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Editorial Projecting

I find it most interesting how my memory fails me. There are
gaps, holes in my past, which I must fill with a new stories and
narratives that probably have little relation to the truth.

— my good friend, Nancy R.

One of the more imposing resources for literary scholars is the mid-twentieth-century etymological dictionary by Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch.*[1] In the following chapter, I will deal with the bibliographical and editorial variant of this issue: what I consider de-historicizing of texts through invocation of history, and the often mystifying creation of editorial terminology, particularly the notion of archetypes, and its variant levels "sub-" and "hyper-." Pokorny's *Wörterbuch* is a once state-of-the-art product of twentieth-century Indo-European linguistics. Its popular counterpart in student-level lexicography is the *American Heritage Dictionary,* a work that makes previous etymological resources (e.g., Skeat, or even the Oxford English Dictionary) seem amateurish.[2] At least, they will seem that way until a new method of classifying word origins (or even a new theory of what the word "origins" itself means) develops.

There is no end to the amusement of using this source. Relations between words can be laid bare. Earlier meanings can

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1   Julius Pokorny, *Indogermanisches etymologishes Wörterbuch,* 2 vols. (Bern: Francke, 1959–69).

2   The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969); Walter W. Skeat, *An Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884).

be imagined or teased out. Often speculative readings can be provided with impressive philological support. All is based on the problematic but very useful theory that somehow the earlier history of word or morphemic units is contained within those units, either directly or subliminally, there to be expressed or cited by serious scholars against their adversaries, much the same as a vulgar reader or undergraduate of today might rant about a competitor's use of a certain word by citing what it means in "the dictionary."

Traditional etymological dictionaries were different. Medievalists are, or once claimed to be, familiar with Isidore's seventh-century *Etymologiae*. Isidore's theory is difficult to determine. It seems that original meanings of words are thought to be contained within the present meanings of words, although how that could be is mysterious. Modern scholars must interpret or read Isidore (whether rightly or wrongly) under the assumption that his theory is naive and incorrect, an early example of impressionistic etymology. The scholarly faults of the *Etymologiae,* paradoxically, make it especially useful: for real speakers and readers of a language, impressions may be far more important than historical truths, and these impressions can be or may be or potentially might be shared by an historical community (or so language historians can imagine). In this sense, a competent reader or speaker of a language would share such Isidorean (that is, historically false) associations of a word, and that in and of itself would make those associations a legitimate feature of any particular language or dialect. "I could care less," in fact, means, 'I could not care less'. "Literally" now famously means 'figuratively'. The meaning of the word "disinterested" is determined entirely by its context, and no competent speaker of English would be confused by its common use: "The casual way the left-fielder played his position showed he was disinterested in the outcome."

Pokorny's systematization of root-forms does not require that these units existed together, or even that they were words at all. These reconstructions are the end point of scholarship on recorded languages. Indo-European speakers, if they ever existed, did not pronounce or spell their units according to this system.

Furthermore, they did not have access to all these words. And there is no certainty that they ever used two of them together. Pokorny's theory thus constructs a history based on a theoretical competence that is well beyond that of any historical speaker.

Pokorny's *Wörterbuch* exemplifies the editorial problem I discuss below. What matters is not what has happened (how Indo-European languages evolved) but rather what exists now: state-of-the-art modern descriptions of those languages, particularly that base language — Indo-European — whose speakers are often only vaguely located in historical time and space, and who could not possibly have spoken or imagined a syntax-free language represented in a conventional spelling system familiar to twentieth-century western scholars. Speaking this Pokorny-esque language would be like trying to "see" a landscape through the description on an early printed page eaten through by bookworms. Or perhaps like seeing an authorial text through the 5% of the manuscript witnesses to that text which actually survive.

Editorial Ancestors and Progeny

The most impressive achievement of the past 150 years of Middle English scholarship has been editorial; at least, that is what most editors, as well as bibliographers such as myself, would claim. Significant editions include those of the Chaucer Society (the parallel-text editions of various texts and Skeat's multivolume edition of the *Canterbury Tales*), the contemporary edition of *Piers Plowman* by Skeat, the later Athlone editions, and two electronic editions — The Canterbury Tales Project, and the Piers Plowman Electronic Archive. I apologize to other editors for not including their work, some of which is excellent (Derek Pearsall, Ralph Hanna, David Fowler — many others could be mentioned).[3]

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3   Principal editions discussed below include: Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* 7 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894–97)

The representation of history in these projects, collectively and taken singularly, may well be correct — that is, the characterization of what Chaucer, Langland, Gower, or the author(s) of the *Pricke of Conscience* did, and even the modern transcriptions of texts that might, at some point, have been produced. (I am struggling to say what it is that editors do or attempt to do.)[4] Editorial procedures and the final histories described in all these editions seem to me generally reasonable, even when they contradict. What I am concerned with here are only the initial assumptions of these several projects and the preliminary language adopted, sometimes carefully, sometimes not. Is the representation of history at all like the history it claims to have existed? Or is it just an Isidorean-like representation of modern editorial imaginings?

Among the terms that bother me are the following: *text, version, recension, manuscript, reading, lemma, holograph, document,* and most important *archetype* and its many variants — that is, most of the terms basic to editorial procedures and reconstructions. Some of these refer to historical entities that have histories of their own (manuscripts, real and imagined). Others are purely editorial hypotheses (a manuscript group or classification). It may be basic editorial goals, and it may be editorial arrogance — the notion that the reconstructed text ideally is the author's text — that blurs what should be the quite different ontological status of these entities.

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and *The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman with Vita de Dowel, Dobet et Dobest, and Richard the Redeless, by William Langland,* 2 vols. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1885); A.V.C. Schmidt, ed., *William Langland: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions,* 3 vols. (London: Longman, 1995–2008); George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, *William Langland's Piers Plowman: The B-Version* (London: Athlone, 1975). See also Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, http://www.iath.virginia.edu/seenet/piers/, and The Canterbury Tales Project, http://www.canterburytalesproject.org/.

4   On the Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, see my *Out of Sorts: On Typography and Print Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), chap. 6, and on editorial goals more generally, see my *Blind Impressions: Methods and Mythologies in Book History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), chap. 5.

Basic to the following discussion is my definition of *text* (I construct this only for convenience; I do not expect others to follow this, nor do I criticize them for adopting other meanings). What I call a text is an abstraction; it can be transcribed and reproduced. It exists in various supports, one of which is a manuscript. It can be imagined to exist in the mind of an author, a scribe, or even a reader. A manuscript, by contrast, is a real concrete entity that contains a text. This is the editorial version of a distinction that I have defined elsewhere as basic to book history: the difference between a book (an abstraction, usually equivalent to an edition) and a book-copy — the physical object you hold, generally referred to in common language as a simple book.[5]

Variation: Single-Text vs. Parallel-Text Editions

When Bembo and Politian transcribed the oldest surviving manuscript of Terence (now Vat. lat. 3226), they did so by transforming it into a series of variants copied into two copies of a contemporary printed edition of Terence (by Adam of Amergau, 1475).[6] Politian and Bembo were not interested in their printed "base text"; the edition was chosen only for convenience (likely it was the only printed edition for which two nearly identical copies were available). It made the transcription of the variants easier, and had no necessary effect on the final text that was implied, and both Bembo and Politian imagined their texts would be more or less the same as the text in the manuscript (they did not include accidentals of spelling or script, but did note colometry — that is, line length). The manuscript text, thus, is reduced to a set of variants, and from there, transcribable again as "the" text, even though Bembo's book-copy, Politian's book-copy, the Bembo manuscript, and the text of any of them — these are all

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5   See e.g., Joseph A. Dane, *What Is a Book? The Study of Early Printed Books* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame press, 2012), 9–11.

6   The manuscript is as late as the fifth or sixth century, although Bembo believed it might be much earlier; see my "A Ghostly Twin Terence (Venice, 21 July 1475; IGI 9422, 9433)," *The Library,* ser. 6, 21 (1999): 99–107.

different things, and the two printed copies, although theoretically identical, themselves had variants.

Scholarly societies in the nineteenth century made many unfamiliar texts available in print without reference to or concern with editorial questions. For reasons of efficiency and convenience, many of the early club editions were simply transcriptions of whatever manuscript was available; under the influence of later editorial theory, some came to be described, wrongly, I think, as "best text" editions. Most of these editions had few if any editorial pretenses (for example, fabliaux collections, the many texts made available by François Michel in French, or the English editions published by Thomas Wright).[7] These books were meant to be sold to amateurs or members of literary societies, not used by scholars in edition-making.[8]

In the case of texts already available in printed editions, such variant single-source versions were printed as a first step in the editorial process that would eliminate their authority. For English medievalists, the most familiar examples are the editions and pamphlets produced by the Chaucer Society in the late nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century philologists thus provided for medievalists what early printers provided classicists. The dissemination of works led to the inescapable confrontation with variant versions of those works. And variant versions

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7   See, e.g., the characterization of Thomas Wright's Chaucer editions as methodological precedent by late-twentieth-century editors of the Variorum Chaucer; Editors' Preface, *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales, A Facsimile and Transcription of the Hengwrt Manuscript* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), xii–xviii, and in introductory sections of various editors in this project.

8   Statement by Roxburghe Club, founded in 1812: "Each member is expected to produce a book at his or her own expense for presentation to the other members"; see list of publications at http://www.roxburgheclub.org.uk/clubbooks. See the useful reprise of this tradition in Poiron's single-text edition of *Roman de la Rose,* with sections omitted by that manuscript added in brackets. The result is a cheap, serviceable edition (useful even for school use), that also provides sophisticated evidence for history, editing, and linguistics: Daniel Poiron, ed., *Le Roman de la Rose* (Paris: Flammarion, 1974).

led to the notion of a superior version.[9] But even that sentence (including the equivocal meaning of "superior") gets ahead of my point in this section — the definition and comparison of variants. The seamless history of editorial projects I seem to be constructing in this introductory section and which might well have been imagined by Chaucer Society editors was more chaotic in practice: those uniformly bound green volumes neatly

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9 That mechanical features of print led to criticism in its strongest sense has been made in various forms: see, e.g., Anthony J. Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). My own view is that the nineteenth-century editorial practices were projected back onto the fifteenth century, which was recast in modern terms, and it was this period that was responsible for the editorial self-consciousness seen centuries earlier.

Figure 6. Chaucer Soc. Publ. on my shelves.

shelved in our libraries (or now in remote facilities) contrast sharply with the way they exist on my own shelves.

The Parallel-Text Edition

Parallel-text editions had or developed multiple and often conflicting goals. The first was to present evidence and thus lay the foundation for a standard edition (the Chaucer Society's *Canterbury Tales,* and several texts of the minor poems). To Skeat, these editions could in some cases make editing deceptively simple:

> The text of the present edition of the Canterbury Tales is founded upon that of the Ellesmere MS. It has been collated throughout with that of the other six MSS. published by the Chaucer Society….The text of the Ellesmere MS. has only been corrected in cases where careful collation suggests a desirable improvement.[10]

A second was to constitute an edition and to present variant versions as autonomous texts (e.g., Skeat's three-text edition of *Piers Plowman*).

The Chaucer Society editions seemed addressed only to scholars (unlike the Piers Plowman Archive and the Canterbury Tales Project, both of which claim their editions are useful for students and civilians). What they printed was not an edition per se, but rather the foundation for an edition, an edition later realized in Skeat's multi-volume edition of Chaucer.[11] Only in

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10   Skeat, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* 4: xvii–xviii.

11   See also, the Piers Plowman Archive edition of the supposed archetype for the B-version, called "Bx" — an edition that initially I thought was to be long deferred: "The B-Version Archetype," eds. John Burrow and Thorlac Turville-Petre, The Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, vol. 9, http://piers. chass.ncsu.edu/texts/Bx: "We shall argue that the readings of the B archetype (henceforth Bx) can be established with certainty in the majority of lines."

a few cases did a variant text become an autonomous one (the prologue to "Legend of Good Women" found in Cambridge University Library MS Gg. 4.27 and now printed in many standard Chaucer editions).

There are several paradoxes involved in this process. While on the face of it, the parallel-text method places unmediated evidence before the reader, its goal seems to be the opposite. It is not designed to retain evidence (that is, it does not serve the same function as the Synoptic Gospels, whose goal is to retain every trace of God's word), rather its goal is the same as that of the classical edition: to eliminate such evidence, and to provide the basis for scholars to rid themselves of the cacophony of manuscript variation.[12]

The nature of the parallel-text edition was also affected by a material consideration: the number of columns that could be printed in an ordinary book of "landscape" format, a constraint no longer applicable to electronic versions of these editions. That number was six. And that, it turns out, served extremely well for Chaucer's "Parlement of Fowls," "House of Fame," and even "Legend of Good Women," where the number of manuscripts was limited. It also was the origin of Furnivall's "Six-Text Version of the Canterbury Tales" — six being a very convenient number, since it also could be mapped onto an arbitrary notion of "important holdings": the then British Museum, university libraries, and "private owners." Evidence, in order to be evidence, fit the scholars' abilities to describe and to present it.

The presentation of evidence in this format is in some way duplicitous. Although evidence seems unmediated, many of the most interesting editorial decisions have been made before a word is printed. First, and most important, is that each of these (I'll call them texts) is a variant of the others, something that

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12 See, also, the unselected parallel-text editing in the first EETS series by Zupitza and Koch, printing all variants of the "Pardoner's Prologue" and "Tale." Given the unrepresentative nature of links, it is not clear to me what editorial purpose these could have served. Julius Zupitza and John Koch, *Parallel-Text Specimens of all accessible unprinted Chaucer MSS: The Pardoners Prolog and Tale* (London, 1890–97).

seems more obvious and banal than it should. In order to make the two texts parallel (that is, to set them up for printing), they must first be defined as variants, and they must be modified through editing. Where one version, say, lacks lines found in the other, it is printed with a gap. Where the two versions have lines in a different order, the order of those lines must be changed (this is noted in the Chaucer Society editions in marginal print so fine it is difficult to read and reproduce; see Chapter 3, Figure 3 above). Lines and whole passages must be moved to create a text that duplicates as much as possible the text used as the basis of collation. Despite this, Skeat himself claimed his transcriptions were both: (1) identical to the manuscript evidence, and (2) somewhat paradoxically, superior to that evidence:

> In other words, my work is entirely founded upon the splendid "Six-text" Edition published by that Society, supplemented by the very valuable reprint of the celebrated 'Harleian' manuscript in the same series. These Seven Texts are all exact reproductions of seven important MSS., and are, in two respects, more important to the student than the MSS. themselves; that is to say, they can be studied simultaneously instead of separately, and they can be consulted and re-consulted at an moment, being always accessible.[13]

Such editions cannot be created without a logical *petitio principii*: the chosen texts are "the same," although the basis for that identity must exist in the editor's mind. In some cases, a parallel version can be defined as a different text (Piers C is not Piers B or A, even though sections can be collated and many lines are the same: in the case of *Piers,* the parallel-text method does not provide any of the evidence required to challenge such a claim). The most extreme form of this argument developed in the late twentieth century: each variant text (whether the product of an author or scribe) could be defined as an autonomous text, even

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13 Skeat, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,* 4:xvii.

if the result of a reader's whimsy, ready for readerly analysis and appreciation.

Editorial Illusions: The Archetype

A staple of classical editing is reconstructing the sources (or re-imagining them) for extant copies, prints, or manuscripts. In genealogical editing, this (theoretically) can only be done after texts are conceived or declared as parallel, and after they are broken down into decontextualized *lemmata,* the identification and definition of which have received far less attention than they deserve.[14] A "text" (of a work?) is imagined to exist imperfectly in all its recorded or extant variants. The goal of editing is the reconstruct an earlier version of that text that accounts for differences in extant witnesses. This can be done either by ignoring certain witnesses (or declaring them irrelevant), or, more modestly, by reconstructing versions that will together explain or account for all the variants in the extant copies.

The goal might be various. Perhaps a Great Leap Backwards to the author's original: this was surely the goal of most classical textual criticism. The source of error was less important than the simple recognition that it existed. Or, in a method as-

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14 See, e.g., John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), and the labored but largely unfiltered defense of their supposed methods by Roy Vance Ramsey, *The Manly-Rickert Text of the Canterbury Tales: A Revised Edition with a foreword by Henry Ansgar Kelly* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1994, 2010), esp. 47–91. Manly and Rickert's methods of transcribing these things on 60,000 cards received far more discussion than their actual choice of them. Lawrence Warner has criticized the editorial procedure of "lemmatization," but not in terms I fully understand; see Lawrence Warner, *The Lost History of Piers Plowman: The Earliest Transmission of Langland's Work* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), xiv. And on the red herring of Manly and Rickert's "basis of collation," see my "The Presumed Influence of Skeat's *Student's Chaucer* on Manly and Rickert's *Text of the Canterbury Tales*" (1993; rpt. Joseph A. Dane, *The Myth of Print Culture: Essays on Evidence, Textuality, and Bibliographical Method* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003], 114–24).

sociated with Karl Lachmann, a reconstruction of the history of such errors manifested in the textual tradition and the extant versions. At the heart of the genealogical method is the notion that while you cannot recognize truth, you can recognize error, and by constructing a clear and convincing genealogical history of these errors, say, of manuscript or textual readings (or any other field!), you can perhaps spiral in on the truth by stumbling upon or imagining readings that are irreducible: you can no longer account for them as errors. This is the *via negativa* of textual criticism, and common to all genealogical methods. Only in the twentieth century, and with the popularity of reception theory (in various practical and theoretical forms), was there an interest in this "erroneous history" as a subject in and of itself, spurred on by McGann's theories of the socialized text. This concern with texts and versions that were unauthorial then moved in even more radical directions to involve the banalities of individual readers' use, legitimate or not, of those texts (see Chapter 5 above).[15]

> The [Piers Plowman] Archive will be the supreme tool for carrying forward textual work on Piers Plowman….What the reader does is central, at least as a layered, collaborative, later process….The user will be able to assemble and disassemble the stages of such editions at will.[16]

Classification of Witnesses

Most editors, following the classical model, classify witnesses, generally manuscripts and manuscript readings, by construct-

15   Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), or Charles A. Owen Jr., *The Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991).

16   Andrew Galloway, "Reading Piers Plowman in the Fifteenth and the Twenty-First Centuries: Notes on Manuscripts F and W in the Piers Plowman Electronic Archive," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 103, no. 2 (2004): 232–52, at 232.

ing a stemma; or perhaps more accurately, the stemma is the virtual representation of the less well-defined classification scheme.[17] Other, more recent editors, have tried to get around this by using a presumably more neutral form of classification, one that takes witnesses as presenting individual readings classified without reference to their origins (Kane in particular.) A variant of this is what is occasionally called "rhizomatic" theory, or, more clearly, cladistic theory.[18] The first (Kane's theory) is to me a mere reconfiguration of the classical theory. The second (cladistic theory) does not seem to me as radically different as its practitioners claim, but can have the advantage of not materializing the entities critiqued here: the forks on a typical cladistic diagram do not demand a frustrating and futile imagining of, say, evolutionary "missing links" (the equivalent of the imagined textual-critical *archetypes).[19]

In textual criticism, a loose set of conventions applies to the notation used in these diagrams. In the classical diagram, the difference between an upper case roman letter and a Greek letter is a difference between a real and a hypothesized witness. Only attested manuscript or printed readings (represented by upper case roman) constitute "evidence" or "witnesses." The use of the word "witness" is problematic, however, in that it implies in a Platonic sense that such a witness must be a witness "of something." (That "something" is assumed to be an earlier or authorial reading, but such readings do not have the status of fact outside the editor's imagination).

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17 "The stemma is not a tool for the editor but the product of the edition.… We differ from Kane and Donaldson in that we find no evidence that any manuscript offers readings derived from a putative pre-archetypal stage": Piers Plowman Electronic Archive, Introduction to the Electronic Edition of the B-Version Archetype of *Piers Plowman,* http://piers.iath.virginia.edu/exist/piers/restricted/crit/front/B/Bx/Front.

18 David Greetham, "Phylum — Tree — Rhizome," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (1995): 99–126.

19 Even fifty years ago, editors occasionally provided stemmata incorporating elements of both systems; see, e.g., E.R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 67.
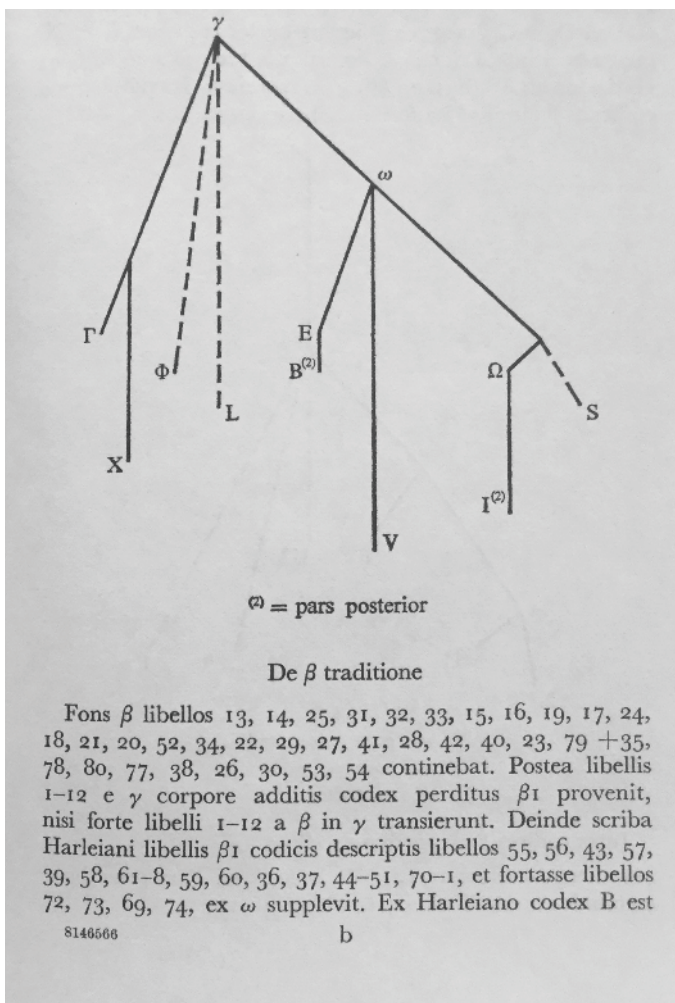
$^{(2)}$ = pars posterior

De β traditione

Fons β libellos 13, 14, 25, 31, 32, 33, 15, 16, 19, 17, 24, 18, 21, 20, 52, 34, 22, 29, 27, 41, 28, 42, 40, 23, 79 +35, 78, 80, 77, 38, 26, 30, 53, 54 continebat. Postea libellis 1–12 e γ corpore additis codex perditus β1 provenit, nisi forte libelli 1–12 a β in γ transierunt. Deinde scriba Harleiani libellis β1 codicis descriptis libellos 55, 56, 43, 57, 39, 58, 61–8, 59, 60, 36, 37, 44–51, 70–1, et fortasse libellos 72, 73, 69, 74, ex ω supplevit. Ex Harleiano codex B est

b

Figure 7a. Classical stemma.

Formicidae

Vespidae
Masaridae
Eumenidae
Scoliidae

Apidae
Anthophoridae
Megachilidae
Fideliidae

Bradynobaenidae

Melittidae
Halictidae
Andrenidae
Oxaeidae
Colletidae

Rhopalosomatidae
Pompilidae

Nyssonidae
Philanthidae
Astatidae
Pemphredonidae
Mellinidae
Larridae

Mutillidae
Sapygidae
Sierolomorphidae

Tiphiidae

Sphecidae
Ampulicidae

VESPOIDEA

SPHECOIDEA

Scolebythidae
Bethylidae
Sclerogibbidae
Embolemidae
Dryinidae
Cleptidae
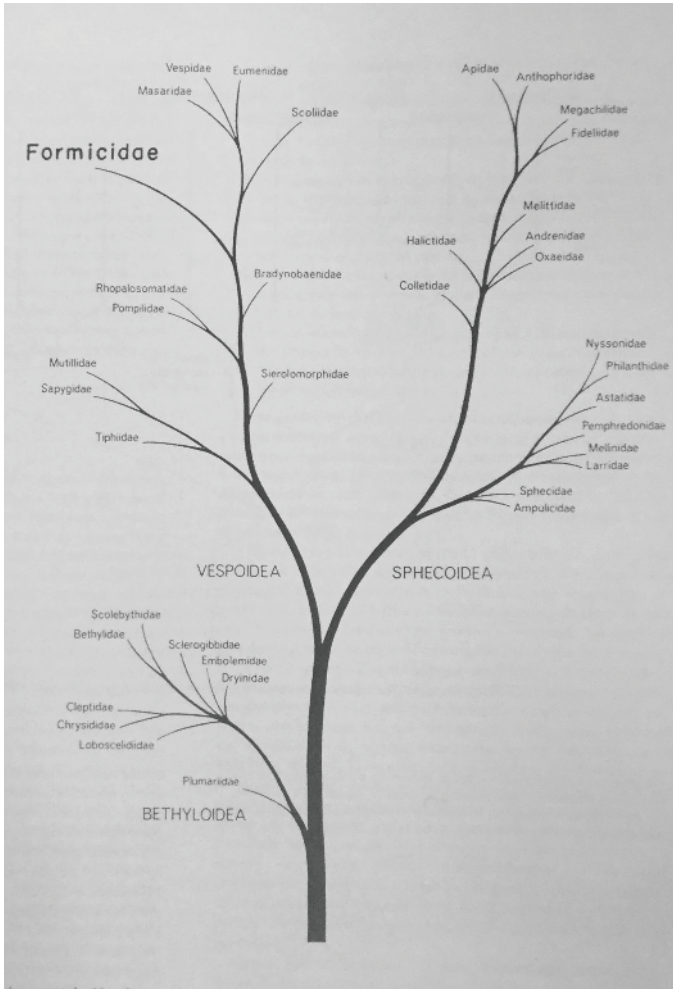Chrysididae
Loboscelididae

Plumariidae

BETHYLOIDEA

Figure 7b: Cladogram by Hölldobler and Wilson, *Ants,* 25.

The meaning and function of the Greek letter in a classical diagram is my concern here. In theory, it represents a source in the most abstract sense: some imagined text or manuscript, that is, a *res* that serves to explain the variants (all of them? the significant ones?) in the group considered a family below it? These might be direct descendants, or there might be further hypothesized texts between them. All these imagined texts are known as "hyperarchetypes" whatever their relations may be. Occasionally the word "subarchetype" might be used, but these terms are only distinguishable in specific contexts. Again, these things are editorial explanations, not historical facts.

Such hyper- and sub-archetypes intervene in some way between real witnesses (book-copies and manuscripts) and the imagined source of all of them, which is *the* archetype (*x or O') — that is, the imagined or hypostasized textual source of all variants in recorded texts of this imagined (or defined) text — or rather, the earliest imagined form that can be reconstructed using the genealogical method alone. Behind that editorial text might be the authorial original (whatever that is), something that may have existed in a material support (a manuscript version of the text preceding the earliest one that can be reconstructed from all extant variants), or abstractly (something that can be conjectured as having existed in the author's mind). The singular advantage of this distinction seems to be that O', like all texts, has errors (the one exception is the authorial text, which, by definition, must be perfect whatever form it is imagined to take). But the implication is that the historical authorial original, though by definition perfect, is never static and always subject to change. O', by contrast, is imagined to be a stable and thus reproducible text with its manuscript support. It exists at one time, in a way that the authorial original never could. This applies particularly to texts such as *Piers Plowman,* where Langland is constantly revising, or the *Canterbury Tales,* unfinished, and, according to Chaucerians, never achieving a final imagined form.

Notwithstanding its utility from an editorial point of view, there are many problems with this terminology. To begin with, it represents a more systematic process of composition and cop-

ying than may have existed: "what happened" cannot be quite the same as "what we describe as happening."[20] Modern editors (post-print) can reasonably speak of "publication" and can also reasonably consider the text in such an edition as stable, even given the unlikelihood of a print-run continuing start to finish error-free. Medieval textual critics can then extend this notion backwards, imagining that the production of a manuscript (or perhaps the author's signing off on the production of such a manuscript?) is itself a form of publication or, more abstractly and far more problematically, that the author imagined a form of publication similar to that of modern authors (that is, an authorial consideration that the text was ready to be put forth, despite the material state of such a text), and that this publication is itself documented or alluded to in the textual-critical history. This notion of publication is obviously different from print publication; it does not involve the production of hundreds of presumably identical copies or any of the steps in that process — for example, galley- or page-proofs. More important, there is, as far as I know, no convincing evidence that medieval authors ever conceived of their work this way. (Adam Scriveyn miswrites a work, but there is no certainty he will miswrite it in the same way again). Chaucer can speak of reactions to his *Canterbury Tales* in passages from that same work. But we have little evidence as to what those implied early forms of the tales were. And since the author's imagined "publication" is difficult to define or imagine, no less problematic are the abstractions that genealogical textual criticism creates in order to get there — archetypes, subarchetypes, and hyperarchetypes, whose ontological status changes as scholars describe them. This is especially but not exclusively true of texts whose variant versions are imagined to be authorial (Legend of Good Women and what I consider the purely scribal variant, Prologue G), or are prod-

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20 For a critique of the self-contained nature of modern editing and the difficulties with its "semantic" value — that is, reconstructing real historical events — see my *Blind Impressions,* chap. 6.

ucts of continuing authorial intervention (the notion of "rolling revision" in *Piers Plowman*).[21]

*Archetypes

Now let us consider what an archetype, a hyperarchetype, or a sub-archetype actually is or is claimed to be (I will use the typeform *archetype to refer to these generally). An *archetype is an imagined text, one consisting of a series of substantive or significant readings that could account for the variants in its descendants (which may be other *archetypes or physical witnesses or manuscripts). These variants may be conjectured; they might include accidental variants, that is, specific spellings. They might be misreadings based on accidentals of spelling or even what I have called "subaccidental" extra-textual features (damage to a manuscript, inkblots, wormholes) that would in most cases not be indicated in any purely textual transcription.[22] The highest archetype, then, is that imagined text which contains (or in some way accounts for) all these readings, that is, all correct readings, and (except in extreme cases, which unfortunately are not rare in textual production) all erroneous ones as well.

As is the case with other basic editorial terminology, the more I try to make basic points such as these, the more obvious it is to me how difficult it is to say precisely what it is such editorial entities are or do.

The readings (or in some cases, features) imagined to exist in an *archetype do not constitute a complete linear text, even though they can be read as one, nor are they an accurate representation of what a manuscript or book might have contained. They are essentially a list. A Greek letter in a stemma might rep-

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21 Ralph Hanna, *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 222–23.

22 As far as I can tell, these are not really considered in W.W. Greg's often cited definitions of substantive/accidental: W.W. Greg, "The Rationale of Copy-Text," *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950–51): 19–36; rpt. W.W. Greg, *Collected Papers,* ed. J.C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 374–91.

resent several generations of manuscripts, not just the last conjectured one. They are equivalent to the reconstructions of an Indo-European root — the most elegant imagined source for the descendant evidence, spelled according to a set of conventions that can be applied to all of them. There is no certainty that the various readings, correct and erroneous, attributed to imagined *archetype beta or gamma ever existed in a single manuscript any more than there is certainty that any Indo-European speaker actually used a number of Pokorny's reconstructed forms in a single coherent sentence, or, for that matter, even that those forms were contemporary and potentially usable.[23]

In a textual-critical sense, archetypal readings account for select and often decontextualized readings of real manuscripts, but may never have co-existed except in the editor's imagination and transcriptions. To my knowledge such "hyperarchetypes" or "sub-archetypes" that intervene between the real manuscripts and whatever is the final goal of the editor (either an authorial original or earliest conjectured manuscript O') have never been fully reconstructed or transcribed as complete texts even though they are described as if such transcriptions were completely unproblematic. If an editor provides a diplomatic transcription of an extant manuscript, together with an editorial version of the originary O' based on it through genealogical reconstruction, then every intervening *archetype the editor proposes (whether this abstraction represents one or several layers of versions) should be fully transcribable. I think that in a case where the editor imagines multiple manuscript generations or acts of copying here, a legitimate editorial transcription might not have to correspond to any one of them (even the last one); there is nothing theoretically unsound about that, although an editor, I think, might be loathe to concede it.[24]

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23 I am not as confident about the validity of this statement as I would like to be. The archetype reconstructed to represent a series of manuscripts *might* have to represent the last in this series (but I am not quite willing to concede that).

24 An aspect of this analogy is that textual criticism imagines the norm as pure descent: accommodation or contamination are considered aberrations. In

An *archetype on any level is an idealization of the text it is supposed to represent, whether a scribal work or authorial one. Even though we know perfectly well from our own experience that with the exception of the shortest texts, there is no way we can keep our own works in a state of simultaneity, we speak of these texts/books as existing precisely in that fashion, such that they can be perfectly or imperfectly (as they seem to be) embodied in a support such as a book, typescript, or manuscript. And even in the most careful discussion, these abstractions very quickly become stabilized as they take material form.

However the editor proceeds, the difference between real historical versions (manuscripts intervening between the author and an extant manuscript) and editorial *archetypes is fundamental. Yet obeying this distinction is almost impossible for textual critics, who generally conflate the *archetypal text with the *archetypal support for that text (a manuscript or book). Note how in the otherwise excellent article by M.C. Seymour these editorial abstractions are materialized in a dazzling and dizzying combination of fact and pure conjecture:

> The extant text of LGW is now found only imperfectly in compilations and remnants of compilations. The "large volume…cleped the Seintes Legende of Cupide" would originally, without doubt, have been a separate publication, and the copy presented to Queen Anne was probably a handsome quarto with musical notation of ballade and lyric, each tale having an illuminated and possibly historiated initial set within a semi-vinet. The extant work (2,723 lines, i.e., 579 in prologue and 2,144 in tales) suggests that the completed work would have contained approximately 5,000 lines; at 30 lines to a page, with notation and illumination, its size would have been about 100 pages quarto (cf. the illuminated manuscripts

linguistics, contamination would obviously be the norm.

[of slightly later date] of Hoccleve's *Regiment*), and so might aptly have been described as a *large volume.*[25]

See also, this statement by Thorlac Turville-Petre, one of the main editors in the Piers Plowman Archive, where this editorial hypothesis materializes in a single sentence:

> Establishing the archetype is one step on the way to a critical edition. Since even an archetypal manuscript, however accurate, will contain errors the critical editor must go further to introduce conjectural emendations to correct evident corruption.[26]

Skeat, *Piers Plowman*

For Chaucerians, the creation of these editorial theories did not much change their view of things. Editorial problems in Chaucer seem significant to those who have studied them, but for those who simply read Chaucer, they are largely irrelevant. Most of what has been said about Chaucer in the last hundred years or so could have been said on the basis of any text I have seen: Caxton, Thynne, Urry, Skeat, or the *Canterbury Tales* Project.[27] For *Piers Plowman* scholars and readers, the stakes are much higher. Using the same method used in the *Canterbury Tales* (the printing of multiple texts on the same open page), Skeat produced a

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25 M.C. Seymour, "Chaucer's Legend of Good Women: Two Fallacies," *Review of English Studies* 37, no. 148 (1986): 528–34, at 530.

26 Thorlac Turville-Petre, "The B Archetype of Piers Plowman as a Corpus for Metrical Analysis," in *Yee? Baw for Bokes: Essays on Medieval Manuscripts and Poetics in Honor of Hoyt N. Duggan,* eds. Michael Calabrese and Stephen H.A. Shepherd (Los Angeles: Marymount Institute Press, 2013), 17–30. See also Warner, *Lost History,* ix where Bx is variously described as: "B archetype"; "archetypal B manuscript," a "document."

27 Ralph Hanna, *Introducing English Medieval Book History: Manuscripts, their Producers and their Readers* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), claims that the only textual-critical problem of interest in the *Canterbury Tales* is that of tale order (162).

three-text version embodying in a single work differences between the printed editions of Crowley and Whitaker, as well as manuscripts that agreed with neither of them.[28]

The three versions edited by Skeat represented three ideal forms of this text; "ideal" here means only 'abstract'—in textual-critical terms, the form of the text that could account for major textual variants in all versions of that text, versions which were themselves not perfectly, or at times even well represented in any single manuscript. Since there are manuscripts containing texts that conflate various of these forms (whether considered authorial or editorial), the distinction A/B/C/[Z] will not serve as a perfect classification of either physical manuscripts or the complete texts contained in them, but rather is an idealization that can classify sections or aspects of them. I don't see or propose any alternative to the editorial assumptions here. My only question concerns the nature of the things (whether one, three, or seventy) that scholars are reconstructing.

Skeat referred to A, B, and C as "Three Forms of the Poem" in the introductory section defining them. But within a paragraph, these are three "versions":

> In 1866, now twenty years ago, I printed a short tract (no. 17 OS EETS) entitled "Parallel Extracts from 29 MSS. of Piers Plowman with comments, and a proposal for the Society's Three-text edition of the poem." I believe I was the first to shew clearly, in this tact, that the number of distinct versions of the poem is really three, and not two only, as stated by Mr. T. Wright and others.[29]

Such language conflates two things: the history and creation of "the poem" in the fourteenth century, and the nineteenth-century classification of manuscripts and the texts they contain.

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28 The characterization is from Skeat himself: *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman,* 2:vii–viii. Skeat notes that the existence of a third version had been "suspected" earlier by Richard Price in a note to Warton's *History of English Poetry.*

29 Ibid., 2:vii.

In Skeat's edition, these three "forms" or "versions" are suddenly synchronic in a way that they never were claimed to be historically. In the theory of a revising author (Hanna's "rolling revision"), the synchronic nature of these texts was explicitly denied: Langland did not issue nor did he imagine three forms of the poem, even if we accept the notion of a medieval version of publication; rather, he cancelled one form through creation of the next. The modern scholar revises this history as a static corpus of evidence: three simultaneous versions of the text all included in Skeat's convenient edition.

We see much the same terminology in editorial projects contemporary with Skeat: John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* was revised in seemingly obvious ways, reflecting the regime change in England; G.C. Macauley, although presenting only one final text, uses the terms "forms" of the poem, "versions," "recensions," then "classes of manuscripts," as well as "partially revised copies of the first recension."[30] I think I can keep these straight, at least in a technical or theoretical sense: a version or recension of the poem is a text as published or issued by the author, or intended by the author. Of course it is an abstraction, but it is a product of a historical, fourteenth-century event, whether real or as imagined by a modern scholar. A "form" of the poem is I think closer in spirit to 'a class of manuscripts'. This is the abstract form that enables a modern scholar to claim that certain versions, that is, texts in various manuscripts, are the same. Note, however, that this discussion is not at all clear, and these terms, even in my own critique, blur almost as badly as they do in the editions I am critiquing. Macauley uses the word "recension" in his "Text and Manuscripts" section to refer to a version of the text, but a few pages later, it is a scheme for classifying texts in manuscripts. ("In producing the originals…partially revised copies of the first recension must have been used as a basis.")[31]

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30 G.C. Macauley, *The Complete Works of John Gower, edited from the Manuscripts with Introductions, Notes, and Glossaries,* 4. vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1902), 2:cxxvii–cxxx.

31 Ibid., 2:ccxxvii and cxxx.

The Editions of Kane-Donaldson and A.V.C. Schmidt

The Kane-Donaldson edition of *Piers Plowman* addressed these ambiguities by looking at manuscript relations in a different manner. What they saw were variants of individual lemmata and these variants served to classify manuscripts for each particular lemma and not for others. In other words, manuscript classifications were done on the basis of each individual lemma, not as an a priori means of classifying the variants and determining which ones were significant.[32] Or so it seemed. Kane-Donaldson used, then, not a classical textual-critical schema with holograph — archetype — manuscript form, but rather a classificatory system in terminology proposed by Greg.[33] They constructed not a history, but a synchrony of manuscripts whose readings exist simultaneously: for example, [(CrS)M] = Cr and S agree in a reading against M; Cr and S and M agree in a reading against other manuscripts.[34]

But their printing conventions are difficult to follow. It is not always clear what an upper case letter refers to (manuscript? or a reading within that manuscript?) — at least, it is not always clear to me.[35] I will represent in the following quotations bold upper case A as "boldA" and italic A as "italicA." I do this, because there is no possible way to avoid errors in my own proofreading and the introduction of further errors at press if I use any other convention. Thus:

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32 In classical textual criticism, this leads to many cases of *petitio principii,* in that variants that do not conform to the manuscript classifications implied by other variants (defined as "significant") are regarded as "insignificant" or the product of a long list of scribal habits and accidents.

33 W.W. Greg, *The Calculus of Variants: An Essay on Textual Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927).

34 The genealogical version of this might be: MSS Cr and S descend from manuscript gamma which together with M descends from a manuscript beta.

35 This is compounded occasionally by a purely typographical problem in that certain letters, upper-case G, seem to be printed in bold.

> The text of that ancestor, the 'archetypal' boldB text, can generally be ascertained from the evidence afforded by the boldB manuscripts.[36]

This is a cumbersome system of annotation, but one I think Kane and Donaldson generally use consistently and correctly. It is difficult to find them in violation of their implied principles. But ambiguities in terminology like this are unavoidable. The following locutions imply a difference between, say, boldX and italicX, but I have no idea what that is: "material common to all three forms italicA italicB italicC"; "the text of boldAC"; "readings of the boldA and boldC versions"; "boldB archetype"[37] Is this implying a difference between an imagined text and a transcribable one? I just don't know. "Nevertheless where R is represented, F alone of the boldB manuscripts has about 100 readings…."[38] I believe "F" should never be used of a text, since it is a manuscript; rather the phrase should be "the text in F."[39]

Schmidt in his recent Skeat-like three-text edition returns to a more classical way of expressing manuscript relations, while amplifying the typographical conventions found in Kane-Donaldson. Schmidt does not use Greek letters for presumed archetypes. Upper case roman refers to an extant manuscript, as it does conventionally in classical textual criticism. Lower case roman refers, I think, to a group suggested by combinations of extant manuscripts. Italic lower case (I think) refers to the source implied by agreement in readings of implied lower-case groups. Bold lower case refers to the highest conjectured group of lower-case groups. Ax thus means the archetype for group A. BoldA refers to the entirety of Group A manuscripts? (I am not certain precisely how, in practice, this differs from Ax, which is based on and implies those variant readings). To these are added such ambiguous phrases as seen in the following: "the lost archetypal

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36 Kane and Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The B-Version,* 70.

37 Ibid., 71.

38 Ibid., 100.

39 See, also, "we have applied the practices followed in transcribing W to all the manuscripts" (ibid., 220).

manuscript of the boldA version, was, it seems likely, not the poet's holograph."[40]

The bold/roman distinction, generally followed in the Kane-Donaldson edition, is far more confusing in Schmidt and I have no confidence while reading that it is used consistently. The following come from the opening pages of his introductory section "The Manuscript Tradition":[41] "The text of boldA is only of variable certainty. Thus in about 7%, it has to be constituted from either boldr or boldm. … The two independent copies made from Ax, boldr and boldm, both in turn introduced a number of errors." Boldr and boldm are clearly imagined to be real manuscripts. "Two early copies are likewise presumed to have been made of boldr, which are here called boldr1 and boldr2. Another two were made of italic r1 (italic u and d) and at least six of italic r2 (italic v, j, l, k, w, z)…" (92) In the genealogical schema on the facing page, d and u are not italicized, nor in the explanatory sentence: "TH²ChD and RU each have an exclusive common ancestor (here called respectively 'd' and 'u')." Why italic in the first instance but not the second? Furthermore, in this sentence, TH²ChD, RU are in roman.

Earlier in the same paragraph, TH²ChDRU and VHJLKWN, are in boldface (93). Is this because TH²ChDRU (roman) is an abstraction based on the readings common to the group of manuscripts TH²CHDRU (bold)?

I am unable to distinguish possible errors in these statements from possible subtleties Schmidt intends. Yet the difference he is trying to express between readings in real manuscripts and conjectured readings in a tradition or in an imagined manuscript are crucial. I assume from the opening statement here that Schmidt concedes that no higher-level text can be constructed without first constructing the lower level text; that is, archetypes

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40 Schmidt, *William Langland: A Parallel Text Edition,* 2:91. See also, such difficult formulations as the following: "But it seems reasonable to suppose that [Langland] showed a copy of the poem (here designated 'A-Ø') in its Pr-XI shape to personal acquaintances" (2:91). Does this refer to a textual form? or a physical manuscript?

41 I take all the following quotations from ibid., 2:92–93.

depend on readings found in sub-archetypes. But none of these reconstructed sub-archetypes or imagined manuscripts is in fact fully transcribed; with the exception of the highest editorially reconstructed text, and the lower extant manuscripts, they are little more than lists of lemmata.

Conclusion

You are asked to revise, and you do so piecemeal. In the early days of computing, you often did not know what version you were looking at. Each of us, doubtless, has had that Langlandian moment where we realize the copy we are so carefully revising today is actually older than the most recent revision that we completed yesterday or last week.

Jerome McGann claimed to be able to keep an entire book-length text in his mind at once; he did not begin writing until the entire book was mentally drafted. But I certainly cannot do this. I keep shapes of it, parts of it, and perhaps sentences of it in my mind. I recall them chaotically, and when I look at them in some print version, there are only a few pages on my screen at once. I could print out any of these, I suppose, and have a record of a something I could call a version, but that version is at best a late version of, say, the final paragraphs or pages, or maybe an early version of the early paragraphs, which take something of a different form in my head as I revise them abstractly to conform to what I have actually typed out today.

Manuscript production and print or typescript production embody slices of this production process in a fixed or static product. If professional scribes, typists, or typesetters are involved, those fixed versions are not entirely ours any more than the final printed version, corrupted by copy-editors (the modern version of that medieval bugaboo, the intelligent scribe) is ours. These manuscripts and these prints have material existence; at least, we can hold them and file them on library shelves. But once they are included in the editorial process, they undergo a transformation. They are changed from material things to texts;

that is to say, they are abstracted into repeatable transcribable units. The language editors and bibliographers use necessarily rationalizes and fixes this chaotic history: abstract texts and material supports are conflated and the objects of discussion shift, I think perniciously, from one to the other.

The basic entities of our textual-critical schemes, while seemingly trying to get beyond the belletristic mystification of an author's text by subjecting its reconstruction to some form of science (whatever that is), only multiply that belletristic entity and lend it a scientific veneer. Somehow, by surreptitiously performing radical acts of imagination in our textual-history schemata, the discredited act of divining an authorial original through *Fingerspitzengefühl* seems to have been obviated. But it is only reborn in a different form, and placed squarely at the heart of our theories.

In almost any textual-critical discussion, it is easy to see how these archetypal reconstructions move from their textual-critical base (which I call, a "modern editorial list" that in no sense constitutes a text) to the ontological status of a manuscript. It is given a date; a scribe is assigned to it (the "intelligent or editing scribe" or "Adam Pinkhurst" or perhaps the tinkering author working from a faulty copy). It assumes the same ontological status as real books and manuscripts. Shakespeare's inexistent "foul papers" become as important as extant quartos. Of course, editors of medieval texts and professional Shakespeareans are conscious of the difference between these things. But intelligent readers looking over one of these books or articles might reasonably conclude that Shakespeare's foul papers, the abstractions Q and F, or Chaucer's early versions of the *Canterbury Tales* are as real as any of the manuscript or early (or late) printed copies that are the basis of such notation.

In its strongest form, my argument is that textual critics have been able to construct their sophisticated schemes and theories only because they have sidestepped the most basic of editorial procedures: in *Blind Impressions* I pointed out one of these — editorial procedures have been developed to produce theoretically reasonable readings, but the question as to whether an editorial

procedure produces historically correct readings has rarely been addressed. Here I point out another. All modern textual-critical projects rely to some extent on reconstructed or imagined *archetypes: an editorial "thing" or series of things lurking behind extant witnesses, lattices through which we somehow see the original authorial or archetypal manuscript. To reconstruct that requires filling in all the holes. But how we do that is anyone's guess. Textual criticism works in any of the more sophisticated forms developed in the last two centuries because it fails to account for or to define the ontological status of witnesses consistently in the edition-making process, and such failure is itself essential to the success of the editions that result.