

**The Prologue, Text and Epilogue of de Worde-Copland's Edition
of The Parliament of Fowls:
An Examination of the Printer's Commercial Tactics**

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(For a final version of this paper, see Essays on English Literature and Language in Honour of Shunich Noguchi (Eihosha, 1997))

One editorial attempt usually observed in the history of manuscript-production was to prepare ¹a readable text from a single exemplar. The editing tradition of Chaucer's The Parliament of Fowls was not an exception to it. Textual modernization was executed in some manuscripts and early prints to provide clients with an understandable version of the poem. R. Pynson, however, first attempted in his 1526(?) edition to produce a better, though modernized, text from multiple sources,² and W. Thynne, showing a great concern for the original wording, adopted in his 1532 edition the practice of reconstructing a 'Chaucerian' text by collating several texts.³ Between these two versions intervened W. de Worde's 1530 edition, and the text was wrapped by a prologue and an epilogue which might set up a bridge over the abrupt shift of the editing principle from modernization to classicization. This article is concerned with the significance of the printer's editorial remarks for the readers/customers and the Chaucer reception in this transitional period.

The 1530 edition of the Parliament was brought out in a small quarto under R. Copland's supervision in de Worde's printing shop. Copland deplored in the preface that 'olde morall bokes' like Chaucer's were left aside by the newfangled reading-public who came to him and asked for 'newes' and 'tryfles,' and then he made clear his intention to publish the Parliament with a wish to nourish their minds. As for the copytext used and the textual treatment exercised in his edition, he implied in the epilogue as follows:

Lenuoy of R Coplande boke prynter (B6v)

Layde vpon shelve, in leues all to torne,
With letters dymme, almost defaced clene,
Thy hyllynge rotte, with wormes all to worne,
Thou lay, that pyte it was to sene.
Bounde with olde quayres, for aege all hoore & grene
Thy mater endormed, for lacke of thy presence.
But nowe thou arte losed: go, shewe forth thy sentence.

And where thou become, so ordre thy language
That in excuse thy prynter loke thou haue,
Whiche hathe the kepte frome ruynous damage
In snoweswyte paper, thy mater for to saue
With thylke same langage that Chaucer to the gaue,
In termes olde, of sentence clered newe,
Than methe moche sweter, who can his mynde auwe
(punctuation and emphases are mine.)⁴

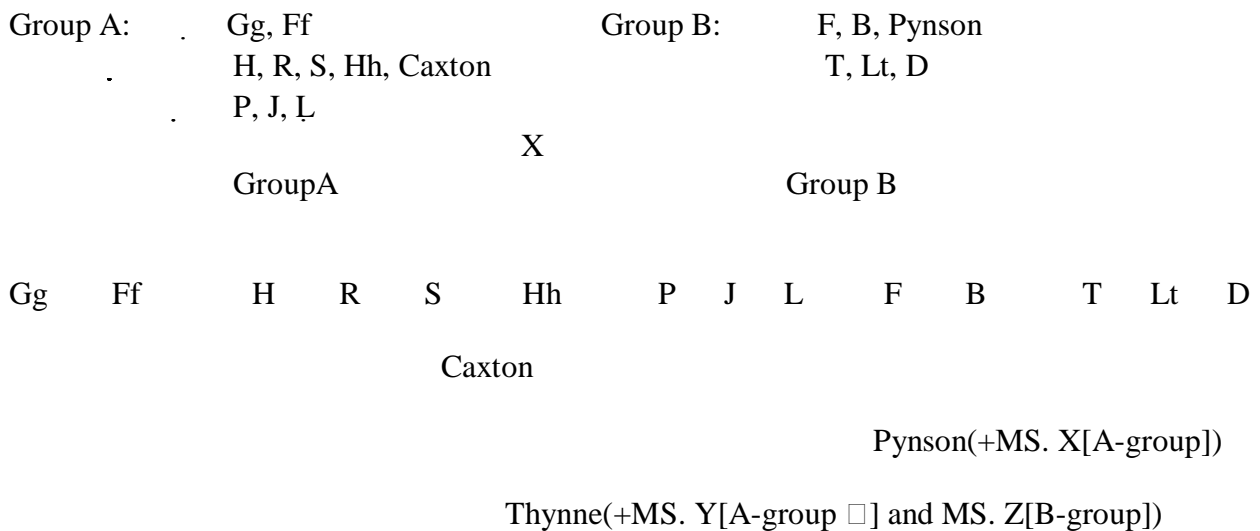
Copland found an old mildewed manuscript containing the Parliament on the shelf in his master's bookshop. The letters of the vulnerable manuscript were dim and illegible, and some leaves were even torn off. He, as editor/printer, restored corrupt lines with the same language Chaucer had employed, and was proud of having fixed the text with printed letters and thus kept it from any further corruption. These are what Copland stated. Did the editor, with an awareness of the

contemporary literary milieu, contrive such an enticing epilogue in order to attract customers? Or is there any bit of truth about his suggestion of a manuscript as his setting copy and about his editorial respect, as a precedent of Thynne's editing, for the Chaucerian diction?

The Parliament is extant in fourteen manuscripts and four substantive early printed editions,⁵ and, taking into consideration the relevant textual studies, the relationship of these texts except de Worde can be illustrated in this way:

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A collation of all these texts shows that, unlike the other Caxton's remakes issued from de Worde's shop, de Worde-Copland's edition (hereafter abbreviated as W) was not a reprint of Caxton's text (Cx),⁸ but that W has a striking textual affinity to Pynson's edition (Pyn), as is inferred from the use of the same title 'The assemble of foules' as in Pyn.⁹ Pyn proves to be a composite edition which contains, in the main, the □ readings of the B group, especially those of the manuscript B, and incorporates some better readings from the A-group. In the places where Pyn textually agrees with the □ group against the other texts, W almost always corresponds with Pyn. The most crucial evidence to show W's textual closeness to Pyn is that W shares with Pyn all of the ten readings unique to the manuscript B, as is cited in the following list (the lemma indicates W, followed by the reading of the other texts):

- 4/27 To rede forth gan me to delyte] so B Pyn (to] so B Pyn),
 gan] I gan Cx, it gan Others Th
- 9/63 In this worlde and cause of armony
 In . . . armony] so B Pyn, In t. w. here and c. o. a. Others Th
- 20/140 The eschewyng is the remedy] so B Pyn,
 The e. ys only t. r. Others Th
- 30/206 euery] so B Pyn, eke euery Others Th

- 45/313 That erthe see and tree and euery lake] so B PynTh,
 That e. and s. and t. and e. l. FYTLtDPH, etc.
- 48/335 grene] so B PynTh (greyne T), grey Others
- 57/394 all] so B PynTh, om Others
- 57/395 second the] so B PynTh, om Others
- 91/637 That it ought to be to you a suffysaunce] so B Pyn,
 That to you it ought to ben a suffisaunce PJFTLtDFf (a) om Ff),
 That to 3ou oughte to been a suffisaunce Gg,
 That to you ought haue ben a suffysaunce Cx,
 That to you it ought ben a suffysaunce Th
- 92/644 I shall you say ryght soone] so B Pyn,
 you wol I say right sone FfPF Th (wol] wel Ff),
 I wil you saye right sone CxHJLt, etc.

However, it is not conceivable for Copland to have prepared his text directly from Pyn. Pyn had eighty-one unique variants at the time of its publication. Of all these variants, W shares twenty-three with Pyn, and in the other fifty-eight instances, which are distributed evenly throughout the work, W deviates from Pyn, agreeing with the other texts, more precisely, mainly with the □ manuscripts in the B-group. For example, in the following variant reading caused by Pynson's textual improvement of a corrupt comparative sentence, W still preserves an awkward reading of the B-group:

- 30/207 No man may there were seke ne olde
 -10 Yet was there more ioeye a thousande folde
 No man can tell neuer wolde it nyght
 But ay clere day to any mannes syght
- (209) No man can tell . . . nyght] so B-group,
 Than any man can telle ne neuer wolde it nyght
 A-group (ne] for Ff, S),
 Than I can tell / or euer coude or myght PynTh
- (210) But ay clere . . . syght]
 There is euer clere day / and neuer nyght PynTh,
so Others (any] euery R, ilke S; clere] om S)

And in the unique variants where Pynson obviously emended his basetext by consulting another text affiliated with the A-group, de Worde's text, disagreeing with Pyn, retains awkward readings of the □ group. The typical examples are:

- 21/141 These verses of golde and blacke ywryten were
 -2 Of whiche I gan a stounde to beholde
 (142) a stounde] so FBT Cx, stonde LtD, astonyed Others PynTh
 (As in the manuscripts F, B and T, W gives 'a stounde,' a decayed form of 'astonyed,' and the rest of the B-group, Lt and D, use 'stonde,' a verb which was meant to have improved the corruption. Pyn, noticing the corruption, replaced it with 'astonyed' which the A-group provided.)
- 56/390 But nethles my ryghtfull gouernaunce
 -2 May I not let for all this worlde to wynne
 That he that most is worthy shall begynne
- (390) my . . . gouernaunce] as by rightfull ordynaunce PynTh
 by my ryghtful ordenaunce Ff, my ryghtful ordenaunce GgCxP,
 by my ryghtful gouernaunce Lt, so Others

(392) That] But PynTh, Ne S, so Others

(Pyn is identical with Ff, Gg, P and Cx of the A-group in its use of ‘ordynaunce,’ while W, along with the other texts, uses ‘gouernaunce.’ Pynson, as in Ff and Lt, construes as an adverbial the phrase containing this legal term, but the other texts and W presents it as an object noun phrase of the verb ‘let’ in the next line, followed remotely by an appositive clause ‘That he . . . begynne.’ Pynson, who might have puzzled by this loose syntax or felt uneasy at the successive use of ‘gouernaunce’ at the rhyme position (ll. 387 and 390), probably left his basetext and had recourse to another text for a better reading.)

34/237 And on the temple sawe I whyte and fayre

-8 Of douues whyte many an hundreth payre

And . . . payre] so B-group (whyte] om D),

And on the temple of dowis white & fayre

Saw I syttyng manye a thousand payre

A-group (thousand] hunderede GgFf),

And on the temple sawe I whyte and fayre

Of douues sitting / many a thousande payre

PynTh

(Pyn has two textual variants from W and the B-group: W and the B-group have ‘whyte’ for Pyn’s ‘sitting’ and ‘hundred’ for Pyn’s ‘thousande.’ These lines in W and the B-group are obviously awkward in its duplicated use of ‘whyte.’ Pynson, noticing the corrupt text, attempted to improve it, but W was composed as its basetext ran.)

On this unique relation between W and Pyn, it can be conjectured that their respective exemplar can have shared a common ancestor or that both of the editions can have been based on the now-lost text of Rastell’s 1525(?) edition, which is to be classified, as a corollary to this speculation, among the □ subtype in the B-group. In either case, W was simply a descendant of this textual tradition, whereas Pyn was a composite development incorporating, in places, superior readings from a different line of textual transmission. Although we cannot dismiss as improbable the possibility of Copland’s referring to Pyn as a subsidiary text, most of the twenty-three cases where W agrees with Pyn’s unique reading may well be derived from the ancestor text, and the fifty-eight cases of W’s disagreement with Pyn’s unique variant may be largely ascribed to the editorial or compositorial intervention in Pynson’s edition.

The epilogue in W, true or not, suggests the possibility of Copland’s having used as his exemplar a manuscript rather than a printed edition, but even if this is the case, we should now see whether the editor restored and established the Chaucerian text as he stated he did. What should be noted about the text of de Worde’s edition is the frequency of textual corruptions, corruptions due to accidental reasons such as miscomposing or misreading. Actually, this kind of sloppy work brings about most of the twenty-three variants unique to W.¹⁰ In contrast with this textual deterioration, there can be also found some active practices for emendation on the side of the editor/compositor. The most prominent is the modernization of the third person plural pronouns, ‘them’ for ‘hem’ and ‘their’ for ‘her.’ The attempt was already observable in R, S, Lt, Cx and Pyn, but it is now more thoroughly carried out in W. Pyn, for example, uses ‘them’ and ‘their’ from line 191 onwards, but W prefers modern forms almost regularly throughout the work. A similar editorial concern is also discernible in W’s following variants against the readings of the B-group, especially the □ subgroup (for comparison, the instances where Pyn still gives older forms are marked with an asterisk*): *Accordynge] Accordant (29/203), better] bet (65/451, 68/474, etc.), *bytwe] betwixe (6/40, 22/148, etc.), came] com (59/413, 86/597), dyd] gonnyn (76/531, 83/577, etc.), *endure] dure (92/641), *eyes] eyen (25/172, 49/341), *gawe] yafe (40/274, 96/667), *henge] henge (41/282, ppl. of ‘hongen’), many] fele (47/329), mother] moder (42/292), nor] ne (86/602),

walked] welke (43/297, pret. of a strong verb 'walk'); *thou can] thou canst (24/163), *thou may] thou mayst (24/163); *sayle yerde fyrrer] sayling fyree (26/179); *the normalization of multiple negation (20/137, 44/306, 67/467). These instances, combined together, seem to point to the presence of a collective concern in the printer's side to provide the text in a modern style. The textual realization is disappointing and even contrary to what Copland stated in his impressive epilogue.

The discrepancy between the text and the editorial statement is significant as a sign of the times. Copland, as a man of letters, was perceptively aware of the rising Renaissance humanism with its classical affinities. Under the social settings were prized antiquity and moralistic nature. In early sixteenth century, some medieval romances such as Court of Love and Ipomydon were reproduced, in manuscript or print, with some archaization furnished,¹¹ and the works of Chaucer, who was called 'English Homer,' were assimilated to the classics.¹² John Skelton, as a witness to the fresh reception of Chaucer, criticized the popular attempt to make the text more intelligible and advocated the need to enjoy the works as they were originally written.¹³ Anticipating the new literary attitude, Copland, as is suggested in his use of an evaluative term 'morall bokes,' must have susceptibly placed greater emphasis on the moralistic nature of the content and declared in the epilogue to defend the Chaucerian language. Furthermore, Copland, as a man engaged in printing, was quite conscious of an advantageous nature of the new media, the 'fixity and permanence' given to text by printing.¹⁴ He flauntingly added to say that he did 'sauē [the text] with thylke same langage' as Chaucer used, and thus implied that authority was successfully lent to the text. However, these articulate, editorial words were not carried out in the actual text. In the quality of text and printing, de Worde-Copland's edition was defective and inferior to its previous Pynson's edition, and yet the the concept of a standard and authentic text advanced by Copland, which was feigned and pretentious to the customers of the edition, found itself into and was realized in W. Thynne's editing of the 1532 Chaucer's collected works.

Notes

1

² As for Pynson's editorial practices in his 1526(?) edition, see my forthcoming article, 'The Text of R. Pynson's Edition of The Parliament of Fowls: Editing on Multiple Sources.'

³ As for W. Thynne's editing principles, see W. Blodgett, 'William Thynne,' Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition, ed. P. Ruggiers (Pilgrim Books, 1984), pp. 35-52.

⁴ In parsing and interpreting Copland's prologue and epilogue, I owe a great deal to Professor G. Jember's insight.

⁵ The extant manuscripts and early prints are: B (Bodley 638, Bodleian, ff. 96-109v), D (Digby 181, Bodleian, ff. 44-52), F (Fairfax 16, Bodleian, ff. 120-129v), Ff (Cambridge University Library Ff 1.6, ff. 29-41), Gg (Cambridge University Library Gg 4.27, ff. 480v-490v), H (Harley 7333, British Library, ff.129v-132), Hh (Cambridge University Library Hh 4.12, ff. 94-99v), J (St. John's College, Oxford, LVII, ff. 226-237v), L (Laud 416, Bodleian, ff. 288-289v), Lt (Longleat 258, in the possession of the Marques of Bath, Longleat House, ff. 85-101), P (Pepys 2006, Magdalene College, Cambridge, ff. 127-142), R (Trinity College, Cambridge R 3.19, ff. 17-25), S (Arch. Selden B 24, Bodleian, ff. 142-152), T (Tanner 346, Bodleian, ff. 120-131); Cx (Caxton's 1477? edition, STC 5091, ff. 1-17), Pyn (Pynson's 1526? edition, STC 5088, ff. 10-14), W (de Worde-Copland's 1530 edition 1530, STC 5092, ff. 2-14), Th (Thynne's 1532 edition, STC 5068, ff. 583-591). Most of the manuscripts and all of the printed editions are available in facsimile or microfilm versions, but as for D, H, Hh, J, L, Lt, R and S, the relevant institutions kindly supplied me with the microfilms or photocopies. I gratefully acknowledge it.

There is a unique copy of Rastell's 1525(?) edition at Bodleian Library, but the copy wants its entire text and part of the prologue and epilogue is available. Therefore we cannot locate its relation with the other texts.

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7

⁸ Caxton's edition has one hundred and two unique readings at the time of its publication, but there are only two places where de Worde coincides with Caxton's unique variant. The instances are:

18/122 Ryght of a parke walled with great stone
great] so Caxton, grene Others Pynson Thynne

70/486 Ne herde I neuer no man me beforne
I] so Caxton, om others Pynson Thynne

⁹ The poem bears a variety of titles, incipits or explicits:

Caxton: Explicit the temple of bras

Pynson, de Worde, Thynne: The assemble of Foules

Rastell : Here begynneth the parlyament of fowles compyled noble
rethorycyen Geffray chaucer.

H, P, B, Lt, D: The parlement of Foules

R: Here followeth the parlement of Byrdes reduced to loue

L: Of the assemble of Pe byrdis on Seint Volantinis day

F, T: Explicit tractatus de congregacione Volucrum dei sancti Valentini

Gg: Explicit parliametum Auium in die sancti Valentini tentum, secundum
Chaucers. Deo gracias.

Ff: Explicit Parliamentum auium Quod W. Calverley

S: Here endis the parliament of foulis Quod Galfride Chaucere

Lt, D: Here endith the Parlement of foules

¹⁰ All of de Worde's twenty-three unique readings are cited in the following list and the instances marked with an asterisk * shows the cases which are likely to have been caused by the editorial revision, successfull or not, intended to improve the text:

*3/17 (not all this yore), 4/30 (it] is), 6/45 (of] om), 9/59a (after] om), 9/59b (he] om),

*17/119 (gyue] ye gyue), 20/137 (frute ne] om), 23/159 (be] by), 24/167 (haddest] haue),

*26/179 (sayling] sayle yerde), *31/215 (harde fyle] a h. f.), *32/221 (to do] and to do),

*41/282 (hange] hanged), 42/292 (of] om), 45/314 (ther] other), *45/315 (the] euery),

63/435 (me] om), 63/441 (at] om), 77/315 (this] om), 80/556 (golee] golde), 84/587 (none] not), 97/673 (were] were there), 98/681 (the] theyr).

¹¹ See C. Meale, 'Wynkyn de Worde's Setting-Copy for Ipomydon,' Studies in Bibliography, 35 (1982), 156-71.

¹² See Chaucer: The Critical Heritage, ed. D. S. Brewer (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), vol. 1, p. 9, and Manuscript Bodley 638, A Facsimile, Introduction by P. Robinson (Pilgrim Books, 1982), pp. xxxix-xl.

¹³ See Brewer, Chaucer: The Critical Heritage, vol. 1, p. 85.

¹⁴ While preparing this article, I was led to an essay on Copland's prologues and epilogues by Helen Phillips ('Aesthetic and commercial Aspects of Framing Devices: Bradshaw, Roos and Copland,' Poetica, vol. 43(1995), 37-65). She located and examined the printer's prologues and epilogues as part of an established medieval tradition of translators' frames. Her discussion of the frame to the Parliament showed me a profile of Copland as a printer who was proud of making a 'fixed' text of the poem. In connection with this, L. Hellinga wrote about the interaction of manuscript and print in setting a standard and imposing authority in her stimulating essay, 'Manuscripts in the Hands of Printers,' Manuscripts in the Fifty Years after the Invention of Printing, ed. J. B. Trapp (The Warburg Institute, 1983), pp. 3-11.