. However, in each case (as the length of the lines show) the affiliation is rather loose

Se: in 301-400 this is near Sl₂/To/Mc/Ra₁; in 401-500 it is near Ad₁ and En₃

Ha₄/Ra₂: in 301-400 these are together near Hk/Ps; in 401-500 they are apart, with Ha₄ near Gg/Bo₁/Ph₂ and Ra₂ near Hk again, but this pair is now affiliated rather loosely with Ch

Cx₂/Pn/Wy: in 301-400 they are very close to Cx₁/Tc₂; in 401-500 this three stay in the same branch of the tree but move nearer its root (that is: to the left, 'up the tree' towards Hg

Hk: in 301-400 this is near Py; in 401-500 it moves closer to Ra₂ and Cx₂/Pn/Wy

Apart from these moves, and some other apparent moves where the affiliation is very loose (e.g. the affiliation in 301-400 between Dd/En₁/Ds and Se/Ad₁/En₃; this is probably the result of instability in Se drawing the other manuscripts of these groups together in this section), the relations between most of the witnesses remain encouragingly stable. The pairings Ad₁/En₃, Cn/Ma, Ds/En₁, Bo₁/Ph₂, Ld₂/Ry₂, Ld₁/Ry₁, Mc/Ra₁, Lc/Mg, and the larger groupings Dd/En₁/Ds/Cn/Ma, Bw/Ln/Ry₂/Ld₂, Gl/Tc₁/Ra₃, Cp/En₂/Ld₁/Ry₁/La/Ph₃/Pw/Mm/Dl/FiTo/Sl₁/Sl₂, He/Ii/Cx₁/Cx₂/Wy/Pn, are constant across the two cladograms. This mixture of a majority of witnesses remaining stable in their relationship to one another and a few which move is exactly what we should expect if the hypothesis above is correct, and most witnesses are not subject to change of exemplar or contamination while those which are will show this by shifting patterns of affiliation.

Following this method, therefore, the eight cladograms for the eight distinct parts of The Wife of Bath's Prologue were compared, to identify the witnesses whose affiliations were not stable across the whole text. The following fifteen witnesses were so identified, as likely to show evidence of contamination and/or shift of exemplar: Cx₂ El En₂ (this is fragmentary, lacking 475 to end) Gl Ha₂ Ha₄ Hk Mc/Ra₁ Py Pn Ps Ra₂ Se Wy. These fifteen were removed from the body of texts subjected to cladistic analysis.

The fundamental witness groupings

Following the processes outlined in the last section, 2217 variants were removed from the body of variants, as likely to arise from coincident variation or contamination. This left a total of 4531 variants for analysis. Fifteen of the fifty-eight witnesses were removed from the body of texts subjected to cladistic analysis, leaving forty-three witnesses for analysis.

The cladistic analysis program PAUP, used throughout this work, was then run over the remaining variants and texts. The cladogram in Figure 4, showing the fundamental witness groupings, resulted.

One may divide the witnesses in this cladogram into groups as follows (witnesses linked by / indicate a special and consistently close relationship):

Groups as in Manly/Rickert⁹

A Cn/Ma, Ds/En₁, with these four descending either from Dd or an hyparchetype closely related to Dd (5 witnesses; or four excluding Dd)

B Ii He Ne Cx₁/Tc₂, with these five descending from an A manuscript (5)

CD Cp La Mm Ld₁/Ry₁ Ph₃ Pw Sl₂ To Dl Fi Nl Sl₁ Lc/Mg (15)

Additional groupings partially identified by Manly/Rickert

E Bo₁/Ph₂ Gg Si (4)

F Bw/Ln Ld₂/Ry₂ (4)

Manly and Rickert II: 196-7 identify the links between these manuscripts, but obscure the groups by associating them with other manuscripts where the link may be contamination (Hk and F; see below) or coincidence (Ad₁/En₃ and E). The cladistic analysis suggests that E and F may descend from a common hyparchetype; Manly and Rickert do not note this possibility.

The following group consists of manuscripts whose only relationship appears to be common descent from the archetype of the whole tradition:

O Ad₁/En₃ Ad₃/Ha₅ Ra₃/Tc₁ Ch Bo₂/Ht Hg

The status of this last group must be clearly understood. Each of groups AB CD E F appear to represent descent from a single hyparchetype. Therefore, the thirty-three witnesses in these four groups represent just four independent lines of descent (or only three, if E and F descend from a single hyparchetype.) However, if the manuscripts in O are indeed only related by common descent from the archetype, then the six groupings in O (four pairs and the two singletons Ch and Hg) represent a further six independent lines of descent. For convenience, the witnesses in this group are referred to as 'O,' but they should not be seen as constituting a genetic group in the same sense as do the other groups—if the hypothesis of the closeness of O to the archetype is correct. One of the tasks of the variant database analysis is to test this hypothesis.

The variants characteristic of each fundamental group

Analysis now turns from cladistics to the variant database. Cladistic analysis has suggested the six fundamental groupings A B CD E F O outlined above, accounting for forty-three of the fifty-eight witnesses. This has provided a broad 'road-map,' to guide analysis by the more exact means provided by the variant database. The variant database may now be used as follows:

1. To identify the variants characteristic of each group of witnesses: that is, the variants apparently introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of a group (its hyparchetype) and descending into each member of that group;
2. To assess the quality of the readings characteristic of each group. Are the readings introduced in the tradition by this hyparchetype of each group likely to be authorial, or scribal?
3. To quantify the incidence of variants of each group across all the witnesses. Witnesses genetically part of a group will have a high proportion of the variants of that group; witnesses contaminated by it will have a lesser proportion;

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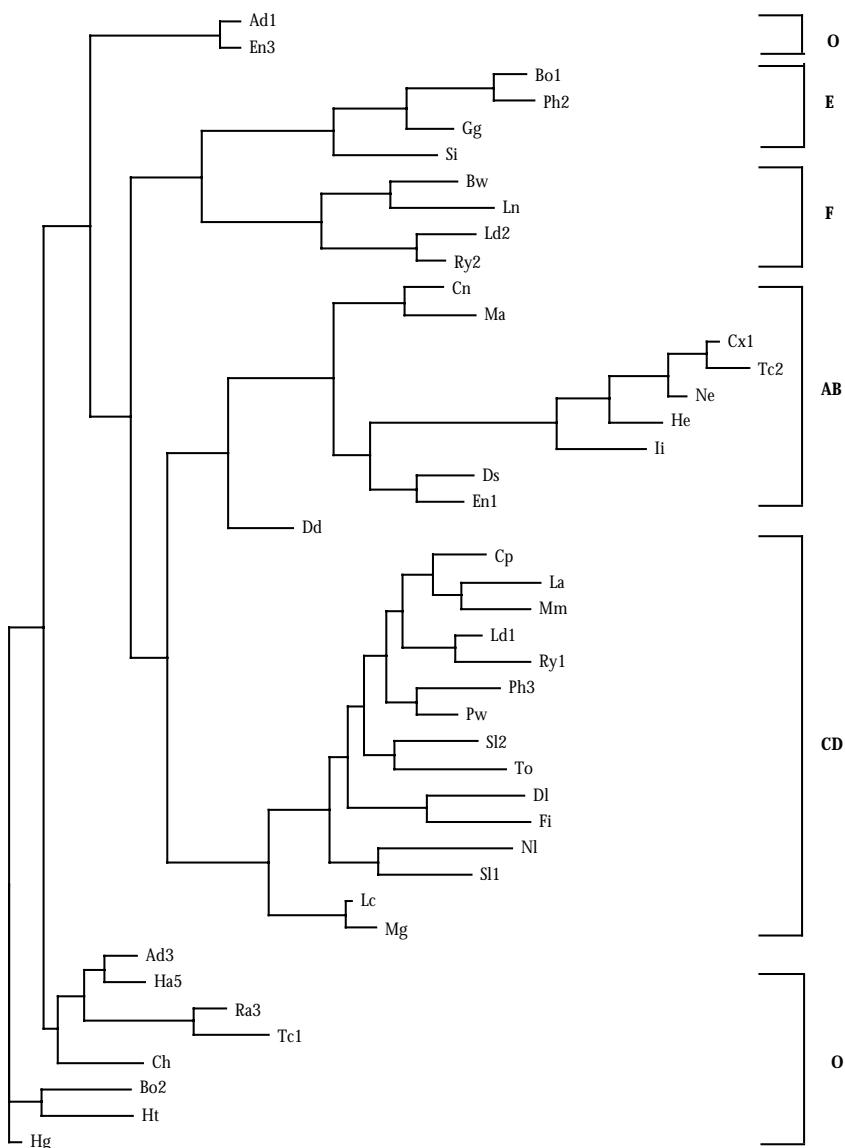


Figure 4. The cladogram of fundamental witness groupings

4. To clarify relationships suggested by cladistics: are groups E and F descended from a single hyparchetype? does the B group descend from an A manuscript, and the A group from Dd or a manuscript very close to Dd?
5. What evidence is there for the existence of lost exemplars (especially, of exemplars close to Chaucer's own text); what can be deduced of the nature of such exemplars?

Once these are done, we may use what we have learned to fix the relationship of the fifteen witnesses not included in these fundamental groupings to the forty-three witnesses they do include.

Identifying the variants characteristic of each group

The first step is to determine the variants characteristic of each group of witnesses. The method adopted was as follows. For each group of witnesses, the variant database was used to identify the variants most likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the hyparchetype of each group. Because of the operation of contamination and coincident variation, it is improbable that (for example) every variant introduced by the hyparchetype of the four witnesses in group E will appear in every one of the four witnesses of that group, and only in that four. That is, it is only rarely that we will see over and over again the four sigils Bo₁ Gg Ph₂ Si appearing on their own, and with no other sigils. Rather, we may see two or three of the four on their own.¹⁰ Or, we may see the two or three from this fundamental group joined by sigils for other witnesses (perhaps, from the fifteen excluded witnesses) which affiliate to this group from time to time, whether by shift of exemplar, or contamination, or simple coincidence. Thus, readings with the following combinations of sigils are evidence of the existence of group E:

Bo₁ Gg Ph₂ Si
 Bo₁ Gg Ph₂
 Bo₁ Ph₂ Si
 Ph₂ Gg

So also are the following:

Bo₁ El Ph₂ Si
 Bo₁ El Ph₂ Ra₃ Si
 Bo₁ El Gl Ph₂ Ra₁ Si
 Bo₁ El Gg Hk Ht Ph₂ Sl₂
 Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

Less obviously, so also are likely to be:

Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Ii Ph₂ Ra₂ Ra₃ Si Tc₁
 Bo₁ El Fi Gg Ht Ii Mc Ph₂ Ra₁ Si

The following is on the borderline, with the large number of sigils from distinct and presumably unrelated groups (B: Cx₁ Cx₂ He Ii Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy; CD: Nl) suggesting that this reading is specially likely to arise by coincidence:

Bo₁ Cx₁ Cx₂ El Gg He Ii Ne Nl Ph₂ Pn Si Tc₂ Wy

The following is probably not distinctive of this group. The presence of sigils for witnesses close to the presumed archetype (Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch Hg Ht Ra₃ Tc₁) suggests it is ancestral to the whole tradition, and not introduced by the hyparchetype for this group:

Ad₃ Bo₁ Bo₂ Ch El Gg Ha₄ Hg Ht Ph₂ Py Ra₂ Ra₃ Tc₁

From instances such as this, it appears that a reading likely to be characteristic of a group, as having been introduced by the hyparchetype of the group and present in them by descent, will satisfy the following criteria:

1. The reading will be present in the witnesses of the group in such a distribution as to make it likely that it was present in the group's ancestor also. Thus: if the group appears to have two branches, the reading should be present in at least one witness in each branch. For group E, this will mean readings have to be present in one of Bo₁/Ph₂, and in one of Gg or Si.
2. The reading should not be present in the likely immediate ancestor of the hyparchetype, so far as this can be identified. If it is present in an ancestor higher up the tree, then it will be likely to descend to other groups, and so not be characteristic of this group. For group E, we may take Hg as representative of the likely ancestor (in fact, as the last example above suggests, one could get similar results by choosing any witness of group o.)
3. The reading should not be present in witnesses from so many other distinct groups as to make it likely that its occurrence in witnesses of this or any group is the result of coincidence. One has to be careful here: if the number of 'outside' witnesses allowed is set too low, then one may exclude readings which indeed arose uniquely in the ancestor of this group and then spread by contamination or shift of exemplar beyond the group. These are just the readings in which we are specially interested. But if we set this too high, we will swamp genuine instances of readings introduced by the ancestor of the group with readings arising in many different places by simple coincidence, and so baffle analysis.

For group E, the figure was set at a total of fourteen witnesses: at least two from the group itself, and up to a further twelve from outside the group. This figure was set quite high because this group—or its lost hyparchetype—appears to have been peculiarly influential, and so readings from this group are specially likely to spread elsewhere.

Using these specifications, all the examples above except the last two qualify readily as characteristic of group E. The second last (the reading in Bo₁ Cx₁ Cx₂ El Gg He Ii Ne Ni Ph₂ Pn Si Tc₂ Wy) only just qualifies, as a borderline case: it has exactly the fourteen witnesses permitted by criterion 3.¹¹ The last example (the reading in Ad₃ Bo₁ Bo₂ Ch El Gg Ha₄ Hg Ht Ph₂ Py Ra₂ Ra₃ Tc₁) fails on criterion 2 (it is in Hg), though just satisfying criterion 3 (it is in fourteen witnesses.)

The variant database used in this analysis has been specifically designed to perform complex queries of this type. In the screen shot in Figure 5 the queries in lines one and two correspond to criterion 1 above: together, these will find

all readings in at least one of Bo1/Ph2 and in one or both of Gg or Si. The qualification ‘with !punct’ in line one has the database exclude all punctuation variants. The condition in line three corresponds to criterion 2 above: readings not in Hg, the manuscript selected as nearest the ancestor of the hyparchetype of group E. The condition in line four corresponds to criterion 3: readings in less than fifteen of the fifty-eight witnesses. A further condition is added in line five: the reading should not be in any of the manuscripts of group F (Bw Ld2 Ln Ry2.) This is to distinguish the readings present in group E by descent from the exclusive common ancestor of this group, and only this group, from the readings present in both groups E and F by descent from the hypothetical ancestor shared by both E and F.

Clicking the **Search All** button searches the variant database for readings whose sigils satisfy the conditions in all five lines, and thus all three criteria given above. There are 147 readings which satisfy these conditions, and hence are likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the hyparchetype of this group. The first of these readings appear in the window below. They are then all saved into a file for use in later analysis.

| Find all variants which satisfy these conditions: | | | |
|---|-----|------------------------|-------------|
| 1. <input checked="" type="radio"/> In <input type="radio"/> Not in | >0 | of Bo1 Ph2 with !punct | In.. Search |
| 2. <input checked="" type="radio"/> In <input type="radio"/> Not in | >0 | of Gg Si | In.. Search |
| 3. <input type="radio"/> In <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not in | | of Hg | In.. Search |
| 4. <input checked="" type="radio"/> In <input type="radio"/> Not in | <15 | of \all | In.. Search |
| 5. <input type="radio"/> In <input checked="" type="radio"/> Not in | | of Ld2 Ln Bw Ry2 | In.. Search |

147 reading(s) found satisfying those conditions

| | |
|--|---|
| L59 Where seye] Whan saw ye euere Bo1 E1 Ph2 Si | ↑ |
| L71 certes] certeyn Bo1 E1 Ph2 Ra3 Si | ☰ |
| L72 thanne wherof] wherof thanne Bo1 E1 G1 Ph2 Ra1 Si | ⊕ |
| L85 that] Omitted Bo1 E1 Gg Hk Ht Ph2 S12 | |
| L91 he heeld] that Bo1 E1 Gg Ph2 | |
| L92 parfit] profiteth Bo1 E1 Gg Ph2 | |

OK **Search all** **Output to...** **Write output** **Help...** **Variant Set...**

Figure 5. Identifying the readings characteristic of group E

This method was used for each of the fundamental witness groups A B CD E F O identified above. The following sections give, for each group, the query used to retrieve all the variants for the group, examples of these variants, and comments on the status of these variants: specifically, what they tell us of the *usus scribendi* of the presumed hyparchetype in which these variants arose, and the possibility that these variants might represent an authorial revision.

The variants of groups E and F

Group E

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

in >o of Bo₁ Ph₂ with !punct

AND in >o of Gg Si

AND not in Hg

AND in <15 of \all

AND not in Ld₂ Ln Bw Ry₂

That is: all variants in one or both of Bo₁ Ph₂, and in one or both of Gg Si, and not in Hg, and in less than fifteen witnesses, and not in any of Ld₂ Ln Bw Ry₂.

This query returned 147 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or by incorrect regularization and were removed from the group: 144 (barly breefor Hg barleybreedzo₁ (folkefor folkzo₅ (botheomitted) 436 (so omitted) 437 (synfor sit)₄₄₃ (thus to gruccfor to grucche th)₁₄₄₈ (is for any) 512 (agayn anon for anon) 624 (atfor of) 763 (hiisfor thi)₇₉₀ (anonomitted) 793 (Thanne for And tha)₇₉₄ (yourfor Hg thy) 830 (quod heomitted.)

This left a total of 134 readings as characteristic of the E group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the E variants identified up to line 150 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

59 Where seye] Whan saw ye euer Bo₁ El Ph₂ Si

71 certes] certeyr Bo₁ El Ph₂ Ra₃ Si

72 thanne whero[wherof thann Bo₁ El Gl Ph₂ Ra₁ Si₈₅ that]

Omitted Bo₁ El Gg Hk Ht Ph₂ Sl₂

91 he heel[that Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

92 parfi[profite Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

97 It] Hem Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

97 hem] Omitted Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

97 in] Omitted Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂

98 wol] ny[Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Ra₂ Si

100 Ne] He Bo₁ Gg Ph₂ Si

108 he] Omitted Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Ii Ph₂ Ra₂ Ra₃ Si Tc₁

116 maad] ymaad Bo₁ Dl El Ph₂ Si Sl₁

121 and bothe bothe and Bo₁ Gg Ph₂

122 Was] And Ad₁ Bo₁ El En₃ Gg Ph₂ Se Si

130 man] a man Bo₁ El Gg Nl Ph₂ Si

134 eek] Omitted Bo₁ El Gg Hk

142 envie[nat envi Ad₃ Bo₁ El Ma Ph₂ Si

Other readings in this group up to line 400 which have a significant effect on sense or metre (or both) include:

188 quod she] sires Bo₁ El Ph₂ Si
 189 that] yet Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂ Si
 193 thanne] now Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Ph₂ Ra₂ Si
 209 bisye] sett Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂ Si
 220 ful blisful] ~~wass~~ ful bli**Be** El Ra₁ Si
 259 or] and Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Mc Ra₂ Si
 260 dalyaunc~~s~~ somme for dalyaunc~~s~~ Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂
 282 we] that w Bo₁ El Gg Ph₂ Si
 288 stoole~~s~~ and stool Bo₁ El Gg He Ii Si
 326 hyestel the hyest El Gg Lc Mg Mm Ph₂ Si
 357 helpe~~t~~ eylet Bo₁ El Gg Si
 368 resemblaunce~~s~~ of thise resemblaunce~~s~~ Bo₁ Gg Si
 372 water may na~~n~~no water may Bo₁ Gg Si
 387 I] yet Bo₁ Gg Mc Ph₂ Ra₁ Ra₂ Si To
 388 often tym~~f~~ omitted Bo₁ Cx₁ Cx₂ Gg Ha₄ He Ii Ne Ph₂ Pn Ra₂ Si
 Tc₂ Wy

Particularly notable is the frequency with which group E manuscripts are joined by El and (to a slightly lesser degree) Ha₄.

Comments

The variants in this group are discussed by Elizabeth Solopova, in her article 'Chaucer's Metre and Scribal Editing in the Early Manuscripts of The Canterbury Tales' in this volume. The variants in this group are the result of deliberate scribal editing aimed at producing a 'clearer prosaic style, less conversational, less emotional, more formal.' The effect of this editing on metre is particularly marked: 'it seems that the editor wished to meet the requirements of a neutral and balanced prosaic style, and in an eagerness to remove syntactic inversions, "metrical words" and colloquialisms, often damaged the metre.' The result is often 'a plainly unmetered, prosaic text.' In addition, Solopova comments that 'the introduction of a more formal style and removal of colloquialisms impedes Chaucer's expression of the characters through their speech,' and that many of the changes conform to types characteristic of scribal intervention, as observed by Windeatt and Kane.

Accordingly, the version of the text contained in the E group witnesses, and thus the group of variants introduced by the E exemplar, is the result of revision by a scribe, and not by Chaucer.

Group F

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

in >_o of Bw Ln with !punct
 AND in >_o of Ld₂ Ry₂
 AND not in Hg
 AND in <₁₅ of \all
 AND not in Gg Bo₁ Si Ph₂

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That is: all variants in one or both of Bw Ln, and in one or both of Ld₂ Ry₂, and not in Hg, and in less than fifteen witnesses, and not in any of Gg Bo₁ Si Ph₂.

This query returned 110 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and were removed from the group: 124 (*The experience wofor Thexperience woot we*) 130 (*sholdefor sha*) 202 (*anyghtfor a nygh*) 303 ('etfor yet) 303 (*prenticefor apprentice*) 337 (*that omitted*) 346 (*thefor thy*) 437 (*sen for syn*) 541 (*hym selfor hymself*) 641 (*moo for mo*.) Also, the variant *wrightfor Hg wight* 17 was added: though present in Bw Ld₂ Ry₂ it was not retrieved by the variant database as it is part of a variant on a phrase including this word in Bw.

This left a total of 99 readings as characteristic of the F group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the F variants identified up to line 150 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

- 4 was] had Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
5 on lyuſalyue Cp Fi La Ld₂ Ln Mm Pw Ry₁ Ry₂ To
10 sith that Crisſt Cm̄est Bw Cx₁ Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Ry₁ Ry₂ Tc₂
12 taughte hſhe taught Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
14 Herke] Herkne El Fi Ld₂ Ln Mc Nl Ra₁ Ry₂
16 of] to Ld₂ Ln Ra₂ Ry₁ Ry₂
18 ilkſthil Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
28 for] Omitted Bw Cn Ht Ld₂ Ln Ma Ry₂
30 Eek] Omitted Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
30 he seyde] omitted Bw Cn Cx₁ Ds En₁ He Ii Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Ry₂ Se
Tc₂
36 he] that h Bw Lc Ld₂ Ln Mg Py Ry₂
38 ofte] wel Ad₁ Bw En₃ Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
40 thiſ the Ad₁ Bo₂ Bw Ha₄ Ld₂ Ra₂ Ry₂
70 the dede] out dred Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
71 were] nere Bw Cx₂ Pn Ry₂ Wy
74 A] That Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
75 dart] spere Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
75 vp for] vpon Ad₁ Bw En₃ Ha₄ Hk Ii Ld₂ Pn Ra₂ Ry₂ Tc₂ Wy
76 Cacche] That Ln Ry₂
77 take] ytake Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
80 nathelees th̄neuerethelēs th̄d̄ Ld₂ Ln Mc Ra₁ Wy
93 if] Omitted Ad₁ Bw Ch En₃ Ld₂ Ln Mc Ps Ra₁ Ry₂ Tc₁
93 he] I Bw Ln Ry₂
95 haue] ne haue Bw Ld₂
98 no] my Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
113 the of] omitted Bw Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
117 wight] wright Ld₂ Ry₂ (also Bw, as part of a longer variant)

121 oure bothe~~s~~ other Ad₁ Bw Ch Cn Ds En₁ En₃ Ld₂ Ma Ry₂ Se
 126 that] Omitted Bw Cx₁ Ii Ld₂ Ln Ne Ry₂ Tc₂ Wy
 128 ther] dar Bw Cn Ld₂ Ma
 133 a] Omitted Ad₃ Bw Ry₂
 148 perseuerel preserue~~Ad₃~~ Bw Ht Ld₂

Observe the concentration of F variants towards the beginning of the poem: one third of the 99 F variants (32 of 99) occur in the first 150 lines.

Comments

The character of these variants suggests scribal carelessness rather than deliberate revision, as seen in the E variants discussed above. Some variants make the text more explicit (18 That thilke ~~man~~ That ilke ~~þ~~others smooth meaning at the expense of vividness (16 in repreue to the Samaritan~~for~~ in repreue of the Samari~~an~~~~þ~~others smooth the word order at the cost of emphasis and metre (12 he taughte ~~for~~ taughte he ~~þe~~ others omit words, with no loss of meaning but with considerable damage to metre (10 That Crist wente neuere but ~~for~~~~þat~~ sith that Crist ne wente neuere but ~~only~~~~þ~~others replace a less common word by a more common word (75 spere~~for~~ dart so losing the allusion to Cupid's dart); others substitute a common expression for a more vivid phrase (70 without dredefor with the de~~d~~others are simple nonsense (148 I wol preser~~for~~ I wol perseuer~~likel~~ likely prompted by misunderstanding of marks of abbreviation.)

Accordingly, the version of the text contained in the F group witnesses, and thus the group of variants introduced by the F exemplar, is the result of scribal carelessness and tinkering, and not of revision by Chaucer.

The EF variants

The query

The cladistic analysis shown in figure 4 suggested that the E and F groups shared a common ancestor below the archetype. The variant database was used to test this, by seeking to identify the variants apparently introduced by this hyparchetype.

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

```
in >0 of Bo1 Ph2 Gg Si with !punct
AND in >0 of Ln Bw Ld2 Ry2
AND not in Hg
AND in <15 of \all
AND in >2 of Bo1 Ph2 Gg Si Ln Bw Ld2 Ry2
```

That is: all variants in at least one E group witness (i.e. any of Bo₁ Ph₂ Gg Si), and in at least one F group witness, and not in Hg, and in less than fifteen witnesses, and in three or more of the witnesses of the combined E and F groups.

This query returned 67 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and were removed from the group: 303 ('it~~for~~ yet) 506 (a¹ for a²) 508 (& for and) 510 (at~~for~~ tha²) 512 (ageyn an~~or~~ anon) 546 (auerylle~~for~~ april

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and.) All these were the result of incorrect regularization. This left a total of 61 readings as characteristic of the EF group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the EF variants identified up to line 550 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

- 6 atte] at Ad₃ Bo₁ El Gl Ii Ld₁ Ln Ph₂ Ry₂ Se
31 to] Omitted Ad₁ El En₃ Hk Ii Ld₂ Ln Ry₂ Si
56 euere] Omitted Cn El Ha₄ Ld₂ Ln Ma Mc Ra₁ Ra₂ Ry₁ Si
60 defended] defendet₁ Bo₁ Bw Ra₃ Ry₂
78 as] that Bw Ds En₁ Ld₂ Ln Ry₂ Si
98 I] nat Bw Dd El Gg Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
109 it] Omitted Bo₁ Ln Mc Ph₂ Ra₁
136 to yow] of Bo₁ Bw El Gg Hk Ld₂ Ph₂ Ry₂
146 Iesus] Omitted Bo₁ El Ha₄ Ld₂ Ni Ph₂ Ra₂
149 wol † I w~~c~~ Bo₁ El Gg Ha₄ Ln Ph₂ Ra₂ Si
187 techet₁ tell₁ Gg Ld₂ Ry₂
198 statu† statute₁ Ld₂ Ln Ph₂ Ry₂
199 vnto] to Bw Ld₂ Ln Ph₂ Ry₂
204 hin] Omitted Bo₁ Bw Fi Gl Hk Ph₂
226 sholde] sha~~1~~ Bo₁ Bw El Gg Ld₂ Ln Ph₂ Ps Ra₁ Ra₂ Si
257 som] that son~~1~~ Bo₁ Dl El Gg Gl Ha₄ Ln Ra₃ Ry₁ Si Tc₁ To
263 men] that mer Bo₁ Ln Ph₂ Ps
269 ther] Omitted Bo₁ Bw El Fi Ld₂ Mc Ph₂ Ps Ra₁ Ry₂ Si
292 And thann~~1~~ Thanne Bo₁ El Gg Ln Mc Ph₂ Ra₁ Si
364 that] Omitted Bw Cn Ld₂ Ln Ph₂ Ph₃ Ry₂
379 thus] Omitted Bw Hk Ld₂ Ln Ry₂ Si
389 to mille com~~1~~thomth to the mi~~1~~Ba~~2~~Dd Ha₄ Ld₂ Ln Ra₂ Si Sl₂
405 thyng] of thyn~~1~~ Bw Ii Ln Py Si
406 or] and Bo₁ Cp Dd Gg He Ld₂ Ln Mc Ph₂ Py Ra₁ Ry₂ Si
420 hem bisyde] by his syde Bo₁ Bw Dl Gg Ph₂ Py
468 lechour~~1~~ lecherou~~1~~ Ad₃ En₃ Ht Ld₂ Ln Ra₁ Ry₂ Se Si Tc₂
477 is] nys Ad₃ Bo₂ Cx₂ Ld₂ Ph₃ Pn Pw Ra₂ Ry₁ Ry₂ Si Wy
515 that] Omitted Gg Hk Ld₂ Ma Ni Ry₁ Ry₂ Sl₁ Tc₁
542 to] Omitted Bo₁ Gg Lc Ld₂ Mg Ph₂ Ps Ry₂ Si Sl₂

Comments

As with the F variants, the character of the EF variants suggests scribal carelessness rather than deliberate revision. Some changes affect sense and metre little or not at all (60 defendeth mariag~~for~~ defended mariag~~for~~ 406 and grucchyn~~for~~ or grucchyn~~for~~) others are at the expense of vividness (56 euere omitted); others substitute a more usual word order and more prosaic expression (389 comth to the mi~~for~~ o mille com~~1~~tho seten by his syde for seten hem bisyde) others smooth sense at the cost of rhetorical emphasis (379 right as ye han vnderst~~for~~ right thus , as ye han vnderstonde with the placement of the virgule in Hg critical to the colloquial effect); others

smooth syntax at the expense of metre (405 som maner of thyn^{for} som maner thyn_g)

Accordingly, the version of the text shared by witnesses from both groups E and F, and thus the group of variants introduced by the EF exemplar, is the result of scribal carelessness and tinkering, and not of revision by Chaucer. The distribution of these variants across the witnesses and particularly across the witnesses of both groups E and F (41 of the EF variants occur in four or more of the eight core E and F witnesses Bo₁ Gg Ph₂ Si Bw Ln Ld₂ Ry₂; 27 occur in five or more; 13 in six or more) suggests that the cladistic analysis was correct in suggesting that the E and F groups shared a hyparchetype. The significance of this is that it implies that the extant witnesses of groups E and F—and the manuscripts which are closely affiliated with them, notably El and Ha₄—are actually removed by at least two stages of copying, both introducing significant error, from the archetype of the whole tradition. The first stage of copying is that represented by EF hyparchetype; the second stage is the copies made from this into the separate E and F hyparchetypes, from which the eight witnesses of the two groups directly descend.

The variants of groups A and B

From figure 4, there appears a close link between the manuscript Dd, the four manuscripts of Manly and Rickert's A group (Cn Ma Ds En₁), and the five witnesses of Manly and Rickert's B group (Ii He Ne Cx₁ Tc₂). This relationship was explored further by seeking to identify, through the variant database, the variants introduced at each of the following three points:

1. In Dd, or an immediate relative: these are the Dd variants
2. In the A group exemplar: the A variants
3. In the B group exemplar: the B variants

From the cladogram, it appears that the A group witnesses descend from a witness either very close to Dd or from Dd itself, and that the B group witnesses descend in turn from a witness very close to an A group witness. Identification of the variants characteristic of each group and study of their distribution across the tradition will help clarify this.

The Dd variants

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

```
in Dd with !punct
AND not in Hg Ch Ad3 Ad1 En3 Ha5 Ra3 Tc1 Bo2 Ht
AND in <20 of \all
AND in >1 of \all
```

That is: all variants in Dd, not in any of the 'O' group witnesses and so unlikely to be ancestral to the whole tradition, in less than twenty witnesses in all, and in at least one other witness beside Dd.

This query returned 108 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and

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were removed from the group: 27 (with *oute for* without *en*) 66 (, all *for*
allaszoz ('et *for ye*) 306 (æet *for Yet*) 307 (wol *for wil* *E* *for thou*) 308
(wita for wit) 312 (cleped *for callad*) 335 (, *pardee for pardee*) 436 441
(sith for sit) 512 (agayn *anon for anon*)

All variants in the additional passages were also removed, as these were judged particularly likely to travel by contamination. This left a total of 70 readings as likely to have been introduced into the tradition either by Dd or a very close relative.

The variants

The following are all the Dd variants identified up to line 300 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

- 9 certeyn] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Dd Dl Ds En₁ Fi He Ma Ne Pn Ps Wy
- 39 yift^þa yift^þa Cx₁ Cx₂ Dd Ds En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Nl Pn Se Si Tc₂
- Wy
- 40 in this world al^þyow on lyu^þCx₁ Dd Ds En₁ He Ii Ne Nl Se Si
- Tc₂
- 56 euere þeuery Dd Ph₃
- 59 seye] se Dd Fi Hk Ln
- 65 therof] Omitted Cn Cp Dd Dl En₂ Gl Ha₂ Ld₁ Ma Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁
- Sl₂ To
- 84 it] Omitted Dd Ld₁ Ry₁
- 88 as] Omitted Bo₁ Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Dd Ds En₁ Ha₂ Ha₄ Ii Ma Ne Pn Ps
- Ra₂ Se Si Tc₂ Wy
- 89 fyr] tow Dd Mc Ra₁
- 98 I] nat Bw Dd El Gg Ld₂ Ln Ry₂
- 122 Was] Were Cp Dd Dl Fi Gl Ha₂ La Ld₁ Mc Mm Ph₃ Ps Pw Ra₁ Ry₁
- Sl₁ Sl₂ To
- 127 for] bothe fo^þCx₁ Cx₂ Dd He Ii Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy
- 132 he] that h^þp Dd Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₂ Ln Mc Mg Mm Ph₃ Pw Ra₁
- Ry₂ Sl₁ To
- 168 wyf] Omitted Dd Fi Gl Ld₁ Mm Nl Ph₃ Ps Pw Se Sl₁ Sl₂ To
- 186 spareth] and sparet^þDd Hk Ps
- 188 it] that ^þin Dd En₁ Ma
- 191 nat] it na^þDd Ds En₁ Py
- 201 I] that Gx₂ Dd Ha₄ He Pn Wy
- 217 I] as Dd Ps
- 231 if] shal , Dd Lc Mg Mm
- 232 Shal] Omitted Cp Dd Dl Fi Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mc Mg Mm Ph₃ Ps Pw
- Ra₁ Ry₁ Sl₂ To
- 232 the] that th^þn Cp Dd Dl Ha₂ La Ld₁ Ma Mc Mm Ps Pw Ry₁ Sl₁
- Sl₂ To
- 243 I] that ^þn Cx₁ Cx₂ Dd En₁ Ii Ma Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy
- 245 his] hir Dd Mc Ra₁ Tc₂
- 290 fol^þmen Bo₁ Dd Mc Nl Ps

Comments

The character of the Dd variants suggests scribal rather than authorial variation. Colloquial emphasis is lost by the omission of *certeyn* line 9, of *i* in line 84, of *as* in 88. The version of this line in Dd: *He mente in his bed or in his couche* for Hg *He mente as in his bed or in his* typifies these changes: omission of just the two-letter word *as* quite alters the impact and metre of the line. A more usual syntax is supplied by which a *yif* or *which yift* in line 39. The expression is rendered prosaic by the substitution of *now* on *lyue* *for* in this world *alyuor* *in dies* 40. In line 56 *as fer as euery can* for *as fer as euer* I results from mechanical misreading. The substitution of *hadde he therof noon* *therof hadde he noon* 65 renders the metre awkward, while the abbreviation of lines 9 and 40 reflects a taste for shorter lines. There is a preference for a more explicit expression in *bothe for office* and *for es* 127, for Hg *for office* and *for and* for the easier *taketh it nat agr* in line 191 where Hg has *taketh nat agr*. The overall effect is very similar to that of the E group variants: a prosaic, less colloquial and less interesting expression, with many lines which are unpoetic and lack vividness and force.

The relationship between Dd and the A witnesses Cn Ma Ds En₁ is clearly close. Of the 70 Dd variants, Cn has 21, Ma has 25, Ds₁ has 21, En₁ has 28. Thus, in the list given above of Dd variants in the first 300 lines, the reading is shared with A group witnesses in lines 9, 39, 65, 88, 188, 191, 232 (that t^e 243, and with B witnesses but not A in 127). In the other lines up to line 200, A witnesses have a related reading in 40 (now *alyuor* now a *lyve*) readings possibly derived from attempts to correct obviously-incorrect Dd readings in 56 (*as fer as I here for Dd as fer as euery*) and 84 (so it is not to repreve for Dd so is noon repreve where Hg has so nys it no repreve) and consecutive variation in 98 (A *I wol make for Dd I wol nat maken* for Hg *ne wol*).¹

If the A witnesses are indeed derived from Dd, one will not expect to find the A witnesses agreeing with Hg (taken as likely to be nearest to Dd's immediate exemplar) against Dd. For this to happen, one must presume that in each case of agreement between A witnesses and Hg against Dd, the scribe of the A exemplar had in front of him or her the error in Dd and in each case managed to restore the correct reading, as found in Hg. This may well have happened in the following: 59 (*sey for se*; an easy correction); 89 (A Hg *fyr and tow* for Dd *tow* and *fyr* restoring a set phrase) 132 (A Hg *If hDd If that he*; minor variation in otiose *that*) But it is more difficult to see this happening in the following: 122 (A Hg *thinges smale / Was eke to knowe* for Dd *Were eke to knowe*) 27 (A Hg *for office* and *for Dd* *the for office* and *for es*) 168 (A Hg *wedde no wif to yere* for Dd *wedde noon to yere*) 186 (A Hg *telle forth your tale, spareth fo* for Dd *manle forth your tale and spareth for*). In these cases, it is unlikely that a scribe with the Dd reading in the exemplar would have spontaneously replaced it by the quite distinctive Chaucerian reading found (for instance) in 122 and 186.

On this evidence, it is difficult to argue that the A witnesses are descended from Dd itself, at least in this part of The Canterbury Tales. However, they are clearly descended from a witness very close to Dd, and the many readings shared by Dd and the A witnesses arise from common descent from an ancestor below the archetype. This ancestor (henceforth, the Dd/A ancestor) introduced readings common to both A and Dd (thus the readings they share) while preserving many readings from the archetype lost in Dd, though kept in A (thus, the readings shared by A with Hg against Dd.) From the list given above, one may identify the Dd/A variants apparently introduced by this Dd/A ancestor: they are the readings shared by Dd and A witnesses. Thus, the readings in lines 9 39 40 65 are likely to have been present in the Dd/A ancestor. These readings do not appear to be authorial revision; like Dd itself, the Dd/A ancestor was the result of scribal alteration and does not represent Chaucer's reworking of the text.

For further discussion of the Dd/A ancestor, and the possible use of a Dd/A ancestor by El, see the discussion of the 'added passages' below.

The A Variants

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

```
in >o of Cn Ma
AND in >o of Ds En1
AND not in Dd
AND in <2 of Hg Ad3 Ad1 En3 Ha5 Ra3 Tc1 Bo2 Ht Ch
AND in <2 of Cp La Mm Pw Fi
```

That is: all variants in at least one of Cn Ma, in at least one of Ds En₁, not in Dd, not in more than one of the O group witnesses nearest the archetype, and not in more than one of the C group witnesses.

This query returned 135 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and were removed from the group: 307 (wo⁻ for wi)₁ 310 (πde for pardee) 599 (Myn for Myn) 633 (paraph added) 653 (ageyn for agayn) All variants in the additional passages were also removed, as these were judged particularly likely to travel by contamination. This left a total of 96 readings as characteristic of the A group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the A variants identified up to line 250 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

```
4 For] But Cx1 Cx2 Ds En1 He Ma Mc Ne Pn Ra1 Se Si Tc2 Wy
4 yeer] wynter Cx1 Ds En1 Ma Ne Nl Se Tc2
14 Herke 1bLo herkne Cn Ds En1 Ma Se Si
17 yhad] had Bo1 Cn Cx1 Cx2 Dl En1 Ha2 He Hk Ht Ii Ln Ma Ne Ph2
    Pn Ra2 Se Si Tc2 Wy
26 dyuyne] deme Cn Cx1 Cx2 Ds En1 Fi He Ii Ma Ne Nl Pn Py Se Si Tc2
    Wy
```

30 Eek] For Cn Cx₁ Ds En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Se Tc₂
 30 he seyde] omitted Bw Cn Cx₁ Ds En₁ He Ii Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Ry₂ Se
 Tc₂
 34 thannel] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds El En₁ Ha₄ He Ii Ma Ne Pn Ra₂ Se
 Si Tc₂ Wy
 46a] after L₄₅ Cn En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Se Tc₂
 53 fol₁] men Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ He Ii Ld₁ Ma Ne Pn Ry₁ Se Si Tc₂
 Wy
 54 his] of hi₆n Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Fi He Ii Ln Ma Mc Ne Pn Ra₁ Ry₂ Se
 Tc₂ Wy
 56 Iacob eek Iacob Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds Ii Ma Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy
 61 word] wordes Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ En₁ Ii Ma Ne Ni Pn Se Si Tc₂ Wy
 67 conseilly_h conseil Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ii Ma Ne Pn Py Se Tc₂ Wy
 68 put] puttet Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ En₁ Hk Ii Ma Ne Pn Se Tc₂ Wy
 79 that thapostle_h the apost Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds El En₁ Fi Ii Ma Ne Ni Pn
 Ps Se Si Tc₂ Wy
 80 that] Omitted Bw Ch Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Fi Ma Ne Pn Ry₂ Se Si Tc₂
 81 swich] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Ds En₁ Ii Ma Ne Ni Ph₃ Py Se Si Tc₂
 84 nys] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ii Ma Mc Ne Ni Pn Ra₁ Se Si Tc₂
 Wy
 84 no] is nat Cn Ds En₁ Ma Mc Ra₁ Se Si
 89 bothe] Omitted Cn Ds En₁ Gg Ma
 94 al] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Ds En₁ Hk Ii La Lc Ma Mg Ne Se Tc₂
 99 For] Fu₁Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Pn Ry₂ Se Si Tc₂ Wy
 102 fol₁] Omited Bw Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ii Ld₂ Ma Ne Pn Ry₁ Ry₂ Se
 Si Tc₂ Wy
 102 in] folk Bw Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Pn Ry₁ Ry₂ Si Tc₂ Wy
 104 liket_h list Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ii Ma Ne Pn Ps Se Tc₂ Wy
 126 this] thus Bw Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Ht Ii Ld₂ Ln Ma Ne Pn Ra₂ Ry₂
 Se Si Tc₂ Wy
 130 shal] shold Bw Cn Ds He Ii Ld₂ Ln Ni Ra₂ Ry₂ Se Tc₁ Tc₂
 140 seynt sith t_haboly seynt sc₆n Cx₁ Ds En₁ He Ma Ne Se Si
 Tc₂
 197 and] Omitted Ds En₁ Ha₄ Ma Ps Py Ra₂ Si
 212 al] Omitted Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Pn Ps Tc₂ Wy
 214 myn] for myn Bw Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds Ii Ld₂ Ma Ne Ph₂ Pn Ra₁ Ra₂
 Ry₂ Tc₁ Tc₂ Wy
 222 glad fayn Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy
 226 wrong] Omitted Bo₂ Cn Cx₁ Cx₂ Dl Ds El En₁ He Ii Ma Ne Pn Tc₂
 Wy

Comments

The great majority of the changes introduced in the A witnesses are typical of scribal alteration, as we have seen it at work in the E F and Dd variants. Thus the loss of dramatic emphasis for a smoother expression in 14 (Lo herkn_{for} Hg Herke eek , 1039 (For wel I w_{for} Hg Eek wel I w_{dp}the substitution

Stemmatic Analysis of The Wife of Bath's Prologue

of a more usual and less vivid word or expression (26 Men may demen for Hg Men may dyuynē 53 men for Hg folk61 By expres wordefor Hg BY expres worþ expression is rendered less dramatic and more prosaic, with a preference for metrically lighter lines, by omission or other alteration in several lines (30 he seydeomitted; 34 thanneomitted; 67 consei for Hg conseilly&g thatomitted); transposition to create a more usual word order loses vividness and damages metre in 56 (And eke Iacob for Hg And Iacob eke); the substitution of the present tense puttet for the past put in line 68 unbalances the metre.

A few changes show rather more sensitivity to the text. Compare the A version of line 4:

But lordynges sith I twelf wynter was of age
with the same line in Hg:

For lordynges sith that I twelf yeer was of age
The sense in A is more concrete, more explicit, with the substitution of But for For and wynterfor yeer There is little to choose between the A and Hg readings; it is only that the connective For is slightly more appropriate to the context than the harder contrastive But which suggests that Hg is the original. Other changes in A are similarly intelligent, and without the violence to sense or metre (or both) seen elsewhere: substitution of the apostle for Hg that thapostlin line 79. However, the few good readings introduced by the A scribe do not seem beyond the invention of a competent scribe, and are considerably outweighed by the number of inferior A variants. There is no need to presume that the few good readings represent a Chaucerian revision; rather, where a scribe introduces so many changes it is likely that some will be acceptable.

The B witnesses (Cx₁ He Ii Ne Tc₂) are clearly descended from an A witness. Of the 96 readings identified as characteristic of the A variants, 61 are found in Cx₁, 44 in He, 51 in Ii, 57 in Ne, 62 in Tc₂. The rather higher number of A variants found in Cx₁ than in He, the manuscript usually taken as the best representative of the B group, is striking. One should expect that the B witness nearest to the B hyparchetype to preserve the greatest number of A readings. This suggests that Cx₁ (and also Tc₂ and Ne) are better examples of B group witnesses than is He.

The B Variants

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

in >3 of Cx₁ He Ii Ne Tc₂ with !punct

AND not in Dd Ds Cn Ma En₁

AND in <2 of Hg Ad₃ Ad₁ En₃ Ha₅ Ra₃ Tc₁ Bo₂ Ht Ch

AND in <2 of Cp La Mm Pw Fi Ph₃ Sl₂ To

That is: all variants in at least three of Cx₁ He Ii Ne Tc₂, not in Dd or any A group witness, not in more than one of the O group witnesses nearest the archetype, and not in more than one of the C group witnesses.

This query returned 175 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and

were removed from the group: 278 (hous for houses) 280 (filler character omitted) variants in the added line 332-1. This left a total of 168 readings as characteristic of the B group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the B variants identified up to line 125 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

- 9 me] ones meCx1 He Ne Tc2
- 13 ne] wedded Cx1 He Ii Ne Tc2
- 13 wedded] Omitted Cx1 He Ii Ne Tc2
- 14 Herke 1þLo Cx1 He Ii Ne Tc2
- 28 God] That GodCx1 Cx2 He Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 31 letþ leueBo1 Cx1 Cx2 Gl Hk Ii Ne Pn Ra2 Tc2 Wy
- 32 no] Omitted Cx1 Cx2 He Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 32 menciouñ no menciouñCx1 Cx2 He Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 44 that] forCx1 He Ii Ne Se Tc2 Wy
- 44-5 parfiteparfiteCx1 He Ii Ne Tc2
- 55 wel] Omitted Cx1 Cx2 He Ii Ne Pn Se Tc2 Wy
- 55 an] a fuCx1 Cx2 He Ii Ne Pn Se Wy
- 62 virgynyteþeuere virgynyteCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 64 speketþ spakCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Py Tc2 Wy
- 65 precept] Omitted Cx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 65 hadde] precept haddeCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 67 comandement] maner comandementCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Nl Pn Se Tc2 Wy
- 72 thanne , wher of sholdþwhat sholde therCaf Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 84 no] be nat t6Cx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 89 is bothþit Cx1 Cx2 Fi Ii Ne Pn Se Tc2 Wy
- 93 that] Omitted Cx1 Hk Ii Ne Se Tc2
- 93 and] orCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Se Tc2 Wy
- 99 ye] 1Bo1 Cx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Nl Ph2 Pn Py Se Tc2 To Wy
- 103 euerichþ echeCx1 Cx2 Ii Ln Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 107 of parfeccioñ is of parfecciounCx1 Cx2 Hk Ii Ne Nl Pn Tc2 Wy
- 119 bothe] Omitted Bw Cx1 Cx2 Dl Fi Gg Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 121 oure bothþ of otheCx1 Cx2 Ii Ln Ne Nl Pn Tc2 Wy
- 125 be nat with me with me be naCx1 Cx2 Ii Ne Pn Tc2 Wy

Comments

The B variants are consistent with scribal and not authorial activity. Some alterations, though slight in meaning, affect the metre: 32 (nombre nofor Hg A no nombre) 55 (see below) 62 (euer virgynytefor Hg A virgynyte) 67 (maner comandementfor Hg A comandement—the extra word making up for the lightening of the line resulting from the substitution in A of counsefor Hg conseillyng earlier in the line.) The alteration Lo for A Lo herkne(Hg Herke ,

eek ,) in line 14 loses emphasis and lightens metre; the commonplace leuis substituted in line 31 for the more striking let Hg in the phrase lete fader and moder. Some readings appear as attempts to correct a reading found in the A exemplar used by the B exemplar. Thus: the A witnesses omit certeyn in line 9; the B witnesses introduce ones earlier in the line to attempt to make up the metre; similarly That is introduced at the beginning of line 28 to compensate for the perceived metrical deficiency in the A witnesses arising from omission of for later in the line. Particularly telling is the alteration of line 55, where B has:

I woot abraham was a ful holy man

Where Hg and A have:

I woot wel Abraham was an holy man

The B version loses the colloquial speech rhythm of the pause after wel in Hg A—a pause reinforced in Hg by the placement of a virgule after wel.

From instances such as this, it appears that the B variants are the result of scribal revision, not authorial activity.

The variants of group CD

Manly and Rickert regard the C and D groups as forming a single group in The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The cladogram of fundamental witness groupings agrees with this: there is no division between the three manuscripts (Cp La Sl2) seen by Manly and Rickert as constituting their group C and those of their larger and rather amorphous group D. They are here treated as a single group, CD.

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

in >3 of Cp La Mm Ld₁ Ry₁ Ph₃ Pw Sl₂ To with !punct

AND not in Hg

AND in <3 of Ma Cn Ds En₁ Bw Ln Ld₂ Ry₂ Gg Si Ph₂ Bo₁

AND in <3 of Ad₁ En₃ Ad₃ Ha₅ Ra₃ Tc₁ Ch Bo₂ Ht Dd

That is: in more than three of the eight manuscripts Cp La Mm Ld₁ Ry₁ Ph₃ Pw Sl₂ which the cladogram groups closest to Cp and La usually taken as the key representatives of Manly and Rickert's group C, not in Hg, in two or fewer of the witnesses in groups A E and F, and in two or fewer of the witnesses in group O likely to stand close to the archetype.

This query returned 174 readings. Of these readings the following appeared likely to have arisen by coincident variation or incorrect regularization and were removed from the group: 407 (had for hadder) 469 (at for thaþ 508 (But ·for But) and variants in added or alternative lines (e.g. after 222.) This left a total of 153 readings as characteristic of the CD group, and likely to have been introduced into the tradition by the exclusive common ancestor of this group.

The variants

The following are all the CD variants identified up to line 100 of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. The reading before the square bracket is the reading of Hg.

1 Experiencþ ExperimenBw Cp Fi Gl La Ld₁ Mm Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂

8 And] But Cp Dl Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mg Mm Nl Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂ To

9 agon i\$ agones Cp Gl Ld₁ Mm Ry₁ To
 12 the same] thilkēp Gl La Lc Mc Mg Mm Ph₃ Pw Ra₁ Sl₂
 20 that] Omitted Cp Cx₁ Cx₂ Dl Fi Gl Ha₂ He Hk Ht Ii La Lc Ld₁ Mg
 Mm Ne Nl Ph₃ Pn Pw Py Se Sl₁ Sl₂ Tc₂ To Wy
 21 But] Wel but Cp Dl En₂ Fi Ha₂ La Lc Mg Mm Ph₃ Sl₂
 30 that] Omitted Ad₁ Cp Dl El En₂ En₃ Fi Gl Ha₂ Ha₄ La Lc Ld₁ Mc Mg
 Mm Nl Ph₃ Ps Pw Py Ra₁ Ra₂ Ry₁ Si Sl₁ Sl₂ To
 34 speke] Omited Dl Ha₂ La Ld₁ Ln Nl Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₂
 34 vileyne~~y~~haue vileyne~~Ha~~ Ld₁ Nl Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂
 35 Lo] Looke Ad₁ Cp Dl En₂ En₃ Fi Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mc Mg Mm Nl
 Ph₃ Pw Ra₁ Ry₁ To
 35 kyng daur] man kyng Cp Dl En₂ Fi Gl Ha₂ La Ld₁ Mm Ph₃ Pw Sl₁
 To
 37 As] Now Cp Dl En₂ Fi Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mg Mm Nl Ph₃ Ps Pw Ry₁
 Sl₁ Sl₂ To
 46 me] Omited Cp Fi Gl Ld₁ Mm Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂
 60 heigne] vs Cp En₂ La Ld₁ Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂
 65 that] therof~~Cn~~ Cp Dl En₂ Gl La Ld₁ Ma Mm Ph₃ Ps Pw Ry₁ Se Sl₂
 To
 65 therof] Omited Cn Cp Dd Dl En₂ Gl Ha₂ Ld₁ Ma Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁
 Sl₂ To
 74 noon] him noor Cp Dl Fi Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mg Mm Nl Ph₃ Ps Pw
 Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂ To
 76 Cacche] Chace Cp En₂ Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mg Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁
 Sl₂ To
 76 who] whoso Cp En₂ Ha₂ La Ld₁ Mm Nl Ph₃ Pw Sl₁ To
 78 listwolde] Cp Dl En₂ Gl Ha₂ La Lc Ld₁ Mg Mm Nl Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁
 Sl₂ To
 82 but] nat bu~~C~~p Dl En₂ Fi Ha₂ Ld₁ Mm Nl Ry₁ To
 88 in] Omited Cp Dl Gl Ld₁ Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂
 88 bed] body Cp Dl En₂ Fi Gl Ld₁ Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ Sl₂ To
 92 weddyng] wedded Cp En₂ Fi Gl La Ld₁ Mm Ph₃ Pw Ry₁ Sl₁ To
 93 but i~~f~~nat but~~A~~₃ Cp Dl En₂ Fi Gl Ha₂ La Ld₁ Mm Nl Ph₃ Pw Ry₁
 Sl₁ Sl₂
 94 al hir l~~yf~~ir l~~yf~~ir Cp Dl En₂ Fi Gl Ha₂ Ld₁ Mm Nl Ph₃ Ps Pw Ry₁
 Sl₁ To

Comments

The CD variants appear the result of scribal variation, not authorial revision. The change of And in line 8 to But (Hg And alle were worthy) ^{might} loses poor sense, and may result from anticipation of the initial But in line 9. Omission of that in line 20 and 30 does not alter sense but affects metre; the compressed sense and unusual word order of line 34 in Hg speke of it vileyne appears to have caused problems for the scribe, who rewrote the phrase into the clumsy haue it in vileyne. Similarly, the wise kyng daun Salomon in line 35 is rewritten to the prosaic, and slightly less elliptic, wise man kyng Salomon in

CD. From instances such as this, it appears that the CD variants are the result of scribal revision, not authorial activity.

The one exception to this may be the striking variant (to a modern eye) *Experimentor Experiencē* at the first word of the text. See the discussion of this reading in Solopova 'Authorial Variants' in this volume.

The CD Variants and 'variant drift'

The CD group is the largest of the fundamental witness groups, with fifteen witnesses of the forty-three given in figure 4. Another seven of the fifteen ungrouped witnesses, En₂ Ha₂ Mc Ps Ra₁ Gl Se, also appear to be descended wholly or in part from a CD exemplar.

One might expect there to be considerable variation within such a large group, in particular in the proportion of CD variants found in each witness. Analysis of the distribution of the variants confirms this. Some manuscripts have a high proportion of the CD variants: thus Cp with 122 of the 153 CD variants, Pw with 123, La 121, Ld₁ 136, Mm 130. But in others, the proportion of CD variants falls towards, or even below, the fifty percent figure arbitrarily held to indicate membership of a group: thus Dl with 90 of the 153 CD variants, Fi with 81, Nl 77, Lc 70, Mg 71. The proportion is even lower among the seven ungrouped witnesses allocated to this group (see below): Ps has 48 of the 153 and Mc and Ra₁ just 41 and 38 respectively.

The explanation for this variation in proportional presence of the characteristic variants—from 90% in Ld₁ down to 25% in Ra₁—lies in a phenomenon we may call 'variant drift.' It appears that in cases where an exemplar introduces a large number of distinctive (and perhaps eccentric) variants into a tradition, there is a tendency for later copies descended from this exemplar to remove these distinctive variants through progressive copying. In some circumstances, and particularly when there are many variants introduced, the distinctive introduced variants appear specially unstable, and specially likely therefore to be themselves replaced. We can see this at work in the characteristic variants for the CD group in the first forty lines of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. In these instances, in each case the CD variant is present in at least four of the nine manuscripts regarded as forming the core of the CD group (i.e. Cp La Mm Ld₁ Ry₁ Ph₃ Pw Sl₂ To.) For each variant, the CD variant is given first with the number of CD witnesses which have this reading, followed by the other readings present in CD witnesses at this point and the number of CD witnesses to each reading. The Hg reading, usually the majority reading of all witnesses, is also given.

1 Experimento CD: Experiencē CD (and Hg)

8 And 16 CD: But 5 CD (and Hg)

9 agones 6 CD: ago it iſCD; agon it iſCD; agon iſi CD (and Hg)

12 thilkē CD: the thilkēCD; that ilkēCD; the ilkēCD; the same Hg

20 thatomitted 17 CD: present in 3 CD (and Hg)

21 Wel but 1 CD: Wel , but CD; wel ; but CD; wel but replacing
But thaſ CD; wel 3 CD (and Hg)

- 30 that omitted 20 CD: present Hg
 34 speke omitted 9 CD: thanne speke omitted 2 CD; seye 4 CD; tell 2
 CD; haue 2 CD; present 1 CD (and Hg)
 34 haue vileyne 8 CD: speke vileyne 6 CD; haue , vileyne 6 CD;
 vileyne 8 CD (and Hg)

In this sample of nine sets of readings, in four cases fewer than half the CD witnesses actually have the characteristic CD reading: thus lines 1 (10 of 21 CD witnesses), 9 (6 of 19), 34 (9 of 19; 8 of 19.) There is only one case in this sample where all the CD witnesses have the CD reading: the omission of *that* in line 20. In seven of the nine cases at least one of the CD witnesses restores the reading apparently in the archetype. An example of this is the eleven witnesses which restore *Experiencán* line 1 in place of the CD reading *Experiment* probably because the scribes recalled this reading, which is particularly prominent as the very first word of the text, from other witnesses. In other cases, it appears the scribes find the CD reading unsatisfactory, and this triggers consecutive error as the scribes seek alternatives: thus the series of readings at lines 12, 21, and 34.

This tendency of scribes to replace an introduced variant has some interesting consequences. In cladistic terms, it may make the witness appear more like witnesses from other groups, and so move the witness away from the hyparchetype of its group towards other groups. This is visible in the disposition of the CD group in the cladogram in figure 4. We may presume that Cp, because of its very early date, is likely to be nearest to the CD hyparchetype. According to this cladogram, most CD witnesses are actually nearer the archetype of the whole tradition, represented by the line on the left of the figure, than is Cp. One would expect the reverse: that consecutive variation built on the CD variation introduced at or near Cp would take the later CD witnesses further away from the ancestor. In fact, the tendency of later witnesses to restore the reading of the ancestor, or to introduce by coincident variation readings found in other groups, has the effect of making those witnesses appear nearer the archetype than is Cp.

Because CD is the largest single group of witnesses in this tradition, and because it spans so long a period and so many acts of copying, the witnesses of this group will have been particularly liable to 'variant drift.' This tendency of witnesses further from the CD hyparchetype (possibly Cp itself) to include an increasing number of readings from outside the CD group will have been exacerbated by contamination, known to have been present in Ps and probably also a factor in Mc Ra₁ Se and (from the incidence of the 'added passages') Ry₁ and Ha₅. It is possible that what Manly and Rickert saw as evidence of a distinct D group in parts of *The Canterbury Tales* (though not in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*) is actually no more than cases of CD witnesses which, through variant drift and contamination, have lost some of the readings introduced in the CD hyparchetype.

The O variants

This group of variants, those characteristic of the ten manuscripts regarded as close to the archetype of the whole tradition, is different in status from those in the groups previously discussed. It is possible to test the assumption that these ten are indeed close to the archetype. Recall that the cladogram shown in figure 4 is an 'unrooted tree.' I have chosen to root the tree at Hg. As a result each of the five groups A B E F and the group CD appear in the cladogram to descend from a single node within the tree, while the other nine O witnesses appear to be related to Hg only in that they appear close to the archetype and do not descend from a single node within the tree. Then, in the preceding sections, I have extracted the five sets of variants which appear to have been introduced by the five exemplars from which the witness groups A B E F and CD descend. Examination of all these sets of variants suggested that all these contained many readings which are clearly scribal in origin. Thus, each of the five exemplars must be some distance from Chaucer's own text, and could not be the archetype of the whole tradition.

The assumption that the ten O manuscripts are close to the archetype can be tested by a similar process. Imagine that the tree is not (arbitrarily) rooted on an O manuscript, but on a witness from the A group (Cn, for example.) It will now appear as if it is the A group witnesses and Dd which are related only by closeness to the archetype; and it will now appear as if the O manuscripts descend from an exemplar within the tree. The variant database may then be used, exactly as before, to extract the readings which appear to have been introduced at this presumed O exemplar. If these readings prove on examination to be authorial in character, and not scribal, we may then presume that the intuition that these manuscripts are close to Chaucer's own text, and hence to the archetype of the whole tradition, is correct.

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

```
in Hg with !punct
AND in <2 of Cp La Mm Ld1 Ry1 Ph3 Pw Sl2 To
AND in <2 of Ma Cn Ds En1 Bw Ln Ld2 Ry2 Gg Si Ph2 Bo1
AND in >1 of \all
```

That is: all variants in Hg, which are in fewer than two CD witnesses, and in fewer than than two AEF witnesses, and are in more than one manuscript (that is: not just in Hg alone. The variants which occur in Hg and only in Hg are discussed below.)

This query returned thirty-five readings. Of these readings the following arose by incorrect regularization or involved punctuation variation and were removed from the group: 97 (goost for goostelsewhere) 123 (no for no) 303 (yet for yet) 509 (ther with for therwith) 541 (hym selffor hymself) 596 (bigo) 598 (Taur) 599 (ther In for therin) 600 (eu ere for euere) 642 (outrely) 653 (agayn). This left a total of twenty-seven readings as characteristic of the O group, and apparently not present in the archetype of any of the ABCDEF witness groups.

The variants

In the following, the chief variants on the O reading are given together with a summary statement of the distribution of these variants.

- 36 many] Bo2 Hg Ht Ra2 (*mo than*A B CD E F Ha₄ El other O)
 46 me] [add]*me* [/add] Ha₂ Hg (*me all others*)
 67 nys] Bo₂ Ch Ha₄ Hg Pw Ra₃ Tc₁ (*isA B CD E F El other O*)
 84 nys] Ad₃ Ha₄ Hg Ra₂ Ra₃ Tc₁ (*isCD E F; omitted A B; it others*)
 89 tassemb_{le}] Ad₁ Ad₃ Ch El En₃ Hg Ht Lc Ln Mg Py (*to assemb_{la}A
B CD E F; assembleCD*)
 98 ne] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch En₃ Hg Ht Py Ra₃ Tc₁ (*xA B CD E F*)
 98 x] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch En₃ Hg Hk Ht Py Ra₃ Tc₁ (*natE F El; omitted A
B CD*)
 100 Ne] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch Dd En₃ Hg Ht Ra₃ Tc₁ (*He E; omitted A B CD
F*)
 111 wol] Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch Cx₁ Cx₂ En₃ Ha₅ Hg Ht Ii Ne Pn Ps Ra₃ Tc₁ Tc₂
 Wy (*woldeA B CD E F*)
 114 thacted] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch En₃ Hg Ht (*the acteA B CD E F;
charit₆D;*)
 117 wys] Ad₁ Ch En₃ Hg Ra₁ Ry₂ (*wiseA CD; wyse B*)
 124 Thexperience] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ En₃ Ha₄ Hg Hk Tc₁ (*The
experienceA B CD E F*)
 154 And] He Hg Ii Sl₂ (*An A B CD E F*)
 192 nys] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ En₃ Ha₅ Hg Si (*isA B CD E F*)
 215 awerk] Hg Ht (*so awerkA B CD E F other O*)
 361 as] Ad₃ Ch Gl Ha₅ Hg Ht Py Tc₁ (*so A B CD E F other O*)
 407 hadden] Ds El Ha₄ Ha₅ Hg (*hadde or had all others*)
 484 trocel] Ad₁ Ad₃ Ch Cx₂ Hg Hk Pn Wy (*croceall others*)
 532 as] Ad₃ Ch El Ha₅ Hg Ht Ra₃ Tc₁ (*so or alsall others*)
 567 hym] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch El En₃ Gl Ha₅ Hg Ht Ra₂ Ra₃ (*omitted all
others*)
 631 roule] Bo₂ Cp El Fi Gg Ha₂ Ha₄ Hg Lc Mg Ps Py (*royleA B CD E
F*)
 745 hem] Ad₃ El Ha₄ Ha₅ Hg Ht Ii Mc Py Ra₂ (*omitted CD; yeuen
hem A B CD E F*)
 766 on] Hg Ht Ii Lc Mg Py (*hym on others*)
 818 wol] Ad₁ Ad₃ Bo₂ Ch En₃ Gl Ha₅ Hg Hk Ht Ra₃ Tc₁ (*omitted
others*)

Comments

This group of variants repays close study, as a compendium of just what scribes found difficult in Chaucer's poetic. Thus, the compression of *he hadde wyues* many oon in line 36 is lost in the prosaic *he hadde wyues mo than o*. The emphatic double negative of lines 67 and 84 is lost by the substitution of *is* for *nys*. The colloquial present *wol* of line 111 in *He spak to hem, that wol lyue* *fitly* lost, for the more usual *wolde*. In these and most of the other variants in this group (e.g. 89 98 100 114 124 etc.), the support for the Hg reading in

other O witnesses suggests that this is indeed the reading of O. The authorial character of these variants confirms the hypothesis that the witnesses of group O are united only in their closeness to the ancestor of the whole tradition.

In a few cases, the lack of support from other O witnesses for an Hg reading suggests that Hg has miscopied O, and that the Hg reading accordingly should be rejected. Thus the reading *And* in line 154 in Hg:

And housbonde , wol I haue , I wol nat lette

Here, the other O witnesses are unanimous in reading *An*, with Hg supported only (probably by coincident variation) by one CD and two B witnesses. Similarly, the isolation of Hg from other O witnesses in 215 (omission of *so*, leaving the line metrically defective), 407 (*hadden* for *hadde* or *had*) and 766 (*on* for *hym on*, leaving the sense defective) suggest that in these cases an editor should emend away from the Hg reading. The Hg copyist was unquestionably excellent, but not perfect.¹²

In one case, there appears to have been an error in O itself. This is *troce* 484: a simple error from misreading initial *c* of *croceas t*. The presence of this reading in four of the group O witnesses (and in Hk, also likely an O witness), and probably in the Cx2 exemplar (see below), suggests that this error was present in O itself.

That only one reading in this group appears to be the result of an error in O itself suggests that O is likely to have stood very close to Chaucer's own copy of The Wife of Bath's Prologue.

The exemplar used by Caxton for his second edition: the 'α' exemplar

In the introduction to his second edition, Caxton describes how a 'gentylman' informed him that the text of Caxton's first edition was not 'accordyng in many places vnto the book that Gefferey chaucer had made,' and that this gentleman claimed to have access to a much better copy than the one Caxton had used.¹³ Caxton states that he used this better copy for the second edition, and therefore asserts that his second edition gives a better text than the first edition.¹⁴

In fact, it has long been known that Caxton did not make his second edition by abandoning the text of his first edition and resetting it anew from this copy, as one might read his words to imply. Rather, he took the existing text of his first edition, compared this more or less methodically with this other copy, and introduced many new readings into his first edition text from this other copy.¹⁵ This is confirmed by the cladistic analysis, which consistently places Cx2 and the two later printed editions Pn Wy among the B witnesses. However, the cladistic analysis also suggests that in some sections of The Wife of Bath's Prologue Cx2 is closer to the archetype of the whole tradition than is Cx1. Thus figure 3 (for lines 401-500) places Cx1 to the left of Cx2 in the cladogram, while figure 2 (for lines 301-400) places Cx2 next to Cx1. This would suggest that Caxton indeed took readings from a manuscript nearer the archetype and introduced these into Cx2. The exact position of Cx2 in the cladogram will therefore vary, nearer or further from Cx1, according to the precise number of readings from this better manuscript introduced at different points.

This can be confirmed by the variant database. Between lines 301 and 400, Cx2 contains 10 of the 12 B variants, but only 12 of the 20 B variants between lines 401 and 500. For example: in line 489 the emphatic (and unmetrical) B reading *I was his verray purgatōnde* in Cx1 is altered in Cx2 to the presumably-original *I was his purgatorie*.

The extent of alteration between Cx1 and Cx2 is easily measured by the variant database: there are 375 readings in Cx2 which are not present in Cx1. Some of these will be due to simple variation; but a significant number will have been introduced from the better manuscript. The closeness of this better manuscript to the archetype of the whole tradition can also be inferred from the number of readings apparently introduced into Cx2 and also present in Hg: 238 of the 375. Similar numbers of these introduced readings are also present in other O group witnesses. Perhaps the most remarkable reading introduced into Cx2 is in 484, where the correct *croce* is changed by Caxton to *troce*. Apart from the later printed editions, this reading is found only in Ad₁ Ad₃ Ch Hg Hk. The error is thus present in only these four O group manuscripts (Hk, see below, may also be an O manuscript), and so is highly likely to have been present in the ancestor to the whole tradition. Accordingly, its probable presence in Caxton's better manuscript is the best single piece of evidence in The Wife of Bath's Prologue for the closeness of this manuscript to the ancestor of the whole tradition.

As with earlier groups, the database may be used to extract the body of readings likely to have been present in this better manuscript.

The query

Variant Set resulting from Multiple Query:

in Cx2 with !punct

AND not in Cx1

AND in >3 of \all

AND not in Hg

That is: all variants in Cx2, not in Cx1, in more than three witnesses (and so not just in the three printed editions Cx2 Pn Wy) and not in Hg. Readings in Hg were excluded from this query as these readings were likely to be ancestral to the whole tradition, and so could not help in identifying the particular exemplar used by Caxton.

This query returned 54 readings. The following readings were removed from this list: 46 (*me* where Hg has [add]_{me} [/add]; thus *me* is effectively the ancestral reading) 307 (*E*for Hg *thow*, regularization error) 414 506 (all *for* *a* regularization error) 512 (agayn *anor*for *anor*; coincident variation) 546 (april *f*or *aueryll* *an*regularization error) 598 (*mars* for Mars; regularization error) and eight variants in the added passages resulting from regularization errors. This left a total of 39 readings as apparently present in the Caxton exemplar and not in Hg.

The variants

Because of their high intrinsic interest, all 39 readings are given:

10 that] Omitted Ad₁ Bo₁ Cx2 Dd Dl En₃ Fi Gl Ha₂ Ha₄ La Ld₁ Mm Nl
Ph₃ Pn Pw Ra₂ Sl₁ Sl₂ Wy

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10 ne] Omitted Ad₁ Bo₂ Cx₂ En₃ Ha₄ Hk Ht Lc Ld₁ Mc Mg Nl Ph₃ Pn
 Ra₁ Ra₂ Tc₁ Wy
 13 sholde weddeþwedded shold Bo₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Fi Ha₄ Ld₁ Mc
 Ph₂ Pn Ra₁ Ra₃ Ry₁ Se Si Tc₁ Wy
 40 alyueþ on lyþCx₂ En₂ Ha₄ Hk La Pn Ps Wy
 44-1 the] Ch Cn Cx₂ Dd Ds En₁ He Ii Ma Pn Ry₁ Se Si Wy (Cx₁: of
 the)
 44-2 purs] Ch Cn Cx₂ Dd Ds En₁ Ii Ma Pn Ry₁ Se Si Wy (Cx₁: ende)
 44-5 siker] þCh Cx₂ Ds En₁ Pn Ry₁ Se Wy I (Cx₁: to be sikerly)
 46 sitþ soþeCx₂ Dl El Gl Ha₄ Hk La Ld₂ Ln Mc Mm Ph₃ Pn Py Ra₁
 Ra₂ Ry₂ Wy
 71 were] nereBw Cx₂ Pn Ry₂ Wy
 81 that] Omitted Cx₂ Dl Pn Wy
 100 Ne hath] hath Bw Cn Cp Cx₂ Dl Ds En₁ Fi Gl Ha₂ Hk Ii La Lc Ld₁
 Ld₂ Ln Ma Mc Mg Mm Ph₃ Pn Pw Ra₁ Ry₁ Ry₂ Sl₁ Sl₂ Wy
 100 a1] Omitted Bo₁ Cp Cx₂ Fi Gl Ha₂ Ii La Lc Ld₁ Ld₂ Mg Mm Ph₂
 Ph₃ Pn Pw Ry₁ Se Sl₁ Sl₂ To Wy
 111 hem] hym Bo₂ Cx₂ Hk Pn Py Si Wy
 140 that] Omitted Bo₁ Bo₂ Bw Cx₂ Dl El Fi Gg Gl Hk Ht Ld₁ Ld₂ Ln
 Mc Ph₂ Pn Ps Py Ra₁ Ra₂ Ry₁ Ry₂ Sl₁ To Wy
 145 Mark] as MarkBo₂ Cx₂ Fi Pn Wy
 201 I] that Gx₂ Dd Ha₄ He Pn Wy
 202 hem] hym Cx₂ Ln Ra₂ Si Wy
 237 oueral thþwher euerCx₂ He Ii Pn Tc₂ Wy
 245 or] and Ad₁ Cx₂ Ds En₁ En₃ Ha₄ Mc Pn Ra₂ Sl₂ Wy
 316 itþ theeCn Cx₂ Dd Ds El En₁ Ln Ma Pn Wy
 326 hyestel the bestEn Cx₂ Ds En₁ He Ma Ne Pn Ry₁ Wy
 329 thar] darAd₁ Bw Cx₂ Ld₂ Ln Mc Mg Ne Nl Ph₃ Pn Ra₁ Ra₂ Ra₃
 Ry₂ Se Sl₁ Tc₁
 369 liknþbe lykCx₂ Pn Tc₂ Wy
 457 to] vntoAd₁ Cx₂ En₃ Pn Wy
 477 is] nysAd₃ Bo₂ Cx₂ Ld₂ Ph₃ Pn Pw Ra₂ Ry₁ Ry₂ Si Wy
 499 subtilþþo subtilAd₃ Bo₁ Ch Cx₂ Dd En₃ Gl Ha₄ Ha₅ Ph₂
 Pn Py Ra₂ Ra₃ Tc₁ Wy
 509 koude he] omitted Cx₂ Ph₃ Pn Wy
 572 mouses] mous Ad₃ Bo₂ Cx₂ Ds En₁ Hk Ld₂ Mc Ne Pn Ra₁ Tc₂
 Wy
 604-1 Martes] Cx₂ El Gg Pn Wy (Cx₁ Mars)
 640 hym] hem Ad₃ Bw Ch Cx₂ En₃ Gl Ha₅ Pn Ra₃ Tc₁ Wy
 657 Salomon] wyse SalomorCx₂ He Pn Se Wy
 667 wol] woldeBo₁ Cx₂ Ln Pn Ra₂ Wy
 669 woman] wommen Cn Cp Cx₂ Dd Ds En₁ Ha₅ Hk Ln Ma Pn Ps
 Ry₂ Si Wy
 681 And] As Ad₃ Ch Cp Cx₂ Dd Dl Fi Ha₂ Ha₅ Ld₁ Mm Ph₃ Pn Pw
 Ry₂ Se To

706 comth a] ther comth Bo₁ Cx₂ En₃ Ha₄ Ph₂ Pn Ry₁ Wy
 717 Exiphile~~E~~ Eriphile Gp Cx₂ Dl Ds El En₁ Gg Ha₂ Ii La Lc Ld₁ Ma
 Mc Mm Nl Ph₃ Pn Ps Pw Ry₁ Se Si Sl₁ Sl₂ To Wy
 731 oon] Omitted Cx₂ Pn Sl₁ Wy
 734 how] Omitted Ad₁ Bo₁ Bw Cp Cx₂ En₃ Gg Gl Ha₂ Hk Ht La Lc Mc
 Mg Mm Nl Ph₃ Pn Ps Pw Ry₂ Se Si Sl₁ Sl₂ To Wy
 790 right~~t~~ Omitted Cx₂ Ld₁ Pn Se Wy

Comments

The relatively high frequency of group O witnesses in this list, and the infrequency of sigils for witnesses from groups ABCDEF, confirm the closeness of Caxton's exemplar to group O, and hence to the exemplar for the whole tradition. However, no surviving O witness occurs so frequently in this list to have itself been Caxton's exemplar: of these 39 readings, En₃ has the greatest number, with 8. There is an interesting possible link with the common exemplar of Dd and the A group, discussed above. Eight of these 39 readings are shared with Dd and (perhaps most telling) a further 7 are present in at least one of the four A witnesses Cn Ma Ds En: a total of 15 of the thirty-nine. This suggests that the nearest O witness to this lost exemplar may have been the Dd/A ancestor. Further evidence linking this exemplar to the Dd/A ancestor is that Cx₂ differs from Cx₁ in having the tale sequence Squire/Squire-Franklin link/Franklin: a sequence found elsewhere almost exclusively in the A manuscripts, in Dd and El—the El tale order found in most modern editions.¹⁶ It is suggested below that this Dd/A ancestor may also have been the exemplar for the second half of El.¹⁷

Most interesting is the combination of variants present in Caxton's exemplar. Note the following:

1. It appears to have been an O group witness, but to have contained all five added passages. Of the extant O witnesses, only Ch contains all five 'added passages.'
2. It contained the reading *sothe* for *sithe* in line 46 (unless this rather striking reading were introduced by Caxton from memorial contamination; see below.) No extant O group witness has this reading, and none of the SEVENTEEN witnesses which have the first of the 'added passages' immediately preceding this line have this reading.
3. The version of the added passages in this exemplar appears close to that in both Ch and Dd (and likely the Dd/A ancestor), rather than the more common version found in the A witnesses.
4. It had *trocein* line 484, a reading found only in earlier witnesses in four of the ten O group witnesses (including Ch) and Hk (probably an O witness.)

This unique, and highly significant, group of variants suggests that Caxton's exemplar was a manuscript of the highest importance. For example, the likely occurrence of *sothe* in line 46 in this exemplar for Cx₂ is probably the strongest piece of evidence for the possible Chaucerian origin of this reading, as the only evidence for its existence in an O group witness. The readings

introduced by Caxton in his second edition, together with the alterations in the tale order, would repay further study.

Particularly notable is the evidence that this lost exemplar was both very close to O, and also contained readings linking it to Dd and the A manuscripts: both the ‘added passages,’ and variants outside these ‘added passages.’ Following Dan Mosser’s work on what he has called the ‘ α text,’ the version of the Tales descending from the ultimate ancestor of El (in parts), of Dd, and of the AB manuscripts, we postulate the existence of an α exemplar. This α exemplar appears to have been very similar to the Cx2 exemplar, and may indeed have been identical with it. Like the Cx2 exemplar, it seems to have been very near O, yet to have contained readings linking it to El Dd and the AB group: thus, the El tale order, the added passages and other variants.

In the discussion of Dd and the AB manuscripts above (p. 90–93) it was suggested that these have a common ancestor, the Dd/AB exemplar. It is likely that the α exemplar was itself the ancestor of this Dd/AB exemplar: that is, it was at least one stage of copying closer to O than the Dd/AB exemplar: see Figure 6 below, p. 123. The significance of this α exemplar for the question of authorial variants in The Wife of Bath’s Prologue is discussed further below.

Witnesses excluded from the fundamental groups

Discussion now turns to the fifteen witnesses excluded from the fundamental groups, as likely to evidence shift of exemplar, or contamination, or both. The fifteen are: Cx2 El En2 (fragmentary, lacking 478 to end) Gl Ha2 Ha4 Hk Mc/Ra1 Py Pn Ps Ra2 Se Wy.

The analysis of the fundamental groups has identified seven groups of variants: the A B CD Cx2 E F EF groups. Each of these groups of variants appears to have been introduced by a single exemplar, the exclusive common ancestor of the witnesses containing significant numbers of variants of each group, which introduced these variants into the tradition. An eighth group, the O group, consists of variants which appear to have been in the ancestor of the whole tradition, and are preserved in witnesses close to this ancestor but typically removed by other witnesses.

Contamination, and shift of exemplar, should be observable by viewing the incidence and distribution of variants from these fundamental groups across the fifteen witnesses. Thus, where a scribe starts copying a B witness, then moves to a CD witness at line 200, one should see numerous B variants and few CD variants in this witness up to line 200, and the reverse after line 200. Where a scribe is copying a B witness but introduces readings from a CD witness, one should see numerous B variants throughout and varying numbers of CD variants, depending on the scribe’s enthusiasm for contamination.

To facilitate this, the seven groups A B CD Cx2 E F EF were each divided into four subgroups, covering lines 1–199, 200–399, 400–599, 600–end. The Collate database was then used to produce a ‘variant group profile’: a count of how many variants of each subgroup were in the corresponding part of each witness. This division into subgroups was designed to reveal shifts of exemplar and

unstable patterns of contamination. The O group variants were also split, this time into two subgroups for lines 1-399, 400-end, and the incidence of these also counted in each witness.

Some system of interpreting the variant group profile for each witness had to be devised. In my earlier work on the Old Norse *Svipdagsmál* tradition I suggested a rule of thumb for determining whether a witness were actually a member of a particular group (that is, descended from the common exemplar of that group) or contaminated by it. If it were a member: then one would expect typically that the witness would have more than around half the readings characteristic of that group. If it were contaminated by that group: one would expect typically that the witness would have around a quarter of the readings of that group. A witness which has less than around ten percent of the readings of a group may have them by simple accident alone, and this would not be significant. Thus: if there are 100 readings in group A and X has 60 of them, it is likely that X is descended from the group A exemplar. If X has 20 of the A readings, it is likely that X has been contaminated by a group A witness; if it has only 7 this is probably just chance and of no significance (Robinson 1989.)

This is necessarily imprecise; in the shifting sands of manuscript studies, exact quantification is not possible. There will be times when the numbers of readings in particular groups in particular witnesses fall near or across these arbitrary levels. Such instances have to be treated individually, using whatever guides we can find.

For each witness, the Collate database produced a variant group profile as in the case of Cx2, given below in full.

Cx2 Pn Wy

These are the three printed editions—respectively Caxton's second edition, those of Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde—produced before 1500, following Caxton's first edition. The variant group profile for Cx2, given below in full, may stand for all three.

7573 readings in this witness.

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-----|
| A Variants | 96 | 50 |
| B Variants | 168 | 110 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 5 |
| Cx2 Variants | 41 | 41 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 2 |
| E Variants | 134 | 8 |
| F Variants | 99 | 3 |
| O Variants | 28 | 3 |
| A vars (0-200) | 29 | 18 |
| A vars (200-399) | 29 | 19 |
| A vars (400-599) | 24 | 8 |
| A vars (600-end) | 14 | 5 |
| B vars (0-199) | 52 | 36 |
| B vars (200-399) | 40 | 31 |
| B vars (400-599) | 29 | 17 |

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| | | |
|--------------------|----|----|
| B vars (600-end) | 49 | 26 |
| CD vars (0-199) | 42 | 1 |
| CD vars (200-399) | 47 | 3 |
| CD vars (400-599) | 32 | 1 |
| CD vars (600-830) | 32 | 0 |
| Cx2 vars (0-199) | 16 | 16 |
| Cx2 vars (200-399) | 8 | 8 |
| Cx2 vars (400-599) | 6 | 6 |
| Cx2 vars (600-end) | 11 | 11 |
| E vars (0-199) | 32 | 2 |
| E vars (200-399) | 47 | 3 |
| E vars (400-599) | 27 | 1 |
| E vars (600-end) | 28 | 2 |
| EF vars (0-199) | 13 | 0 |
| EF vars (200-399) | 10 | 0 |
| EF vars (400-599) | 15 | 1 |
| EF vars (600-end) | 23 | 1 |
| F vars (0-199) | 36 | 1 |
| F vars (200-399) | 48 | 1 |
| F vars (400-599) | 18 | 1 |
| F vars (600-end) | 14 | 1 |
| O vars (0-399) | 16 | 1 |
| O vars (400-end) | 12 | 2 |

Each line gives the name of a group of variants ('A Variants,' for the first line), followed by the total number of readings in that group (96, for the A variants) and then the number of readings from that group in this witness (50.) The first seven lines give the counts for each of the groupings A B CD Cx2 EF E F, with the count for the O group in the eighth line. Thus, this witness has a significant number of variants for groups A (50 of 96), B (110 of 168) and Cx2 (41 of 41.) Thus, it is descended from an A witnesscc (the 50 of 96) and is a member of the B group (110 of 168.) By definition, it has all the Cx2 variants: these are the readings found in Cx2 and not in Cx1. As one should expect, it has very few readings from any of the other fundamental groups: only five of the 153 CD variants, 2 of the 61 EF variants, etc. These few variants shared with other groups are likely to be the result of coincident variation.

The remaining lines study the distribution of the variants across the text. From this, we see that the distribution of A and B variants remains very consistent across the whole prologue, with significant numbers of A and B variants in every 200 line section. Thus, Cx2 appears to be precisely what it should be, from Caxton's preface. Like Cx1, it is a member of the B group, and so too a member of the A groups from which all B witnesses descend. It also has a number of readings (the Cx2 readings) not found in Cx1: this accords with Caxton's statement that he used readings from a different exemplar while preparing Cx2.

Apart from having slightly fewer Cx2 variants (39 in Pn, 38 in Wy) the variant group profiles for Pn and Wy are virtually identical to that for Cx2. This confirms what has been long known: that these later editions are derived from Cx2.

EI

Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in El as follows:

| | | |
|--------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 13 |
| B Variants | 168 | 1 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 3 |
| Cx2 Variants | 41 | 5 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 13 |
| E Variants | 134 | 45 |
| F Variants | 99 | 2 |
| O Variants | 28 | 9 |

The distribution of variants from the EF E and O groups in El is particularly interesting:

| | | |
|-------------------|----|----|
| E vars (0-199) | 32 | 25 |
| E vars (200-399) | 47 | 19 |
| E vars (400-599) | 27 | 0 |
| E vars (600-end) | 28 | 1 |
| EF vars (0-199) | 13 | 7 |
| EF vars (200-399) | 10 | 5 |
| EF vars (400-599) | 15 | 1 |
| EF vars (600-end) | 23 | 0 |
| O vars (0-399) | 16 | 1 |
| O vars (400-end) | 12 | 8 |

This suggests that El is descended from an E exemplar up to about line 400: up to that point, it has 44 of the 79 E variants. Thus, it will also be descended from an EF exemplar up to about line 400, as are all E witnesses: up to 400, it has 12 of the 23 EF variants.

After line 400, El changes character dramatically. There are only two E and EF variants of a possible 93 from 400 to the end of the Prologue, compared to 56 of a possible 102 up to 400. From the increase in number of O variants (eight of twelve after 400 compared to one of sixteen before) El appears to move to an exemplar considerably closer to that of the O witnesses from line 400. See the discussion of the ‘added passages’ below for the suggestion that El, in the second half of the Prologue, is based on the ultimate exemplar of Dd and the A witnesses. This ultimate exemplar is the ‘α exemplar’ postulated in the discussion of the Cx2 exemplar above, p. 108.

This shift of exemplar in El raises many interesting questions. Why did the scribe change exemplars? One possible reason is that the E exemplar used by the scribe for the first half of the Prologue did not have the ‘added passages.’ Two E witnesses (Bo1 and Ph2) do not have any of the added passages; of the other two, Si almost certainly has them by contamination from an A witness (see above) and this is probably the explanation for their presence in Gg. Thus, the scribe used an E witness lacking the ‘added passages’ for the first half, but realized about half-way through that this exemplar did not have these passages and so switched to an exemplar that did have them.

This analysis suggests that at least two exemplars, drawn from distinct branches of the textual tradition, were available to the El scribe. What other material was available to the scribe, and the processes across the whole length of *The Canterbury Tales* by which this material was amalgamated to form El, will require close study.

The punctuation and spelling systems in El will also require further study. Concerning punctuation: Killough and Solopova have both shown the close relationship of the punctuation in El to that in Hg; Solopova has also demonstrated how unlike the punctuation in El and Hg is to that in other witnesses (Killough 1982; Solopova forthcoming.) If, as we suppose, Hg is a direct copy of Chaucer's own working copy, the presence of a distinctive punctuation system likely to be Chaucer's own in Hg is easily explained. But it is more difficult to explain the presence of the same punctuation system in El, which must (on this analysis) be separated by several stages of copying from Chaucer's working copy. Did both the exemplars used by the scribe in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* preserve the punctuation also found in Hg, through all the intervening copies? Or did the scribe, who was familiar with Chaucer's punctuation from copying Hg, apply this knowledge to supply the punctuation, where the exemplars lacked it? Killough's study supports this possibility: Killough was able to 'learn' the Hg punctuation system and then re-create it in an unpunctuated text with eighty percent success; exactly the proportion of agreement in punctuation achieved between Hg and El.

Concerning the very similar spelling systems of the two witnesses: again, one must determine whether the same spellings have been passed through all the different stages of copying which separate El and Hg, or whether the scribe has again imposed a system learnt while copying Hg on El on witnesses differently spelt. One expects, following the arguments of Smith, Samuels and Macintosh, that no such imposition could be perfectly successful, and that the layers of copying might show themselves in different spelling patterns. Ramsey has pointed out differences in spelling between El and Hg (Ramsey 1982): these might be symptomatic of such layers, though this is not how Ramsey explains them. Further, the evidence that identifiable sections of El are based on different exemplars might guide analysis of spelling patterns: one would expect to see the different spellings of the different exemplars influencing the spelling in El.

For the suggestion that the E exemplar used by El for the first half of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* was also used by the Ha₄ scribe, see the discussion of Ha₄ below.

En2 Ha2 Mc Ps Ra1

En2 is fragmentary, and contains only lines 21 to 477 of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*. Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in En2 as follows:

| | | |
|-------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 2 |
| B Variants | 168 | 0 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 65 |

| | | |
|--------------|-----|---|
| Cx2 Variants | 41 | 1 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 0 |
| E Variants | 134 | 0 |
| F Variants | 99 | 0 |
| O Variants | 28 | 0 |

This suggests that En₂ is derived from a CD exemplar. This is confirmed by the presence of CD variants in lines 0-399:

| | | |
|-------------------|----|----|
| CD vars (0-199) | 42 | 16 |
| CD vars (200-399) | 47 | 32 |

Thus, En₂ has 48 of the 89 CD variants for lines 0-399.

Ps may stand for three of the other manuscripts here discussed: Mc Ps Ra₁. Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in Ps as follows:

| | | |
|--------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 7 |
| B Variants | 168 | 8 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 48 |
| Cx2 Variants | 41 | 5 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 6 |
| E Variants | 134 | 10 |
| F Variants | 99 | 7 |
| O Variants | 28 | 2 |

There is a higher proportion of CD variants than those of any other groups. Nevertheless, the number of CD variants, at 48 of 153 and so around 36 per cent, is less than the half usually held to evidence membership of the group. Part of the explanation may lie in the phenomenon of 'variant drift' remarked above as specially typical of the witness constituting the large and dispersed CD group. Through the many stages of copying within this group, the variants introduced in the CD exemplar and present in large numbers in witnesses close to this exemplar (thus: 122 of 153 in Cp, 123 in Pw) are likely to be removed lower down the tree. Hence, a witness may contain rather fewer of the CD variants but still be a member of that group. At the same time as CD variants are removed by successive copying, one would expect a number of variants characteristic of other groups to 'leak' into later witnesses by coincidental variation and (possible) memorial or deliberate contamination, or correction. Contamination is clearly visible in Ps, in the corrections made by Jean d'Angoulême. From the small number of readings from any of groups ABCDEF in Ps, it appears likely that the source of the contamination in Ps was an O witness.

The pair Mc and Ra₁ have a similar pattern of distribution of variants from the fundamental groups: 41 of the 153 CD variants in Mc, 38 CD variants in Ra₁, with a scattering of variants from other groups indicative of coincidental agreement or sporadic contamination. These two also then appear to be descended from a CD witness, though through many intervening copies. As in Ps, it is likely that contamination (apparently from an O witness) has further reduced the proportion of CD variants in the common exemplar of Mc and Ra₁.

The fifth witness here discussed, Ha₂, is clearly a member of the CD group with 125 of the 153 CD readings. It was excluded from the fundamental groups because it appeared in different positions in the cladograms relative to other CD witnesses (thus, figures 2 and 3), but always among the CD witnesses. Close analysis of the relationship of Ha₂ to other CD witnesses might explain this apparent movement of Ha₂ within this group.

The CD group is far the largest single group of witnesses, with twenty members including the five discussed in this section, En₂ Ha₂ Mc Ps Ra₁. Two other witnesses, Se (200 to 400, and perhaps to the end) and Gl (up to line 200) appear to draw part of their text from a CD exemplar. Further study of the CD group of witnesses might reveal more about the nature of the sub-exemplars within the group, and about the movement of readings between the witnesses of this group.

Gl

Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in Gl as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 3 |
| B Variants | 168 | 3 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 30 |
| Cx ₂ Variants | 41 | 8 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 5 |
| E Variants | 134 | 5 |
| F Variants | 99 | 3 |
| O Variants | 28 | 3 |

The distribution of variants from the CD group in Gl is particularly interesting:

| | | |
|-------------------|----|----|
| CD vars (0-199) | 42 | 26 |
| CD vars (200-399) | 47 | 1 |
| CD vars (400-599) | 32 | 2 |
| CD vars (600-830) | 32 | 1 |

From this, it appears that almost all the CD variants in Gl occur in the first 200 lines: it has 26 of a total of 42 CD variants in that section, and only four more of the 111 CD variants for the rest of the Prologue. The last CD variant in the first 200 lines of Gl is at line 174 (al omitted.) It appears that Gl was based on a CD exemplar up to about line 175 and then changed exemplars to a witness that seems to have had no affiliation to any of the seven fundamental groups. This exemplar from line 175 on appears to have been descended from O independently of any of these seven groups. The relationship of the exemplar of Gl after line 200 to other witnesses also descended independently from O is unclear. Gl may share an exemplar below O with one of the O group witnesses, but the manuscript contains so many idiosyncratic variants (thus, removing almost all the O variants found in witnesses close to O) that any such relationship is difficult to establish.

Ha₄ Ra₂

Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in Ha₄ as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 8 |
| B Variants 168 | 6 | |
| CD Variants | 153 | 3 |
| Cx ₂ Variants | 41 | 9 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 11 |
| E Variants | 134 | 23 |
| F Variants | 99 | 7 |
| O Variants | 28 | 6 |

On the face of this evidence, Ha₄ appears to show no affiliation to any of these groups: it might be a manuscript separately descended from O but with a relatively high proportion of readings from the fundamental groups by simple coincidence or by occasional memorial contamination (as appears to be the case with Py and Hk.) However, the proportion of readings from the E and EF groups is rather higher, at around fifteen percent, than one would expect from simple coincidence or occasional contamination. On closer examination, it appears that Ha₄ is actually based on an E exemplar. However, many of the characteristic E readings found in the other E witnesses, and also in El which is based on an E exemplar up to around line 400, have been removed by extensive scribal intervention.

In her study of the metre of the early manuscripts in this volume, Solopova points to several lines where the scribe of Ha₄ (Parkes and Doyle's 'scribe d') 'corrects' a perceived metrical deficiency introduced by the E or EF exemplar, for example in lines 383 and 825.

It is notable that Ha₄ and El share numerous readings up to line 150 not found in other E witnesses, or found in only one other E witness:

7 If] For Ad₁ El En₃ Ha₄ Si
 37 leueful weſe were leueſe El Ha₄ Ra₂ Si Sl₂
 37 to] vnto El Ha₄ Ra₂ Si Sl₂
 44 Blessed yblessed El Ha₄
 46 sit] sothe Cx₂ Dl El Gl Ha₄ Hk La Ld₂ Ln Mc Mm Ph₃ Pn Py Ra₁
 Ra₂ Ry₂ Wy
 54 his] of El Ha₄ Ra₂ Si
 56 fer] ferfort El Ha₄ Mc Ra₁ Ra₂ Si
 73 dorste] ne dorſte El Ha₄ Ra₂
 100 Ne hath] He nat El Ha₄
 113 al] Omitted Bo₁ El En₃ Fi Ha₄ Mc Ph₂ Ra₁ Ra₂ Ry₁ Sl₁
 146 Iesuſ] Omitted Bo₁ El Ha₄ Ld₂ Nl Ph₂ Ra₂

This apparent agreement of El/Ha₄ against other E witnesses may be overstated. Gg, the E witness apparently closest to El and Ha₄, is missing lines 1-76: it is likely that some at least of these readings up to line 76 were present in Gg, also. However, these agreements in Ha₄ and El suggest that both were based on a single, now-lost, E witness. The closest extant E witness to this now-lost exemplar appears to have been Gg.

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The cladograms for the first half of The Wife of Bath's Prologue consistently show that Ra₂ appears very closely related to Ha₄; so closely related as to be possibly a direct descendant of Ha₄ up to line 400. This can be seen in the highly-distinctive group of variants shared by El and Ha₄ above up to line 146: eight of these eleven are present in Ra₂. It can be seen too in Figure 2, the cladogram for lines 301-400, showing Ra₂ very close to Ha₄. However, after around line 400, Ra₂ seems to change exemplars: thus in Figure 3, the cladogram for lines 401-500, it is away from Ha₄ and now very close to the Hk. The variant group profile for Ra₂ suggests that it has very few readings from any of the fundamental groups after around line 400, suggesting that its exemplar thereafter is a witness independently descended from O.

Hk Py

Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in Py as follows:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 9 |
| B Variants | 168 | 9 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 15 |
| Cx ₂ Variants | 41 | 4 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 6 |
| E Variants | 134 | 3 |
| F Variants | 99 | 5 |
| O Variants | 28 | 8 |

From this evidence, Py appears to show no affiliation to any of the fundamental groups: it might be a manuscript independently descended from O but with a relatively high proportion of readings from the fundamental groups by simple coincidence or by occasional memorial contamination. The variant group profile for Hk is similar:

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 10 |
| B Variants | 168 | 9 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 9 |
| Cx ₂ Variants | 41 | 9 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 12 |
| E Variants | 134 | 8 |
| F Variants | 99 | 12 |
| O Variants | 28 | 4 |

The higher proportion of EF variants, and also (to a lesser extent) of F variants, in Hk may be consistent with this manuscript having been influenced in part by an F witness. The concentration of EF and F variants after line 600 in Hk is notable: this witness has 7 of the 23 EF variants in this section and 6 of the 14 F variants. It may be that Hk is independently descended from O up to 600, but shifts exemplars to an F exemplar thereafter.

Se

Readings from the fundamental groups (and O) occur in Se as follows:

| | | |
|--------------|-----|----|
| A Variants | 96 | 38 |
| B Variants | 168 | 15 |
| CD Variants | 153 | 55 |
| Cx2 Variants | 41 | 12 |
| EF Variants | 61 | 4 |
| E Variants | 134 | 1 |
| F Variants | 99 | 2 |
| O Variants | 28 | 1 |

The distribution of variants from the A and CD groups in Se is particularly interesting:

| | | |
|-------------------|----|----|
| A vars (0-200) | 29 | 26 |
| A vars (200-399) | 29 | 5 |
| A vars (400-599) | 24 | 5 |
| A vars (600-end) | 14 | 2 |
| CD vars (0-199) | 42 | 6 |
| CD vars (200-399) | 47 | 29 |
| CD vars (400-599) | 32 | 10 |
| CD vars (600-830) | 32 | 10 |

From this, it appears that Se uses an A exemplar up to around line 200. In fact, the last A variant in Se up to line 200 occurs in line 140. Indeed, with 26 of the 28 A variants up to that point, Se appears to be a quite close copy of an A witness to line 140. After around line 200, the scribe seems to have switched to a CD witness as the exemplar—thus, the high number of CD variants after 200—and imported readings from the A witness. Accordingly, the scribe introduces the renumbering of the husbands in lines 452-525, otherwise found only in A witnesses and in two other manuscripts, Si and Ry1, which appear to have imported readings (including the ‘added passages’) from an A witness. Others of the further twelve A readings found after line 200 in Se may have come by deliberate import from the same source.

Thus, the Se scribe appears to have had two exemplars available: an A witness and a CD witness. It is notable that Se contains a quite high proportion of Cx2 variants (that is, readings presumed to have been in the lost exemplar used by Caxton for his second edition), particularly in lines 0-200 (6 of 16) and 600-end (5 of 11.) It is suggested above that this lost exemplar may have been close to the presumed ultimate ancestor of Dd and the A witnesses: the α exemplar. The A witness available to the Se scribe may also have been close to this Dd/A ancestor, and hence have inherited some of the same readings also apparently present in the Caxton exemplar.

The 'added passages'

The most remarkable single aspect of the textual history of The Wife of Bath's Prologue is the presence in some manuscripts but not in others (including Hg) of the five so-called 'added passages.' These passages contain altogether thirty-two lines not present in Hg, and are found after lines 44, 574, 594, 604, and 694 (in the CTP numbering) in other witnesses. Unlike many other additional lines not found in Hg, editors have long thought that Chaucer wrote these lines. Further: the presence or absence of these lines fundamentally alters our perception of the Wife of Bath, and our understanding of the whole Prologue: see my 'Editor's introduction' on the CD-ROM (Robinson 1996.) The discussion in this section is much indebted to the article by Elizabeth Solopova in this volume on authorial variants in The Wife of Bath's Prologue. I am particularly grateful to her for the clarification of the relationships between witnesses, as shown by the text of the added passages themselves in the various witnesses, and for her demonstration that all the witnesses which have the added passages derive these from a single exemplar, either by descent or contamination.

Assessment of whether these lines were written by Chaucer must rest on two factors. The first factor is their quality as poetry and their connection to their immediate context and to the rest of the Prologue, and indeed to the text of The Canterbury Tales as a whole: are they likely to have been written by Chaucer? do they fit into the poem, and into the whole of the Tales? The second factor is their distribution across the witness tradition: is this consistent with an early origin for these lines? or were they introduced late into the tradition, and so might be late productions and not by Chaucer?

Concerning their quality as poetry: that Chaucer wrote at least the passages after 574, 589, 604, and 694 has rarely been doubted (an exception is Blake 1985, 130; also Kennedy in this volume).¹⁸ The vivid, even racy, expression of lines such as 604/3 to 604/5 are typical of Chaucer at his most forceful, and the Wife at her most outrageous:

For god so wys , be my sauacioun
I ne loued neuere , by no disreciooun
But euere , folwed myn appetit

The lines after 44 (the 'nether purs' passage) have attracted more scepticism. In part, this is because of their absence from El, the manuscript which has influenced most modern editions. In part it is because their expression is rather more prosaic and in lines 44/3 and 44/4 *Dyuers scoles dyuers praktyk* could be read as Chaucerian pastiche rather than as by Chaucer himself. However, it is difficult to exclude these lines on the grounds of style alone: one does not have to believe that Chaucer always wrote brilliantly. I will return later to the question of how well these passages fit into their context, and into the whole Canterbury Tales.

Concerning the distribution of these passages in the textual tradition: at first glance, this is puzzling; so puzzling that Manly and Rickert felt they had to consider the distribution of these passages quite separately from the rest of the

tradition. A total of twenty-two witnesses contain one or more of the five so-called ‘added passages.’ Sixteen of these witnesses are among the forty-three which constitute the fundamental witness groupings. Figure 5 shows the distribution of these passages across these fundamental groupings. Each character in a five-letter sequence ‘xxxxx’ or ‘oxxo’ etc. represents one of the five ‘added passages’ (after lines 44, 574, 598, 604, 694 in the CTP numbering.) Thus: xxxxx means all five are present; oxxx means that those after 574, 598 and 694 are present while those after 44 and 604 are absent.

Explanation of the distribution of these added passages must consider both the overall affiliation of the various manuscripts which have one or more of these passages, and also the links between the manuscripts shown by the text of the passages themselves. In essence, a witness might have one or more of these added passages by one of two routes:

- **descent:** if the overall affiliation of the witness shows that throughout the Prologue a witness is of a particular grouping, and the text of the added passages is of the same grouping, then the passages will have come to that witness by direct descent from the exemplar, along with all else in the Prologue;
- **contamination:** if the overall affiliation of the witness shows that throughout the Prologue a witness is of a particular grouping, but the text of the added passages comes from a different grouping, then the passages will have come to that witness by contamination from a witness outside the line of descent of the exemplar for the rest of the text.

In the following discussion, the overall affiliation of the various manuscripts—that is, their relationships with other manuscripts throughout the Prologue, outside the added passages—is based on the preceding discussion in this article. The discussion of the links between the witnesses shown by the text of the passages themselves has been researched by Elizabeth Solopova (see her article on authorial variants in this volume) and I summarize her findings in the following.

Descent appears to be the explanation of the occurrence of the passages in all the witnesses of groups A and B and Dd (thirteen witnesses, including Cx2 Pn Wy.) From the discussion above, throughout The Wife of Bath’s Prologue all these witnesses descend from a single exemplar, the Dd/AB exemplar (itself, it is suggested, descended from the α exemplar.) All these passages were in the common exemplar of Dd and group A (see above); from this exemplar they descend into the text of all the A and B witnesses and into Dd.

Solopova’s research into the text of the added passages themselves in Dd and the AB witnesses shows that these witnesses share the following significant errors in these passages:

44/4-6 *The dyvers scolines*: the version in Dd (uncorrected; for the source of the corrected text in Dd see below) and AB is metrically and stylistically inferior

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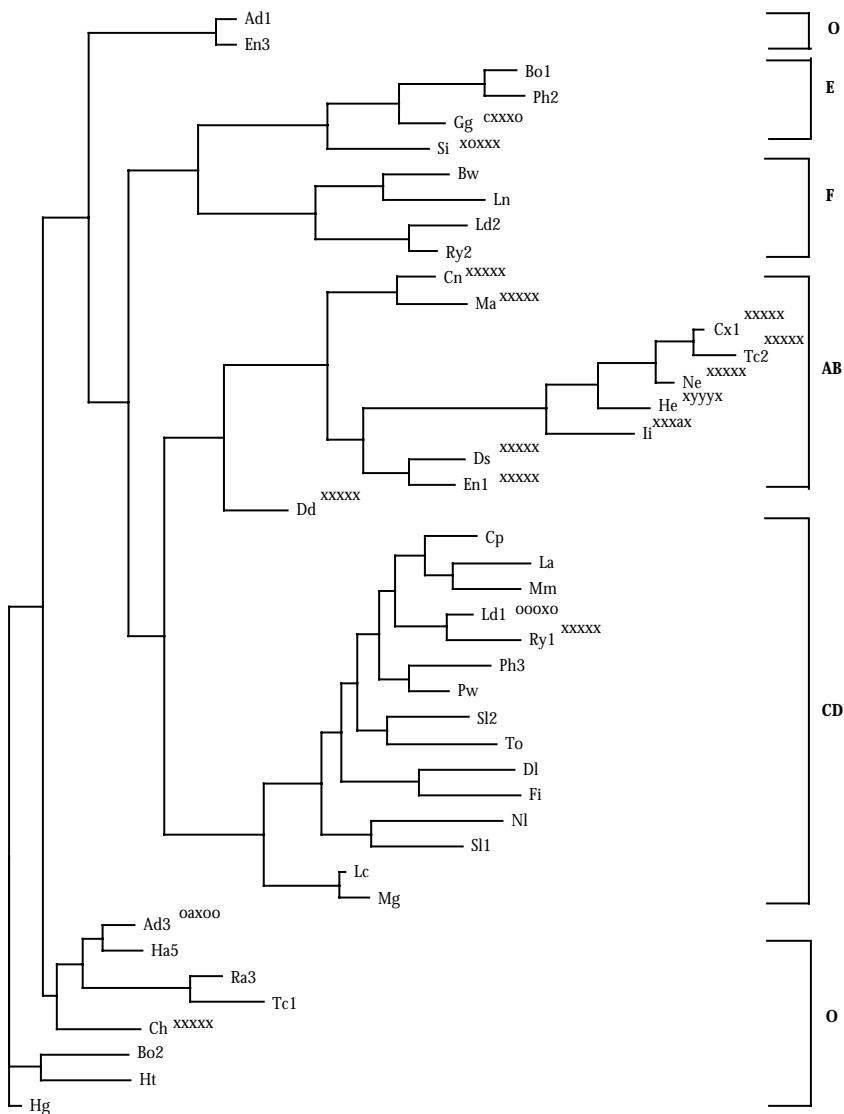


Figure 5. Distribution of 'added passages' across fundamental text groupings
Added passages in witnesses excluded from the fundamental groupings:

| | |
|-----|-------|
| Cx2 | xxxxx |
| Pn | xxxxx |
| Wy | xxxxx |
| El | ooooo |
| Se | xxxxx |
| Ha2 | oodde |

Key: x = presence, o = absence, a = present but differently placed, c = in lacuna, but presumed absent, d = present in margin, e = absent, but mark in margin indicating knowledge, y = in lacuna but presumed present

- 604/1 The simplification marke of Mars for the ‘metrically regular and syntactically concise’ (Solopova) lectio difficilior Martes mark (the El reading)
- 604/3 The grammatically explicit but metrically irregular wisly for wis (El)
- 604/6 The metrically irregular Al were he short long blak or (and variants of this) for metrically regular Al were he , short· or long· or blak , or wh(E)

Solopova’s findings suggest that the text of these passages in Dd AB goes back to the same common exemplar. We have seen that the whole text of these witnesses throughout The Wife of Bath’s Prologue goes back to the same common exemplar. Therefore, these witnesses (Dd AB) have the added passages from the same source as they have the whole text: by descent from the Dd/AB exemplar. Accordingly, these passages were all present in the Dd/AB exemplar.

This accounts for the presence of the passages in 13 of the 22 witnesses which have them. This leaves their presence in a further nine witnesses—Se Si Ch Ad₃ Ld₁ Ry₁ El Ha₂ Gg (and, also the lost Caxton exemplar)—to be explained.

Both descent and contamination from a Dd/AB witness account for the presence of these passages in Se. The variant database analysis above (p. 116) suggested that the Se scribe had access to two exemplars, a Dd/AB exemplar and a CD exemplar, and that the scribe both changed from one exemplar to another during copying and also introduced into his copy readings from the witness he was not currently using as an exemplar. For the first 200 lines of the Prologue, Se appears to be using a AB witness as its exemplar, and thus it has lines 44/1-6, the first added passage. In the remainder of the Prologue, it appears to switch to a CD witness as its exemplar. However, Se imports numerous AB readings in this part, notably the renumbering of the husbands—and the added passages. Thus, the first passage is present in Se by descent; the last four by contamination.

Contamination from a Dd/AB witness also appears to explain the presence of these passages in Si and Ry₁. Si is a member of the E group outside the added passages, but includes a significant number of AB readings outside the added passages, apparently by contamination. Thus, Si has the renumbering of the husbands in lines 450-525, characteristic of the AB manuscripts, and some thirty other readings (of a total of 96 identified by the variant database) from AB. Ry₁ has the renumbering of husbands, but so few other readings from AB as to suggest (as Solopova observes) that it appears that the scribe deliberately imported only major variants from AB. Both witnesses have readings in the added passages identified by Solopova as descending from their common Dd/AB exemplar. Contamination from AB is also probably the explanation of the presence of the single passage in Ld₁: Ld₁ is closely related to Ry₁ throughout the Prologue, and so probably had this passage by the same route as Ry₁.

Contamination is clearly likely in Ha₂, where two of the passages are written in the margin. Ha₂ has the AB errors in lines 604/1 and 604/6, suggesting that they came to Ha₂ from a AB witness.

According to Solopova’s analysis, contamination from a now-lost AB manuscript, close to Dd, appears to be the source of the added passages in Ch.

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Ch has all four of the Dd/AB added passage variants noted above. Outside the added passages, there is no evidence of affiliation between Ch and AB: Ch has just three of the ninety-six AB variants identified by the variant database, and seems very close to O. Thus, while Ch outside the added passages is a direct descendant of O, in the added passages the text has come by deliberate import from an AB. This agrees with Dan Mosser's findings, that other parts of the Tales in Ch take their text from AB.

As Solopova argues, all these witnesses derive the added passages from a single exemplar, the Dd/AB exemplar. However, there are three other manuscripts which do not appear to have the text of these passages from the Dd/AB exemplar, either by descent or contamination. These are Ad₃ (2nd and 3rd passages), Gg (2nd, 3rd, 4th) and El (all except the first passage.) Both Gg and El lack all three of the Dd/AB variants in the fourth passage. Further, all three of Gg El Ad₃ share the following errors against AB in the second passage, present in all three:

574/9 as omitted in But as I folwed ay my dame loore

574/6 he for ye in But yet I hope that ye shal do me ^{An error} resulting from scribal failure to recognize the shift into direct speech in this line, as Alisoun reports her speech to Jankyn.

In addition, El and Gg agree in the following error in the fifth passage (passage lacking in Ad₃):

694/1 that ~~is~~ omitted from For which that ieu crist himself was slain (Dd), leaving the metre defective.

From this, it appears that El Gg Ad₃ all have their text from the one source, and that this source is distinct from the Dd/AB exemplar. Nor can this source itself have been the ancestor of Dd/AB, as these errors are not present in any of the witnesses of that group.

For both Ad₃ and Gg it appears that the passages have come into them by contamination, as both witnesses are members of groups (O for Ad₃, E for Gg) whose other members do not have the added passages, and therefore they cannot have been in the shared exemplar. For Ad₃, the misplacement of one of the passages makes deliberate import specially likely: the scribe could have seen the passage in the margin of a exemplar and copied into the text, but mistook the place. Similarly, as Solopova suggests, the absence of the first and fifth passages from Gg implies contamination once again, with a scribe choosing to include some passages, but not others, from a manuscript where the passages may have been written in the margin or otherwise marked.

Further, there are links between El and both Ad₃ and Gg in other parts of the Tales. Ad₃ and El are the only two manuscripts with the additional lines in The Franklin's Tale, while Gg and El are both descended from an E exemplar in the first half of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. However, as I remark above (p. 110), in the second half of the Prologue El shifts from the E exemplar it uses in the first half to an exemplar very close to O. The question is whether El derived these passages from this exemplar by descent, or from some other exemplar by contamination. To answer this question, we need to look closely at the second half of El.

From line 420 on (the part containing the added passages) El is so close to Hg as to be near indistinguishable from it in all else but the added passages. In these 410 lines and apart from the added lines, El differs substantively from Hg on 24 occasions. Because of their interest, I give all 24 here:

- 457 How] we1 Ad1 Bo1 Cn Cx1 Ds El En1 En3 Gg He Hk Ii Ma Ne Ph2
Se Si Tc2
- 463 Ne] He Bo1 Cn Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1 Gg He Ii Ma Mc Ne Ph2 Pn
Ra1 Ra2 Tc2 Wy
- 467 womman] women Bw Cn Dl Ds El En1 Fi Ha4 Hk Ld1 Ld2 Ln Ma
Mc Ps Ra1 Ry1 Ry2 Si
- 484 trocel croceBo1 Bo2 Bw Cn Cp Cx1 Dd Dl Ds El En1 En3 Fi Gg Gl
Ha2 Ha4 Ha5 He Ht Ii La Lc Ld1 Ld2 Ln Ma Mg Mm Ne Nl Ph2
Ph3 Ps Pw Py Ry1 Ry2 Se Si Sl1 Sl2 Tc1 Tc2 To
- 486 certeynl] certeyn Bo2 El
- 508 so] fu Bw Cn Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1 He Ne Pn Se Tc2 Wy
- 540 often] ful oft Bo2 Cn Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1 He Ma Ne Ph3 Pn
Ra1 Tc2 Wy
- 550 that] the Bo2 El Hk Ld2 Ph3 Py Ry2 Sl1
- 575 shal] i I shad3 Bw Cp El Ha4 La Ln Mc Ra1 Ra3 Ry1 Si Tc1
- 590 twenty] of twentyn Ds El En1 Ii Ma Mc Ra1 Ry1 Si
- 592 But] And El Gg Mc Ra1 Si
- 638 prouerbel prouerbes Ad1 Ad3 Bo1 Bo2 Ch Cp Dd Dl El En3 Fi Gg
Gl Ha2 Ha5 La Lc Ld1 Mc Mg Mm Nl Ph2 Pw Py Ra1 Ra2 Ry1 Se
Si Sl2 Tc1 To
- 638 sawe] lawe Cp Dd El La Ps Pw Py Ra2 Sl2 To
- 663 in] on Cn Cx1 Cx2 Ds El En1 He Ii La Ma Ne Nl Pn To Wy
- 669 Nof] Ne Dl El
- 717 Exiphile] Eriphile Gp Cx2 Dl Ds El En1 Gg Ha2 Ii La Lc Ld1 Ma
Mc Mm Nl Ph3 Pn Ps Pw Ry1 Se Si Sl1 Sl2 To Wy
- 724 on] vpon Ad1 Bo2 Cn Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1 En3 He Ii Ma Ne Pn
Tc2 Wy
- 735 hertes] herte Bo1 El Fi Gg Gl Ha4 Mc Ps Py Si Tc1
- 738 shal] tit shab2 El Ii La
- 760 wene] leue Bo2 Cn Cx1 Cx2 Ds El En1 He Ii Ma Ne Pn Tc2 Wy
- 766 on] hym on Ad1 Ad3 Bo1 Bo2 Ch Cn Cp Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1
En3 Fi Gl Ha2 Ha4 Ha5 He Hk La Ld1 Ma Mc Mm Ne Nl Ph2 Ph3
Pn Pw Ra2 Ra3 Ry1 Se Si Sl1 Sl2 Tc1 To Wy
- 794 the] to El
- 818 wo1] Omitted Bo1 Bw Cn Cp Cx1 Cx2 Dd Ds El En1 Fi Gg Ha2 Ha4
He Ii La Lc Ld1 Ld2 Ln Ma Mc Mg Mm Ne Nl Ph2 Ph3 Pn Pw Py
Ra2 Ry1 Se Si Sl1 Sl2 Tc2 To Wy
- 826 ben] were El Gg Mc Ra1

Because there are so few differences between El and Hg, it is possible that for lines 420 on El is actually based on the same exemplar as is Hg. This exemplar was certainly available to the scribe when copying Hg; it could also have been

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available when copying El. If this were the case, then one would expect all agreements between El and other witnesses against Hg in these twenty-four readings to be quite random. In fact, they are not random. Among the twenty-four readings, El agrees with readings likely to have been present in the Dd/A exemplar fifteen times (El agreeing with Dd with or without A witnesses nine times: 463 484 508 540 638 638 724 766 818; El agreeing with other A witnesses without Dd six times 457 467 590 663 717 760.) So high a rate of agreement cannot be chance. By way of comparison, there are seven agreements with the CD witness Cp, five with the E witness Bw and four with the F witness Ld2.

From this, it appears that the El scribe used as his exemplar for lines 420 on of The Wife of Bath's Prologue the ultimate ancestor from which both Dd and the AB witnesses all descend, the manuscript we call the α exemplar. This manuscript contained at least the last four added passages and probably (from its appearance in both Dd and all the AB witnesses) the first one as well. It is notable that there are readings from lines 420 on shared by Dd and the A witnesses (and therefore, likely to have been present in their shared Dd/AB ancestor) which are not in El: thus, the renumbering of the husbands; 502 deed irCn Dd Ds En₁ Ma for deed El Hg; 649 Theofast Cn Dd Ds En₁ Hk Ma Si for Theofast El Hg; others at 580 591 592 682 796.) Therefore, it appears that there were two consecutive Dd/AB exemplars. The first, α , contained the fifteen (or so) differences from O which were inherited by El, as well as the 'added passages.' This α witness was also copied again, into Dd/AB, with this copy introducing the additional readings shared by Dd and A (for example, the renumbering of the husbands) but not shared by El:

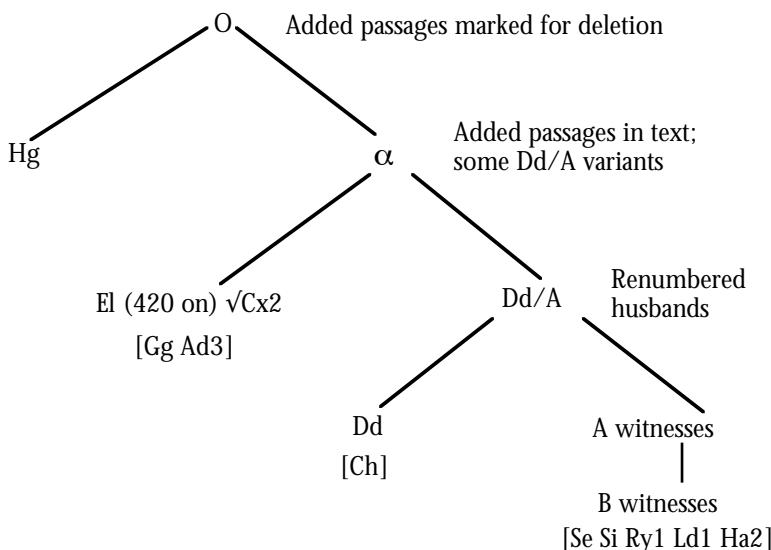


Figure 6. Relationships of O Hg α Dd El and the AB witnesses. Manuscripts in brackets have the added passages by contamination

It is also likely, from the errors shared by El Gg Ad₃ in the added passages, that all three of these took the text of these passages not direct from the α exemplar but from an intermediate ancestor (unless, indeed, Gg and Ad₃ took them from El itself.) Thus:

Study of the variants introduced into Cx₂ gives further support for this hypothesis. As Manly and Rickert observed, it appears that this Cx₂ exemplar had the text of the first of the added passages, and specifically 44/4-6, in a superior form to that found in Dd/AB. Further, it appears that the Dd scribe had access to this same superior text and so corrected what he originally copied (the inferior version found in AB) so that it was identical with the text in the Cx₂ exemplar.²⁰ In discussion of the Cx₂ exemplar above, it was remarked that this exemplar was extremely close to the α exemplar, and may indeed have been the α exemplar.

O, α and the added passages

Apart from the added passages, there are so few differences between El and Hg from lines 420 on that there can scarcely be more than one stage of copying between O and El. Thus, it is likely that α is a direct copy of O, Chaucer's original.

This analysis locates this α exemplar, apparently containing the added passages, only one copy from O, Chaucer's own copy. The probability that Chaucer himself wrote these lines is accordingly increased. Could Chaucer himself have added these lines to his own text; could α therefore represent (as it were) a second edition by Chaucer of The Wife of Bath's Prologue? There are three possibilities:

1. O was written without these passages, with Hg and other witnesses being copied from it. α represents a distinct authorial version of The Wife of Bath's Prologue, with El/Dd/AB descended from this distinct authorial version;
2. O was written without these passages. Chaucer then added these passages to O (perhaps in the margin.) Hg and the other witnesses without the passages descend from copies made before the passages were added to O, α and hence El/Dd/AB from copies made after the passages were added to O;
3. O always contained these passages. However, they were marked for deletion. Hg, the ancestors of all other group O witnesses, and the ancestors of CD EF, all respected the marking of the deletion and excluded the passages. However, the scribe of α ignored the marking of the deletion and included the passages.

The first possibility, that α represents a distinct authorial version, appears unlikely for The Wife of Bath's Prologue. Apart from these passages, there seem to have been no authorial variants in the α exemplar—or, indeed in any witness to The Wife of Bath's Prologue. If the α exemplar really represented a distinct authorial version one would expect there to be a significant number of authorial variants outside these passages: there might be revisions of words, phrases and

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whole lines, as there are (for example) in the two versions of the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. However, Solopova (p. 138–139) is able to identify just two variants in the manuscripts of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and outside these passages which might be authorial: *experimēt experientia* in line 1 and *sit̄ sothin* in line 46—and it is doubtful that either variant was present in α .²¹ So far as we can judge α from the copy in El in the second half of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and from the variants introduced into Cx2, apart from these passages α differed from O only in rather insignificant scribal variation: thus the twenty-four differences between El and Hg in the second half of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* noted on p. 122. These few variants, inherited by El Dd AB Cx2, serve to mark their shared descent from α ; but they do not show evidence of anything like deliberate or even sporadic authorial revision.

If we dismiss the first possibility, this leaves the second and third. Either the passages were added to O, or they were first written in O then deleted. There is reason to think the second explanation, that they were first written in O then deleted, is the most likely. I noted above that decision as to whether Chaucer wrote these passages must rest on their context within the immediate text and the wider Tales, as well as their poetic quality. While their poetic quality and their probable presence in O itself make it virtually certain that Chaucer was the author of all five passages, study of their immediate and wider context suggest that Chaucer may have decided to delete them from the text. So far as their immediate context is concerned: all five passages may be removed from the text without creating any local obscurity. All five are by way of being asides: indeed, at line 575, immediately after where witnesses place the ‘blood in the bed’ added passage, the Wife has to remind herself where she is in the tale:

But now sire , lat me se , what shal I seyn
A ha by god , I haue my tale ageyn

Given the rambling nature of most of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, this is not decisive: there are many passages which might be removed without local difficulty. More telling are the problems that the presence of these passages cause. The inferior quality of the first added passage (after line 44) has been remarked on already; Chaucer might have removed these simply because they were poetically slack as well as redundant. The ‘blood in the bed’ passage (after line 574) appears to link to nothing else in the text, and hints at a violent sexuality which appears out of character in the Wife. The third and fourth passages (after 598 and 604; the Venus and Mars passage and the ‘priuee place’ passage) repeat much of what is in the lines immediately adjacent. Thus, the association with Venus and Mars is spelt out in lines 594–9, and hardly needs the insertion of the rather conventional astrologizing of the third added passage after 598 (lust from Venus; hardynesse from Mars) to make the point.²² Similarly, lines 604–5 and 604–6 in the fourth added passage:

I ne loued neuere , by no discrecioun
But euere , folwed myn appetit

repeat the sentiment and echo the wording of the immediately preceding lines 600–01:

Allas, allas, that euere loue was synne

I folwed ay myn Inclinacioun

Finally, the fifth added passage, the four lines following 694, ascribe commonplace antifeminist sentiments to Jankyn's book. The surrounding lines do this also, sufficiently fully and more vividly.

These are all reasons why Chaucer, on re-reading the text he originally wrote containing these passages, might have decided to delete these passages. But beyond this immediate context of the passages in this Prologue, there is a further reason—relating to their wider context in the Tales—why Chaucer might have determined to delete these passages. It has long been thought that Chaucer originally assigned what is now the Shipman's Tale to the Wife of Bath.²³ It appears that the Shipman's Tale was intended to be told by a woman: the speaker times classes himself (or herself) among wives in lines VII 12-19 and VII 174 (in the Riverside numbering.) Further, the blatant and coarse sexuality of these passages fits their speaker to that tale.

According to this hypothesis, Chaucer wrote the Prologue for the Wife including these passages, and assigned her the Shipman's Tale. He then decided to give the Wife a quite different tale. In accordance with the more refined nature of the tale the Wife actually tells, Chaucer determined to soften the Wife's character to fit her better to this tale by removing the three passages (the first, second, and fourth, after 44, 574, and 604) which most clearly express the explicit sexuality of the Wife in the Prologue, as he originally wrote it. He also took the opportunity to remove two other passages (after 598 and 694) which appeared redundant. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that the Wife, who speaks the Prologue without these passages and who tells the tale of the loathly damsel, is a much more interesting figure than the coarser-grained Wife whose Prologue includes these passages and who tells what is now the Shipman's Tale.

O as Chaucer's own working copy; Hg as a direct copy of O

O might be either a scribal fair copy derived from Chaucer's own copy; or O might itself have been Chaucer's own working copy. For O to be a scribal fair copy, and not Chaucer's own copy, we have to presume that the scribe of O copied the 'added passages' along with the indication that they were to be deleted. Ockham's razor and simple probability suggest otherwise: that O was Chaucer's own working copy, in which certain passages were marked for deletion by Chaucer himself.

This suggests that the scribe of Hg, and the scribes of the ancestor of other O group witnesses as well as that of α , had as their exemplar Chaucer's own working copy, and that O actually was this working copy. Two factors work to verify that Hg is a direct copy of Chaucer's working copy, O. The first is the extraordinary excellence of the text in Hg, with only a handful of emendations required throughout to give excellent sense (Blake's 1980 text has just two emendations.) The second is the preservation in Hg of the distinctive system of punctuation argued by Solopova to have been Chaucer's own. Blake's argument that Hg may have been prepared in Chaucer's own lifetime and perhaps under his supervision, as an attempt by Chaucer to bring the whole Canterbury Tales together, is consistent with this analysis.²⁴

Conclusions

This analysis confirms much that was already known or suspected, but also points in some unexpected directions. The existence of Manly and Rickert's groups A B C D is confirmed. This analysis has also suggested that there are a further two groups E F, each containing four witnesses and with the two groups descending from a common ancestor, EF. The pre-eminence of Hg, regarded by most editors over the last half-century as the best base for an edition, is affirmed by this study: it may be a direct and careful copy of O, Chaucer's own working copy of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. However, this study suggests that O contained material written by Chaucer (in this case, the 'added passages') which the Hg scribe chose not to copy, and that witnesses separately descended from O—particularly El (in parts), Dd, Cx₂, and the AB witnesses—may preserve this material where the Hg scribe did not. Apart from these added passages, there is notably little or no evidence of any Chaucerian revision of the text. This has implications for editors of the Tales. Hg may be the best choice for the base text of an edition, but other witnesses may contain material bearing on the evolution of the Tales and its text, and account must be taken of this. Nor is the Hg copy perfect: it does contain errors, and it is possible that other witnesses close to O (especially the O group witnesses, but also Dd El and the lost Cx₂ exemplar) may contain a correct reading where Hg does not.

For our own work, this analysis confirms the value of transcription and collation of all the witnesses of a selection of the text, rather than of a selection of the witnesses. The identification of the E and F groups is crucial to assessment of El, as this appears based on an E witness itself descended from an EF archetype, up to about line 420. The E and F groups could not have been identified without transcription and collation of all eight witnesses (Bo₁ Bw Gg Ld₂ Ln Ph₁ Ry₂ Si.) Of these eight, only Gg had been transcribed and studied with any closeness by previous scholars and the importance of the other seven could not have been anticipated. Similarly, the possibility that the Cx₂ exemplar might have been so close to O, and contain critical evidence that O itself contained Chaucerian material absent from other witnesses, could not have been predicted. We look forward to extending this analysis across other parts of the Tales, as transcription and collation proceed.

Notes

¹ This study could not have been attempted without the co-operation and help of the many who have worked on the Canterbury Tales Project, and especially on 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue': see the 'Acknowledgements' section in my editor's introduction to The Wife of Bath's Prologue CD-ROM, Robinson 1996. I am grateful to Dan Mosser for allowing me to use his unpublished work on the α text: this illuminated much that was dark in the tradition. This paper is particularly indebted to Elizabeth Solopova, not only for the insights into the early manuscripts afforded by her discussions of their metre and punctuation and the added passages in her two articles in this book and her forthcoming

article on the survival of Chaucer's punctuation, but also for her careful reading of earlier drafts of this paper.

² The separation of the two parts of our work on The Wife of Bath's Prologue, so that the CD-ROM presents access to all the materials while this paper and that by Elizabeth Solopova in this volume present the analysis, has arisen because the materials must be ready before analysis (which has to be based on the materials) can begin and we did not wish to delay the publication of the CD-ROM until analysis was complete. It is intended that future electronic publications will present both materials and analysis together. The next CD-ROM to be published, of the General Prologue edited by Elizabeth Solopova, will include the supporting documentation and the variant database for The Wife of Bath's Prologue.

³ For further discussion of the effect of these variants see my editor's introduction to the CD-ROM, Robinson 1996; also Kennedy 1996.

⁴ For the graphemic basis of our transcription, and hence the preservation of all spelling and morphological variation in the transcripts and thus in the unregularized collation, see the article 'Guidelines for Transcription of the Manuscripts of The Wife of Bath's Prologue' in the first Occasional Papers volume; also provided on the CD-ROM (Robinson and Solopova 1993.) For Collate see Robinson 1994.

⁵ Contrast the apparatus of Cowen and Kane's edition of *The Legend of Good Women*. This smooths out 'spelling and morphological' variation, as does our regularized collation of The Wife of Bath's Prologue. However, because of the importance of metre and direction of variation in their reconstruction of the text, they do not regularize when (in their view) information bearing on this would be lost. Especially, they do not regularize final -e spellings where the metre is in doubt (Cowen and Kane 1995, 152-3.)

⁶ The one exception was our transcript of La. The scribe of this manuscript places a virgule after almost every word, clearly out of personal habit and not reflecting anything in the exemplar or the text, and therefore there seemed no value in transcribing any of them. Transcription of these would have given only information about the scribe, and told us nothing about the tradition.

⁷ Elizabeth Solopova's conclusions were presented in a paper 'The Survival of Chaucer's Punctuation in the Early Manuscripts of The Canterbury Tales' given to the 8th York Manuscripts conference in July 1996. This paper is to be published in the forthcoming conference papers volume.

⁸ The variant database confirmed this: there are 87 readings found in these two and only these manuscripts; around one variant every ten lines.

⁹ The differences between the analysis given in this article, and that given by Manly and Rickert, will be the subject of a further article by the author.

¹⁰ A further factor reducing the likelihood of all descendants of a hyparchetype preserving every reading introduced by that ancestor is what I describe as 'variant drift': the tendency for introduced variants to be unstable, and likely to be removed by further variation, or corrected back to the archetype, in consecutive copies. See the discussion of the CD group.

¹¹ In practice, all such borderline instances were scrutinized individually, and a decision made on the basis of the spread of sigils witnessing the reading

whether the variant seemed specially likely to arise by coincidence (in which case it would be discarded) or not (in which case it would be kept.) The reading in Bo₁ Cx₁ Cx₂ El Gg He Ii Ne Nl Ph₂ Pn Si Tc₂ Wy is kept because the ten witnesses outside the E group divide as follows: eight from group B (Cx₁ Cx₂ He Ii Ne Pn Tc₂ Wy), which are effectively a single witness; Nl from CD; and El, which it appears is here using the same exemplar as E. Thus, the ten in fact represent only two cases of coincident variation at most, and so the reading is kept.

¹² On the theoretical basis of a 'historical' edition, based on Hg as the 'best text,' see Robinson 1996.

¹³ Caxton's second edition, including this 'Prohemye,' is published in facsimile by Cornmarket Reprints 1972.

¹⁴ See the discussion in Boyd's account of Caxton's Canterbury Tales, Boyd 1984; also that by Blake 1967.

¹⁵ This was demonstrated by Dunn 1940; cited by Boyd 1984, 25. Blake arrived at the same conclusion, apparently independently, Blake 1967, 23.

¹⁶ For a contrary view, see Blake 1967, 23. Blake is certainly correct (p. 24) in asserting that this Caxton exemplar is unlike any existing A witness.

¹⁷ The first attempt to identify the manuscript used by Caxton appears to have been made by Koch, in his study of all the manuscripts of the Pardoner's Tale: he places this manuscript in his 'A type' group, in which he includes El, Dd, Ch, Nl, Hg and Py among others (Koch 1902.) Greg tested this assertion, and found that Ad₃ was the nearest to Cx₂ (Greg 1924.) Kilgour explored this further and suggested that Ad₃ might itself be the 'lost exemplar,' a suggestion refuted by Greg and not supported by our analysis, above (Greg 1929; Kilgour 1929.) The agreements with Ad₃ can be explained as the result of the lost exemplar, like Ad₃, being also an 'O' group manuscript and also very close to the original. See further Dunn 1940.

¹⁸ The hypothesis that the Dd scribe himself composed these passages assumes that the A witnesses are descended from Dd itself. Compare the discussion of the Dd variants above for arguments against this.

¹⁹ The absence of three of these passages from He is due to loss of leaves in He.

²⁰ I owe this suggestion to Dan Mosser, in his unpublished work on the α text. Manly and Rickert (II: 193) suggest that Dd had 'direct access to the original form of the lines' and corrected the text accordingly.

²¹ Experiments unlikely to have been present in α as it is found only in CD manuscripts (regarding Gl as a CD manuscript at this point) and a single F manuscript, apparently by contamination. The reading is not found in any Dd/AB witness, or in any witness possibly descended from α . The evidence that sothewas present in α is little stronger. The occurrence of this reading in El is not evidence of presence in α : El is here, as throughout the first half of the Prologue, a copy of E not α . Thus, the only evidence for sothehaving been in α is that Caxton introduced sotheinto his second edition, and so it may have been present in the exemplar (a close relative of α , if not α itself) used by him—or Caxton could have known it from elsewhere. Further, it is doubtful whether experimenterexperience should be regarded as a variant at all: the two words, as Solopova (p. 139 of this volume) points out, were semantically

equivalent. Similarly, Kennedy (p. 25-26 of this volume) remarks that the substitution *sothefor sithas* a typical scribal error.

²² The discrepancies and repetitions between the ‘added passages’ after 598 and 604, and the surrounding text, have been acutely noted by Marshall Leicester, though in a rather different context. Of the ‘priuee place’ passage, he notes ‘the passage looks less and less like a single worked-out explanation...and more like a reworking, a set of alternative explanations of the same behaviour’ (Leicester 1990, 109.) Marshall Leicester focusses on the ambiguities and dissonances in these two ‘added passages,’ and also the ‘blood in the bed’ passage, as evidence for the indeterminacy of the Wife’s self-presentation, and hence her post-modern undoing and remaking of herself (e.g. p. 81; 101.)

²³ Tyrwhitt appears to have been the first to observe that the Shipman’s Tale seems to have been originally intended to have been told by a woman, in his 1775 edition of *The Canterbury Tales* (thus, Tatlock 1907, 205 fn. 6, ascribing the observation to iv. 280 of the 1830 printing, while Furnivall seems to have been first to suggest that the original female teller must have been the Wife of Bath (Furnivall 1868 footnote on p. 10 with note by Furnivall.) Also, it is probable that the Man of Law’s epilogue found in many witnesses (basically, the B and CD witnesses, but also Ha₄, the O manuscripts Ra₃ Tc₁, and the F manuscripts Bw Ln) was originally intended to be spoken by the Wife, as the speaker refers to her ‘joly body’: one could easily imagine the Wife referring to her body with this phrase, but no other woman on the pilgrimage seems likely to have used this phrase of herself. It does not appear to have been previously suggested that the so-called ‘added passages’ may have been deleted by Chaucer as part of a revision consequent on re-assigning the tales now given to the Shipman and the Wife of Bath herself.

²⁴ In an unpublished paper presented to the 1996 York Manuscripts conference.

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