

THE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY ON FIVE
PSEUDO-CHAUCERIAN POEMS, 1866-1900

by

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This paper will describe the controversy which appeared in the years 1866--1900 in British books and periodicals concerning the genuineness of five works then attributed to Chaucer. These five poems, the Complaint of the Black Knight, the Court of Love, the Cuckoo and the Nightingale, and Flower and the Leaf, and Chaucer's Dream (later known as the "Isle of Ladies"), were the major remains of a sizeable number of literary works which became attached to Chaucer in the blackletter editions of his works between 1532 and 1687. In 1778 Thomas Tyrwhitt, in his edition of the Canterbury Tales, published an appendix in which he attempted to state which of the large number of pieces accumulated in these editions were actually Chaucer's. His list discarded more than two thirds of the spurious titles. His advice was not heeded immediately, but by 1822 and after the editions of Chaucer's works followed with minor exceptions the reduced canon laid down by Tyrwhitt.

The last new edition to follow Tyrwhitt's canon was the Aldine Chaucer of 1866, revised by Richard Morris. The late sixties saw the beginning of criticism leading to a reformulation of the canon, first in the Bell Chaucer of 1878, and later in the Oxford edition and the editions of this century. The controversy was virtually complete by 1878, but the closing date has been extended to 1900 in order to include several dissident opinions which appeared later and because the publication of Skeat's Chaucer Canon in 1900 provides a convenient landmark. Although the correspondence occasionally mentions one or two of the short poems left over from the blackletter

editions, these will not be discussed here since no issue of substance is attached to any of them and they are mentioned only in passing.¹

The Court of Love was one of the poems reviewed by Thomas Tyrwhitt. He accepted it "on the basis of the internal evidence,"² though this evidence is not specified. In any case, the poem was an accepted part of the canon down to the period we are discussing. When Swinburne alludes to it in his book on William Blake in 1868, he calls it "Chaucer's most beautiful of young poems." And when he is later called upon to defend this statement, he readily agrees he is unqualified to do so, that in alluding to the poem in that way, he considered himself authorized by "general acknowledgment."³ In 1857 and again in 1859, it was quoted as Chaucer's in letters to N&Q, a magazine where many questions about Chaucer were disputed, and each time the ascription went unchallenged by any other reader.⁴ Most recently it had appeared in Richard Morris's revision of the Aldine Chaucer. Morris's main concern in his edition was to print reliable texts, for which he went directly to manuscripts whenever they were available. However, the appearance there of the Court of Love did not in any way discredit the poem.

The other four major spurious poems discussed, though not cited quite so often, were also commonly accepted. Tyrwhitt accepted them all, his only doubts being over the Cuckoo and the Nightingale. "I do not think its authenticity so clear as that of [Chaucer's Dream]." ⁵ They all appeared in the current editions, including the 1866 Aldine, with no qualification of

their genuineness. They also were quoted in N&Q, virtually the only periodical in England which was mentioning any Chaucerian questions.⁶ But even so, the readers were not so interested in Chaucer himself, as in his words or idioms, or metaphors or proverbs which appear in the writings. In truth in the fifties and early sixties the readers of the weekly did not seem overly concerned with the canon. One reader attracted no notice who quoted "Chaucer's" Testament of Cresseid alongside Troilus and Criseyde.⁷ The Testament had been ascribed to another author since 1721, an ascription repeated by Tyrwhitt in 1778. By the latter sixties, however, interest in the canon was beginning to stir. Though Morris ultimately did not attempt to separate the spurious poems in 1866, he seems to have discussed the possibility with his colleagues.

In 1868, the year the Chaucer Society was founded, public discussion of the canon began, opened appropriately by F.J. Furnivall, the Society's founder. In the Temporary Preface to the Chaucer Society's Six-Text Edition of the Canterbury Tales he announced some conclusions of Henry Bradshaw on the genuineness of certain poems associated with Chaucer.⁹ First was the idea that he did not rhyme words ending in -ye with those ending in -y. Before giving a more complete explanation of the rhyme test, Furnivall suggests that the Chaucer Society members "work at the question of the genuineness or spuriousness of the following poems" all of which would be disqualified on the basis of the test. He mentions the Court of Love, the Complaint of the Black Knight, the Flower and the Leaf, the Cuckoo and the Nightingale,

Chaucer's Dream, and some short poems. Noting that Bradshaw's conclusion, when published, "will not be of the poohpoohable kind" because of Bradshaw's constant practice of firm and certain documentation, Furnivall adds two thoughts of his own. He himself rejects Chaucer's Dream and the Flower and the Leaf, but he emphasizes that his rejection is based on "the present state of some of their stanzas." He affirms the possibility that later scribes had altered the rhymes. A question is implied here. If Bradshaw maintains these poems are spurious on the basis of the test, how can he show that the inappropriate rhymes are not scribal alterations?

Then Furnivall has a question. He wonders what Bradshaw will say to show that a poet's rhymes must be constant throughout his life. Why might he not change his rhyming practice? Bradshaw never did get around to publishing his article, and in some respects Furnivall's two points were never settled.

Turning aside briefly from the discussion begun by Furnivall and to be taken up again in 1870, another controversy worthy of mention concerning the Testament of Love was proceeding during this time. The Testament, a prose work, had not been printed with the works of Chaucer since 1810, although Tyrwhitt had sanctioned it, since subsequent editions gave only the "poetical works." Formerly believed to be autobiographical, it received the first blow to its credibility when Harris Nicolas showed that it conflicted with extant documentary evidence about Chaucer's life.¹⁰ Like the poems discussed here, it had been mentioned in the fifties as Chaucer's but now its spuriousness

appeared to be uncontested. In 1867 J.P. Collier mentioned in his introduction to Seven Poetical Miscellanies that "a careful perusal of the whole treatise, and a comparison of style, have confirmed our impression that the Testament of Love is not by Chaucer."¹¹ His primary evidence was in passages in which the author of *Troilus*, known of course to be Chaucer, was praised very highly in the third person. Later that year he again mentions the point in a query to N&Q. He cites his evidence and, noting that "all the Chaucerian authorities I have on hand speak of the Testament of Love as the work of Chaucer," he asks for confirmation for his rejection, since "I may be altogether wrong upon the point."¹² The next year in Athenaeum Collier again makes his assertion, more positively, citing the same evidence.¹³ The month following, again in Athenaeum, a reader entered a letter noting that Collier supported the conclusions of Prof. Hertzeberg, who had published similar reasons for rejecting the Testament of Love in the introduction to his translation of the Canterbury Tales, published in 1866.¹⁴ Apparently this letter went unnoticed by Collier; in 1869 he reacted very strongly to a report of the English Early Text Society which said that the Testament of Love would be omitted from the society's edition of Chaucer's works, "following Payne Collier and other critics." His irate letter to Athenaeum claimed sole credit for the "discovery" and began a ten-letter wrangle between himself, F.J. Furnivall and others which continued into 1870, before Furnivall recalled Hertzeberg's role and Collier was forced to leave off.¹⁵

In November 1870 George Waring brought up the canon in a review of Ten Brink's Chaucer Studien.¹⁶ Waring disputed Ten Brink's contention that the Black Knight, Chaucer's Dream, the Flower and the Leaf and Court of Love are spurious. Waring mentions no specific arguments supporting the first two works, but his evidence for the genuineness of the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf is worth noting.

The Court of Love, he says, "reads like a dream of the poet's youth." Describing the poem's first section, which features a choir of birds, he adds,

Its appended stanzas are entirely Chaucerian not only in their exquisite rhythm and felicitous expression, but even more in that artistic selection and concentration, of which among the poets of his time, the master alone knew the secret.¹⁷

The Flower and the Leaf he calls "a sister poem to the Prioress' and Nun's Tales. The three taken collectively, form a manual of the more serious thought and feeling current among women of birth and culture in that period." The poem is "'all womanly' through graceful diction, refined taste and spotless sentiment."¹⁸

This literary appreciation is valued much more highly than the lack of any contemporary ascriptions, for example in the Legend of Good Women or by Lydgate in the Fall of Princes. After all, Waring asks, why might it not be classed with those works suggested but not named in Chaucer's Retraction? Also, the rhyme test is discarded as inconclusive because of the bad state of the text, which has been "unscrupulously modernized" by scribes. He

closes with a recommendation that the four works be given "a close and searching comparison with Chaucer's unquestioned work." Of course this is what Ten Brink had just done, though not for literary qualities, the way which appears most fruitful to Waring.

Waring's remarks undervalue the application of scientific criteria to the question. He reacts as if this problem of authenticity is another literary problem to be solved by literary method. As yet, it is true, the scientific knowledge necessary is not yet mobilized to the problem but Waring's position, being the entrenched one, becomes very hard to dislodge, even when ample evidence is available.

Furnivall's reply is typical of the most vociferous and, though usually well-informed, the most pugnacious of the scholars participating in the discussion.¹⁹ He begins his letter thus: "Being unwilling that the Academy should be held to support the most doubtful doctrine of its last number... ." Thereby he registers not only his disagreement with Waring's position, but also his firm judgment that the position is intrinsically stupid, not worth advancing seriously in a public forum like the Academy. His reply, which deals only with the Court of Love, is brief, almost perfunctory. It consists mainly of counter-assertions, e.g. the language is said to be too late, though not one example is given. He spends considerable space on an argument of doubtful merit---that the author of Court of Love compares himself unfavorably with a certain "Galfride" who must be Chaucer, but here again assertion, not evidence, carries the weight. Finally he ridicules Waring's suggestion that the poem has any "felicity

of expression." He does make a point worth noting---but passes over it quickly, as if it does not carry much weight. The poem has no external evidence for Chaucerian authorship except appearance in Stowe's edition in 1561. (Later editions merely followed him.) Furnivall's remark is "this evidence may be safely held worthless", which is quite true.

In a quite temperate reply, Waring calls Furnivall's bluff, and points out that conclusive evidence has not yet been presented and that the question of authorship is still open to discussion. Unfortunately the counter-arguments and rebuttal he offers are not always as strong as his initial declaration. He questions Furnivall's identification of "Galfride," saying that Chaucer wasn't ranked with the ancients Cicero and Vergil during his own time. Furthermore, Geoffrey of Vinsauf was the man named by both Tyrwhitt and Bell. Can Furnivall dispute their evidence? And regarding the poem's style and merit, Waring cites Trywhitt's acceptance on the grounds of internal evidence. He also points out that there is necessarily a difference in quality between a poet's early work and his mature work. He admits there are badly done portions, yet, "...The work from first to last is made up of realistic yet subtle touches, each individualizing an accessory, and bringing, at the same time, life and colour in the picture as a whole."²⁰ Both these observations are well taken, yet the strongest points of Furnivall's assertions remain unmet.

Waring admits that Court of Love has a few expressions which seem foreign to Chaucer's English, but for these to be given any

weight he demands that the critic show two things: that "these are absolutely incompatible with the state of the English language in Chaucer's time", and that they "are home-grown in the text, and not grafted upon it by scribes." This question of scribal alteration, already touched on by Furnivall in the Temporary Preface, runs through the entire discussion as one of the most frequently cited arguments.

Regarding Stowe and his evidence, Waring admits that he was uncritical but still maintains that works chosen by him have "weight of tradition" and thus must get "close examination from every point of view" before rejection. This is a doubtful judgment about Stowe's edition, but close examination is surely sensible advice.

Finally, regarding the problem of non-Chaucerian rhymes, Waring offers a counter assertion. "I say that I find in this poem Chaucer himself, through each and every one of his characteristics, ranging from his powers of picturesque description and pathos, down to his familiar trick of banter."²¹ This is as good a reply as any. After all, as Furnivall himself noted about Bradshaw's rejections, nothing has yet been said to show that a poet could not change his rhyming practices during his lifetime.

The exchange stops here with neither side outstanding for the strength of its position. The fuzzy literary impressions adduced by Waring are set off against the unsupported assertions of Furnivall. The most significant factor is inertia, the weight of which favors Waring. Why change our evaluation? Thus, in

1872, when the next notable exchange on the poem appeared in N&Q, readers were informed by an editor's note that "Those inclined to investigate the matter further will find the whole question, as regards Court of Love very ably argued by Mr. Waring in The Academy for November 1870."²²

The appearance in 1870 of two books added at least the weight of numbers to the support for some of the spurious poems. The second edition of Charles Cowden Clarke's Riches of Chaucer, modernizations of certain Chaucerian pieces first published in 1835, once again included adaptations of the Flower and the Leaf, Chaucer's Dream, and the Black Knight. Clarke wrote a preface for the new edition but saw no need to explain his acceptance of these three poems. A book by D. Laing Purves, The Canterbury Tales and Faerie Queen with Other Poems by Chaucer and Spenser doesn't recognize the Black Knight, but does include Court of Love, Chaucer's Dream, Cuckoo and the Nightingale and the Flower and the Leaf. Purves does not contribute any arguments for their genuineness, but merely prints pious admiration. "The Flower and the Leaf is pre-eminently one of those poems by which Chaucer may be defended against the charge of licentious coarseness...The poem throughout is marked by the purest and loftiest tone; and it amply deserved Dryden's special recommendations, 'both for the invention and the moral.'"²⁴ These books take no notice of current controversy. It is worth noting that each author in his preface also indicates his belief that the Testament of Love is Chaucer's. These books suggest the weight of conservative opinion.

Furnivall mentions the Court of Love as spurious in a couple of articles published in 1871, but these were mostly concerned with other topics and added nothing new. In one, he places our five poems in a group of works which, "when well examined, carry their spuriousness on the face of them," but he does not elaborate.²⁵

A controversy printed in N&Q in 1872 involved A. Hall and F.J. Furnivall and arose when Hall published a series of notes called "Chaucer Restored, Numbers I-IV." Hall's announced object was "to question the validity of certain arguments for excluding from the collection known as Chaucer's Works some half dozen or so of minor poems." Actually he spends very little space answering arguments supporting these threatened poems. The works involved are Court of Love, the Black Knight, Chaucer's Dream, Cuckoo and the Nightingale and the Flower and the Leaf.

In the initial piece in the series Hall tries to establish credibility for all the poems.²⁶ After citing Tyrwhitt's acceptance of the poems, Hall proceeds. He quotes four lines from the Confessio Amantis where Venus says that Chaucer in his youth wrote poems dedicated to her, many poems. Then he recalls that Furnivall has dated only two poems before 1369, the ABC and Complaint to Pity. Chaucer must have written many more poems than these two; and anyway these do not mention Venus at all. She is mentioned, however, in the five threatened poems. Then he clinches the argument with the question, "Who wrote the remaining five poems if Chaucer did not?" Of these five poems, Hall continues, Furnivall has said that the Flower and the Leaf

is post-Chaucerian. "The remaining four we may assume to be admittedly contemporaneous." They fit the description given by Gower perfectly.

Hall tries to load the burden of proof back on to Furnivall and his colleagues who impugn the Court of Love. The argument is not very persuasive. Furnivall replies to this in the following number of N&Q only by affirming that he does indeed believe that all five poems are post-Chaucerian, thus depriving Hall of his imputed assistance.²⁷

In the second note Hall advances two arguments which deal with the Court of Love exclusively and are not much more successful.²⁸ First Hall gives nine quotations from the Court of Love which are paired with quotations from genuine works of Chaucer (except for one citation from The Complaint of the Black Knight). For example:

The blossoms fresh of Tullius' garden sote.
Poems of Virgil taken here no root.

Court of Love

Whan that April with his showres sote,
The drought of March hath perced to the root.

Prologue of the
Canterbury Tales

These quotations purport to illustrate Hall's contention that Court of Love is "identical in rhyme and meter" to Chaucer's recognized poems, that "the ring of the metal sounds alike through all these passages." Actually they are quite inconclusive except to show that words used by Chaucer sometimes appear in the Court of Love.

Hall's other argument is based on stanza 100 of the Court

of Love, which mentions the tomb of Pity. According to Hall this "plainly refers" to Chaucer's poem Complaint Unto Pity which also says that Pity is dead. Hall extends this to be a proof that Chaucer wrote the Court of Love. "Who but the author of the latter [the Complaint] would dare thus to refer to another's work?" Hall finishes by appealing to his readers. "I hope that my countrymen will unanimously book the claim for Chaucer, if only to clear his fame from a possible charge of the grossest plagiarism."

This last suprising sally is the starting point for a rather sarcastic reply from Furnivall which begins, "it is pleasant to see a good joke or two in N&Q."²⁹ He ridicules Hall for supposing that Chaucer could be thought to have imitated a "plainly fifteenth century poem like the Court of Love." His reply positively rejects Court of Love on three grounds but is still short on evidence. Furnivall mentions the fallacy of assuming that since the author of Court of Love mentions Pity, he also wrote Pity. Then he disallows it as Chaucer's because "Its rhythm has not his sweet flow." and "The ring of the Court of Love is fifteenth century at the earliest, all through." Furnivall's parting shot is "This reasoning is evidently grounded on the assumption that all readers of N&Q are fools." Perhaps Hall deserved this. Still, though Furnivall thoroughly believes his own position, he has yet to present it as anything more than a blunt assertion. The literary evaluations, "sweet flow" etc. and Furnivall's appeal to authority are not much more help than Hall's curiosities.

Hall continued for two more installments.³⁰ But he has used

his best arguments. He covers the rest of the poems even less convincingly than he did the Court of Love. For example, noting that Chaucer wrote the "Complaint to Pity" and the "Complaint to Mars", the "Complaint to Venus" and the "Complaint to his Empty Purse", "because of manifest resemblance in title and construction," the Complaint of the Black Knight must be Chaucer's also. Actually the latter poem is much longer than any of the others and it does not fit the conventions of the "complaint" genre.

In a brief note to the third installment (he disregards the last), Furnivall meets Hall's claims for the Black Knight squarely with the information that Shirley ascribes the poem to Lydgate.³¹ This ends the discussion on this poem. Apparently Bradshaw had located the citation by Shirley years before, but had not had time to publish. Furnivall asserts that Chaucer's Dream is too late to be Chaucer's and that the Flower and the Leaf was written by a lady. Furnivall does not explain his last assertion here but continues a couple of months later in the Athenaeum.

In 1871 Furnivall published his Trial Forewords.³² He mentions the Court of Love, the Cuckoo and the Nightingale and Chaucer's Dream but only to say that proof of their spuriousness does not depend on the y-ye rhyme test. For such proof he refers the reader to his "answers to Mr. A. Hall---a publisher or bookseller in Paternoster Row, with queer reasoning powers." Since we have already been unsatisfied with the said answers, this isn't any help. Furnivall also makes the notable announcement that Chaucer's Dream ought to be considered spurious, until shown

to be Chaucer's. Waring and Hall claimed the burden of proof should be with those who claimed spuriousness. The question of who carries the burden of proof will continue to be a source of misunderstanding.

A review of some of Furnivall's Chaucer Society publications is more help. An anonymous writer summarizes the evidence, pro and con, on the Chaucerian authorship of Chaucer's Dream, the Flower and the Leaf, and Court of Love. All of the evidence he cites for Court of Love is con. It was not printed till 1561. Thomas Tyrwhitt could find no manuscript. The language is hard to prove contemporary. Finally, "It requires no grammatical knowledge to make the verse flow smoothly."³³

Evidence on Chaucer's Dream is not as full, but what there is is against it. Its 1597 publication is cited along with the un-Chaucerian rhyme, kneen:queen. On the Flower and the Leaf, the review notes that the subject of the poem was mentioned by Chaucer in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, but the language is late. The article brings together evidence that certainly has weight, though it is not totally convincing. Still, the evidence is scant and hardly settles the issue.

Some remarks in this article on the qualifications of the Chaucerian editor reflect on the approach to the canon taken by literary men.

What is really wanted in an editor is that he should thoroughly understand the grammar, the idioms, and as far as possible, the pronunciation of fourteenth-century English. In fact, sound scholarship is required, and this is a point that is always being overlooked. ...It is strange that such a truism should require to be so often re-

peated; but Englishmen are, as it were, too near to their own language, and commonly cannot see the perplexities and difficulties of it. They suppose they know by nature many things concerning it which really require many years of hard work to learn.³⁴

The statement is notable for two things---the minimum requirement which is stated for the editor, and the attitude ascribed to Englishmen. In reply to Furnivall's stipulation that he have an "ear"---presumably a literary man's quality, a poet's forte---Athenaeum goes to the opposite, not mentioning literary qualities at all, demanding definite linguistic knowledge. This demand for "science" is at the heart of this whole controversy. Furnivall and the others of the Chaucer Society are bringing philological knowledge to bear upon the question of Chaucerian authorship and some of his impatience with those who challenge his mysterious dicta ("the language is much too late", "obviously fifteenth century") is due to the fact that he regards such judgments based on philology to be self-evident, unless one is ignorant of philology; in which case one shouldn't argue--one should study. This demand for science is the current revolution which seeks to displace the judgment of entrenched amateurs who "suppose they know by nature" the language of Chaucer because they are literary men.

When Furnivall takes up the question of the genuineness of the Flower and the Leaf in July, he is able to present a schedule of arguments which are backed by considerable evidence.³⁵ His temper however has not improved and he opens his exposition with a splenetic reference to "the extraordinary and wilful ignorance

of the British literary public regarding their second greatest poet, Chaucer, and the perverse way in which professors, and people who ought to know better, will go on attributing to Chaucer poems which like the Complaint of the Black Knight are given to Lydgate by Shirley."³⁶ Then he proceeds to show why the Flower and the Leaf can not be Chaucer's. His first arguments relate to the content of the poem. It can not be Chaucer's because it speaks against the Daisy, Chaucer's favorite, supporting the leaf. This is done not in the "light easy tone of vers de societe" of someone like Deschamps who could choose the flower and then the leaf with no great conflict. Rather the tone is contemptuous, hardly reconcilable to Chaucer's "profound affection." Now Furnivall repeats his claim that the author is a woman, as is clearly seen when the "faire Lady" of the poem addresses the narrator as "doghter" three times. Further, the poem praises virginity rather than the "indulgence so often instanced in Chaucer's tales." He adds, "and this praise is a woman's rather than a man's; all through the poem run a woman's grace and tenderness, a woman's feeling, just as the worthiest predecessor of Elizabeth Barrett Browning should have possessed."³⁷ Perhaps this female author was in his mind when he declares the poem un-Chaucerian because it "confuses things" by having the Flower party wear green dresses and the Leaf party white dresses. Chaucer would never have been guilty of such awkwardness.

Having devoted considerable space to these opinions, he advances arguments based on language. The poem "plainly copies Chaucer's poems and words," and he cites four passages which

echo passages from recognized Chaucerian poems.

When that Phebus in his chaire of golde so hie
Had whirled up the sterrie sky aloft

Flower and the Leaf

Appolo whirleth up his char so hye
Til that the God Mercurius hous the slye

Squire's Tale

He mentions that the poems fail the y-ye rhyme test, with fifteen faulty rhymes in 600 lines. He cites fourteen vocabulary items which he says are fifteenth-century.

Before he concludes, he adds two short arguments. First the poem refers to the founding of the Order of the Garter as long ago, whereas it occurred about 1344. Second, "The flow of the Flower and the Leaf is not Chaucer's." He is referring mainly to run-on lines.

He concludes with the evidence that it was printed late, in 1598, and no manuscript is extant. He asserts, "It was, without doubt, written after the invention of printing, and multiplied by copies." He notes that Tyrwhitt questioned it, and, citing Bradshaw, Ten Brink, Hales, and Skeat, adds that "all our best late critics" have rejected it. Even Morris's printing is no testimonial since his intention was not to set the canon.

Furnivall's opinions on the feminine character of the poem or on the flow of the verse might be successfully challenged. Nevertheless he makes a strong presentation. The lack of external evidence, the difficulties in the language of the poem, the question of imitation, all require notice. Furnivall's case may not justify his bad temper, but it is a good case.

Hall does not offer much evidence in reply.³⁸ He quotes a passage from the Legend of Good Women.

But, natheles, he were not that I make
In preysing of the flour agayn the leef.

which purports to show that Chaucer was not all for the "Flour" against the leaf.

Responding to Furnivall's linguistic evidence, Hall agrees that he "has a perfect right to his opinion" but asserts that the text may have been modernized by the scribes. And Hall scornfully refuses to accept the suggestion of imitation.

The real point of Hall's article is the way he describes his defense of the Flower and the Leaf.

I consider it a moral wrong to withdraw from an author works that have been habitually ascribed to him, except upon conclusive testimony; without such conclusive testimony, the eliminators are in a false position; with conclusive testimony, all argument is superfluous.³⁹

It is true that, in a sense, Furnivall's statements are not conclusive; there is a possibility the poem is Chaucer's after all. But what Hall is not willing to admit, with great fervor, is that the work can be doubtful, and that to establish a merely likely case is a legitimate procedure. Whereas Furnivall is convinced that he has done enough in establishing the doubtfulness of the poem, Hall is just as convinced that anything less than a complete victory by Furnivall is a vindication of his own position.

In 1873 Furnivall published an article in Macmillan's Magazine on the gradual settling of the Chaucer canon.⁴⁰ In the

ten-page article the Court of Love, the Flower and the Leaf, the Cuckoo and the Nightingale and Chaucer's Dream are again passed over as spurious simply because they fail to pass the rhyme test. So further elucidation must wait.

In 1874 Skeat printed in a note to N&Q the results of a little test he had devised.⁴¹ From the present, when the rhyme test seems inevitable, looking at another attempt at a test can perhaps recall the contemporary appearance of such indicators. Skeat's idea was to count the number of times the opening lines of a verse paragraph was rhymed with the concluding line of the previous paragraph. The data he derived from the test supported conclusions already arrived at by other means. The House of Fame had 58 such links in 2,170 lines, for a ratio of 26/1,000. The Book of the Duchess had 47 in 1,334 lines for 35/1,000. The Roman de la Rose had only 37 in 7,700 lines for a low count of 5/1,000 and Chaucer's Dream had no such links at all. The latter two, then, are non-Chaucerian.

Skeat placed no great weight on this test, and its premise is at least plausible; but he did not pursue the matter further. The hard mathematical evidence, however, serves to dramatize a basic difference in approach between the Chaucer Society scholars and the critics who opposed them with less concrete evidence.

William Minto's Characteristics of English Poets, published this same year, provides an example of continued skepticism displayed toward the rhyme test.⁴² Minto cannot believe that the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf are not Chaucer's.

Minto is convinced that none of the contemporary poets we know about could have written such excellent stuff, and, as for an unknown poet, "It is simply incredible that these poems could have been written by a poet whose name has perished." If the poet was before Chaucer, then he would have been very famous indeed, and Chaucer "would have mentioned him as the model of his seven-line stanza." If after Chaucer then he would have mentioned Chaucer as his master "according to the universal custom of the time." The only other alternative, Minto says, is deliberate forgery, and this is out of the question since a forger would have been especially careful about a mechanical rule like y-ye rhymes.

So Minto cannot admit the rhyme test as final. He supports his decision with the Romaunt, which he thinks is indeed Chaucer's own translation. "It is hard to believe that this translation, if written before Chaucer's, could have been unknown to him, and if known, could have been ignored; and the supposition that it could have been written after his, without any reference to him, is absurdly contrary to the customs of his time."⁴³

The failure of the Romaunt to pass the rhyme test presents, at least Minto believes, sufficient evidence of the test's inadequacy. He notes that Bradshaw then rejected the Romaunt, but "Ten Brink makes the more cautious and rational conjecture that, when Chaucer translated the Romaunt, he had not yet begun to restrict himself from the ye-e rhyme, which was freely used by all English poets before him."

Minto decides that the only significance of the rhyme test

is for determining the order in which the poems were composed. Early works, like the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf, do not have the rhymes of his more mature work.

In 1876 Skeat published a rather full marshalling of evidence against Chaucerian authorship for the Court of Love.⁴⁴ He, in large measure, makes good on Furnivall's claims. He begins by pointing out there is no external evidence at all for Chaucerian authorship. Then he lists the internal evidence which is against Chaucerian authorship:

First the issue of Galfride. Skeat says it cannot be Geoffrey de Vinsauf because the man was ridiculed by Chaucer. In other words, how could such a man be regarded as superior? It cannot be Geoffrey de Monmouth, who does not fit at all. Actually the stanza seem to be copied from Occleve's tribute to Chaucer in De Regimine Principium, where Chaucer is compared with Tully, Aristotle and Vergil. Hence Galfride must be Chaucer, who is thereby disqualified as a possible author.

Second, no final -e's appear as line closings in the poem. Four apparent exceptions are imperfections in the text, that is, a line ending is a word left out or the line is corrupt.

Third, language is sixteenth century. Words like celstitute and pulcritude appear. The use of names like Philobone, Philogenet suggest Greek learning which delays the poem to Sir John Cheke's time. The word exception is given three syllables instead of

the four Chaucer would have used.

Grammar is bad. The -en particularly is misused as when kepten is given as a past participle. Also the ancient plural -es is not consistently maintained. Use of the word enprint suggests an anachronism.

Rhymes are obviously post-Chaucerian. Finally the versification is smooth, unlike Occleve, Lydgate and Hawes, but like Sackville. Skeat suggests Sackville as a possible author, but definitely rejects Chaucer.

Skeat's critique is brief, to the point and well-supported. He does not supply evidence for his last two points but at least the smooth versification is easily verified as true. This is at least a respectable presentation of evidence which merits serious reply. The case still is not made exhaustively, but those who maintain the Court of Love's genuineness must do more than rely on critical inertia.

A few weeks later Furnivall prints a short note in Athenaeum to thank Skeat for "adding the weight of his well-known and well-won authority" to Bradshaw, Ten Brink and F.J. Furnivall himself, against the Court of Love.⁴⁵ He adds that Skeat may be wrong about Galfride. Geoffrey de Vinsauf in fact wrote De Arte Poetica which was a highly respected poetical treatise. Thus he might be the one referred to in the poem. This removes one argument from Skeat's arsenal, but he still has enough to demand notice.

F.G. Fleay's Guide to Chaucer and Spenser, published in 1877, apparently does take some notice.⁴⁶ Fleay, an industrious

member of Furnivall's New Shakespeare Society, apparently has followed to some extent the discussion of the canon. He confidently ascribes the Black Knight to Lydgate, an opinion which Furnivall had published, and he joins in the rejection of the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf, but he does have his own reasons. He rejects, for example, the rhyme test, which he explains by a recollection from his own poetic career. "In my first period, up to leaving the university, I used to rhyme -in and -ing in imitation of my then favorite models, especially of Mrs. Browning."⁴⁷ He reports that he later changed his mind on the point and burned a quantity of his verse and has not since used such rhymes at all. He suggests that a similar change of taste occurred in Chaucer's case.

He rejects the Flower and the Leaf, then, not because of faulty rhymes, but because it was written by a lady, where he says he follows Tyrwhitt. He gives three reasons for rejecting the Court of Love. First, its non-pronunciation of final -e's in nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. However, he does not reject it because this usage is too late, for he then ascribes the poem to Henry Scogan, Chaucer's contemporary, with this observation, "Is not, however, this poem too modern for the fourteenth century at all in its present shape? It seems to me to have been re-written by the sixteenth century editor." Skeat's demonstration of the lateness of the language has thus been shuffled off to a parenthesis. Fleay does not see it as bearing directly on the question of authorship. Another reason for rejection is that the poem does not use the "dream" framing device "as all Chaucer's poems of this

kind" do. His third reason is that it contains a distinct allusion to the Legend of Good Women, thus placing it after 1383, a time when Chaucer had long given up his imperfect rhyming practices. Rhymes can be used to date a work within Chaucer's career, once the question of authorship is settled. Thus Chaucer's Dream and the Roman de la Rose are both assumed by Fleay to be early works of Chaucer. The genuineness of Chaucer's Dream is, of course, supported by its use of the dream as framing device.

Fleay suggests that the Cuckoo and the Nightingale also is genuine, though it doesn't use the dream device as he might expect. His principal reason is that "no one else I know at that date could have written it." Fleay's book suggests that the opinions of Furnivall and Skeat were not making as much headway as they sometimes assume.

A more conspicuous reply, though not directly to Skeat, came the following year when William Minto's article on Chaucer for the ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica became available.⁴⁸ Minto's piece is a general survey of knowledge about Chaucer and he discusses the facts of Chaucer's life as well as the works themselves. But he does not try to dodge the controversy over works of disputed authorship in the canon, led by Furnivall and Skeat. He has no trouble with the exclusion of the Testament of Love, Assembly of Ladies, and Lamentation of Mary Magdalene, all of which bear no internal marks of Chaucerian authorship and are universally rejected. Still convinced of the position he held in 1874, he balks at the rhyme test, "which would deprive us of several works which are in no respect unworthy of Chaucer's genius",

meaning the Court of Love, Flower and the Leaf, and Chaucer's Dream. He cannot accept the rhyme test as sufficient proof, he says. He repeats his belief that these poems may be early works, done before Chaucer had become confident of his poetic technique; and that a forger would surely have most conscientiously observed such a rule. He points out that the works have received ample testimony from eminent men; Swinburne vouched for the excellence of the Court of Love, Dryden and Hazlitt for the Flower and the Leaf. If we reject them, he says, the obvious question is, "If Chaucer didn't write them who did? Is it conceivable that the writer of such works could have been utterly unknown in his own generation?"⁴⁹

Minto decides that though he believes Chaucer's Dream to be genuine, "it is not worth contending for." And he is now willing to admit that the Flower and the Leaf is perfect enough to be an imitation of Chaucer by another hand. The Court of Love, however, is genuine, as is proven by the Kingis Quair. This poem, written by James I of Scotland in 1405, imitates the Court of Love, which thus obviously preceded it. Furthermore, "in paying the customary compliments to his poetical masters, he mentions no names but Lydgate and Gower, who were clearly incapable of writing such a poem, and Chaucer", indicating, says Minto, that it was Chaucer who wrote the Court of Love.⁵⁰ Finally Minto sees a possible reference to the poem in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women which explains why it is so little known.

Hast thou not in a book lyeth in thy chest
The greate goodness of the Queene Alceste
That turned was into a dayeseye?

Of course, Chaucer had hidden it away in a chest. Why? "The tide of Puritanic religious sentiment which was destined to sweep into temporary oblivion the airy structure of the chivalric imagination had already begun in the middle of Chaucer's life."⁵¹ The Court of Love adopted the courtly notion of love where the "husband is the natural enemy of the lover," which may have proven offensive to the "Fair Maid of Kent, the widow of the Black Prince." Thus Chaucer hid the poem away.

Apparently Minto's article was written too early to take advantage of Skeat's more complete linguistic and grammatical evidence, or too late for him to prepare an adequate defense. At any rate, he takes no notice of Skeat. For all its length and ingenious reasoning the statement is short on evidence. A fact that carries considerable weight with him is the fact that the poem is pretty good, too good to be spurious. This argument might have had some value in 1870 when Waring used it, but in 1877, after Skeat's remarks, it is a little pale.

A brisk controversy resulted from Minto's article, though a good bit of it had not much to do with Chaucer. F.J. Furnivall replied at the end of March in Athenaeum with considerable sarcasm and contempt.⁵² He begins, "If all, or many of the articles in the new Britannica match the Chaucer one, Punch will have a dangerous rival." Furnivall attacks (that is the proper word) two arguments advanced by Minto. The first is his citing of Swinburne's judgment as evidence for genuineness. He makes a point prefigured in the review from Athenaeum quoted above and which apparently had not been widely thought of. "The genuineness

of a Chaucer poem is first a question of knowledge of Early English, the history of its grammar and vocabulary, and of paleography; second, of taste and critical power, which are of no use till the first conditions are satisfied." Here Furnivall makes explicit the priorities he has been working under. It is precisely Furnivall's granting of precedence to the findings of philology which has caused differences of opinion.

A common attitude in the discussion up to this point is to see linguistic evidence countered with a literary judgment, as if the two were more or less interchangeable. Perhaps this was true in an earlier time when linguistic knowledge was vague and probably of less value than carefully considered literary opinions. But in 1877 linguistic knowledge carried unimpeachable authority within its proper area.

Having made this valuable point, Furnivall goes after Swinburne, calling him a man even less knowledgeable on Early English than Minto, and one whose opinion is worthless. Furnivall then attacks Minto's "'evidence' gleaned from the Kingis Quair; Minto just assumes that Kingis Quair is an imitation of the Court of Love." Furnivall counters with the observation that "James never mentions this poem, never quotes a line of it, as, of course, he could not, for he had never seen it; it was written long after his death."⁵³

Minto's only defense, in the face of Furnivall's disagreement is to say that the positions mentioned "are matters of opinion in which I do not agree with Mr. Furnivall, with all my respect for his authorities."⁵⁴ He declines to repeat his position, saying it has been demonstrated twice, in Characteristics

and again in the Encyclopedia Britannica. He adds one more point.

I am perfectly open to conviction as regards the authorship of the Court of Love. I am simply in this position, that I have not yet seen any evidence against its being Chaucer's which seems to me to be conclusive. I hope I shall lose neither my temper nor my memory if Mr. Furnivall should prove that it was written in the latter end of the nineteenth century by himself and Mr. Skeat. It matters very little either way, it does not affect Chaucer's position in literature, nor any critical judgment on the character of his mind or the qualities of his poetry.⁵⁵

Minto's argument does not, in truth, advance the case for Chaucerian authorship; but neither does Furnivall's gleeful annihilation of Minto help explain his own conviction that the Court of Love is spurious. He has yet to present a thorough case for its spuriousness. The linguistic evidence is still not compelling, hence Minto's expression of doubt is understandable.

In the following week's Athenaeum Swinburne points out that F.J. Furnivall merely entered a rebuttal against Minto's arguments and offered no proof for his assertions.⁵⁶ Most of Swinburne's space is devoted to vilification of F.J. Furnivall who had been in dispute with Swinburne on his New Shakespeare Society publications.

I have as little wish as ability to contend with the erudite and warlike founder of the new-Shakespearean dynasty---be it a dynasty of dunces mainly, or chiefly rather of churls---on the especial eminence from which he now crows and claps his wings with more than all the clamorous confidence of the most bellicose bantam-cock that ever defied creation to match for mortal combat on the towering crest of his own dunghill.

In the same number Skeat enters a peacemaker's plea, while at the same time disputing straightforwardly the idea that there

is no proof the Court of Love was not written by Chaucer.⁵⁷ He is careful to preface his remarks with "I wish to say that I do not express any dissatisfaction with that Encyclopedia Britannica article except to say Minto is mistaken." Skeat says "the proof to the contrary is positive and certain; being simply this, that the language and prosody alike assign it to the very end of the fifteenth century." "I wholly repudiate the notion that his question is one of authorities"; instead it is based on externally verifiable linguistic facts. This is a statement which we have been waiting for. Up to now the case has been obscured by dubious suppositions and arguments added to linguistic facts. This is the first declaration that the linguistic facts by themselves are decisive.

Finally, to indicate his peaceful intentions and no intent to insult, Skeat adds, "Let us do what we can for our own noble language and literature, sinking all personal considerations in our love of subject."

The following week F.J. Furnivall makes a return with more spleen.⁵⁸ He has a few more words for Swinburne, of which this is more or less characteristic, "If only his knowledge could be brought up to within a hundred miles of his insolence and presumption, what a scholar he would be!" Then he takes Minto to task for his remark "it's no consequence."

This no-consequence Toots or Minto notion is precisely the thing we want to stop in the treatment of Chaucer. We do object to our great early poet being set up as a sort of cockshy for everyone to heave the guesses of his ignorance at. We do object to having the facts of Early English grammar treated as 'matters of opinion'

by men in Mr. Minto's state of incapacity to perceive the facts or their value.⁵⁹

The publication of the Bell edition of Chaucer's works in 1878 is an important point in the controversy over the canon because it presented without possibility of mistake the result of discussion on the canon to date. It also intimated, in a four-volume edition, the fact that the changing attitude toward the five poems we have been discussing is not eccentric and singular but recognized "best opinion." In revising the edition Skeat tried to place in a separate volume the works he judged spurious or very doubtful. Thus volume four contains Court of Love, the Black Knight, the Flower and the Leaf, and the Cuckoo and the Nightingale. Chaucer's Dream was placed at the end of the third volume only because the last volume was full. The remarks on each exclusion which he made in his preliminary essay were very brief and merely restated arguments already advanced at more length, but their very succinctness lends them an interest. The Black Knight he says, of course, is ascribed to Lydgate by Shirley. Against the Court of Love, he mentions that the unique manuscript is sixteenth century; and that the language of the poem is also sixteenth century ("hardly contains one clear example of the use of the final -e"). Against Chaucer's Dream he mentions its late publication, 1598, and the rareness of the use of the final -e. Against the Flower and the Leaf he mentions un-Chaucerian rhymes, clearly fifteenth century language, and the fact that it "purports to have been written by a lady." The Cuckoo and the Nightingale, he allows, is "much nearer to Chaucer's

style than most of the spurious poems," but its first two lines are the same as two lines from the Knight's Tale. Thus the poem is probably an imitation of Chaucer.

Skeat cites linguistic evidence when it is available, except in the case of the Black Knight, where he has more definite evidence. It is worth remark that he supports the linguistic evidence with other arguments, despite his confidence in the evidence.

Lest it be assumed that this is the end of the controversy, we must say that not quite all critics were convinced. In April 1878 F.J. Furnivall wrote to Academy praising Skeat's work in the edition, and hoping that all infidels would be soon converted.⁶⁰ He mentions specifically the Testament of Love, Romaunt of the Rose, Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf. There had not been much doubt about the first, but since the other three had all occasioned considerable differences of opinion, it is hardly suprising that a letter was forthcoming on one of them.

In June, a T. Arnold challenged Skeat's rejection of the Court of Love.⁶¹ Arnold disputes him by claiming that the language is not late. He points out that Skeat's charge is applicable to the poem as printed by Stowe in 1561, but not to Morris's edition "from the manuscript." The 1561 edition has "them" and "their" which are late, of course. But Morris's edition uses "hem" and "here", which are the authentic early forms. Further, he says, "A minute examination of the language of the poem would, at least in my judgment, show that there exists no reason why it should not be assigned to the age of

Chaucer and Gower." The other arguments are familiar. The poem cannot be sixteenth-century because its attitude toward classic authors is medieval, not from the re-awakening of learning. The poem is much better than anything between Chaucer and Henry VIII and if it is not by Chaucer it is by "an unknown contemporary... of very remarkable and highly cultivated powers" of whom no other trace remains, implying of course that this is scarcely possible. Arnold finally declares "This is a matter of taste and it would be interesting to have the opinion of the Poet Laureate upon it, or that of Prof. Shairp."

Skeat replies rather sharply the following week, answering Arnold's claims for the early language.⁶² He points out that Morris used the same manuscript that Stow used, only he altered "them" and "their" in deference to the possibility that the poem is by Chaucer. He says Morris informs the reader of this practice by printing altered words in italics. Skeat finishes by observing, "The whole difficulty of the matter resides in this: that critics have preferred in general to adopt opinions on slight grounds rather than go through the solid drudgery of textual criticism."

But the matter is not done with. Arnold replies again.⁶³ "I still rely on the soundness of his [Morris's] philological instinct" which prompted him to alter the late forms. Arnold then lists Chaucerian forms of negatives, Chaucerian words and phrases which occur in the poem. He finishes by complimenting Skeat. "He is certainly a true scholar, and therefore I am convinced, as I said before, that he will not deliberately maintain a thing [sixteenth century date] so untenable."

Skeat's rejoinder is a civil but thorough annihilation of his position.⁶⁴ Skeat points out that the poem has Chaucerian words because it is an imitation of Chaucer, just as the Rowley poems had fifteenth century words. He then suggests a test.

The true test in these cases is a philological one, or to speak more plainly, a grammatical one. Mr. Arnold seems to know nothing about this and never to have dreamt of applying it. Yet it is not only a safe test, but a convincing one. ... The result is certain, because it appeals to facts.

He suggests that Arnold look in the introduction to Morris's edition of the Prologue of the Canterbury Tales where the grammatical uses of the final e in Chaucer are tabulated. Then he should observe the occurrence of the final e in a given number of lines of the Canterbury Tales, and record the frequency of its use for both metre and grammar. Skeat concludes that Arnold will find the number of occurrences in the Chaucerian passages to be "very considerable;" he will find, very likely, none at all in the passage from the Court of Love. In a postscript, Skeat adds a long list of other grammatical violations in the poem.

To Arnold's credit it must be said that he did not try to enter a rebuttal, and this discussion ends. With this exchange controversy on these five poems is virtually complete.

From this time until 1900, there is no direct exchange of views in periodical publications. Critics express their views more generally, mostly in books.

When Characteristics appeared in a second edition in 1885 Minto revised somewhat his expression of his position. He wishes to add new arguments to those advanced in 1874 in his first edition because Skeat and Furnivall through textual criticism

have strengthened their case against the two poems. Minto admits the case is "so strong, that Mr. Skeat is pardonably impatient with those who do not at once own themselves convinced."⁶⁵ Minto does not add new arguments so much as concentrate the ones he has advanced, dropping the evidence relating to the Kingis Quair.

The great difficulty in the way of not assigning Court of Love or the Flower and the Leaf to Chaucer is this, that between him and Surrey there is no English poem half so good, and that it is next to incredible that the name of any poet capable of such work should have perished. If Chaucer did not write them who did?...That the grammatical differences, which are doubtless very striking, should have been introduced by a transcriber, seems to those of us who think Chaucer may have been the author more likely on the whole than that a nameless poet, in an age whose known poets never rise anywhere near such a level, should have produced works that have received enthusiastic admiration from Dryden and Mr. Swinburne.⁶⁶

This manages to roll a great many arguments into one sweep, but the idea of scribal errors seems to be somehow fundamental to Minto's statement.

This is an argument advanced by Minto before, and by others before him including Furnivall. It is interesting that Minto does not let the argument stand alone but ties it to another, making the case a dilemma: either Chaucer wrote the poems and they were later corrupted by scribes; or the author of these excellent poems is a complete unknown. Minto has been forced to reduce the argument to this form by the accumulation of philological evidence. He has been compelled to grant a degree of credence to the evidence collected.

In 1887 Hall's name appears again.⁶⁷ In N&Q, he makes the

belated observation that the fact that the narrator of the Flower and the Leaf is a woman, does not necessarily indicate that the author is a woman. In making this observation he recalls painfully his confrontation with Furnivall. "My humble papers were followed by a sort of running commentary of an aggressive nature." Hall makes no further attempt to press the point, and he expressly disclaims any intention of controversy.

In the 1890 edition of English Writers, Henry Morley contests the rejection of the Cuckoo and the Nightingale, and Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf.⁶⁸ The case of the first he can settle merely by saying "There is no great reason for denying it to him." The Court of Love he also gives to Chaucer, but feels compelled to justify himself. He dismissed the problem of late language in the poem by comparing it to the second manuscript of Layamon, where changes had occurred after only forty years. He assures us "Changes made after a hundred years by some transcribers of the Court of Love whose work was re-copied into the Trinity college manuscript, would account for much more alteration than we find."⁶⁹ After reviewing the contents of the poem, noting the reminiscences of the Roman de la Rose, the use of the Triolus stanza, the technically accomplished verse, and an attitude toward love which he says would not offend God, he decides, "Argument against Chaucer's authorship of the Court of Love from the fact that it could not have come just as we have it, fresh from Chaucer's hand, has I think, no great force against the strong reasons for assuming Chaucer's authorship on evidence of its contents."⁷⁰

The Flower and the Leaf occasions comment, not because Morley seeks to demonstrate its genuineness, but because he wished to establish firmly the inconclusive nature of present evidence against it. He admits that the poem is "not now usually regarded as Chaucer's" but he challenges the idea that the alleged lateness of its vocabulary is decisive against it. Morley regards the procedure of dating a work by the words in it to be highly suspect, and he mentions T.L. Oliphant's essay in the Chaucer Society series in particular. Morley cannot accept such a procedure for two reasons. It is impossible to be sure that the earliest recorded use of a word noted previously is in fact an accurate reflection of usage, that the word wasn't current at an earlier date. He points out this is particularly true for earlier stages of the language when written sources are fewer. They may fail to reflect completely faithfully the actual vocabulary of the language. The second source of error is the fact that copyists may vary the vocabulary. He cites an example from two manuscripts of Chaucer's Complaint to Pity,

- I Pitee that I have sought so yoore
 With herte sore full of hevy peine
 That in this world was no wight woer
- II Pitee that I have sought so yore agoo
 With herte sore full of besy payne
 That in this world was never wight so woo

demonstrating the introduction of a new word into the text.

Regarding what may be late vocabulary in the Flower and the Leaf, Morley says, "No very great allowance is required for the corruption of the text under copyists."⁷¹

The chief statement that Morley has to make concerns the

degree of certainty which we are authorized to grant our evidence. He cautions, "Wherever there is room only for reasonable doubt of Chaucer's authorship of any piece, it should be taken as doubt only, until facts appear that supply conclusive evidence."⁷² He is not unduly concerned with the lack of manuscript ascription. He regards the matter firmly, as "not a settled question." This final statement directly reflects the certainties which others have advanced.

Each reader may incline as freely as he will to one opinion or the other. Let him be positive in his own mind, if he will, but he must not turn his positive opinion into a dogma and call all men heretics whose opinions face another way.⁷³

The last remark seems to be a direct product of the certitude long expressed by Furnivall and of his use of strong language in rebuttal. Morley uses the same argument advanced by Minto--- that late language is the product of scribes. Morley adduces examples for support, but these are hardly conclusive. He shows no real acquaintance with the process of manuscript corruption and the argument is still little more than conjectural.

In the final decade of the century, Lounsbury published his Studies on Chaucer, and Skeat brought out his edition of the Oxford Chaucer. Our five poems have been dropped from the canon, and now there is no advocate for bringing them back.

The last critic mentioned does not even suggest that possibility. Saintsbury's remarks in 1898 touch on two of the poems, the Flower and the Leaf and the Court of Love.⁷⁴ He is careful to inform the reader "I do not by any means assert" that Chaucer wrote the Flower and the Leaf or the Court of Love. He

is concerned with clearly stating some arguments which "do not appear to me to have received sufficient answer." The arguments he advances object to the rhyme test and to the dating of poems. His ground for challenging the rhyme test is that it seems to produce a kind of circular argument for excluding the poems. The test was derived from a group of poems which consciously excluded the Flower and the Leaf and the Court of Love. When the Flower and the Leaf and the Court of Love did not follow the rhymes of that group of poems, they were excluded from the canon. He suggests that according to such a procedure Tennyson's classical experiments in the appendix to Enoch Arden would also have to be named spurious because none such exist anywhere else in his poetry.

For the dating of Chaucer's poems Saintsbury lays down two rules. He says first that poems older than Chaucer's in meter, language or rhymes may be safely excluded. His second rule says that for poems younger than Chaucer's in meter, language or rhyme "no argument can be founded on that fact alone, because copyists may always have been responsible for the modernization." Having made this reservation he recalls that both the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf exist in unique manuscripts, "facts of which the importance cannot be exaggerated."⁷⁵

Saintsbury seems to be most interested in calling attention to our lack of certitude about the two poems. In stating our knowledge about the poems we should be aware that there still is room for doubt. That this doubt is not very large seems to be suggested by his careful disclaimer of any assertions for the genuineness of the poems. Nevertheless he considers it worth

mention.

In 1900 Skeat published his thorough review of the entire canon.⁷⁶ In the course of the book he touches upon the evidence relating to all the works which have been at some time ascribed to Chaucer and his presentation of the case against the poems here is very full. For the Black Knight and the Cuckoo and the Nightingale, the manuscripts provide ascription to other authors, Lydgate and Clanvowe respectively. The linguistic evidence he gathers against the other poems is extensive and varied, very discouraging indeed to proponents of the scribal alteration theory. This is enough to settle any lingering disputes.

The controversy chronicles the maturation of textual study in Chaucer. There is a great difference on both sides of the question between the statements of 1870 and those of 1889 or 1900. In the opening rounds Furnivall rejects the poems, but justifies his rejection only by assertion. His attitude toward the language of the poems proved to be correct where, at least for the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf, the language is late. But the proof of that, the cold hard factual presentation of that, was years away. The progress of the controversy shows the gradual accumulation of facts on these poems. The few critics who continue to dissent into the final decade of the century are compelled to recognize the arguments based on language and somehow account for the modernisms they point up. They can no longer claim merely that "internal evidence" or the style shows the poem to be Chaucer's.

The controversy also suggests some of the effects, good and

bad, of extreme opinions. From 1870 on Furnivall spoke about the spuriousness of these poems as a settled question, and he addressed his opponents as though he was convinced they were doubting absolute fact. When Saintsbury and in part Morley discuss this question, they go to some trouble to enter a resounding maybe. They emphasize very strongly that the linguistic facts collected by the Chaucer Society scholars justify only a tentative, not a positive, conclusion of spuriousness. This seems a direct effect of Furnivall's words. On the other hand, the speed with which these works went from being considered Chaucer's as a matter of course by informed men, to being considered at best highly doubtful is remarkable. Until the final stage of the controversy there are few uncertain expressions. Either a man is fairly well convinced they are genuine, or he is convinced they are spurious. This also is an effect of Furnivall's words which rather forced the issue, forced critics to take sides.

The Chaucer Society critics, as Furnivall relates in the Temporary Preface, sought to establish the canon from scratch, reviewing the arguments for every work. The advantages of this procedure were never brought home to some, and this was perhaps the major source of disagreement. On the one side were Furnivall and Skeat pointing out facts which would make a work doubtful; on the other side were critics like Hall and Morley pointing out the lack of proof on the other side. Perhaps the ultimate accomplishment of this whole exchange was to make it impossible to claim Chaucerian authorship for a poem on the grounds of its

poetic qualities until its linguistic authenticity had been established.

FOOTNOTES

1. The controversy over the English Romaunt, long and quite varied, is interesting in its own right. Adequate coverage of the discussion on this work would lengthen this paper inordinately and so it is not included here. Likewise, German scholarship, through the activities of Ten Brink, Koch, Kaluza, and others, was active during this period. Though sometimes allusion is made to their work, e.g. as mentioned in a review, no attempt is made here to consider the progress of this question in the German press. The paper is limited to the British press exclusively.
2. Thomas Tyrwhitt, ed., The Canterbury Tales, Second Edition, (Oxford: 1798), p.526.
3. A.G. Swinburne, William Blake (1868; photorepr. New York: 1967), p.89.
4. F., Notes and Quotes, Second Series, 3(1857), 329.
T.W. Wonfor, N&Q, Second Series, 7(1859), 66.
5. Tyrwhitt, p.528.
6. W.D., N&Q, Second Series, 1(1856), 401. Complaint of the Black Knight
W.Denton, N&Q, First Series, 6(1856), 426. Chaucer's Dream
Cuthbert Bede, N&Q, Third Series, 11(1867), 504. Cuckoo and the Nightingale
7. J.R.M., N&Q, First Series, 6(1852), 424.
8. F.J. Furnivall, Athenaeum, No.2166 (1 May 1869), pp.606-7.
9. F.J. Furnivall, A Temporary Preface to the Chaucer Society's Six-Text Edition of the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer Society Publication, No.3, (London: 1868), pp.107-8.
10. Nicolas's biography of Chaucer, the first assembled on historical principles, published discoveries he had made of documents relating to Chaucer's life. These plainly contradicted the poet's supposed imprisonment in 1384 drawn from the Testament of Love. The biography first appeared in the 1845 Aldine Chaucer and was reprinted many times, as in The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. Richard Morris with memoir by Sir Harris Nicolas (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), pp.1-116, esp. pp.31-34.
11. John Payne Collier, ed., Seven English Poetical Miscellanies (London: 1867), p.iii.

12. John Payne Collier, N&Q, Third Series, 12 (1867), p.303.
13. John Payne Collier, Athenaeum, No.2138 (7 October 1868), p.499.
14. D.Asher, Athenaeum, No.2141 (7 November 1868), p.611.
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THE AUTHORSHIP CONTROVERSY ON FIVE
PSEUDO-CHAUCERIAN POEMS, 1866-1900

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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Five spurious poems, the Complaint of the Black Knight, Court of Love, Flower and the Leaf, Cuckoo and the Nightingale, and Chaucer's Dream, attached to Chaucer in the sixteenth Century blackletter editions, were accepted as part of the Chaucer canon up to 1866, when they appeared as Chaucer's for the last time in a new edition of his works. Between 1866 and 1900 F.J. Furnivall, W.W. Skeat and other critics called these poems into question despite opposition, and finally saw them completely rejected.

Furnivall in 1868 announced Bradshaw's rejection of the poems because of the rhyme test.* Furnivall tentatively accepted this conclusion but asked other scholars to consider the question. In 1870 George Waring opposed Ten Brink's rejection of four of the poems on the rhyme test, emphasizing their literary merit and the conjectural nature of evidence against them. Furnivall disputed with Waring, but their exchange was inconclusive.

In 1872, A. Hall tried to reestablish the poems securely, but advanced such silly arguments that Furnivall in replying to Hall's four notes had no trouble discrediting them. Furnivall introduced some linguistic evidence, but nothing very convincing. A review of F.J. Furnivall's Trial Foreword, published the same year, pronounced the evidence to be against Chaucerian authorship. When Furnivall and Hall disputed the genuineness of

*Bradshaw and Ten Brink found that the undoubted works of Chaucer did not rhyme words ending in "ye" with those ending in "y," whereas other poets' work made no such distinction. The presence of y-ye rhymes was taken as evidence against Chaucerian authorship.

the Flower and the Leaf, the main issue was whether Furnivall's evidence against Chaucerian authorship of the poem had to be conclusive in order to be credible. Hall believed all the poems to be Chaucer's until conclusively proven otherwise.

In 1876 Skeat assembled an impressive amount of linguistic evidence against Chaucerian authorship of the Court of Love, but did not directly settle the question of possible scribal alteration. In his article for the Encyclopedia Britannica, and in the exchange of views it elicited, William Minto continued to maintain the genuineness of the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf, supported by the theory of scribal alteration, although he doesn't directly reply to Skeat. Skeat states unequivocally that linguistic evidence is sufficient to disqualify the Court of Love.

The Bell Chaucer of 1878, edited by Skeat, clearly separates the five poems as spurious, and practically speaking settled the matter: William Minto in the 1885 edition of his book Characteristics reiterates his arguments and considers them as yet unchallenged. Morley claims Court of Love and Cuckoo and the Nightingale for Chaucer, on rather peculiar grounds. Saintsbury in 1898 also resists rejecting at least the Court of Love and the Flower and the Leaf. He doesn't claim them for Chaucer, but he assails the certain rejection issued by Furnivall and Skeat. In 1900 Skeat gathered the evidence collected since 1868 and repeated his rejections of 1878.

The controversy chronicles the maturation of textual and philological study in Chaucer. The linguistic evidence only

guessed at by Bradshaw in 1868 was later amply demonstrated, and even opponents to rejection were forced to acknowledge it. The controversy also provides a demonstration of the effects of advancing doubt-free, positive opinions.