

Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeve's Tale*[†]

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[The delay in publishing this paper is principally due to hesitation in putting forward a study, for which closer investigation of words, and more still a much fuller array of readings from MSS. of the *Reeve's Tale*, were so plainly needed. But for neither have I had opportunity, and dust has merely accumulated on the pages. The paper is therefore presented with apologies, practically as it was read, though with the addition of a "critical text", and accompanying textual notes, as well as of various footnotes, appendices, and comments naturally omitted in reading. It may at least indicate that this tale has a special interest and importance for Chaucerian criticism, even if it shows also that it requires more expert handling.]

Line references without any prefix are to the actual lines of the *Reeve's Tale*. Numbers prefixed A or B refer to these groups of the *Canterbury Tales* in the Six-Text numbering.]

Chaucer as a Philologist.

One may suspect that Chaucer, surveying from the *Galaxye* our literary and philological antics upon the *litel erthe that heer is . . . so ful of torment and of harde grace*, would prefer the Philological Society to the Royal Society of Literature, and an editor of the English Dictionary to a poet laureate. Not that Chaucer *redivivus* would be a phonologist or a lexicographer rather than a popular writer—the *lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne!* But certainly, as far as treatment of himself goes (and he had a well-formed opinion of the value of his own work), of all the words and ink posterity has spent or spilt over his entertaining writings, he would chiefly esteem the efforts to recover the detail of what he wrote, even (indeed particularly) down to forms and spellings, to recapture an idea of what it sounded like, to make certain what it meant. Let the source-hunter *have his swink to him reserved*. For Chaucer was interested in "language", and in the forms of his own tongue. As we gather from the envoy to *Troilus and Criseyde*, he

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chose his forms and probably his spellings with care, by selection among divergencies of which he was critically aware; and he wished to have his choice handed on accurately.

Alas! if the curse he pronounced on scribe Adam produced any effect, many a fifteenth-century penman must early have gone bald. We know the detail of Chaucer's work now only through a fifteenth-century blur (at best). His holographs, or the copies impatiently rubbed and scraped by him, would doubtless be something of a shock to us, though a shock we shall unfortunately be spared. In our unhappy case, he would be the first to applaud any efforts to undo the damage as far as possible; and the acquiring of as good a knowledge as is available of the language of his day would certainly have seemed to him a preliminary necessity, not a needless luxury. One can imagine the brief burning words, like those with which he scorched Adam, that he would address to those who profess to admire him while disdaining "philology", who adventure, it may be, on textual criticism undeterred by ignorance of Middle English.

Of course, Chaucer was the last man himself to annotate his jests, while they were fresh. But he would recognize the need, at our distance of time, for the careful exhuming of ancient jokes buried under years, before we shape our faces to a conventional grin at his too often mentioned "humour". Chaucer was no enemy of learning, and there is no need to apologize to him for the annotating of one of his jests, for digging it up and examining it without laughing. He will not suspect us of being incapable of laughter. From his position of advantage he will be able to observe that most philologists possess a sense of the ridiculous, one that even prevents them from taking "literary studies" too seriously.

Of all the jokes that Chaucer ever perpetrated the one that most calls for philological annotation is the dialect talk in the *Reeve's Tale*. For the joke of this dialogue is (and was) primarily a linguistic joke,¹ and is, indeed, now one at which only a philologist can laugh sincerely. Merely to recapture some of the original fun would perhaps be worth the long and dusty labour necessary; but that will not be my chief object. Other points arise from a close study of Chaucer's little *tour de force*, so interesting that we may claim that it has acquired an accidental value, greater than its author intended, and surpassing the original slender jest.

The representation of Northern dialect in the *Reeve's Tale* is so well known that it is taken for granted: its originality and novelty are apt to be forgotten. Yet it is a curious and remarkable thing, unparalleled in Chaucer's extant writings,² or, indeed (as far as I am aware), in any Middle English work. Even in our copies the dialect lines stand out astonishingly from the linguistic texture of the rest of Chaucer's work. We may well ask: Is this a most unusual piece of dramatic realism? Or is it just the by-product of a private philological curiosity, used with a secret smile to give

some life and individuality to a *fabliau* of trite sort, a depressing specimen of low-class knockabout farce? Or does it just pander to popular linguistic prejudices—ranking with what passes for Scotch, Welsh, Yorkshire, or American in supposedly funny stories of to-day? The answer, of course, requires elaborate enquiry. But I think I would here anticipate and say that to all three questions the answer is “yes”.

Chaucer deliberately relies on the easy laughter that is roused by “dialect” in the ignorant or the unphilological. But he gives not mere popular ideas of dialect: he gives the genuine thing, even if he is careful to give his audience certain obvious features that they were accustomed to regard as funny. He certainly was inspired here to use this easy joke for the purposes of dramatic realism—and he saved the *Reeve's Tale* by the touch. Yet he certainly would not have done these things, let alone done them so well, if he had not possessed a private philological interest, and a knowledge, too, of “dialect” spoken and written, greater than was usual in his day.

Such elaborate jests, so fully carried out, are those only of a man interested in language and consciously observant of it. It is universal to notice oddities in the speech of others, and to laugh at them, and a welter of English dialects made such divergences more a matter of common experience, especially doubtless in London, then than now. There was already growing in and with London a polite language (there was a polite idiom available for Chaucer's own work), and a standard of comparison was beginning to appear. Yet this does not make such a joke inevitable. Many may laugh, but few can analyse or record. The Northern speech is elsewhere the subject of uncomplimentary reference before this date: in Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon* it is called *scharp, slytting, and frotyng, and unschape*; but no examples are given. Dialect was, and indeed is still, normally only embarked on, in full and in form and apart from one or two overworked spellings or phrases thrown in for local colour, by those who know it natively. But Chaucer has stuck in a Northern tooth, and a sharp one, a deal more convincing than Mak's poor little *ich* and *ich be*³; and he has done it without a word of warning.

The result is, of course, not of any special importance as a document of dialect. It is dialect only at second hand, and Chaucer has affected to excuse himself from localizing it precisely.⁴ We can hardly expect the lines to add anything to our knowledge of the northern speech in the fourteenth century. They have to be judged, and only reveal their interest when carefully examined, in the light of that knowledge such as it is. Almost at once, if we try to examine them in that light (none too clear and bright), we shall be confronted with lexicographical and textual difficulties. Lexicographically we shall observe, as usual, that we cannot walk far in such paths without the massive helping hand of the *New English*

Dictionary; yet we shall find quickly, nonetheless, how little knowledge is on free tap concerning English words, if we wish to enquire about their *distribution* at any given time. *N.E.D.* answers such questions reluctantly, or not at all. But such questions must be asked: the answers are essential to an estimate of the dialect dialogue, even if we must plough many texts to find them (or hints towards them), and hunt in un glossed verses for a phrase.

Textually we shall not be long in noting, or suspecting, that these dialect passages have been exposed to considerable adulteration—because they are in dialect, and because they are in dialect sandwiched between passages of narrative in Chaucer’s ordinary idiom. In compensation we may reflect that usually it is difficult to catch Adam and his descendants at their tricks: we only know “Chaucer’s language” (confidently though we set examination-questions on it) through the copies of scrivains, who were certainly not his contemporaries, and who would usually have thought no more of altering a spelling or a form than of brushing a fly off the nose—less, because they would notice the fly, but often hardly observe the spelling. We are to a certain extent at their mercy, and they interfere confoundedly with our prosody and our grammar. But here we may have a little revenge. We know something of northern dialect independent of them. What have they made of it? I believe that a close examination of all the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* with respect to the northernisms in this tale would have a special textual value—and that some reputations for fidelity would be damaged. In fact, purely accidentally, the *Reeve’s Tale* is of great importance to the textual criticism of the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole.⁵

But for the moment we can reserve these important points, lexicographical and textual, and take what we have got for a preliminary glance. The first thing to recollect, of course, is that (accurate or inaccurate) this northern dialect was intended not for Northerners, but for Chaucer’s usual audience. Now “dialect” is seldom amusing in a tale, unless the audience has some actual experience of it (and can in effect laugh at private memories). Modern writers may often forget this, but Chaucer is not likely to have done so. And in any case, jesting apart, the dialect must be more or less intelligible. The talk of the two clerks had to be understood without a gloss: the *Reeve’s Tale* when written was no place for explanatory footnotes or asides. We learn therefore from it at once—without considering textual adulteration, for that, if it has occurred, will naturally have tended to leave intact the most obvious and familiar elements—what most immediately struck the London ear as comic and unusual in Chaucer’s day among the features of northern speech. At the same time we get a glimpse of how much a Londoner could be expected to understand, what sort of dialect details and words were more or less

familiar to him, though not used by him. This is in itself interesting: both what is in the *Reeve's Tale* and what is not (e.g. present participles in *-and*, or indications of a shift in the sound of *ō*) is instructive.

Chaucer plainly kept some of his knowledge up his sleeve, and even so he put in at least one touch (e.g. *slik*, on which see below) that cannot have been familiar, even if the context made it intelligible; but what has been said is generally true. He showed considerable skill and judgment in what he did: skill in presenting the dialect with fair accuracy but without piling up oddities; judgment in choosing for his purpose *northern* clerks, at *Cambridge*, close to *East Anglia* (whence he brought his Reeve). Indeed, in an *East Anglian* reeve, regaling Southern (and largely London) folk, on the road in *Kent*, with imitations of *northern* talk, which was imported southward by the attraction of the *Universities*, we have a picture in little of the origins of literary English. Too good to be mere accident. Whether fully conscious of this or not, it cannot be denied that Chaucer has shown an instinctive appreciation of the linguistic situation of his day which is remarkable. We shall be justified in paying close attention to the dialect-writing of an author such as this. The whole situation is cleverly contrived philologically. Many of the principal features of northern speech, especially in vocabulary, being largely of Scandinavian origin, were also current in the East; and Chaucer was able to use dialectalisms, recognizable as such, that were at once *correct* for the North, and yet, owing to the growing importance and influence of East Anglia, especially Norwich, not unheard-of in the capital. The reeve is at once the symbol of the direction from which northerly forms of speech invaded the language of the southern capital, and the right sort of person to choose to act as intermediary in the tale. Chaucer could have given a good philological explanation—should any hypercritical modern require one—of the ease with which the teller of the tale negotiates the talk of the clerks.

Perhaps it is for this very reason that he tinges the talk of his reeve also with linguistic elements of the same kind.⁶ Slight as the touches are, they are nonetheless unusual, and unlike Chaucer's normal procedure; he makes no effort (as far as our manuscripts show) to touch the talk of the Dartmouth shipman with south-westernisms. In any case, it will be granted that a Norfolk man was well chosen as the teller of a story of Cambridge and of northern men.

On the *fer north* Chaucer's choice fell naturally—apart from possible private knowledge, and apart from the possibility that something in “real life”, a meeting with real students of Cambridge that came from the North, lies behind not the *fabliau*, but the colouring given to it (a possibility that does not in the least affect the argument)—because, if dialect was to be attempted at all in a funny tale, one of a marked character, one perhaps already as conventionally comic in London as a Welsh “whateffer”

is to-day, was both easier to do and more effective. It is significant of the shift since Chaucer's day, that the *fer West* was not selected. It was peculiar enough in some respects, and it might have been put appropriately in the mouths of students of Oxford. But it was not. Probably, in so far as it then differed from the uses of London, it was too remote from London's ken and not a current joke.⁷ The dialect-situation, in fact, jumped neatly with the answer of Cambridge clerks and Trumpington miller to Oxford Nicholas and Osney carpenter. Too neatly to be accidental. It had been well thought out.

If we now leave the generalizations and proceed to a more detailed scrutiny, we need as a preliminary to hear the dialogue passages in their setting. They should be read aloud, as one may fancy Chaucer reading them (if he ever did). In the absence of an accomplished renderer, such as Professor Wyld, each must do that for himself, with such approximate fidelity as philological knowledge allows. This is important because mere statistics, and numerical counting, fail altogether to represent the relative prominence of a linguistic feature to the ear, or to make clear the astonishing effect of the contrast of the dialogue with the narrative setting.

One thing arises from any such reading, that is even approximately correct, arises so clearly that no statistics are needed to support it: the most striking characteristic of northern speech in a London ear was the long \bar{a} (of O.E. or O.N. origin), retained where the southerly forms of speech had an \bar{o} . The latter was probably in Chaucer's time still a pure, not a diphthongal, sound, the same as, or similar to, that in present southern *awe, or*. But in the North it remained \bar{a} , without trace of any rounding or tendency to an *o*-sound. The tendency in the North of England was rather to fronting, towards an \bar{e} -sound (that is to the preservation of old \bar{a} until it fell in with the later post-medieval shift of later \bar{a} -sounds, seen also in the South, which affected generally in all dialects such \bar{a} -sounds as those of French *blame, dame*, or of English and Norse *make, cake*). This is a trite phonological fact, but nonetheless remarkable; it was also of special importance, since the number of words affected was very large. The dating of the later fronting (towards \bar{e}) only becomes of importance in dealing with *geen, neen*, the one real problem that we encounter, and one that I reserve for a special note in an appendix. For the moment, though the full development of the shift towards \bar{e} was not, I believe, in Chaucer's day accomplished, later history probably warns us to give a quality to our Northern \bar{a} which anticipates the change: it was not our present Southern \bar{a} (in *calm, say*), and the difference between Northern *bān* "bone" and Southern *bōgn* was wider than that between modern *barn* and *born*. The sound was, indeed, part of the "sharp slitting" which offended Southern ears—in words where they were not accustomed to hear it.⁸

Statistics actually show (see below) that Chaucer has provided a nota-

bly large number of examples of this Northern \bar{a} : some thirty-nine in the manuscripts here used, probably more in his original version, a number far exceeding that of any other feature represented. So, even if we make allowance for the fact that examples were naturally numerous, we may regard the effect produced (which is even more striking than the statistics suggest) as intentional. The joke about \bar{a} was one all would appreciate, and this \bar{a} had the advantage of occurring in common words used in all dialects, which would be thus quite intelligible and yet all the more odd and laughable in alien shape because of their very familiarity.

Nonetheless, it is easy for dialect-imitators to seize on some such general correspondence as this $\bar{a} = \bar{o}$, and to apply it to cases where, for some historical reason, it is actually false to the dialect. Thus to the vowel-sound in our word *time* the dialects of modern Yorkshire respond in a very great number of cases with some variety of \bar{a} , but not in all cases—*lie*, *light*, and *eye*, for instance, are usually $\bar{l}i$ (or $\bar{l}ig$), $\bar{l}it$, and \bar{i} , though imitators will produce $\bar{l}\bar{a}$, $\bar{l}\bar{a}t$, and \bar{a} . Indeed, such forms are actually heard from “natives”, supposed to be speaking dialect. In that case they bear witness to the influence of standard English, under which “dialect” tends to become ordinary language altered in accordance with a few regularized sound-correspondences (and thinly sprinkled with local words and locutions). Traces of the same phenomenon have been observed in Middle English: a probable example (since it comes principally from areas where \bar{a} and \bar{o} approached one another geographically) is *tōn* “taken”, derived, it would appear, from northern *tān*,⁹ by substitution of the southern \bar{o} , although the \bar{a} of *tān* is a late lengthening of \bar{a} , and not an original O.E. or O.N. \bar{a} that would naturally have exhibited this southern change.

These things are mentioned here only in illustration of the fact that sound-correspondences are readily appreciated by the unphilological, where contact between closely related forms of language occurs, and in the absence of either historical or practical knowledge of both forms of speech in detail, may be, indeed certainly will be, occasionally wrongly applied. It would be interesting if we could detect Chaucer in a wrong application of his \bar{a}/\bar{o} “sound-law” to cases where for some reason northern dialect did not show \bar{a} for southern \bar{o} . There are no such errors. This would be more significant if there were more chances of error occurring. Southern \bar{o} which is not northern \bar{a} is derived mainly from older *o* lengthened (as in O.E. *hopa*, M.E. *hōpe*), or from foreign words, chiefly French (as *cote*, *host*). Mistakes are not likely with the latter class; the former is comparatively infrequent. We have, it is true, *hope* (and in a dialectal sense) in l. 109, and *hoste* (O.Fr. *hoste*) in l. 211; but this is all.¹⁰ *hope* and *hoste* are correct, of course, for the North; but the distinction observed, even if a much larger number of instances occurred, could not be used

as evidence of Chaucer's direct knowledge of northern speech. He may have had a guide either in his own pronunciation or in that of old-fashioned people to aid in distinguishing words of this kind from those whose \bar{q} was northern \bar{a} . It is not certain that *o* in *hope* was in his day yet universally identical with that in *soap* (O.E. *hopa*, *sāpe*): the two vowels are still, of course, kept apart in the dialect of some areas that share in the rounding of older \bar{a} . His rhyming is strict in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and yet we have the famous case in the fourth stanza of the fifth book, where *lore*, *euermore* (O.E. *lār*, *māre*) are contrasted, and do not according to the system of his stanza rhyme with *forlore*, *more*, *tofore* (O.E. *forlōren*, *mōre*, *tōfōran*).

We may conclude, then, that the general correspondence of northern \bar{a} to southern \bar{q} was recognized by Chaucer (and also by his audience), and that it was one of the chief points illustrated in his representation of northern dialect: it was specially suitable for his purpose. But there is more in the dialect passages than these broad and easy effects, and we may now examine them in more detail. A fair initial assumption is that all departures from his normal usage, such words and forms as he nowhere else employs, are here intentional and offered to his readers as samples of northern speech. At least it would be a fair assumption, and on it we might justly put Chaucer through a linguistic examination, but for one grave difficulty: the candidate's scripts have been lost. Adam and his offspring have fortunately kept copies, it is true, but unfortunately they are unreliable on the very points we wish to scrutinize, less so perhaps in vocabulary, more so certainly in grammar, dialectal forms, and spellings. We are involved in the attempt to distinguish between Chaucer and his reporters; and a satisfactory comparison of the candidate's essay at "dialect" with his "normal usage" would require a more careful scrutiny of the individual habits (and the casual inadvertent evidence) of the manuscripts, both in the bulk of his work and in these special passages, than has, I believe, yet been made, at any rate with any such a purpose. The following study is merely tentative. For lack of time and opportunity it is based solely on the facsimile of the Ellesmere MS.; and on the Six-Text¹¹ and the Harleian MS. 7334 (H1) printed by the Chaucer Society.

A more extensive investigation of other MSS. is obviously required. No classification or grouping made on other grounds seems to be a safe guide to the readings that any given MS. will offer in the dialect parts of the *Reeve's Tale*.¹² The similarity, for instance, often extremely close even in minor details of spelling, that can be observed between E and H does not prevent them from differing in notable points in their report of the clerks' northern English. A full comparison of the readings of these seven MSS. alone, even limited to points affecting dialect, would nonetheless occupy too much space. Instead, a preliminary essay towards a critical text of the dialect lines is offered, together with some commentary. It is based

on the following considerations. That the idea of making the clerks speak in dialect was Chaucer's is, of course, agreed. It need not be argued. Exceptional though the procedure is, dialectal ingredients are shown, in any case, to have existed in the original by the rhymes in ll. 167-8 and 209-210.¹³ Nonetheless, it has been held, and may still be, that this idea was variously improved or enlarged upon by individual copyists. An examination of the seven MSS. does not, however, bear this out. The general tendency of all has been to southernize the original. A comparison of the small list given below of those northernisms which have been correctly preserved in *all seven*, with the much larger one containing those that have the support of a majority (and so can in the first instance be taken as Chaucerian) is sufficient to show this. Of northern *forms*, as distinct from vocabulary, only *swa* 110 and *ga* 182 are common to all in the middle of a line. There are also the rhyme-words in ll. 119-120 *fra, swa* (P *fraye, swaye*), 165-6 (*alswa, ra*), 167-8 (*bape*), 209-210 (*bringes*).¹⁴ The last two could not be altered. The ends of Chaucer's lines have, in any case, in general survived rough handling best; and here are found most of the forms on which the supposed archaism of his verse-language is founded, in reality a testimony to the fact that rhyme resists modernization. The northernisms of the surviving copies are, in fact, the residue of a gradual whittling away of the individuality of Chaucer's text, a residue naturally different in amount and distribution in each case. This is precisely what might be expected, especially in the treatment of dialect sandwiched between passages more or less in Chaucer's normal language. That Chaucer should trouble to write in dialect is remarkable, but it is hardly credible that each of these scrivains (and their predecessors) should at odd moments have had the fancy to improve his attempt. Actually a comparison of the critical text here put forward with the MSS. shows a procedure closely similar to that observable in southernizing copies of genuine northern originals.¹⁵ The variations in reading, and the errors, are most numerous precisely where specifically northern forms are concerned; and the variations consist usually in the opposition of southern equivalents to a northern form or word; occasionally and most significantly there appear mongrel blends between northern and southern whose origin is not linguistic but scribal.¹⁶ Had the northernisms been in any considerable measure due to the enterprise and wit of copyists, we should certainly have had frequent competition between different but equally genuine dialectalisms. No certain case of this appears.¹⁷ We have corruptions which have been treated as genuine (in unjustified deference to E), and have even been intruded into historical grammars, such as *geen*, for instance; and we have occasionally the repetition, suitable or unsuitable, of northernisms certainly provided elsewhere by Chaucer in the dialogue¹⁸; we have little evidence that the copyists themselves possessed independent

information concerning the detail of northern dialect, or could use it intelligently to improve the original. Chaucer's jest required some popular knowledge of the kind of dialect depicted, and this doubtless the scribes usually possessed; but Chaucer's detail was finer than necessary, and this probably as a rule escaped readers and copyists alike. The copyists must, of course, usually have perceived that the clerks' lines were abnormal in language (spelling alone in the earlier stages of the tradition probably made it obvious and troublesome enough); but the principal textual effect of this was to render less secure their interpretation of letters, and to weaken respect for the language: the normal checks on the making and accepting of errors were reduced. The notion that "dialect" is a lawless perversion of familiar vowels is no new one.

Accordingly, in the following text as a general rule each "northernism" or dialectal feature offered by the seven MSS. as a whole has been accepted, even if such a form is given in only one of them (where other considerations are not, as in 103, against this). In addition, perhaps less defensibly, the text has been normalized. For example, if the evidence is held to justify the inclusion of *sal, na, es* in certain lines, these forms have been used throughout the clerks' speeches. As will be seen, this entails less alteration than might be expected. Even our MSS. taken as a whole provide something approximating to a consistent text: the presumption that, within the limits of rhyme and metre, Chaucer's own text was fairly consistent in dialectal character is therefore strong. In any case, with the small words such as *is, shal, no*, scribal procedure was casual and need not be imitated slavishly. This gleaning of "northernisms" has not, all the same, been purely mechanical. The habits and peculiarities of each MS. used have to be considered,¹⁹ and the evidence they afford is not of equal certainty. In the note on *dreuen* 190 it will be observed that this form, though frequently found in northern texts, may here show nothing more than the *e* for *ī* which is almost the rule in C and common in L. At the same time, it must be remembered that the chance of original dialectal details surviving was much increased if they happened to look familiar to later scribes. Some have been preserved not as "dialect" at all, but as (to the scribe) permissible variants. Thus the preservation of "northern" *es* = *is* in L only is undeniably connected with the fact that *es* for *is* occurs occasionally in L outside the *Reeve's Tale*,²⁰ though *is* is, nonetheless, its usual form. But the occurrences of *es* in L are far more frequent in the *Reeve's Tale* than in any other passage of Chaucer of equal length. Moreover L always uses *es* where its special dialectal employment as *am, art, are* is concerned (except in l. 319, where it has *am* not *is*). This sudden favouring of *es* therefore has probably some special cause, and may proceed from the original. An instructive example is *til* in l. 190. All seven MSS. preserve *til* in *til helthing*, but in *til scorn* O P Hl have *to*. The universal retention in

the first case was due to the fact that *til* was not unfamiliar before *h* or a vowel. See the notes on *til* and *drue* (below).

Weight has been given to errors. P *ytwix* 251 is a mongrel, but it is even better evidence for the Chaucerian origin of the genuine northern *ymel* than the actual appearance of this word in E H. It is also a measure of the intelligence and linguistic knowledge shown in the copying of rare words in the *Reeve's Tale*. In the note to l. 267 it is also pointed out that the reading *saule sal* rests securely on the error *God sale* (and similar forms) in some MSS., which finds its explanation only in the original presence in the text of these northern forms and in their comparative unfamiliarity to the copyists which favoured misreading.

The spelling adopted is not extremely northern. The original copy or copies made or corrected by Chaucer, and the elder derivatives, certainly differed in mere *spelling* from the usage of Chaucer when writing his own language. The source of Chaucer's knowledge of dialect was largely literary, and drawn from *written* northern works; also he was considering *readers*. The Miller and the Reeve were *cherles*, and we are expressly told by him to *turne ouer the leef* (A 3177) if we do not approve of their tales. It is a fair assumption that for readers' benefit Chaucer marked off the dialect lines or words by using certain of the characteristic northern spellings of the fourteenth century.²¹ But such details have naturally been least observed in the MSS. and can scarcely now be recaptured. One marked peculiarity only has been admitted, tentatively and in illustration of the way in which the dialect could be made effective to the eye as well as to the ear, namely *qu* for *wh*. The evidence that Chaucer actually used this is very slender; but this might be expected. It is, in fact, the duty of an editor to weigh such gossamer—in cases where mere spelling is important. P has *qweistel* in l. 182. This MS. is an extreme southernizer, and this spelling is, in it, quite isolated and remarkable.²² The *q* must therefore be either inherited and by chance preserved²³, or due to a sudden northernizing whim. The latter is extremely unlikely in view of the general behaviour of P.²⁴

It may be observed that the text so produced, possessing in most points direct MS. authority, even when only seven MSS. have been used, is in contrast with more familiar ones (or with E) very nearly purely and correctly northern. The exceptions, southernisms which cannot be removed, are mainly due to the needs of rhyme and metre; but they are in any case so small a proportion of the whole that even a philological examiner would award Chaucer a fairly high mark for his effort. Chaucer has on the whole avoided putting extreme northernisms into the rhymes, and since his scheme made necessary the linking of dialect lines with lines of narrative not in dialect, he has allowed himself some liberty, especially at these joints, and quite reasonably.

The letters *e* and *ë* are used respectively to mark (a) unstressed *e* that seems to have been meant to be slurred or omitted, and in some cases was probably not originally written, and (b) unstressed *e* that seems to be a metrical syllable. This is done to assist later comment. The italics mark normalizations, that is northern, non-Chaucerian forms which in the places where they appear are not given by any of the seven MSS., though they are preserved elsewhere. The irreducible southernisms are underlined—which rather exaggerates their importance; but it serves to mark the curious fact that these certain southernisms and the possible ones (represented by the italics) are largely collected near the end. Chaucer himself probably allowed the linguistic joke to fade away as the knock-about business approached. Or he may have got tired of it before it was quite finished; as he did of other things.

- 102 (4022) Alain spak first: “Al hail, Simond, i faiþ!
 Hou farës þi faire doghter and þi wif?”
 * * * *
- 106 (4026) “Simond,” quod Iohn, “bi god ned has na per:
 Him boës seruë himseluën þat has na swain,
 Or els he *es* a folt as clerkës sain.
 Our manciplë, I hope he wil be ded,
 Swa werkës ai þe wangës in his hed.
 And forþi es I cum, and *als* Alain,
 To grinde our corn and carië it ham again.
- 113 (4033) I prai zou spedës vs heþen as 3e mai!”
 * * * *
- 116 (4036) “Bi god, right bi þe hoper wil I stand,”
 quod Iohn, “and se hougat þe corn gas in.
 3it sagh I neuer, bi mi fader kin,
 hou þat þe hoper waggës til and fra.”
 Alain answerdë: “Iohn, and wiltou swa,
 þen wil I be bineþën, bi mi croun,
 And se hougat þe melë fallës down
 In til þe trogh. þat sal be mi desport;
 For, Iohn, i faiþ, I es al of 3our sort:
- 125 (4045) I es as il a miller as er 3e.”
 * * * *
- 152(4072) And gan to crie: “Harrow and wailawai!
 Our hors *es* lost! Alain, for goddës banes,
 Step on þi fet, cum of man al at anes!
- 155 (4075) Alas! our wardain has his palfrai lorn.”

- 158 (4078) "Quat! Quilk wai es he gan?" gan he to crie.
* * * *
- 164 (4084) "Alas," quod Iohn, "Alain, for cristës paine,
Lai doun þi swerd, and I sal min als wa.
I es ful wight, god wat, as es a ra.
Bi goddës herþe, he sal noght scape vs baþe!
Qui nad þou pit þe capel i þe laþe?"
- 169 (4089) Il hail! Bi god, Alain, þou es a fonne."
* * * *
- 181 (4101) Wiþ "Kep, kep, stand, stand, Iossa, warderere,
Ga quistel þou, and I sal keþe him here!"
* * * *
- 189 (4109) "Alas," quod Iohn, "þe dai þat I was born!
Nou er we dreuþen til heþing and til scorn.
Our corn es stoln; men wil vs folës calle,
Baþe þe wardain and our felawes alle,
- 193 (4113) And nameli þe miller; wailawai!"
* * * *
- 207 (4127) "Nou, Simond," seidë Iohn, "bi saint Cutberd,
Ai es þou meri, and þis es faire answerd.
I haue herd sai man suld ta of twa þinges
Slik²⁵ as he findes, or ta slik²⁵ as he bringes.
But specialli I prai þe, hostë dere,
Get us sum²⁶ metþe and drink, and mak vs chere,
And we wil paië treuli at þe fulle:
Wiþ empti hand man mai na haukës tulle.
Wiþ empti hand man mai na haukës tulle.
- 215 (4135) Lo her, our siluer redi for til spende."
* * * *
- 249 (4169) He pokede Iohn, and seidë: "Slepest thou?
Herdë þou euer slik a sang ar nou?
Lo, quilk a complin es imell þaim alle!
A wildë fir upon þair bodiþes falle!
Qua herknëd euer slik a ferli þing?
3a, þai sal hauþe þe flour of il ending.
þis langë night þer tidës me na reste;
But 3it, na fors, al sal be for þe beste.
For, Iohn," seidë he, "als euer mot I þriue,
Gif þat I mai, 3on wenchë sal I swiue.
Sum esëment has lawë schapën vs;
For, Iohn, þer es a lawe þat sais þus:

- þat gif a man in á point be agreued,
 þat in anoþer he sal be releued.
 Our corn *es* stoln, soþli it *es* na nai,
 And we hauē had an il fit al þis dai;
 265 (4185) And sen I sal hauē nan amendēment
 Again mi los, I wil hauē esēment.
 Bi goddēs saule, it sal nan oþer be!”
 þis Iohn answerede: “Alain, auisē þe!
 þe miller *es* a parlous man,” he seide,
 270 (4190) “And gif þat he out of his sleep abreide,
 He mightē do vs baþe a vilainie.”
 272 (4192) Alain answerede: “I counte him noght a flic!”
 * * * *
- 281 (4201) “Alas” quod he, “þis *es* a wikkēd Iape!
 Nou mai I sai þat I es but an ape.
 zit has mi felawe sumquat for his harm:
 He has þe miller doghter in his arm.
 285 (4205) He auntrēd him, and has his nedēs sped,
 And I li as a draf-sek in mi bed;
 And quen þis Iape *es* tald anoþer dai,
 I sal be haldēn daf, a cokenai.
 I wil arise and auntre it, bi mi fai!
 290 (4210) “Vnhardi *es* vnseli,” þus men sai.
 * * * *
- 316 (4236) And seidē: “Far wel, Maline, swetē wight!
 þe dai *es* cum, I mai *na* lenger bide;
 But euerma, quar *sa* I *ga* or ride,
 319 (4239) I es þin awēn clerk, swa hauē I sel!
 * * * *
- 329 (4249) Alain vpristē and þoughte: “*Ar* þat it dawē,
 I wil *ga* crepēn in bi mi felawe”;
 And fond þe cradel wiþ his hondē anon.
 “Bi god,” þoughte he, “al wrang I hauē misgon;
 Min hed *es* toti of mi swink tonight,
 þat makēs me þat I *ga* noght aright.
 I *wat* wel bi þe cradel, I hauē misgo :
 336 (4256) Her lis þe miller and his wif also.”
 <a marginal note in one of Tolkien’s copies reads “origi-
 nally prob. misgaa / alswa”>
 * * * *

the southernizing of P; *worchen* is normal in P, and used elsewhere where others have *werke* (as A 779). The substitution is here made, although this *werkes* is a different verb. *wanges* all.

111. *forþi* E, rest forms of *þerfore*. These cannot be distinguished dialectally. *cum*: *come* monosyllabic all but P *commen*. See notes on grammatical forms below. P *commen* is not a northernism and is frequent generally in P.

es L, rest *is*. This *es* here accepted as original (extreme dialectal) for *is*, *am*, *art*. See remarks above, and below on grammatical forms. *als*: *alswa* L, rest forms of *eek*. It is here suggested that Chaucer wrote *als*: *eek* is a southern equivalent; L preserves trace of original (as not infrequently) but has expanded the dialectal form to detriment of metre (*alswa* occurs in 165). Cf. 240 *eek* all but C *also*. In 14th c. *als* “also” was mainly N. or northerly. Chaucer’s occasional use of it (proved by rhyme *fals*, HF. 2071, Frank. T. 870) is unusual in South, and perhaps literary, cf. his *greithe*, *lathe*, *wight* (below). Cf. *C.M.* 21, 155; *Hand. Synne* 2748 (*fals* rh. *als* glossed *also*); and *Bk. Duch.* 728. *als* “as” occurs 257, q.v.

112. *ham* E O L Hl. H has the notable form *heem* which goes with *geen*, *neen* of E, but because unrecorded by Skeat has not received same notice as forms of E. See discuss. of *geen*. *again* is, of course, necessary for N. Chaucer may have used both *again* and *azein* (L here *azeine*) in his own language, both appear at any rate in the MSS. elsewhere.

113. *speedes* O, supported by plural pronoun, but rest *spede*, etc. *heþen* L; *heþen* P (error, þ for þ, which supports genuineness of *heþen*); *heythen*, *heithen* E H O, *hene* C, *in al þat* Hl (rewriting). The word would not appear to have been readily understood (which is against northern scholarship of the scribes). L comes out well as frequently. *Heithen*-forms are possibly due to association with *heþen*, *heþen*, “heathen” (the *ei* forms in this latter word are curiously widespread in M.E.), but *eith* for *eth*, for whatever reason, is frequent in E H : e.g. *whether* A 570, 1157.

116. All have *stande* and rhyme-word 115 *hande*. Cf. 181.

117. *howgates* O P; *how þat* E Hl; *how(e)* H C L. Compare 122 *howgates* O *howe gates* L, *howe gate* P; rest *how þat*. Fair example of casual preservation of northernisms. The original assumed to have been *hougat* (*hugat*) on metrical grounds (not conclusive); cf. P 122. Forms with and without *es* are both N., but *hougat* a more likely antecedent of alter. or corrupt. *hou þat*. Cf. *C. M.* 27224 *þis word “hugat”* which refers to a preceding *hu* and provides good example of synonymity of *hu*, *hugat*. In 119 all have *how þat*, which is therefore retained. It is not impossible for N. Unanimity in 119 favours *hougat(es)* as due to original where there is disagreement. *gas* E H O Hl.

118. *sagh* P. The normal form for “saw” in P is *seegh*, *segh*.

119. *hou þat*, see 117. *waggis*: perhaps better *waggis*, so Hl, *wagis* C (but

in both flexional *is, ys* is frequent; cf. 122, 153, 167). All *s* inflexion, exc. *wagged* O, *waggeþ* P. *til and fra* E H O L, *to and fra* C HI, *til and fraye* (rhyme *swaye*) P (cf. 103).

120, 121. *bineþen*, with preserved *n* required for strict N. not in any MS., but such a point would naturally be neglected (possibly by Chaucer; cert. by MSS.); *bineþen* is frequent elsewhere in Ch. *wiltou* is a correct N. form; so all but *wist þou* C. Cf. *C.M. weltu* 20355, but *þou will* in rhyme 8379, 20657. *swa* all but *swaye* P.

122. *hougat*, see 117. *fallis* E H O P L, *fallys* HI.

123. *intil, intill* O L. *sal* E H. *be* all, exc. *ben* C with southern *n*.

124. *ȝfaith, ȝfayth* E C. *in faath* P, *in faape* L: cf. *fraye swaye* (?), but see below, 289. *es al* L, rest *may ben*, etc., with southern *n* (HI *be*): *mai be* is equally likely; further readings are required here.

125. *I es* L, rest *I is. as ere* O HI; *as ar* E H; *as is* C P; *as es* L. None of these forms are normal in the respective MSS. On choice see notes on grammatical forms. *miller: melner* L.

153. *lost* H O P L HI; *lorñ* E C. *lorñ* is a usual Chaucerian form; but also possible in N. *lorñ* certainly used in dialect passage 155 as shown by rhyme, but the sense is not there the same and derives directly from O.E. *forloren*, whereas in 153 O.E. weak verb *losian* "go astray" is also concerned. The distinction between *I am lost* and *I haue lorñ* appears to be observed elsewhere in Chaucer. *banes* all, exc. C *bonys. goddis* P (flexional *is, ys* also found in P independent of the dialect passages).

154. *com(e)* of H C O P L; *cum on* HI; *com out* E. *at anes, att anes* all, exc. *atonys* C.

155. *has* E H C O L. *hap our palfray* P.

158. *whilk(e)* E H O P L, *whedir* C; (*what*) *wikked* HI. *gan(e)* H L HI, E *geen*.

165. HI has *leg* (for *ley*?). *sal* HI, rest the normal forms of *will* in each MS. *alswa* all.

166. *I es* L, *I is* E H C O P HI. *wight, wyȝt*, E H C HI; *swift* O P L. *waat, wat(e)* E H O P L HI. *raa, ra* all.

167. *god* E H (metre shows this erroneous); *goddes* O L, *goddis* C HI. *sal* E H O L HI. *baþe, bathe* all.

168. *nad thow* HI; *ne had(de) thow (þou)* H O P L; *ne haddist thou* C: *nadstow* E; cf. 250. *pit* E H C, rest *put(te). capel* in various forms in all: also *lathe, laþe*.

169. *Ilhayl, il(le) hail*, etc., all (*il a hayle* L). *fonne, fon* all (*grete fonne* L). *þou es* L, rest *þou is*.

181. *stand(e)* all, exc. *stonde* P.

182. *ga* all. *qwistel* P, a remarkable spelling, perh. pointing to northern orthography, see above; rest *whistle*, etc. (but *wightly* HI). *sal* H, HI (*ga wightly þou sal*).

190. *er* L, *ere* O; *ar* H, *are* E C P Hl. Note distribution of forms differs from 125. *dreuen* L, *dreyun* C (E Hl have southern form without *n*, *dryue*). These forms are part of “northern” language, but may here be due only to orthographic habits of L and C. In C *e* for *ī* is almost regular, in L same use is frequent: thus C *wretyn*, L *wreten* A 161, 1305; *redyn*, *reden* 1503; *resyn*, *resen* 1065, etc. For the form in N. texts, cf. *Northern Passion* (E.E.T.S.), pp. 150, 178 (Harl. MS.); also rhyme *driuen*, *heuen* in *C.M.* 22110. Under vocab. it will be seen the sense of *drive* here is Northern. *tīl helpyng* all; *tīl scorn* E H O L; *to scorn* C P Hl. It is possible second *tīl* is derived from first, and that Chaucer wrote *to scorn*; see notes to *tīl* and *driue* (below).

191. *stoln* E, *stolle* P L, rest *stole*; cf. 263. *men wil* H O P L, *me wil* E, *men wele* C, *men woln* Hl.

192. *bathe* E Hl.

207. *Cutberd* E H P L (*berde*); *Cutbert* C; *Cuthbert* O Hl.

208. *es thou* L, rest *is* except *art* C. *mery(e)* C O P L Hl, *myrie* E H.

209. *say(e)* O L Hl, *seye* H P, *seyd* E C. *man* E, rest *men*. *suld* Hl, *sal* E H O, *sall* L; *shal shal* C P; cf. 254. *taa* E; *tan* C; *tak*, *take(n)* H O P L Hl; cf. 210. *twa*, *tua* E H O L Hl.

210. The “such” forms are distributed as follows:—

210. *slyk*, *slik*, 2ce. E Hl; *swilk(e)* H O L; *swich* C; *such* P.

250. *slyk(e)*, *slik* E H O L, *slike* P; *swich* C.

251. *whilk* E; *swilk(e)* H O L; *slik* Hl; *slike* P; *swich* C.

253. *slyk(e)*, *slik* E O L. *slike* P; *swilk* H Hl; *swich* C.

This is the only case of competition among northernisms. It is possible that *swilk* = *swich* (anal. to *whilk* = *which*) was well known, and that scribes have actually in this case introduced a new N. feature. But this would not be an example of their improving on Chaucer. Their use of a northern word was due to his initiative, and *swilk* is in effect a toning down of the dialect, since *slik* is a more extreme dialectalism of much more limited currency than *swilk* (though context made meaning of either obvious). But Chaucer may, as did genuine N. texts, have used both *swilk* and *slik*—if so, as far as evidence here given goes, we should select 250 as a place where original certainly had *slik* (only C, which resolutely has *swich* in all cases, differs); and 210 as possible for *swilk*, since P has *such*, but does not otherwise boggle at *slik*. In 251 where idiom allows *swich* or *which* (for *lo swich*, cf. A 4318, *PF.* 570), E is possibly right in reading *whilk*; but *whilk* was already provided in 158. See appendix on *slik*.

fyndes E H O; rest southern *fynd* (? trace of original *findes*) C; *fint*, *fynt* P L Hl. Contrast *bringes* ret. by all in rhyme. *taa* E; *tak(e)* H C O P Hl; L omits; cf. 209.

211. *hoot and dere* C!

212. *sum* C L. If *gar us haue* (see footnote to text) is Chaucerian, then all our 7 MSS. have toned dialect down here.

213. *at þe* C HI, rest *atte* (*att* L). C has *folle* rhyming *tolle*, but *o* for *ū* is characteristic of this MS. *tulle* seems, nonetheless, isolated; see Appendix (i). All exc. C HI have *þayen* with southern *n*.

214. *man*: all *men*. *na* HI, *naan* O; *none* E H C; *not*, *nouhte*, P L.

215. *for til* O.

249. *slepest þou* L, sim. C O; *slepestow* E H and sim. P HI. *slepest* is accordingly retained as an original southernism, but Chaucer may well have written correctly *slepes*, *slepis*. Cf. next.

250. *herd thow* H, *herde þou* P; *herdtow* E (mongrel); *herdist* (*herdest*) þou C L; *herdestow* (*-istow*) O HI. Skeat inexplicably adopted O which represents end of southernizing process sufficiently exhibited here. Cf. 168. On *slík* see 210. *sang* all exc. *song* C. *ar* O only, rest *er* exc. *or* L; retention (if it is such) of *ar* by O is connected with fact that O has *ar* occasionally in other pieces (e.g. A 2398), and frequently shows *er* > *ar*.

251. On *quilk* see 210. *compline* L, rest errors (such as *cowplyng* E) ? derived from *cōplin* > *conplín*, *couplin*. *ymel* E H; *ytwix* P (mongrel, half-way to) *bitwix*, *betwix* O HI; *betuene* L; *among* C. *þaim*: all *hem*; but *þeym* occurs in L 389 (also *þeire* L 390), prob. original and meant for Reeve (see above). Cf. *þair* 252, and see notes on vocab. Retention of *þair* and rejection of *þaim* is due to fifteenth c. usage, probably not to original.

252. *þair* O HI, *thair* E H, *þeire* L.

253. *wha* E H L HI. On *slík* see 210. *ferly* all.

254. *za* C, rest *ye*; *za* occurs in N. texts; but C has *za* elsewhere, e.g. A 1667; also in *R. T.* 348 (given to miller). *sal* E H, *sall* O; *shal*, *shal*, C P L; HI *sul*; the last prob. a hybrid S. *schul(le)* + N. *sal* (*sul* prob. not a genuine N. form), but may be amateur “northern” on anal. *shal* = *sal*: HI alone has *suld* 209, and though this is a correct northern form, both its *sul* and *suld* are perh. dubious. *il*, etc. all, exc. *euel* L.

255. *tydes*, *-is* all, exc. *þer sal I haue* (imitated northern) L. *na* E H O L HI. *lang(e)* E H O P L HI.

256. *na* E H O P L HI. *sal* E H L HI. O has southern *ben*.

257. *als* E H O : *as* C P L HI. *Als* “as” in fourteenth c. is mainly but not solely northern. MSS. of Chaucer (and Gower) occasionally use this form elsewhere.

258. *gif*: all *if*, but cf. 261, 270. *zon(e)* P HI, *yon* E H O; *þe* C L. *sal* HI, rest forms of *wil* which may be original.

259. *s(c)hapen* H O P L HI; wrongly with southern prefix *ȝshapen*, *Ischapyn* E C. *has* E H C.

260. *says* E H C HI.

261. *gif* E H; *ȝif* C, rest *if*. *á* (i. e. long stressed *á*): *a* E H C O HI; *oon* P, *o* L. *agreued* correctly all but E *ȝreued* wrongly with southern prefix.

262 *sal* E H L HI. C has southern *ben*.

263. *stoln* E H HI, *stollen* P L; *stolin* C, *stolen* O. *sobly*, etc., in all but *s(c)hortly* E C. *na* H HI; *ne* E (cf. *geen*, *neen*); rest *no(n)*.

264. *haue* L HI, rest *han*. *il(le)*, *yлле* all, exc. *euel* P, *yuel* L.

265. *seen* L, rest *syn*. *sal* E H HI. *nan* HI, *naan* H; E *neen* (cf. 267), rest *no*, *non*, etc.

266. *agayn*, *ageyn* all. *haue* all.

267. *goddes saule it sal* H P L; rest have errors due to proximity of *saule sal* which support these forms as original: *God sale it sal* E, *godys sale it schal* C, *goddes sale it sal* O, *godde sale it sal* HI. *nan(e)*, *naan* H O P L HI; *neen* E (cf. 265).

269. *parlous* L HI: *perilous* E H O P, *perlyous* C.

270. *gif* E, rest *if*. *sleepe abreyde* E and sim. rest, but *slape abrayde* O (casual error due to neighbouring *as*).

271. *do* HI, rest southern *don*, *doon*, etc. *bathe*, *bape* E H L.

282. *say* HI; *saie* L, *seie* P; *seyn*, *sayn* E H C O. *I es* L; rest *is*, exc. *am* HI.

283. *has* E H.

284. *has* E H C O. All show genitival, *s*, *is* in *milleris*, but cf. 346.

285. *auntred* all (*auntrep* P, *auntre* L). *has* E H C HI.

286. *drafsek* E C, *-sak(ke)* H O P L HI.

287. *tald* E HI, rest *told(e)*.

288. *sal(l)* E H L HI. *be* O P L HI; *been*, *ben* E H C. *halden* : *halden a* H; *halde a* E; *holden a* L, *holde a* O P; *held a* HI: *told a* C. *daf*, *daff(e)* all.

289. *auntre*, etc., all. C has rhyme *fay*, *say*; rest *faith*, *sayth* in different spellings E H O L HI; *fath*, *sath* P. Though dialect is not correctly restored by *say* (see notes on grammatical forms), this is less violently out of place (or a more natural “error” for Chaucer to make). P *fath*, *sath* may show later knowledge of *ai* > *a* (see above), but prob. depend on *þ*, *y* confusion—illustrated by C *þat* for *yet* A 563, 722, and L *bope* for *boye* in *Gamelyn* 488.

317, 318: the use of southernisms *no*, *mo*, *so*, *go*, etc., by all the MSS. in these two lines is curious. Further readings required; perhaps significant, as southernisms begin at this point to multiply in all. Not ascribable, at any rate, to Alain’s using a “southern tooth” for Maline’s benefit—that he should be able to is rather out of character: in any case, the next line is full of northernisms.

319. *I is* E H C, rest *am*. *awen* E H. *swa* E. *seel*, *sel(e)* all, exc. O *hele*.

330. *cre(e)pen* with southern inf. in all, exc. *crepe* C; as line stands *crepen* must be dissyllabic.

332. *wrang(e)* E H L. All have the southern rhyme *mysgon* (HI *Igoon*) with the *anon* of prec. line (which is narrative and not northern).

334. *makes*, *ga* HI.

342. *swines-hed: sweuenyst* C!

343. *saule, sawle* E H O P.

344. *called: cleped* HI, but this verb also found in N. texts.

346. *þe meller douhter* L, but similar ending of the two words and extreme frequency of omissions of final letters in L make this very doubtful as example of N. uninflected genitive.

347 *hast* all. On evidence of other verbal inflexions and use of *es, is* "art" we may assume Chaucer wrote northern *has* here; but since this has not been preserved in any of the seven MSS. *hast* is here retained.

389, 390. *greythen, greyþen*, etc., all, exc. *hastede* C. *þeym* L; *her hors, here mele*, but *þeire weie* L. <a marginal note in one of Tolkien's copies adds "P greieþ" >

Northernisms preserved intact in all seven MSS.: (a) vocabulary: *hail* 102, 169; *swain* in rhyme 107; *wanges* 110; *ill* 125, 169; *laþe* in rhyme 168; *fomme* in rhyme (eye-rhyme ?) 169; *til* before *h* 190; *heþing* 190; *ferly* 253; [auntre 285, 289.] (b) forms: *wanges* 110; *fra* (P *fraye*) rhyming *swa* (P *swaye*) 119, 120; *alswa* rhyming *ra* 165, 166; *baþe* in rhyme 167; *ga* 182; and the 3 sg. *bringes* in rhyme 210; *es, is* am 166. About twenty-four points, many fixed by rhyme.

Northernisms preserved in four or more MSS.: Add to the above: *es, is* art 208; *es, is* am 282; *has* 106, 107, 155, 284, 285; other 3 sg. forms in *s* 107, 117, 119, 122, 125, 260; 3 pl. in *s* 110; *a* for *oo* one 261; *na, nan* 107, 255, 256, 267; *ham* home 112; *wha* 253; *gas* 117; *banes* 153; *at anes* 154; *wat* 158; *saule* 343; *til* (*scorn*) 190; *til and fra* 119; *thair* 252; *sal* 167, 256, 262, 288; *lang* 255; *sang* 250; *whilk* 158; vocabulary: *yon* 258; *il* 254, 264; *seel* 319; *heþen* (accepting *heilthen, heþen*), 113. About forty-one additional points.

Ellesmere (E) is sole authority for *boes* 107, *gif* 270, *swa* 319, *taa* 209, 210; and to these can perhaps be added *whilk* 251 and *stoln* 191, *ȝfayth* 102 (not necessarily northern). In conjunction with H it preserves an otherwise altered *sal* 123, *ymel* 251, *gif* 261, *has* 283, *awen* 319; with HI *bathe* 192, *tald* 287: with C *drafssek* 286. But it shows over thirty cases of fairly certain error or alteration, of seven of which (such as *ȝgreued* 261) it alone is guilty.

The above text offers approximately ninety-eight lines put into the mouths of the northern clerks. If we now examine the departures from Chaucer's normal usage that there appear, and which we can assume that he offered as dialect, we shall discover what accuracy and consistency he achieved. The italicized forms which have not in their places, in the seven MSS. studied, actual MS. authority are omitted. Chaucer's consistency will then certainly not be exaggerated. The abnormal or dialectal features of the lines may be divided into: A. *sounds and forms*, that is,

words current in Chaucer's London English are presented in a different shape, due to a divergent development, from a common Old English or Old Norse original, in North and South; B. *vocabulary*, words (chiefly of Scandinavian origin) are used, which were not yet in Chaucer's time, and in some cases have never since been adopted into southern or literary English. Here will be included instances of dialectal senses of words current throughout the country.

A. Sounds and Forms.

(i) *ā* for *ō*: *na*, *nan* (O.E. *nān*) 106, 107, 214, 255, 256, 263, 265, 267. *swa* (O.E. *swā*) 110, 120, 319. *ham* (O.E. *hām*) 112. *ga*, *gan*, *gas* (O.E. *gā-n*) 117, 158, 182, 334. *fra* (O.N. *frá*) 119. *banes* (O.E. *bān*) 153. *at anes* (O.E. *ānes*) 154. *alswa* (O.E. *alswā*) 165. *wat* (O.E. *wāt*) 166. *ra* (O.E. *rā*) 166. *bape* (O.N. *báþi-r*) 167 (in this case *a* fixed for the original by rhyme), 192, 271. *twa* (O.E. *twā*) 209. *qua* (O.E. *hwā*) 253. *á* (O.E. *ān*) "one" 261. *saule* (O.E. *sāwol*) 267, 343. *awen* (O.E. *āgen*) 319.

(ii) Similarly in the combinations *ald*: *tald* (O.E. *táld*) 287. *halden* (O.E. *hálden*) 288.²⁷

(iii) *ang* for *ong*: *wanges* (O.E. *wange* "cheek") 110; see below on the meaning of this word. *sang* (O.E. *sang*) 250. *lange* (O.E. *lang*) 255. *wrang* (O.N. *vrang-r*) 332. Note that all the words in (i), (ii), (iii), with the exception of *wanges*, would be normal (Chaucerian) English with substitution of *o* for *a*.

(iv) *e* for *ī*: *dreuen* "driven" 190; authority doubtful, see note to the line.

(v) *k* for *ch*: *quilk* 158, 251; also possibly *swilk* 210 (and perhaps elsewhere: see notes above). These are derived from O.E. *hwīlc* (*swīlc*), whence also normal Chaucerian *which*, *swich*.

(vi) *verbal inflexions*: (a) *es*, *s* for *eth*, *th* in 3 sg. pres. *fares* 103. *has* 106, 107, 155, 259, 283, 284, 285. *boes* 107. *gas* 117. *wagges* 119. *falles* 122. *findes* 210. *bringes* 210 (fixed for original by rhyme). *tides* 255. *sais* 260. *makes* 334. There are seventeen instances. There cannot be any doubt that these *s*-forms are intended as a dialect feature, and this is specially interesting as showing that Chaucer largely made use of points that were to some extent familiar. Not only has this inflexion since become part of ordinary English, but Chaucer himself occasionally uses it in his own work, perhaps only to assist in rhyming (as e.g. in *Book of the Duchess*, 73, 257). He would hardly have done this if the inflexion was in his day entirely unfamiliar and odd to London ears. (b) *es* for *eth* in the imper. pl. *spedes* 113. (c) *es* for *e*, *en* in pres. pl. *werkes* "ache" 110. These are more distinctively dialectal and not elsewhere used by Chaucer (as far as rhymes and printed texts show). Though they appear later in London English,

they never became established. It is therefore perhaps significant that we have only *one* example of the indic. pl. as against 17 of the sg., and in the only other case of a verb in the pres. pl. the “incorrect” form *sain*²⁸ fixed by rhyme with *swain* is used. *fares* 103 might be pl. but is probably sg. as reckoned above; cf. 336. (d) Here may be observed the monosyllabic forms, with unchanged stems in the plural, of “shall” and “will”; as *wil* 91, 213; *sal* (v.r. *sul*) 254. Monosyllabic forms, with the stem the same as in the singular, are found elsewhere in Chaucer (according to the MSS.), but *shal* is rare as compared with *shul*, *shuln*, *shullen*. (e) The forms of past participles. These should in northern dialect have no *y*-prefix, and should retain the ending (*e*)*n* in strong verbs—except in a few cases where final *n* is lost in northern forms after a verbal stem containing *m*, *n*²⁹: as *cum* “come”, *bun* “bound”. The following are all correct for northern speech: Strong: *cum* 111, 317. *born* (rhyming *scorn*) 189. *stoln* 191, 263. *dreuen* 190. *lor*n (rhyming *corn*) 155. *schapen* 259. *halden* 288. *gan* 158. *ben* 347. Weak: *lost* 153. *pit* 168. *answerd* 208. *herd* 209. *agreued* 261 (E wrongly *ygreued*). *releued* 262. *had* 264. *sped* 285. *tald* 287. *called* 344. *swiued* 346. Incorrect is *misgo* without *n*, rhyming also, 335; *misgon* 332 rhyming *anon* has correct form but southern vowel. The correct forms are in the great majority. But actually in most cases they coincide with variants possible or usual in normal Chaucerian grammar. At the same time most of them represent opportunities for error (as is seen in the southernized forms of some MSS.) that have been avoided. Some are additionally marked as northern by vowels, as *gan*, *tald*, *halden* (*dreuen*). *cum* (MSS. *come*) only occurs before a vowel where elision is possible. *stoln*, by metre probably a monosyllable in both instances, may be taken as more specifically dialectal: i.e. as *stōln* with short vowel contrasted with normal Chaucerian *ystōle(n)*, *stōle(n)*, trisyllabic or dissyllabic; *stōln* and later *stollen* (so P L) are characteristic of N. texts (e.g. *C.M.* 4904, *Sir Gawain* 1659). (f) The 2 sg. of the past tense. *nad þou* 168, *herde þou* 250.

(vi) *Various northern forms and contractions*: (a) *es* (*is*) for *am*, 111, 124, 125, 166, 282, 319. *es* (*is*) for *art*, 169, 208. *es*, not *is*, for *is*, 158, 251 (derived from uncertain evidence of L, see above). *er* for *ben* “are”, 125, 190. All these are correct and specifically northern forms and uses. The choice among the variants in case of “are” 125, 190, assumes that Chaucer wrote *er* (or *ar*) in 190, where all the MSS. have *r*-forms, and that he also did so in 125, where the *is*, *es* of C P L are due to the preceding *I is* (*es*). The *r*-forms are correct in immediate conjunction with a pronoun, *es* (*is*) being only used normally when separated from a pronoun. An instructive contrast is provided by *Cursor Mundi* 354 *thre thinges þam es witjn*, and 356 *four er þai*.³⁰ Though the more extreme forms *es*, *er* have been adopted, *is* and *ar* are not necessarily incorrect. *is* varies freely with *es* in any of its uses in northern texts. O.E. *aron*, *aro* were both northern and midland,

and so were the derived forms in Middle English.³¹ *es, er* were due to the influence of O.N. *es, ero*; they were not, of course, merely “northern” forms, but were also found in the East. The uses of *es, is* were probably due to the association of their *s* with the northern *s*-inflection of verbs, which caused them to spread beyond the 3 sg. When replacing *am* this dialectal usage was probably found laughable: the specially large number of instances of this in the text may be noted. (*b*) *sal* 123, 165, 167, 182, 254, 256, 258, 262, 265, 267, 288 (all 1 or 3 sg., except 254 pl.); an irregular but well-evidenced form of *shal*, found still in northern dialects and in Middle English confined to northern texts.³² This detail has been favoured by Chaucer and well preserved by the MSS, as a rule—some of the cases may even represent the substitution of *sal* for Chaucerian *wil* (see variants above). The pa. t. *suld* occurs in 209, a good northern form (but only in Hl). (*c*) *ta* 209, 210: an irregular reduction of *take*, which was specifically northern. Chaucer does not use it elsewhere. It remained dialectal, though the pp. (written *tan, taan, tane, tain*, and now *ta'en*) later gained some currency, especially in verse. (*d*) *als* (111), 257: a form characteristic of northern texts; but see notes to 111, 257 above. (*e*) *boes* 107: this is written in genuine northern texts *bos, bus*, and is a reduction of *bihoues*. Its preservation in E only is notable. E has not preserved the northernisms particularly well, and shows no tendency or ability independently to improve the dialect with such genuine details as this. (*f*) *gif* 261, 270: an irregular variant of *if*, of obscure origin, but well evidenced in northern language. There can be little doubt that it also appeared in 258. (*g*) To the above may be added *ar* “ere” 250, also current outside the northern area and found in various places in O (which gives it here) and L, for instance. 3a 254 (see note on this line above). *sagh* 118, a familiar form and spelling in northern texts. *i* (for *in*), early found in the north, perhaps partly owing to O.N. *í*, but here only in *i-faiþ* 102, 124, where *i* probably had a wider currency; cf. *imell* in B, next. *pit* (for *put*) 168, found in modern northern and Scottish dialect, but rare in Middle English, where it is mainly, but not solely, northern.³³ The uninflected genitive *miller* 346 rests on poor evidence (see above). For the forms of *auntre, draf-sek* see below.

B. Vocabulary.

capel, 168 horse. This word did not obtain a footing in “standard” English, and is plainly intended as dialectal here, though it must have been a fairly familiar word, since Chaucer uses it himself elsewhere. Used by the Reeve in the narrative part of his tale (185), it is probably intended also to be dialectal or rustic; it is also used by the Summoner in his tale, and by the Friar in his, and by the Host in the prologue to the Manciple’s Tale (none of them examples of elevated speech). Chaucer is right in making it an element of northern vocabulary, though it is found in the

West (*Piers Plowman*) and in alliterative verse generally, and was probably also known in the East (East Anglia, which accounts for the Reeve)—it appears at any rate in the *Promptorium Parvulorum*.

daf, 288 fool. This word is dialectal, and is probably quite correctly put into the mouths of northerners; but words of abuse are easily acquired, and have generally a wide distribution. This word is not limited to the North in Middle English (it occurs, for instance, in *Piers Plowman*); nor in modern dialect, where its use is, however, mainly northerly or Scottish.

ferli, 253 wonderful. This word, whether used as a noun, adjective, or verb, is very common in Middle English, both in the North and the West, and is especially associated with alliterative or alliterated verse. After Chaucer's time it is recorded almost exclusively from the North and West, yet it must be reckoned as one of the elements of the vocabulary of verse, with its roots in the alliterative verse of the Scandinavianized North and North-West, that has always been widely familiar, if never naturalized, in the South. Chaucer, however, does not himself use the word elsewhere.

fol, 108 fool. This word is perhaps less common than *fonne* but has a similar distribution, being found (with its derivatives *folte* v., *folted*, *foltisch*) chiefly in northern or eastern texts and writers.

fonne, 169. This is the only occurrence of the word in Chaucer. It is a northern and north-midland word. It did not become part of the "standard" language, though its derivative *fonned*, *fond*, which was until long after Chaucer's time still dialectal and northerly, has since become current. It is quite correct in the mouth of John, but must also be reckoned among the words that were, if northern, not totally foreign. The derivative *fonned* is found, contemporary with Chaucer, in Wyclif or Wycliffite writings; the simple *fon*, *fonne* is found in Manning, Mirk, and (after Chaucer) very frequently in the *Coventry Plays*: it seems thus marked as a widespread midland word.

That in this short vocabulary of dialectal words we should have three words for "fool" and one for jeering (*heping*, see below), not to mention the universally current *fol* 190, or the words *drafsek*, *cokenai*, and *swines-hed*, is a perfectly just testimony to the richness of the northern and Scandinavianized dialects in terms of abuse. We have the same observant Chaucer behind the linguistic portraiture of this tale as behind the sketches of the *Prologue*.

hail in *al hail!* 102; *il hail!* 169. This is the Norse *heil-l* "hale, sound", used in greetings, such as *kom heill*, *far heill!* But the noun *heill* "(good) luck, omen" also used in greetings doubtless contributed. The adjective, except in the salutation, was and remained dialectal, and chiefly northern, or eastern (e.g. *Bestiary* and *Promptorium*).³⁴ The noun, especially in such

expressions as *il hail*, was always northerly: the most southerly example, older than or contemporary with Chaucer, given in *N.E.D.* is from Manning (Lincolnshire) in the expression to *wrother-haylle*.³⁵ In salutations, however, *hail* either alone or in formulae such as *al hail*, *hail be thou*, is found widely scattered. It is found, for instance, in *Vices and Virtues*, presumed to be from the South-East (Essex) and dated about 1200. It is, nonetheless, used little by Chaucer; outside this tale it appears only in the mouth of the somnour, who is a character in the *Friar's Tale*. We may, therefore, reckon Alain's salutation of the miller among the features intended by Chaucer to be taken as dialect, while recognized by him as familiar. The word later became current and literary, but its earliest record seems to be in the angelic salutation to Mary, in which alone it could still be said to be in general use.

hepen, 113 hence. This is from O.N. *heðan*, replacing *hennel(s)* from O.E. *heonane*. It is quite rightly offered as a northern word; but was also used in the East from Lincoln to East Anglia (Manning, *Havelok*, *Genesis and Exodus*, *Ormulum*). It remained dialectal, and is not else used by Chaucer, nor by any southern or London writer.

heþing, 190 contumely, scorn. This again is a word rightly ascribed to the North, but in fact widely used, together with its relatives *heþe* jeer at, *heþeli* contemptible or contemptuous, in the Scandinavianized areas (N.W., N., and E.). It never became part of the literary vocabulary, and is nowhere else used by Chaucer. It is purely Norse in origin: O.N. *hæða*, *hæðing* (and *hæðni*), *hæðligr*, used precisely as in Middle English.

hougat, 117, 122 how. This word (with or without added *es*) seems to have been purely northern, belonging to Yorkshire, Northumberland, or Scotland. Skeat's failure to record its presence in the MSS. used for his edition is curious. The similar formation *algates* was frequently used by Chaucer.

il, 125, 254, 264, and in *il hail* 169, evil bad. This word was characteristic of East and North, and its frequent use (as opposed to its occasional appearance, especially as a rhyme-word) was in Chaucer's day still confined to the language of those areas. The word was later adopted into ordinary and literary English. It now remains current chiefly in uses derived from the M.E. adverb (*it is me ille*, I am ill). It may be noted that the uses here are adjectival. It is interesting to observe this familiar modern word employed by Chaucer to give an impression of dialect. He does not use it elsewhere, but if only because of its later acceptance, we may reckon this word also among northernisms already fairly familiar to his audience.³⁶

imell, 251 among. This was and remained a characteristically northern word, and is among the more extreme dialectalisms used. It occurs in the forms *e-mell*, *o-mell(e)*, *i-mell(e)*, derived from Old East Norse; cf. Old

Danish *i mellae* (modern *imellem, mellem*), O. Icel. *i milli, á milli*. It is not used by Chaucer elsewhere. Compare the use in the *York Plays*, xi, 30, and xxxvii, 104, which is very similar to the use in Chaucer's passage.

laþe, 168 barn. This is derived from O.N. *hláða* store-house. It is a genuine northern word, still in use in the North. It was also found in the East, and appears as early as *Genesis and Exodus* (probably representing East Anglia). There can be no doubt that it is meant to be one of the dialect features in the clerks' speech, and it has not been adopted in the standard language; yet it must also be reckoned as one of the words Chaucer could assume were familiar, for he uses it once elsewhere (*House of Fame* 2140, rhyming with *rathe*).

sel, 319 good fortune. This is of native origin, a dialectal preservation, not an innovation (O.E. *sæl, sēl*). It is found widely in early Middle English (W., N., and E.), but it is certainly not wrong to put it in the mouth of a northerner. The word was obsolescent, and after the thirteenth century seems to have been preserved chiefly in the North.

slik, 210 (2ce), 250, 253, and as a variant for *quilk* 251, such. This is derived from O.N. *slik-r*, and competed with rather than replaced O.E. *swile* in its regular northern form *swilk*. It was a word of more limited currency than any of the others here used as dialect by Chaucer, and so possesses a special interest. It cannot be counted among the widely known or familiar words, and though context usually interprets it, it is sometimes altered or misunderstood in copies of genuine northern texts. See the special note on this word, App. ii.

swain, 107 servant. This is from O.N. *svéinn*, which usually ousted the cognate O.E. *swān* (whence rare M.E. *swon*). It has ceased to be dialectal, though the process has probably been a literary one, and not a development in the colloquial language. Here the sense "servant" (as well as its use in what appears to be a proverb) marks it as colloquial and dialectal, and distinguishes its use from Chaucer's only other employment of the word, *Sir Thopas* 13. There its sense, "young warrior, knight," marks it as a literary borrowing from the vocabulary of the type of poem Chaucer is there ridiculing—a vocabulary that has various connexions with northern and alliterative verse. Compare the notes on *auntre* and *wight* below.

til, 190 (2ce), to; also in *in til*, into 123; and before infinitive *for til*, 215; as adverb in *til and fra*, 119. All these uses are correct for the North. *Til* is found in Old English, only in Northumbrian (Ruthwell Cross, Cædmon's Hymn, Lindisfarne glosses: in senses *to*, *for*, and before infinitive), and in Old Frisian; in Middle English its use and distribution was probably strongly influenced by Old Norse. The competition with the synonymous *to* produced (a) specialization of sense, and with reference to time *til* is found early in all parts, and is, of course, normal in Chaucer; (b) a tendency to use *til* instead of *to* before a vowel or *h*.³⁷ *Til* in such positions

appears as a synonym for *to* early and widely, and is well represented in MSS. of Chaucer; for instance, in A 180 (*Prologue*): *til a fissh*.³⁸ But *til scorn* (though see *drine*), and more still *for til spende*, and *til and fra* are specifically northern. The last is rarely recorded (as a variant of *to and fro*), and the present passage is the latest of the three instances cited in *N.E.D.* *In til* is probably better not treated as a distinct compound word in Middle English: it occurs before a vowel or *h* with same distribution as *til*. Later *intil* is specifically northern and Scottish. Here the use before *þe* is northern.

þair, 252 *their*. This has long since become the standard form, and was no doubt already familiar. It is, however, rare in MSS. of Chaucer, and was probably never used by him in normal language. (Had he used it, its later currency, which has assisted in preserving the present instance, would certainly have caused its frequent retention elsewhere.) Here he rightly uses it as a mark of northern speech, though it could in his day, and long before, have been heard, together with *þaim*, in familiar use side by side with the native *h*-forms in the East, certainly as far south as Norfolk—the home of the Reeve. It seems highly probable that this was recognized by Chaucer, and that he allowed the Reeve himself to use casually here and there the forms *þaim*, *þair*. The Lansdowne MS. actually represents him as doing so at the end of the tale, ll. 339-40: *And greyþen þeym and toke her hors anone, And eke here mele & on þeire weie ei gone*.³⁹ The conjunction with the dialectal verb *greyþen* (see below), and also the isolation of such a form in L, are strongly in favour of descent from Chaucer. As far as I can discover, L does not elsewhere use the *þ*-forms in genuine Chaucerian pieces. Support is given to this view by the occasional occurrence of *þ*-forms in the *Tale of Gamelyn* in various MSS.; for here on other evidence we are dealing with copies of a work originally in language of (North-) East Midland type, where the *þ*-forms would be likely or certain to appear.⁴⁰ It will be noted that even in *Gamelyn* the form *þair* is better preserved than *þaim*. For this reason, though *þaim* does not occur in any of the MSS. used in the clerks' speeches, I have adopted it for l. 251, instead of *hem*, and not treated this *hem* as an "unremoved southernism". The presence of *þaim* in Chaucer's version is very probable. To retain *þair* and substitute *hem* is, in fact, to bring the language into line with the usage of the century after Chaucer's death; it is the usage found in Lydgate. After Chaucer's time *thair*, *their*, *ther* quickly established themselves owing to the ambiguity of *her*, but *hem* maintained itself much longer and has never been completely banished.

wanges, 110. This word is usually explained as "back-teeth, molar teeth". The word is not elsewhere recorded in Middle English (in this sense); in fact, from the whole range of English the *N.E.D.* only cites this present passage, and a modern (1901) record of South Lancashire dialect, which gives *wang* as a word for "tooth" or "back-tooth". In favour

of the reference to teeth may then be urged (a) this modern dialect use, (b) the occurrence in Old English of a word *wang-tōþ* "back-tooth", whence M.E. *wangtooth*, *wongtooth*, the former appearing in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* 54. The first element is O.E. *wang(e)* "cheek, especially the lower part, the jaw"; cf. *wang-beard* "sidewhiskers". If we accept this interpretation, we must then assume that *wang* "back-tooth" is a shortening of the compound, which would only be likely to take place after *wange*, *wonge* had become obsolete in ordinary language in the sense "jaw".⁴¹ Against the sense "tooth" may be urged the doubtful evidence for its existence, indeed absence of any evidence for Middle English. The usual word for "back-tooth" was evidently *wang-tōþ*, which was in general use in Old English. It occurs in the North and in the southern laws (*Laws of Alfred*, sect. 49); it is fairly widely distributed in Middle English (e.g. Wyclif, Langland, Chaucer, *Promptorium*) and is still preserved in the dialects of recent times (though the last reference in *N.E.D.* is from Ray's collection of north-country words, 1674). Apart from the supposed occurrence in the *Reeve's Tale* one would naturally conclude that the scantily evidenced *wang* = *tooth* was a fairly recent development (a) long after the disappearance of *wang* "cheek" (which had not taken place in the Middle English period in the North and West), and (b) in connexion with the development of the sense "tooth" for *fang*.⁴² One may enquire, then, whether the present passage really supports the sense "tooth". It is not easy to see why the manciple of the Soler-hall was likely to die of toothache—that the ache was in the molars may have made it more painful, but hardly more deadly. The manciple might feel like dying himself, of course, but John is not likely to have shared his fear, and we are expressly told that "he lay sick with a malady and people thought he would certainly die".⁴³ A violent headache, as a symptom of fever, is in our tale a much more likely explanation of John's words. It may be noted that the word *werke*, *warke* "ache" is specially associated with headache. The only compound in which it occurs is *head-wark*, found in various forms in Middle English in the North and East, and surviving down to modern times in the North; while *warking* means "headache" by itself and is in the *Promptorium* glossed *heed-ake*, *cephalia*.⁴⁴ It might seem, therefore, that unnecessary trouble has been made about the manciple's *wanges*, and that there is no need to look further than the O.E. *wang(e)*, a word certainly still alive in the North and West in Middle English. But two difficulties occur. First: the simple *wange* in Old English seems generally to have been used of the lower cheek and jaw, though the words descriptive of unclearly defined parts of the body are specially liable to shifts of meaning. Second: it is a curious fact that in Middle English the word is almost solely recorded in the alliterative formulae *wete wonges* or *to wete þe wonges* with reference to weeping.⁴⁵ To the examples quoted by the *N.E.D.* (from *Cursor Mundi*, *Alysoun*, *Sir Tris-*

trem, Wyntoun, and the *York Plays*, all northern except the second which is probably western in origin) I can only add Layamon, *Brut* 30268: *wete weren his wongen* (the earliest M.E. instance), and *Joseph of Arimathie* (an alliterative poem) 647: *I wepte water warm and wette my wonges*, both of which show the same formula. This would certainly suggest that, though alive, the word was preserved in the North and West chiefly as part of the equipment of the alliterative poets and in the vocabulary derived from them—which might be reckoned a point in favour of “teeth”. But it shows more. The M.E. *wange*, *wonge*, so far as it survived, was no longer used for the jaw, but for the upper part of the face. This is the sense of the cognate O.N. *vangi*, which refers to the side of the head from the ear to just under the eyes; and to Old Norse the M.E. use (in North and West) is probably largely due.⁴⁶ This sense would have, moreover, the support of the word *thunwange*, the common Germanic word for the “temples”,⁴⁷ a word still alive in Middle English in the North and East.⁴⁸ We might then assume a use in the North and East of *wange* referring to the side of the head, especially in the neighbourhood of the temples and the eyes. This would fit the case of the sick maniple well enough; and though the evidence for the word is chiefly poetic and alliterative—a diction after all based largely on the actual speech of the northerly regions—it is, at any rate, much stronger in Middle English than the evidence for the sense “tooth”. The influence upon native *wange* of the cognate and phonetically identical O.N. *vangi*⁴⁹ is a familiar process, very different from the abnormal (and probably recent) reduction of *wangtooth* to *wang*.⁵⁰ This discussion of the meaning of *wanges* has led far afield, but is not without point. Whichever meaning we finally decide on, it has been fairly well established that *wang* was dialectal, and correctly ascribed by Chaucer to the North. If the word meant “side of the head”, we can also put it back into the list of those showing northern *ang* for *ong*.⁵¹ In either case we can fairly conclude that the word was not a widely known one, and that Chaucer has for once allowed himself to use an oddity (unless an Eastern use of *wange* = *thunwange* existed, but has escaped record, which is unlikely). In fact, suspicion is aroused that Chaucer got this word from northern or western writings, and not from actual talk. There is a similarity both in the alliteration of Chaucer’s phrase, and in the situation, to the recorded poetic formulæ in which *wanges* elsewhere appears.

werkes, 110 ache. The native word O.E. *wærcan* is in Middle English only found (rarely) in the West, or rather North-West, in the form *warche*: for instance, in MS. T of the *Ancren Riwele* and in the *Destruction of Troy*. It is recorded in the recent dialect of Shropshire. The forms with *k*, *werke*, *warke*, are either derived from or influenced by the cognate O.N. *verkja* “to hurt” (intransitive) and *verk-r* “pain”. There can be no doubt that Chaucer was right in giving this word as a feature of northern dialect, but it

is curious that the present passage⁵² is actually the earliest record of the verb *Wark*. As far as the evidence goes, this seems to be another word that was in use in the East as well as in the North—it is, at any rate, found in the *Promptorium*.

wight, 166 active. This word is probably of Scandinavian origin.⁵³ It is, at any rate, common in Middle English in the North and throughout the areas of direct Scandinavian influence, and wherever alliterative verse or the vocabulary related to it is found. Its area might be described as an arch round the South-East and London, from Robert of Gloucester and Layamon through the West and North (including Scotland) and down the East, where it is found, for instance, in *Havelok* and *Genesis and Exodus*.⁵⁴ It was clearly in its proper area, that of direct Scandinavian influence, not solely a literary and poetic word, though it is chiefly so in our records. It must be counted among the words widely familiar, though never adopted by the standard language, and as one, moreover, that tended to spread as a literary word, favoured in such formulæ as *wight as Wade*, which was last used by Morris in *The Defence of Guinevere*. It was from literature rather than dialect talk that Chaucer took the word, and he could rely on the reading of romances to make the word intelligible to his audience (and readers). Indeed, he uses the word once elsewhere, in the *Monk's Tale* 277: *wrastlen . . . with any yong man, were he never so wight*.⁵⁵ The use in the *Reeve's Tale* is specially interesting, for it occurs in the formula: *wight as es a ra*. The same formula⁵⁶ is found in the romance *Sir Eglamour of Artois* 261: *as wyght as any roo* (rhyming *goo* “go”), describing greyhounds, and showing a sense “swift” very apt for our passage. *Sir Eglamour* is one of the northern or northerly romances, in *rime couee*, of the kind ridiculed in *Sir Thopas*: it is indeed particularly ridiculous, but it must have been popular, to judge by the fact that four manuscripts of it survive.⁵⁷ Though *Eglamour's* name is not in the well-known list in *Sir Thopas*, unless it is concealed under *Pleyn-damour*, it is extremely likely that Chaucer had read (and laughed at) this very poem. If he had, he would have seen there *wight as any ra* (or *es a ra*), for our fifteenth-century copies are all more or less southernized, even Yorkshire Thornton's copy, and the original is seen from many rhymes⁵⁸ to have been in a dialect with northern *ā* for *ǫ*.

yon (*zon*), 258 *yon*. This adjective is only once recorded in Old English,⁵⁹ but it may once have been in fairly general colloquial use, for it is the kind of word that easily escapes literary record: it meant “that yonder” accompanied by pointing to some relatively distant object. In the South and East it evidently died out of colloquial speech (as German *jener* has), and where it remained it tended to oust or to compete with *that*.⁶⁰ It is clearly intended as dialect by Chaucer, who does not use it elsewhere; but it may safely be counted one of the familiar dialectalisms. Later it became literary again, though not apparently before the end of

the sixteenth century, and at first in the form *yond*, due to the influence of the related adverb *yond*, O.E. *geond*. It was fairly widely distributed in Chaucer's time, and though it is most frequently recorded from the North, with which its living colloquial use is now associated, it is found in *Piers Plowman* and *William of Palerne* representing the West, and in Manning's *Chronicle* in the East. Adjectival *yond*, *yend*, in uses which still reveal its originally adverbial function, such as *on yond half* or the yond "that one yonder", is found both earlier and much further south,⁶¹ and this would, of course, assist in making the dialectal *yon* intelligible. Chaucer, however, who uses *yond* often, uses it only as an adverb "yonder".

[*tulle*, 214 "entice". On this form, for which there appear to be no parallels, see Appendix (i). Chaucer here either contented himself with an eye-rhyme *folle*, *tolle*, as probably also in *fonne*, *yronne*, or else the text is corrupt. He uses *tolle* "entice" elsewhere, in translating Boethius.]

[*gar*, 212 make. See the note and footnote. This word might easily have been altered to *get*,⁶² and would provide another instance of genuine northern vocabulary. *Gar*, meaning "make, do", is used in Middle English chiefly with a following infinitive in the sense "cause one to do something, or something to be done". It is of Scandinavian origin and so found pretty generally, but not universally, in texts written in a language with a considerable Norse ingredient; it belongs especially to the vocabulary of Yorkshire and Northumbria and Scotland, though it is also found further south, as in Nottingham and Lincolnshire (*Havelok* and Manning's *Chronicle*).⁶³ The use here is, nonetheless, not easy to parallel exactly: *gar* usually approaches "compel" rather than "let".]

[*greiben*, 389 get ready. This is used by the Reeve, since he is the narrator, and not by the clerks; but was probably, together with accompanying *þaim*, intended to tinge his speech with dialect. It is a Scandinavian word belonging to the North-West and East in natural speech, but it is another word that in early English tended to acquire a certain literary currency, though it did not ultimately keep its place in the standard vocabulary. It is notable that Chaucer employs it three times elsewhere, in the first and probably genuine fragment of the translation of the *Romance of the Rose*, in the *Monk's Tale*, and in the translation of Boethius—probably purely as a literary word, borrowed from books.⁶⁴]

To the above words may be added the following:—

auntre, 285, 290 adventure, risk. This is, of course, strictly the same word as *aventure*, and shows what could happen to a French word when thoroughly popularized, and exposed to the reduction caused by stressing it strongly on the first syllable only, in English fashion. The reduced form is not solely northern, and the southern *aventure* represents rather the continued refreshment of the word by French than a dialectal divergence in development. Nonetheless, in the fourteenth century the

reduced popular form is found mainly in northern texts, and survives today in the North and in Scotland. An exception must be made in the case of *paraunter*, which Chaucer himself used occasionally beside *peraventure*.⁶⁵ Otherwise he never uses the reduced form (nor makes *aventure* a verb in any form), except once in the adjective *auntrous* in *Sir Thopas* 188—a significant place; compare the notes on *swain*, *wight* above.

draf-sek, 286 idle lump. The word *draf* “sediment of brewing; husks” is widespread in Middle English. It is not recorded in Old English and may be of Dutch origin.⁶⁶ Chaucer uses it, for example, in the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* 312. The same Dutch origin is possible also for both the literal and figurative senses of *draff-sack* as “sack of refuse” and “idle glutton”; for Middle Dutch *dragsac* is used in both ways. It is noteworthy that the appearance here is according to the N.E.D. the first recorded, and nearly 150 years earlier than the next quotation for the word in either sense. That Chaucer meant the word as a whole to be dialectal (though comic and very appropriate to a miller's bedroom, certainly) is not clear. But it was made dialectal by the form *sek*. This is not a chance aberration.⁶⁷ It is a genuine form of the word “sack”, and is found in Hampole and in such a thoroughly northern poem as *Ywain and Gawain*; though, like so many of the northernisms here used by Chaucer, it is also found in eastern texts, such as *Genesis and Exodus*, *Havelok*, or the *Promptorium*. In origin it is O.N. *sekk-r*, replacing or influencing O.E. *sæcc*, *sacc*. The early occurrence of the compound in Dutch, and the occurrence of the *sek*-forms of “sack” in the East, may lead one to suspect that Chaucer did not go very far north to pick up this item; at the same time the dialectal accuracy of *sek*, which has no general analogy of sound-correspondences between northern and southern speech to support it, is specially interesting.⁶⁸

Here may be added two cases of dialectal uses of generally current words.

hope, 109 meaning “expect without wishing”. This sense appears only here in Chaucer, and is, of course, used primarily because it is comic in such a context to those accustomed to *hope* only as implying a wish. The joke was probably a current one and was still alive later: Skeat in his note on this passage quotes from the *Arte of Poesie* the tale of the tanner of Tamworth, who said “I hope I shall be hanged”. In Middle English Chaucer is quite right in representing the usage as dialectal and specially northern: *hope* in the sense “expect, suppose, think” is very frequently met in northern texts of all kinds, and though it was probably not confined to the strictly northern dialects, it is seldom recorded elsewhere.⁶⁹

driue, 190 in *dreuen til heping and til scorn*. This use seems to be definitely northern, though the fact seems not previously to have been noted. The N.E.D.⁷⁰ gives only three examples, all closely parallel to our text and

all from *fer in þe norþ*: *Cursor Mundi* 26455: *his lauerd he driues to scorn*; *ibid.*, 26810 *þai crist til hething driue*; and post-Chaucerian (1470) Henry Wallace: *thow dryuys me to scorn*.⁷¹

We have now examined all the points in the clerks' speeches which can possibly be regarded as dialectal. The examination has shown Chaucer to be correct in his description of northern language in at least 127 points in about 98 lines, in points of inflexion, sounds, and vocabulary: a very notable result.⁷² Further, we have found no proven case of false dialect, words, or forms used as dialectal but wrongly assigned and impossible for the North. In fact, this scrap of dialect-writing is extremely good and more than accurate enough for literary purposes, or for jest. It is quite different from the conventionalized dialect of later drama or novel, where this is not based on local knowledge, or from, say, modern popular notions in the South of "Scotch" or "Yorkshire". At the same time there is little in the lines that is extreme, or altogether outlandish, or, indeed, very definitely localizable more closely than "northern" or usually "northern and elsewhere". But this would be expected in a tale for a southern audience, whatever was the state of Chaucer's private knowledge, and is probably due rather to his skill in selection than to his own limited acquaintance as a Southerner with northern English. He has, in fact, put in a few very definite northernisms, some of limited currency, such as *gif*, *sal*, *boes*, *tan*, *ymel*, and especially *slik*, that show that his knowledge was not acquired casually in London, and was founded on the study of books (and people). As the primary northern characteristic *ā* for *ō* comes out first with some 37 instances⁷³; it is followed by *s*-inflexions of verbs with 19; by *sal*, *suld* with *s* for *sh* with 12; and by *es* (*is*) for "am, art" with 8. All these were evidently pretty well known. It is interesting and suggestive to note how large a proportion of the dialect features he uses occur also, more or less contemporarily, in the East, usually at least as far south as East Anglia: *hail*, *hepen*, *heping*, *ill*, *lape*, *sek*, *swain*, *þair*, *werke*; as well as features more widely distributed and found also in the West or North-West, such as *capel*, *wight*, *yon*, and the verbal inflexions in *s*. Of the rest *auntre*, *daf*, *ferli*, *hope*, and *wanges* (if not taken as "teeth") were also not limited to the North; *auntre*, *wight*, and *ferli* were all three doubtless familiar to anyone acquainted with English literature. Indeed, one is tempted, in the middle of an enquiry into mere dialect, to turn aside and emphasize the occasional concomitant *literary* suggestions of some of the words already dealt with. The suggestions are faint and may be perceptible only to philological ears, but those who feel inclined to dismiss them as fancies should consider the description of the battle of Actium in the legend of Cleopatra, especially ll. 56 ff. As in the better known tourney in the *Knight's Tale*, it is impossible here to miss the accents of alliterative verse, turned (or thrust bodily) into "decasyllables". And

significantly we here come upon *heterly*. This word occurs only here in Chaucer; indeed it probably occurs here alone in Middle English outside actual alliterative writings, whether in the prose of the "Holy Maidenhood" group, or in such poems as: *Sir Gawain* or *The Wars of Alexander*. If its source is not *William of Palerne* 1243: *and hetterly bope hors and man he hurled to þe grounde*, Chaucer's *heterly they hurtlen* has been taken from some now lost piece he once conned and did not forget. *heterly* is dialect, but it is more. There was, after all, a literature of merit, especially in the West, before Chaucer's day, and before anything literary was written that can be ascribed to London. Chaucer was not independent either of the past or of the contemporary, and neither was his audience.

We may now consider a quite different type of "error", one far more excusable in a use of dialect for literary purposes: the failure to remove features of Chaucer's own normal London English, which would not occur in pure northern speech. We have some right to ask, when an author goes out of his way to give us words and forms not natural to his usual literary medium, that these should be what he pretends, fair samples of the dialect he is representing. We do not necessarily demand that the dialect's greatest oddities should be dragged in, or that all its most characteristic features as tabulated in historical grammars should be present, as long as what we do get is genuine.⁷⁴ We have no right to insist that a poet, telling a funny story rapidly and economically, and in rhymed verse, should offer us dialect through and through. If he gives us about 130 correct dialect points to a 100 lines, this is ample to give a proper impression of the clerks' talk, if the southernisms are not too frequent. All the same, an examination of the lines for this kind of "error", unremoved southernism, brings out one or two points of interest and emphasizes the fact that the *Reeve's Tale* is of importance to Chaucerian textual criticism generally, as a measure of manuscript fidelity to details upon which Chaucer lavished so much care. A proper text of the *Canterbury Tales* (or other major works of his), not to mention the recapturing to some extent of Chaucerian spelling and grammar, is not to be obtained from devout attachment to any one MS., certainly not Ellesmere, however attractive it may look.

The textual notes above will have shown that allowance has to be made for frequent but inconsistent southernizing of many details in the course of the tradition between Chaucer's copy or corrected copies and even the best MSS. that now survive. Accordingly those "errors" are here first presented which can, with varying certainty, be ascribed to the author, since they appear to be required by metre or by rhyme. Usually we may say, rather, they were dictated by metre or rhyme, and that they were licences not errors; he was well aware of them and gives the correct northern form elsewhere, but felt justified, as he was, in letting them pass.

(i) There is first the rather difficult case of final *e*. Here are omitted from consideration syllabic *e* in inflexions such as *es*, *en*, *ed*: these were certainly largely preserved in the North even at this date, though liable to reduction after vowels or sonorous consonants (as in *stoln*, 191, 263, and *quils* 347, where reduction appears actually in the MSS.). The examples of the metrical value of these inflexions are numerous in the text, though slurring or omission occurs, besides *stoln* and *quils*, also in *dreueŋ* 190, *spedeŋ* 113, *findeŋ* 210 (unless L is right in omitting *ta*), as well as in positions where this was normal in Chaucerian English (e.g. in trisyllables such as *felawes*, *bodies* 192, 252). *Farës* 103 is marked in the text, but possible is *farës* slurred with *fairë* syllabic. Also passed over is the usual ignoring of *e* by elision before a vowel or *h*. The slurring or omission of *e* in other positions, none unparalleled in Chaucerian use elsewhere, occurs in *Maline* 316 (probably); in (*I*) *haue* 332, 335, 345; and in the infinitive *haue* 254, 265.⁷⁵

Metrically significant final *e* occurs in (i) the nouns *mele* 122, *hoste* 211, *wenche* 258, *lawe* 259, 260; (ii) in adjectival inflexion: *þis lange (schorte) night* 255, 345; and possibly in *þi faire wif* 103; (iii) in the adjectives where it was part of the stem inflected or uninflected: *a wilde fir* 252, and *sweete wight*⁷⁶; (iv) in verbal forms: past tense *herde thou* 250, *mighte* 271; imperative *auise* 262; and infinitive *paie* 213. This is combined probably with retention of southern *n* in *ga crepen in* 330, where the following vowel seems to require *n* to avoid elision. Are we to reckon all or any of these cases as untrue to northern dialect? *Crepen* 330 we certainly must, noting that it occurs in Alain's soliloquy (329-366), which is remarkable for the number of southernisms it contains in all the seven MSS.⁷⁷ The loss of final *e* in the infinitive, and in such imperatives as *mak* for *make* (so 212), was specially early in the North, but this does not certainly apply to words of French origin. Scansions such as *changë* are plainly indicated in fourteenth-century poems (e.g. Rolle) where native *stand*, or *luf* (love), are used. We may, then, allow Chaucer *auise* and *paie*. But he ought to have the benefit of the doubt in the remaining cases. The question of final *e* in the North or in general is none too certain. He was not necessarily, in any case, representing dialect right up to date without a literary flavour. The evidence of northern metre is dubious—it was probably syllabically far more irregular than in the South, certainly than in Chaucer, largely owing to the influence of native metrical feeling kept up by alliterative and alliterated verse—but it does at least show that final *e* was in various cases preserved much later than is commonly recognized, at any rate in verse tradition. It is certainly nonsense to say that *at the beginning of our records e was lost about 1300 (Cursor Mundi)*.⁷⁸ Whatever be the original date of the composition of *Cursor Mundi*, the best manuscript obviously misrepresents the original in this matter of final *e* (and many other points) in almost every

couplet, and, even so, many cases of metrical *ɛ* are preserved.⁷⁹ It is probable, however, that colloquial use in London, even in Chaucer's time, was beginning already to drop final *e*,⁸⁰ and we may conclude perhaps that its presence or absence was a point to which he would not give much attention in dialect speech, but would follow mainly the habits of his own language and literary tradition.

(ii) Certain southern verbal inflexions appear. The most definite are the infinitive *crepen* 330 already dealt with; and the past participle with southern loss of *n* seen in *misgo* 335 and fixed by rhyme with *also*. Both occur in Alain's soliloquy. In 108 occurs *as clerkes sain* with southern (strictly midland) plural *n*, fixed by rhyme with *swain*. The correct form, at any rate, for Northumbria, whence the clerks hailed (see below), would have been *men sais*.⁸¹ Similar is the "incorrect" *men sai* or *saiþ* (sg.), rhyming *fai* or *faiþ*, 290, where northern English used *sais*, whether singular or plural was intended.

(iii) There are two proven cases of false vowels⁸²: *misgon* 332 rhyming with *anon*—the latter is part of the (Reeve's) narrative and so cannot be altered to *anan* (this again is in Alain's soliloquy); and in 272 we have *flic* "a fly" rhyming *vilainie*, where northern English had *fle* or *flei*⁸³ (Alain again, but in a different place). The case of *hande* Simkin 114, rhyming with *stande* John 115 is rather different. *Stonde* would have been wrong for John, but *honde* more usual where no dialect is intended. But such forms as *hand*, since victorious, are not uncommon in Chaucer according to the MSS, though they cannot be decisively fixed for Chaucer's use by rhyme.⁸⁴ At the same time the comparative rarity of *and*-forms, and the absence of variants here, where all the MSS. have *hande*, *stande*,⁸⁵ suggest that Chaucer intended *stand* as true to the northern dialect, but was able to link it in rhyme with a non-dialectal line owing to the occurrence of such forms as *hand* already in London English.⁸⁶ *Anan* was a different matter and could not be ascribed to the Reeve. Although he obviously knew that *gan*, *misgan* were the proper northern forms, he evidently did not think it worth while to recast his rhyme in order to avoid *misgon*.

These are the only "incorrect" details in the dialect passages that can be fixed more or less definitely as belonging to the original.⁸⁷ The certain cases are only six in number (excluding the debatable final *e*), a number quite insignificant in comparison with the mass of correct details. But this list does not, of course, exhaust the "errors" actually found in the text of the dialect passages, even as given above, where the northernisms of all the seven MSS. are included. There we have (i) eight cases of southern *o* for *a* in all the MSS. in *no* 317, *euermo* 318, *wherso* 318, *also* 336, *go* 318, 336, *misgo* 335, *wot* 335. We need not here reckon *lord* 344, for though certainly southern in origin it was early borrowed by northern English. Already the most pure MS. (Cotton) of *Cursor Mundi* has frequently *louerd*,

lord beside the northern *lauerd*, *lard*. The case of *lo!* 215, 251 is interesting. There is no variant *la* here in either place, though this, of course, does not conclusively prove that Chaucer here wrote *lo*. It is, nonetheless, a fact that *lo* would be correct for northern dialect. The word is derived from O.E. *lā!* and this form can be found in northern texts; from it is derived Chaucer's usual *lo!* (probably *lō*, the ancestor of our present pronunciation *lou*). But in the North and West the word developed various forms, as is not unusual with exclamatory words; and *lo* (also *low*, *lower*, and other oddities) occur in texts which either by reason of region or date have otherwise still *ā* for O.E. *ā*. The form *lo*, phonetically *lō* rhyming with and sharing the later development of such words as *tō*, is good northern English, and cannot be included among the errors. It may be noted that all the examples of southern *o* (in all the MSS.) come from the words of Alain to Maline or from his later soliloquy—except *lo* and *lord*. *lo* alone comes from the more carefully written (or faithfully preserved) part before l. 250, which strengthens belief that Chaucer actually wrote *lo*, and in one more minute point (like *sek*) showed his accuracy of knowledge. We have also (ii) the false 3 sg. form *lith* 336; and the 2 sg. forms *slepest* 249, *hast* 347. The latter have been retained in the text since by chance no cases of the preservation of the northern 2 sg. in *s* (*has*, *slepes*) occur elsewhere; there cannot be much doubt, all the same, that the *st* here is due to the scribes rather than Chaucer. Finally (iii) *hem* 251 should probably be included though removed from the text, since it is the form here given by all the MSS. This adds another twelve cases of error, none of which can, however, be certainly ascribed to Chaucer.

Before finally dismissing the question of unchanged southernisms two words require brief notice: *wenche* 258 and *cokenai* 289. The former is not dialect, though it now gives that impression. It was still a respectable and literary word for “girl” in Chaucer's time, and was probably in pretty general use⁸⁸ all over the country. It is recorded in modern dialects in practically all parts, including Scotland, Yorkshire, Northumberland, and Durham; but in this tale it contributes nothing to the linguistic characterization of the clerks either as rustic or northern. It was not actually the characteristic word for their dialect: that was probably already in Chaucer's time *lass*. This is well illustrated by *Cursor Mundi* 2608, where Sarah referring to Hagar says to Abram: *Yone lasce þat I biside þe laid*. Even the Göttingen MS. here substitutes *wenche* (as does naturally the southernized Trinity version), while the Fairfax version goes astray with *allas I hir*. *Cokenai* used by John in his soliloquy provides the *N.E.D.* with its first quotation for the sense “milksoy”—for which sense the only other references given, that can be called Middle English, are northerly or easterly (the *Promptorium* and the northern but related *Catholicon Anglicum*). The only earlier quotation in any sense is taken from the A version of *Piers*

Plowman, where the meaning is “a small egg”. Later this word was especially associated with London (or Londoners); but as it is never complimentary in its application, one would naturally suppose that this use did not develop in London, but in the East of England, which had the closest connexion with the capital. The word can hardly be true to the dialect of the “far North”, except as a loan, even apart from the fact that the North used Scandinavian *egg* for English *eye, aye*.⁸⁹ But Chaucer quite justly puts it into the mouth of the Cambridge clerk. He does not wish when he gets back to college to be called a daff, a cockney—he is, as it were, glossing his more rustic *daff* with *cocknai*, the sort of word he would easily pick up in Cambridge; and it would be just the sort of criticism that a *testif and lusty* north-countryman would most resent, to be called a “soft townee”. In fact, consideration of this word might lead us to defend all the inconsistencies of dialect, and the intrusion of southern and midland forms among the northernisms of John and Alain's talk, as not ignorant or even negligent, but intentional and true to life, a representation, in fact, of that mixture of speech that went on at the universities and was one of the causes contributing to the propagation of a south-easterly type of language. But such a defence is not necessary; and in general, whatever may be the case with the word “cockney”, Chaucer does not seem to have represented a mixed language (unless here and there, and then to help a line or rhyme). The idea is too subtle for the Reeve (though he is made out a clever raconteur), and is probably too philological for Chaucer, though it is not beyond the nicety of his observation of external detail.

The critical text of the lines given above will perhaps prove, then, even when more abundant variants are compared, to be a fair representation of Chaucer's essay in northern dialect. Even if we allow some significance to the curious collection of southernisms, even those easily avoided, towards the end of the speeches (from 316 and especially from 329 onwards), and see in this either Chaucer's negligence or art, the errors will be few, not many more than fifteen, a small proportion set against the correct details. On the other hand, after textual examination, no MS., and certainly not Ellesmere, can escape the charge of casual alterations, careless of the detail of Chaucer's work and its intent.

The evidence offered, though far from complete or fully investigated, is sufficient to establish the claim of the dialect of the northern clerks to be something quite different from conventional literary representations of rustic speech, tempered though it may have been to Chaucer's literary purpose, and superior to ignorant impressionism. When we consider that it appears in a tale in rhymed verse, in which few words are wasted, we find a sufficient reason for the “impurities” that occur; the number of the certain cases is indeed very small. In accuracy and in abundance the dialectal features go far beyond what was merely necessary for the joke,

and we can hardly doubt that from one source or another Chaucer had acquired fairly detailed knowledge of the language of the North, and that such linguistic observations interested him.

The problem of *geen* and *neen* has been passed over, but the solution will not radically affect the general conclusion. A more suitable point with which to conclude a laborious annotation of a successful jest would be to consider more narrowly the question of locality. Chaucer may be imagined to have got his ideas about Northern English by applying his observant mind to people (travelling or on their native soil) or to books, or probably to both. But did he—in spite of the Reeve's disclaimer of any special knowledge of such distant regions—really, for his private satisfaction, give his clerks a home in some place he could have indicated, if he had chosen?

Most of the little evidence that can be extracted from words and forms has been glanced at. From accuracy in small details (such as *sek*), from such touches as *wight as es a ra* (and possibly *werkes at the wanges*), as well as from the spelling, which in so far as it comes through from Chaucer's hand to us, reflects that of northern texts as we know them, *written* works may be put down as in part the sources of his knowledge. Other sources, of course, were open to him. The eastern speech was, as he seems to have recognized from the very setting of his tale, a natural intermediary between London and the North; and he would have many opportunities of hearing English of the eastern kind without straying far from London. Doubtless actual northern dialect could be heard in the same way. But Chaucer did not stay in the study. Once at least he is believed to have been in Yorkshire; and though a residence at Hatfield as a very young man would not provide even an inquisitive person, less biassed than usual by southern prejudices against dialectal harring, garring, and grisbitting, with much opportunity for observation of the local vernacular, we may probably take this fleeting glimpse of Chaucer in Yorkshire as a reminder that people moved about, especially those of his class and station. On such occasions Chaucer would not shut his ears. He was observant, and even the least curious were necessarily more dialect-conscious than we are now: dialect assailed the ears more often. It also assailed the eyes, in written works. Chaucer's complaint at the end of *Troilus and Creseyde* concerning the *greet diversitee in English and in wryting of our tonge* has already been referred to. He desired his own work to be handed on in detail as he wrote it, for he wrote as he did by choice among divergences, written as well as spoken. When, then, he suddenly departed, even for a few lines of jest, from his chosen language, he did this deliberately and certainly with some care for detail.

Why he should elect to use the observations he had made to enliven and to plant more firmly in native soil a poor *fabliau* of this sort, to use his

knowledge just at this point and not elsewhere, though other appropriate occasions occurred in the *Canterbury Tales* where the same dramatic touch would have been useful, can now hardly be guessed. To guess is not, in any case, the province of the philologist. The chance events of the actual lives of authors get caught up into their books, but usually they are strangely changed and intricately woven anew one with another, or with other contents of the mind. To others may be left the geography of the tale, and the mill of Trumpington, and surmises concerning visits of Chaucer to the East, including Cambridge, the identity of the Reeve, and the possibility of meetings with actual undergraduates. Even if all these details were established facts of Chaucerian biography, it would not alter the more important point that in his selection from his varied experiences he showed a linguistic insight that is remarkable.

At any rate, the Reeve's *fer in the north* means what it says: it means not some way north (of Norfolk), but in the remote North; if not Scotland, then (we may make a preliminary guess) beyond the Tees. To make this clear it may seem vain to appeal to the dialect—we should be asking a comic poet to indicate in a few lines a narrow localization which our own studious analysis can rarely manage in texts many times the length. There are some indications nonetheless. The non-linguistic may be glanced at first.

In line 94 we are told of the place of John and Aleyn's birth: a "town" called *Strother*. Skeat says there is now no such town in England. This is true, but it has little to do with Chaucer; for his *toun* does not mean "town", but what we should call a village, a place large enough to have a proper name, possibly a church. This is, of course, the sense also in the *Reeve's Tale*, 23 and 57, and in the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*, 478. There are at least two villages of the name still existing, both north of Tees: Strother (Baldon) and Strother (Haughton), not to mention Haughstrother, Broadstruthers, and the now lost *Coldstrother*.⁹⁰ The name is confined to Scotland and the North of England, and is, in fact, a dialect word meaning "marsh", M.E. *strōther*,⁹¹ peculiar to the northern region, and there frequent in names. Chaucer could hardly have chosen a name from among all the northern hamlets more local or appropriate. He may, indeed, have known its then still current dialectal meaning; but neither this meaning nor, in the absence of ordnance maps, the existence of such places is likely to have become known to him except by a visit to the North or contact with actual people from those parts.

The word *strother*, though characteristic of Northumbria (in the narrower sense), is not solely Northumbrian; it is found in Scotland and appears probably in the West Riding name Langstrothdale, for which in the thirteenth century *lange strother* is recorded.⁹² But we possess a second indication which points to Durham or Northumberland. In line 207 John

swears *by seint Cutberd*. The form of the name is a perversion, produced or favoured by the needs of rhyme, of *Cudbert*, the more natural medieval form of St. Cuthbert's name. It is true that oaths in Chaucer are all too often but valueless fillings of a line; but this comes in neatly and naturally, it is no mere padding like *for by that lord that called is seint Jame*, 334. Chaucer does not elsewhere mention the great northern saint, and mentions him here undoubtedly for local colour. The local colour is that of Northumbria—not of Scotland. There was small friendship between St. Cuthbert and the Scots, at least in the fourteenth century. Lawrence Minot says:—

þe Scottes with þaire falshede þus went þai about
 For to win England, whils Edward was out.
 For Cuthbert of Dorem haued þai no dout;
 þarfore at Neuel Cros law gan þai lout.

The author of the *Metrical Life of St. Cuthbert* has similar views (cf. ll. 4881 ff.) regarding even the ninth century.

“The Durham area, when first distinguished from the rest of the earldom of Northumberland, was known as *Haliover(es) folc* or *Halioversocn* = the people or soke (i.e. jurisdiction) of the holy man or saint, a term which is the equivalent of the common Latin expression *terra* or *patrimonium Sancti Cuthberti*.”⁹³ This term originally included considerable parts of the present county of Northumberland. It was still in use in the fourteenth century, though it went out of use in the next. In the *Metrical Life of St. Cuthbert* (c. 1430) the expressions used are *Cuthbert folk (men, lande)* and *saint pople*.⁹⁴ But quite apart from this special use the peculiar association of this part of England with St. Cuthbert and the devotion there to him was familiar throughout the country.⁹⁵

There can be little doubt, then, that Chaucer had actually in mind the land beyond the Tees as the home of his young men and of their speech. For philological purposes that is all that is required. Skeat, and Professor Manly since, have pointed to the actual family of *de Strother* from Northumberland. The names Aleyn and John were borne by its members, though the popularity of these names detracts considerably from the interest of this fact. Aleyn de Strother (whose son was John), was at one time constable of Roxburgh Castle; he died in 1381. The family was important in the North. This may indicate one way, at any rate, in which Chaucer could have learned of the place-name, and even, indeed, have listened to the dialect; for in his days members of such a family might speak dialectally enough at home or at court. If so, in addition to other ingenuities here ascribed to him, Chaucer may possibly have added a crowning touch of satire on living persons. As Chaucer has drawn them,

his young men, of course, are not relatives; they came from the same village, and were *felawes* (283), and they were clerks and poor. If we must seek for "real life" at the bottom of all Chaucer's characters, this must be a composite picture. But this is beside my present object, and I will end with one more philological point. The narrower localization seems clear: did Chaucer, or could he, make this appear also in the dialect used? It would be difficult to do, and at any rate difficult now to pick up the hints, were they given, in our ignorance of local peculiarities within the generally uniform Northern (or North-Eastern) English of the time.

Among the dialect words used only one holds out any hope: this is the word *slyk*, 210, 250, 253, for "such", which, if we take in 251 the variant *slike* as descending from Chaucer, is also the sole word for "such" in the clerks' mouths. The words and forms of words for *such* in Middle English require an investigation which I have not been able to give to them. I began to pursue *slike* with a light heart, trusting my casual impression that it was a word limited to (Eastern) Yorkshire that occurred only in a few easily examined texts. Here it seemed Chaucer had clearly been careless, and had fobbed off a Yorkshire Scandinavianism on his Northumbrian clerks. It soon became plain that a diligent search through many northern texts (mostly ill-glossed or not at all), and an enquiry into their textual history (mostly tangled and seldom known), and finally a considerable knowledge of the recent northern and Scottish dialects, would be required. But Chaucer would emerge triumphant. I have not been able to do more than give a preliminary glance at the available evidence, but even so one fact, the only one that really concerns this paper or the criticism of Chaucer, comes out plainly: if *slike* was ever anywhere at home, as the usual, or even exclusive word for "such", it was precisely in England beyond the Tees. A more typical word, and yet one that though strange would still be sufficiently interpreted by the context without need of a footnote, could hardly have been found. After that the critic of Chaucer's dialect and his skill in using it may well retire. In fact, one may end by remarking that even this one odd word bears out the general impression: even under the limitations of a comic tale in rhymed verse told to a Southern audience, Chaucer took a private pleasure in accurate observation and was probably far more definite in his ideas, and more interested in such linguistic matters than he admitted, just as he loved digressions while ever declaring that he was pushing on with the utmost speed. A deal of pother may have been made over a few comic lines of his, yet we may feel sure he would appreciate the attention, and have more sympathy with such pother, and with such of his later students who attach importance to the minutiae of language, and of his language, even to such dry things as rhymes and vowels, than with those who profess themselves disgusted with such inhumanity.

Appendix I

Tulle

Tulle, 214 “entice” rhyming *fulle*. On examination this reveals a small problem, difficult to solve. It would seem from the rhyme that Chaucer intended the word to have *ũ*, as still in modern *full*. But this form appears to be unparalleled. Has Chaucer made a mistake, or has he provided us with a genuine dialect form which has otherwise escaped record?

Chaucer’s *tulle* here is the only evidence given in the *N.E.D.* for a M.E. *tulle* “entice” from O.E. **tullian*, a supposed variant of *tollian* (also unrecorded in Old English but assured by the frequent M.E. *tolli-n*, *tollen*).⁹⁶ The latter, giving modern toll “attract, entice, decoy”, remained a literary word till the end of the seventeenth century, and is or was till recently used in dialects of the South and Midlands.⁹⁷ But *N.E.D.* does not give any instances of this verb (at any rate in this sense) from northern texts, and I have not been able to discover any. Neither fact is conclusive negative evidence; but whether any examples are to be found or not, it is plain that the usual northern equivalent was the related form *till*, from O.E. *tyllan*.⁹⁸ This is very frequent and easily found.⁹⁹ These words are supposed to have originally meant “pull”. This would be intelligible semantically, and provide a possible link with *toll* applied to bells (see *N.E.D.* TOLL, v.²)¹⁰⁰; but the evidence is very shaky. As far as *N.E.D.* goes, at any rate, it in effect consists of a few citations of modern uses of *tolle*, *tole* in the sense “pull, drag, draw”. The M.E. examples, both under TOLL v.¹ and TO-TOLL are all doubtful, some certainly misplaced. Discrimination is not easy owing to the variety and vagueness of the senses, and of the forms, produced by contact with the foreign word *toil*.¹⁰¹ The latter exhibits in Middle English the senses “contend, fight, struggle (with), harass, pull about, drag at”. See *N.E.D.* under the various words, all of the same origin, TOIL, TOLY, TUHLYE.¹⁰² But, in any case, from TO-TOLL must certainly be removed the citation from *Arthour and Merlin* 8531: the form is *totoiled* and the rhyme *defoiled*.¹⁰³ The two instances (all that remain) of *to-tolled* from the *Poem on the times of Edward II* are both under suspicion, since here is a variant reading to the former of them: *totoilled*. From TOLL v.¹, sense 3, must be withdrawn the citation from *York Plays*, xli, 58: *þei toled hym and tugged hym*. In this text *o* is a letter of varied uses, and this example cannot be separated from the following occurrences in the same text: ix, 281, *to tole and trusse* “to struggle (or toil) and pack” (Noah refers to the trouble of getting his goods and family into the Ark); xxviii, 18, *þou [schall] with turmentis be tulyd*; xlii, 168, *ze me þus tene and tule*. With the last compare *Destruction of Troy* 10160: *The Troiens with tene toiled ful hard, With a rumour ful roide*.¹⁰⁴ A better example, though not conclu-

sive since the text shows strange vagaries of spelling, is *Wars of Alexander* 3640, where *tolls of þe tirantis* probably means (the passage is not lucid) "they pull down the tyrants off (their horses in battle)".¹⁰⁵ Further, the A version of *Piers Plowman*, Pass. v, 127, has *putte hem* (i.e. strips of cloth) *in a pressour and pinnede hem therinne, Til ten zertes other twelue tolden out threttene*.¹⁰⁶ Here probably *tolden* means "counted", but B has *hadde tolled out*, and C *tilled out*, apparently meaning "(had been) stretched out (to)". Though not entirely clear, and in a re-touched passage, these uses do seem to point to a verb *toll*, varying with *till*, meaning "draw, pull"; and the variation would seem to confirm its identification with *toll*, *till* "entice". A further example is possibly *Destruction of Troy* 914: *he till out his tung with his tethe grym* (of the dragon attacked by Jason). However, there is a further complication: namely O.E. *ge-tillan*, *a-tillan* "touch, reach, attain (to)". It is to the descendant of this verb (TILL v.²) that *N.E.D.* ascribes the C reading and the occurrence in the *Destruction of Troy*. It seems to me that *out* is against this¹⁰⁷; and that though we must allow M.E. *tillen* (to) "reach (to)" to be derived from O.E. *ge-tillan*, and even to have had some influence on the sense and form of other verbs, it would not by itself have developed the meanings "pull (out), extend".¹⁰⁸ Of *tille* "pull, draw, extend" we seem also to see a trace in *tille* used of setting nets and snares or pitching tents. This is taken in *N.E.D.* as a special development of TILL from O.E. *tilian*, *teolian* "labour, care for, cultivate". But this cannot be at any rate its sole origin¹⁰⁹; certainly not of *tillen* in *Ancren Riwle* (Morton, 334), which is infinitive. O.E. *tilian* should and does in this text (384) yield *tilien*. Here we have rather the blending of *till*-forms meaning "draw" with *tilden* (*teldin*) "pitch a tent or covering".¹¹⁰

Out of this tangle we can select the following possibilities in explanation of Chaucer's *tulle*:—

(a) A form *tulle* (O.E. **tullian*) actually existed beside *tollian*, *tyllan*, comparable to M.E. *pill*-, *pull*- "pluck",¹¹¹ but has escaped other record.

(b) *Tollen* "entice" also had a sense "pull". Chaucer saw such forms as *tuled*, *tulyd* (possibly even *tulled*, *tullyd*) in uses such as those exemplified in the *York Plays*, and mistook them for dialectal forms of *tollen*.¹¹² These forms were, at any rate, northern.

(c) Chaucer misused Western *tullen* = *tyllan* = N. *till*. Extremely unlikely. He plainly knew a northern text when he saw it.

(d) He was content with a bad rhyme or eye-rhyme, *folle*, *tolle* (as in the Cambridge MS.), owing to the difficulty of finding good rhymes to *tolle*. Such spellings as *folle* can be found in northern texts, but were also characteristic of the South-East.¹¹³ Such a procedure is not worse than Chaucer's elsewhere in a careless moment or a difficulty. Though he seems in general to have taken detailed care with the *Reeve's Tale*, and had no need to rhyme on a word that was a nuisance, we can compare *fonne*

169 (which contains *ō* as in the modern derivative *fond*)¹¹⁴ rhyming with *yronne* 170 (which contains *o = u*, modern *run*).

(e) The passage is corrupt in spite of the consensus of the 7 MSS. (not the only place where this is possibly true), and Chaucer did not write *at þe fulle*, which is not an inevitable expression defying alteration, but something rhyming with *tolle*, or better with the northern *till*. For example, either *as þou will* (a piece of good northern grammar) or *at þi will*.¹¹⁵ This will probably only be seriously considered, if a reading containing some such version, or trace of it, turns up. If it is rejected we must fall back on (*d*)—the others are all improbable, even if the existence of M.E. *tolle*, *tille* “draw, pull” and its identity with *tolle*, *tille* “entice” is granted.

Appendix II

Slik

I give here a few notes leading to the conclusion expressed above. Since *slik* is a purely Scandinavian word that has followed a line of development from an older common **swalik* which is quite different from that seen in native English *swelc* and its variants, and is, moreover, a form for which English possessed a clear brief equivalent, over which the Scandinavian form possessed no advantages, one would expect to find it less widespread than many other well-known Scandinavian loans, and would look naturally to the East. From the East it appears one can immediately subtract the area south of the Humber (for what reason is not clear). But absence of any trace of *slik* in the *Ormulum* (which shows only *swille*, *swillke*), in *Havelok* (*swich*, *suilk*, *swilk*), and, as far as I can find in Manning, as well as the absence of other textual or dialectal evidence, seems conclusive, even for the otherwise highly Scandinavianized language of Lincolnshire. The text of *Havelok*, and of Manning’s works, especially the latter, has been in places greatly, even violently, southernized; but *slik* has elsewhere contrived to survive, if it appeared in the original, even thoroughgoing attempts at substituting other more usual words for “such”. The *Ormulum* at any rate has not suffered this adulteration.

In Yorkshire *slik* was known, especially it would seem in the North and East Ridings, in the parts, that is, that to this day are classified as belonging to the true Northern dialect area (which includes Durham and Northumberland). But in Yorkshire it was not in exclusive use, and it had to compete even in the East with *swilk* (just as in the West *swilk* competed with such forms as *soche* and *siche*); variant MSS. of the same work constantly substitute *swilk* or *soche* for *slik*, or else rhymes and other tests show that the author used both. This is the case with the *York Plays* and with the rhymes of that admirable text *Yvain and Gawain*. Minot may be said

to use only *slik*, but he by chance uses in his surviving verses a word for "such" only once (viii, 35).

If we turn to the metrical homilies printed by Small, which on non-linguistic evidence appear to have a connexion with Durham, we shall meet *slik sli*, as the usual word for "such", and observe the alien *swyilk* appearing wherever, owing to the lacunæ in the best MS. (Edinburgh), a piece from a different MS. of slightly different linguistic texture is intruded by the editor. The massive *Cursor Mundi* is scantily glossed by Morris, but small search beyond the examples he gives shows that its language knew probably in the original both *slik* (*slic, sli, scli*) and *suilk* (*swilk, squilk*). Both occur in rhyme (e.g. *slike* with *suike, relike, like* in 4371, 8002, 9775, 9854; *sulk* with *milk* 5794). For the *slik*, etc., of the Cotton MS. the others usually substitute another word (*suilk* in G, *suche* in FT), or remodel the line to avoid the rhyme. It is interesting to compare 5794, where the rhyme *suilk—milk* is preserved in all, even the southernized T, with 9775 where *slik—lik* has disappeared from FT, and *slik* in G is a correction of *suilk*. *Slik* was the least current of all forms of "such".

If one seeks for a text in which *slik* is used not only frequently but exclusively, one is to be found—namely, the Metrical Life of St. Cuthbert, written in the very *Cuthbert lande* mentioned above. It is a long text, of over 8,000 lines, and *slyke, slike* is extremely frequent, and there is no other form employed at all, save for a single *syke* (5117).¹¹⁶ This is probably not a casual error, but an actual later form of *slyke* (however developed), and the ancestor of the varying forms, such as *seik, sāk, saik* still characteristic of the extreme northern area of English.

Needless to say, in this text most of the other northernisms of the clerks are to be found, especially *gif* (the sole form of *if*) and *hedewerk*, used of a headache of which a lady was like to die, and *hope* in its dialectal sense—St. Cuthbert says of the land tilled in vain "I hope this erde is nocht of kynd whete to zelde". There also are *auntir, bus, es, ferly, fra, zon, hepin, ill, lape, sal (suld), seel, swa, ta, till* and *whilk*.

Appendix III

Geen and Neen in Ellesmere MS.

These strange spellings occur as follows: *geen* gone, 158; *neen* no, none, 265, 267. To them should be added *ne nay*, 263. These, *geen, neen, ne*, are the readings of the Ellesmere MS., from which Skeat adopted the first two, not *ne nay*, for his text. On the readings of the other MSS. *gan, nan, na*, beside *gon, non, no*, see textual notes above (H has *a*).

The textual problem requires for its solution further evidence—the readings in these places of all other MSS. The linguistic problem is more

or less independent of such evidence. As the evidence available to me stands these forms cannot be attributed to Chaucer. Additional readings of the same character (if independent) might shake this opinion, but it would not alter the linguistic situation—these forms are not those of any spoken dialect anywhere in Chaucer's time. Until they are demonstrated as Chaucer's, therefore, we need not attribute to him these fictitious forms; and the evidence for his authorship will have to be strong before such an attribution is made in face of the credit with which Chaucer has in other respects passed philological examination.

The view here expressed that these forms are not genuine is based on the following considerations. (1) *geen* and *neen* are not to be found elsewhere as far as I can discover. It is to dialect texts, not to MSS. of Chaucer's dialect imitation (which have demonstrably adulterated this), that we should go for information on this point.¹¹⁷ (2) *geen* and *neen* do not exist elsewhere in genuine M.E. dialect, because there is no basis for their formation. The antecedents of all English dialect forms of "gone, none" are O.E. (*ge*)*gān*, *nān*. There was no O.E. *gēn*, *gēn*, or *nēn*, nor any sufficient cause for the development of such forms in Middle English.¹¹⁸ Scandinavian influence which accounts for many dialectal forms, especially in the North, here fails. The East Norse *ē* (for West Norse, *ei*, *ei*, M.E. *ei*, *ai*) is rare in M.E. loanwords. It cannot occur here, for Norse has not the word "go" in any form, while E. Norse did not use **nēn* (W. Norse *neinn*). (3) The view that *geen*, *neen* are representations of real Northern pronunciation of written *gan*, *nan* is untenable. Why was this southern phonetic zeal operative only in a few places? In the paper above abundant examples have been given of the preservation of the symbol *a* for the descendants of O.E. and O.N. *ā*; all of these probably go back to Chaucer, in many of the cases there is, at any rate, a consensus of Skeat's seven MSS. (e.g. 106, 107, 117, 182, 255, 256). And why should the amateur phonetician (Chaucer or another) adopt the notation *ee*? It is a fact of later development that northern *ā* was "fronted", and moved in a direction *æ* > *ē*. The orthodox view, however, is that this does not show its first traces until late in the fifteenth century, and cannot be seriously reckoned with until the sixteenth. The view that this process was complete in the fourteenth century is based either on evidence which does not prove the point or on this very supposed Chaucerian *geen*.¹¹⁹ But debate on the question is here unnecessary. The shift in the pronunciation of *ā* was common to the whole country, and proceeded at least as rapidly in the South as in the North.¹²⁰ In that case, since the Southerner's own *a* (in such words as *name*, *blame*, *make*, *fare*, which he shared with the Northerner) was moving in the same direction, the letter *a* would remain *far and away the most probable symbol for him to adopt to represent the northern sound*, until long after Chaucer's time, whether in words with common English *ā* or

in those with specially Northern \bar{a} (as *gan*). The use of *ee*, the principal suggestion of which was long tense \bar{e} , would be an astonishing choice for anyone in a sudden and inconsistent access of phonetic zeal to make. The unlikelihood of such a choice is, in fact, increased by the very attempt to push back the chronology of English vowel changes; for on this theory *ee* must commonly have been associated with a sound-value \bar{i} . In any case the joke about northern *a* for *o* depends on the occurrence in words like *gon* of the vowel heard in *name* (not that in *been*, for instance), and this is phonetically very much more effective when the \bar{a} -words are given an *a*-sound, showing at most the first hint of its later fronting, than with a "mid-front" *e*.

If *geen* and *neen* are not genuine dialect, how have they come to stand at any rate in the Ellesmere text? It is clearly unlikely that Chaucer is in that case responsible for them. But we will deal first with this improbable alternative. If Chaucer wrote them, then they are forms he heard somewhere, and his spelling meant \bar{e} of some variety. We need not suspect him of fobbing off on us arbitrary and pointless perversions. There is only one possible source remaining: the "Low Dutch" dialects. In Low German, Dutch, and Flemish \bar{e} regularly corresponds in cognate words to O.E. \bar{a} and its medieval English sequels; and language of this kind could have been heard, doubtless, by him in London, Norwich, York, or other places. The wool-trade was one of the principal causes of this linguistic contact, which has left its traces in many loan-words.¹²¹ But Chaucer, at any rate, would have known such speech for what it was, and it may be asked why he should casually intermingle it with truly observed Northern English. The question hardly arises, however, because precisely in the case of the words "go" and "none" this source fails us. "Low Dutch" does not possess exact cognates of O.E. *gān*, *nān*. For "gone" it employed *ghe-ghaan* (with an *a* of different origin from O.E.); for "none" derivatives such as *gheen* of O. Saxon *nigēn*; *neen* was used, but only as an adverb "no". If *geen* and *neen* are to be derived from such a source, we have either to assume they are from Frisian dialect (*gēn*, *nēn*), or produced by a complication of errors—e.g. the taking of *gheen* "none", *neen* "no" as "gone" and "none" by the singularly unfortunate application of an amateur "sound-law" (based on such correspondences as *heem* = *hoom* "home") to two cases where it did not apply.¹²² In fact, "Low Dutch" fails as the source of *geen* or *neen* either in Chaucer's own hand or that of any later amateur re-toucher of his trifle.

If Chaucer did not write these forms they cease to have any great importance for this paper—and they lose most of their value for any purpose. The arguments used above are almost equally weighty against *neen*, *geen* (as real spoken forms) even if we consider them as the work of some later "editor". That these forms are "corruptions"—the products

of inadvertence or ignorant whim—may seem difficult to hold in view of their occurring three times, and rash to argue without complete collations. But that this is their origin is not impossible in such a context. The idea that the vagaries of dialect are lawless is old, and this feeling would co-operate in producing and perpetuating anomalous forms—it would allow palæographical similarities to have more effect than when checked by a more familiar or a more respected form of language.

It may be observed that Skeat did not admit Ellesmere's *ne nay* to his text, and rightly. The confusion, whether linguistic or scribal, between *ne* "not, nor"; *na, no* (O.E. *nā* "no" adverb); and *no(n), na(n)* "none" is well known in Middle English. But it is not very different in kind from *neen* for *noon (naan)*, and this reduces somewhat the authority of *neen*. I do not speak with confidence on the palæographical point, but confusion (in the absence of normal checks especially) is obviously possible in fourteenth and fifteenth-century hands between *a* and *ee*, and *o* and *e*; *o* and *e* (both formed with two curved strokes, of which the right-hand one in *e* should finish about half-way down the other, but often exceeds this) are often, even in carefully written books, very similar to the eye. Editors are often confronted with *o* for *e*, and vice versa, in familiar words where there is no question of linguistic variation. I note, though this is from a thirteenth-century MS., *to gene* "to go" from *A Song on the Passion* (MS. Egerton G 13) in *O.E. Miscellany*, p. 199. That this is an error is shown, if not by the rhymes with vowels of like origin, *alone, one*, at least by the rhyme with *trone* "throne".¹²³ But one need not go so far afield. The MSS. of Chaucer themselves provide abundant evidence of such errors, especially of careless interchange of *e* and *o* (rather misformation of these letters, in many cases). There is no more reason for putting the Ellesmere *geen* 158 into a Chaucerian text, or into grammars, than for doing the same by Hengwrt *heem* 112, which Skeat scorned to record even in his variants; and both are probably as genuine as the *ge* for *go* in the Cambridge MS. line 32 (which rhymes with *to* "two").¹²⁴ Indeed Chaucerian "Scotch" *geen* has a ghostly look.

Notes

- † Editors' note: This text of "Chaucer as a Philologist: *The Reeve's Tale*" incorporates a small number of corrections and revisions, as well as a few marginal notations (here presented within pointed brackets, e.g. < >) taken from Tolkien's own copies of the original publication. These corrections were kindly supplied by Christopher Tolkien.
- 1 As plainly perceived by Skeat, though his enquiry amid the mass of his general labour in the service of Chaucer did not proceed very

far.

- 2 For we can scarcely compare the occasional representation of rustic or ignorant forms such as the *astromye* of the *Miller's Tale*, A 3451 (E H L), 3457 (E H), and *Nowelis* for *Noes* in the same tale, A 3818, 3834 (E H C); nor even *sooth pley quaad pley as the flemying seith*, in the *Cook's Prol.*, A 4357.
- 3 Which is all that survives clearly, at any rate in our Towneley text, of Mak's "Southern tooth" —and that is the nearest parallel to Chaucer's effort that exists.
- 4 The words, l. 95, *fer in the north, I can nat telle wher*, are, of course, actually put in the mouth of the Reeve, and so are partly and justly dramatic. Actually, as we shall see, Chaucer was not so vague.
- 5 Especially if combined with a study of the forms in the *Tale of Gamelyn*, where a piece not originally in Chaucerian language is treated often by the same scribes.
- 6 Thus the Reeve, even according to our southernizing MSS., used *ik am, so thee'k* (contrasted with Harry Bailey's *thee'ch*, C 947) in *Reeve's Prol.*, 10 and 13. These forms are under no necessity of rhyme or metre. The Reeve also uses *capel* "horse", though this may be mere repetition of its use just before by the clerks (see also below for fuller note on this word); and also the dialectal *greithen*. <a marginal note in one of Tolkien's copies reads "but *agraiþi* in the *Ayenbite*"> The rare word *sokene* (l. 67) is also actually put into his mouth, and may be meant as rustic or dialectal. At any rate, outside legal use it is rarely found elsewhere (as far as *N.E.D.* records, or I can discover), but it is found notably in the East Anglian *Promptorium Parvulorum*. That he is represented as using on occasion *þeir* and *þeim* is also probable (see below).
- 7 It is interesting to contrast the usual southerly or south-westerly stamp of conventional dialect later, as on the Elizabethan stage, after the partial northernizing of the language of the capital.
- 8 This is, of course, usually the case. A sound will be dubbed uncouth by speakers of another dialect, owing to its contrast to the familiar sound. It may well be itself current in their own speech in another context. There is no reason to suppose that Northern and Southern speech differed much in the pronunciation of *ā* in, say, *nāme* "name".
- 9 This form occurs in the *R.T.*; see below.

- 10 For “stolen”, ll. 191, 268, Chaucer here probably used *stoln*, *stollen* (representing the northern dialect, with retained short *o*): see below.
- 11 Presenting besides Ellesmere (E) the following five MSS. : Hengwrt (H), Cambridge University Library Gg. 4. 27 (C), Corpus Christi College, Oxford (O), Petworth (P), Lansdowne 851 (L).
- 12 This doubtless indicates that alterations *affecting dialect* are relatively late events in the tradition, and in considerable measure due to the procedure of the actual scribes whose works we possess.
- 13 Certain errors (noted below) dependent on the presence of *northern* forms also show that such forms lie behind the existing copies.
- 14 Also the preservation of *es* or *is* in senses *am*, *art*, in 111, 166, 169.
- 15 The process can be studied, for instance, in the various MSS. of *Cursor Mundi* or of the *Northern Passion* as printed in the E.E.T.S. These examples have been specially examined for the present purpose.
- 16 In our text an example is furnished by the readings in l. 251 (q.v.).
- 17 On *swilk slik* 210, 251, 253, see notes on text and appendix on *slik*. On *fallas* see notes to ll. 107, 255.
- 18 Cases probably are: H1 *wightly* for *whistel* 181—*wight* occurs in 166, but was, in any case, a literary word (see below); *sal*, probably wrongly in all but H1, for *suld* 209—*sal* occurred frequently elsewhere; *es*, *is* for *er* 125, or for *may be* in L 124—*es* was probably used several times in the original; or the *to and fra* rhyming *alswa* of C 373 (others, *fro*, *also*) in the narrative not in the dialogue—compare C *to and fra* (others more correctly *til*) rhyming *alswa* in the dialogue, 119-120. A case equally derivative, but showing greater corruption, is L. 255, *þer sal I haue* (shown to be spurious by *þer*) for *þer tides me*. On *folt*, *fonne*, see note to l. 108.
- 19 Not necessarily the same thing as each “scribe”. The linguistic complexion of each MS. doubtless in varying degrees owes something to its predecessors. Some consideration has been given to this: at least the groups A and B of the *Cant. Tales* have been examined with the forms of the *R. Tale* in mind. The *Tale of Gamelyn* has also been glanced at. It would probably repay closer study for this purpose. It is certainly not by Chaucer, and was originally in an Eastern or North-East Midland type of language in many ways nearer to northern dialect than Chaucer’s own natural speech. The behaviour of the MSS. in *Gamelyn* and the dialectal places in *R. Tale* deserve comparison. *Gamelyn* also may be taken as a stray specimen of the English writings

that Chaucer had read.

- 20 Probably not as a northernism, but in such cases related to the use of *e* for *ī* alluded to above. Unstressed *is* was identical, or nearly so, with unstressed (inflexional) *-es*, as is frequently shown in Chaucerian rhymes: e.g. *nones—non es* (O P L), *nonys—noon ys* (E) in A 524. Examples of *es* in L not due to rhyme-spelling are A 573, 658, 1677 (*na es = nis*, preceding stage possibly *nas*; C has also erroneous pa. t. *dawede* in preceding line).
- 21 The general impression given (see notes on words below) is that texts similar to those surviving now from the early fourteenth century in northern dialect were familiar to Chaucer. One may dismiss any idea that he attempted phonetic gymnastics or tried to bring his “dialect” right up to date and indicate pronunciations taken straight from the mouth by odd and uncouth spellings. The oddities, such as *geen*, *heem*, *neen*, *swaye*, *faath*, *sale* “soul”, *slape*, etc., which may be gleaned from various MSS. are the products of copyists, perhaps in some cases in the interests of post-Chaucerian dialect-phonetics (P seems to favour equating *a*, *aa* and *ai*, *ay*), most often demonstrably the product of error and the conviction that monstrosities were good enough in barbaric dialect.
- 22 So far as I can discover P uses *qw* frequently for *qu* (a frequent use of its period), but nowhere else *qw*, or *qu* for *wh*. *qu*, *qw* for *wh* are not, of course, purely northern, and also occur in texts of eastern origin. *qw* is, for instance, much used by the Dulwich MS. of *Handlyng Synne*.
- 23 As is the case in P with certain other dialectalisms, elsewhere altered, both in *R. T.* and *Gamelyn*.
- 24 At the same time it must be noted that H1 has *wikked* for *quilk* 158 and *wightly* for *quistel* 182. While these errors suggest that the word concerned had unfamiliar forms that caused difficulty at some stage in the tradition of H1, they point rather to *w* as the initial letter at least in the immediate source of H1.
- 25 Chaucer possibly here wrote *swilk*; see notes below.
- 26 Tyrwhitt (from MS. unspecified) cited by Skeat, notes p. 121, here gives reading *gar us have*.
- 27 But *ald* occasionally occurs in the MSS. elsewhere: e.g. *houshalder A* 339 O P L; *halde A* 414 in L.
- 28 Whether Chaucer used the “incorrect” pl. *sai* or sg. *saiith* is not clear in 290. Such forms as *sain* do, of course, occur (in rhyme) in works

from some parts of the North (in general this is rather a feature of the debatable North-West). Cf. *Sir Eglamour* 52 *layne* “conceal” / *sayne* inf.; 223 *payne* “pain” / *ye sayne*. Under *ra* will be seen a hint that Chaucer had read this poem or things like it.

- 29 A similar development is found in some German dialects.
- 30 *C.M.* 4847 *es we* cited by Skeat is a passage dubious textually.
- 31 The MSS. seem not elsewhere to represent Chaucer as using the now current *are*, certainly not in rhyme, though there are a few cases of *arn* (probably not genuine). The later currency of *ar(e)* probably explains the retention of the dialectal *r*-forms in these two lines.
- 32 Apart, of course, from spellings with *s*, *ss*, for *sh*.
- 33 *pitte* pa. t. occurs in Gower, *Conf. Am.*, viii, 2796 (MS. F).
- 34 It is found nonetheless in Layamon (who has many surprising words), and more curiously in Gower, who uses it at least twice in rhyme, *Conf. Am.* 1703, 2122 (*heil* rhyming *seil*, *conseil*).
- 35 Cf. also *Hand. Synne* 3672, where *wroþerheyl* in one MS. is in others altered to *wroþer yn helle*. I have noted an earlier example in the reading of the Corpus MS. of *Ancrene Wisse*: *to himmere heile hire to wraðerheale*, which corresponds to the Nero reading *to wrother hele* (Cleopatra *himmere*), Morton, p. 102. Here we have both native *hælu* and the Scand. word. The *A.W.* contains a notable Scand. element; and the distribution of *hail* is plainly related to the areas of Scand. influence.
- 36 This important word is here passed over lightly; it requires more investigation. In distribution it would probably be found to agree with many other Scandinavian words (e.g. *wight*): that is, it would be likely to turn up almost anywhere except in the south, including originally London; while its later currency was probably due to eastern influence (coupled with some literary influence proceeding from the vernacular writings of N. and W.). It certainly appears in the west (in Layamon, for example). Its early appearance in the south-east—for example in *King Horn* (? Essex), where it seems certainly to be original—is well-known and curious. More remarkable is its occurrence in the *Owl and Nightingale*, 421 (adj.) and 1536 (adv.). Compare *hail*. It is clear, nonetheless, that Chaucer here used the word as a dialect substitute for *yuel*, *euel* (by which some MSS. replace it).
- 37 This probably appears in the earliest examples; all four examples cited in Bosworth-Toller from Old Northumbrian are before vowel or *h*. It is still a feature of dialects that use *till* for *to*. Compare also the

quotations under *drive* below.

- 38 E H O P L *til, tille*; C *to*. Other examples are *til a bere* (A 2058 *Knight's Tale*), H C O *til*, E P L *to*; *til a tree* (A 2062), E C O L *til*, H P *to*, Hl *in til*; *til Athenes* (A 2964), E H O P L *til*, C *to*.
- 39 For *þeym þeire* the other MSS. in Six-Text have *h*-forms. In l. 71, for *her whete* C has the very unusual spelling *heyre*, which is conceivably a relic of an antecedent *theyre*.
- 40 *Gamelyn* 49 *þeire* L, rest *h*-forms; 426 *þair* O, *þeir(e)* L Hl, rest *h*-forms; 569 *þeir(e)* O P L, Royal, Harl. 1758, *þer* Sloane, *here* Hl. *Gam.* 438 *þam* O, *þeim* L, rest *hem*; 485 *þam* O, *þaym* L, rest *hem*.
- 41 We must in that case also delete this word from our list of northernisms of vowel above, since its *ang* is then probably to be ascribed to shortening in the first component of a compound. Compare the many names of the type *Langley*, *Langford* that occur far south where *long* is the normal form of the separate adjective. It may also be noted that the form *wang* is odd in S. Lancs. This area belonged from early O.E. times to the W. Midland (not to the technically Northern or Northumbrian) dialect region, an area specially characterized by *om*, *on*, *ong*, independent of lengthening. The original compound from which the word is supposed to be derived should here be *wong-tōþ*, the quality of the vowel being unaffected by composition. Cf. Lancs names of the type *Longley*. *Wang* then has the appearance of not being originally native to S. Lancs even if recorded there, and its form alone may be some sort of evidence for a former wider diffusion. But Lancashire is a difficult dialect area. North of the Ribble it belonged anciently to the Northumbrian area, and there has been a good deal of shifting and interchange, in addition to the disturbance of the Scandinavian settlements, as far as place-name forms go largely in favour of *an*. Of this Camden's *Lonkashire* compared with the current *Lancashire* may be taken as an illustration. See Ekwall, *Place-Names of Lancashire*.
- 42 The earliest reference in *N.E.D.* to sense "tooth" for *fang* is from sixteenth century. The sense was not unknown to the dialects: see *N.E.D.* FANG 6, quotation from Cheshire. The form *fengtōþ* once recorded in O.E. is interesting. It is glossed "canine tooth" by Sweet, but seems to mean the same as *wangtōþ*; see Bosworth-Toller, *Suppl.* *Feng* is the native English form later almost universally replaced by Norse *fang* "seizing".
- 43 Some will say, it is obviously a joke—the petty malady, and the pother

- about it, and the final comic *I hope he wil be deed*. Unfortunately with an ancient writer it is dangerous to remain content with the findings of one's private sense of humour; verbal jokes cannot be assumed unproved.
- 44 But cf. quot. in *N.E.D.* (from Jamieson), app. Scottish of seventeenth century, where "toothache" seems equated with "head-work".
- 45 The well-known passage in *Alysoun*, a highly alliterated poem, *forþi my wonges wexeh won*, refers also to weeping, and is so only a partial exception; though it does supply an example of the word *wong* without the concomitant *wet*. This conjunction is curiously illustrated by the Yorkshire place-name *Wetwang*, though this probably contains the distinct but related O.N. *vang-r* "field".
- 46 Such a use is actually found in late Old English, e.g. in *wonges loc-feax* glossing *cesaries*; and in Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints, St. Mary of Egypt* (E.E.T.S., iii, 236, l. 556): *ic . . . þa wongas mid tearum ofergeat*.
- 47 O.E. *þunwange*, O.N. *þunnvangi*, O.H.G. *dunwengi*.
- 48 It is found in the *Promptorium* and in the *Catholicon Anglicum* (Yorks). In Robert Thornton's MS. (MS. Linc. Ai. 17) occurs a medical recipe for a plaster to be put on the *forhede* and *thonwanges* of a sick man (quoted in Halliwell's *Dict. of Archaic and Provincial Words*, where another reference is given to medicinal anointing of the *thoumwanges*, taken from MS. Linc. Med. f. 280).
- 49 Its form at time when Norse influenced English may be represented **wange*.
- 50 Whereby the original noun is lost and only the determinative element is retained.
- 51 The simple word should have been *wang* in the North, usually *wong* elsewhere. Actually the form *wong* does occur in northern texts (in the citations in *N.E.D.*, for instance, from *Cursor Mundi*, *Sir Tristrem*, *Wyn-toun*)—which suggests that we have traces of the (North)-Western influence on alliterative vocabulary that is seen in other words, such as *blonk*. Cf. the corruptions of *wonges wete* in two MSS. of *C.M.* to *wordes swete*, which indicates both *o* in the original, and obsolescence or dialectal limitation of the word; *wanges wete* with *a* occurs, however, in *C.M.* 25552 (not in *N.E.D.*) and in the *York Plays*.
- 52 Not quoted in *N.E.D.* s.v. WARK.
- 53 Its usual derivation from the neuter *vigt* of O.N. *vigr* "able to fight,

- skilled in arms" presents certain difficulties.
- 54 And after Chaucer's time in the *Promptorium*.
- 55 The *Tale of Gamelyn* and his *wight yonge men* (893), wherein wrestling plays the same part as in *As You Like It*, is perhaps actually echoed here.
- 56 Not cited in *N.E.D.*
- 57 In spite of Mr. Trounce's essay in *Medium Ævum*, i, 2, pp. 86 ff., I remain of opinion that Chaucer was precisely "misusing the gifts of genius to make a cheap caricature of the 'heroic' effects of the old poem". *Sir Thopas* is clever, but in some ways regrettable; but precisely the result to be expected from the contact of a man of Chaucer's temperament with the conventions of the tail-rhyme poems. Here, however, we are principally concerned with the close study which Chaucer gave to these works and their diction: see Trounce, loc. cit., and sequels.
- 58 E.g. *oke* "oak" rhyming *wake* "wake".
- 59 In the *Cura Pastoralis* 443, 25; *aris and gong to geonre byrg*.
- 60 Producing the blended form *þon* seen in some dialects.
- 61 *Ormulum*, *Owl and Nightingale*, *Ayenbite*.
- 62 Cf. not infrequent confusion of *þat* and *þar*, *þer* in the MSS.
- 63 It seems to be absent from the *Ormulum*. It is found fairly frequently as an alliterating word in versions B and C of *Piers Plowman*; as far as the references in Skeat's glossary go, only in passages where the A version has been remodelled. It does not appear in the A version (?).
- 64 The word does not seem to have been used by Gower, nor by any other writers of London or standard English. The word is bungled by P *greieþ* and altered by C to *hastede*. It may be noted that *fit* 264 is also fairly frequent in Chaucer, but apart from quotations from his works appears in *N.E.D.* as chiefly northern; it is apparently not used by Gower.
- 65 E.g. in *L.G.W. Prol.* B 362, and *H. Fame* 1997.
- 66 Middle Dutch *draf*, whence probably also the same word in the later Scandinavian languages. But *draf* and *chaf* occurs in Layamon, which favours perhaps a native origin from an O.E. **dræf* cognate with the Dutch word.

- 67 It is preserved in both E and C. It may be noted that in l. 97, which is outside the dialect speeches, all seven MSS. have *sak(ke)*.
- 68 In fact, it went contrary to the general tendencies. No one could guess that a man from the N. or N.E. would say *seck* for *sack* without direct experience of this detail (in speech or book).
- 69 It occurs in the N.W.M. as, for instance, *Sir Gawain*. It occurs once at least (once in Skeat's glossary) in the C version (x, 275) of *Piers Plowman*, which is somewhat northernized in vocabulary as compared with A (cf. *gar* above).
- 70 s.v. DRIVE iii, 17.
- 71 The contrast, here from genuine northern texts, between *til hething* and *to scorn* suggests that it is possible that Chaucer wrote *to scorn* and the second *til* in 190 is derivative from the first. *Til* is, however, found frequently before consonants in northern texts, and the MSS. readings and general procedure point rather to the second *to* as a southernization.
- 72 The figure, while including all points and each proved occurrence (so that, e.g. *werkes* counts 2, being northern in inflexion and in sense), excludes (a) all doubtful points textually—*dreuen*, *es* for *is*, *als* 111, *ar* “ere”, *3a*, *sagh*, *i* for *in*, *miller* as gen. sg., *til scorn*, *þaim*; (b) all cases of common forms possible in Chaucerian language as well as North, such as the past participles other than *stōln*, *stollen*, or the forms of *wil*; (c) *gar* not recorded in the MSS. used, or *greiþen* outside the clerks' speeches. None of the northernisms which were probably used by Chaucer, but are in the critical text italicized since all seven MSS. have at that point southernized, have been included. The actual total of points achieved by Chaucer was therefore probably a good deal larger even than 127.
- 73 Including the words with *ald*, *ang*.
- 74 Chaucer has given no sample of several well-known northernisms; the present part. in *and*, for instance. This is purely accidental, by chance no opportunity occurs.
- 75 Correct for N. Chaucer may have used the specifically N. *haf*.
- 76 O.E. *wilde*, *swēte*; and cf. O.N. *villi-eldr* “wild-fire”.
- 77 Though it also contains *wrang*; and (on the evidence of H1 only) *makes* and *ga*, 334.
- 78 Jordan, *M.E. Gram.*, § 141.

- 79 *Flours þar es wit suete smelles* is, for example, a pretty clear case, *C.M.*1014.
- 80 Owing to various causes, grammatical and phonetic.
- 81 Cf. *as clerkes sais þat are wis* in *C.M.* (Cotton) 343 (v.r.r. *G seis, F sayne, T say*). On such forms as *sayn* in N. or N. Midland texts see above.
- 82 *misgo* 335 is not absolutely fixed since *alswa* (used elsewhere) might have appeared in 336: *misga* would have been, nonetheless, a mistake.
- 83 Both occur in *C.M.*, for instance.
- 84 Unless one accepts such cases as the rhyme with *gerland* in *Knight's Tale* 1071-2 (the word frequently is written *gerlond* in M.E.), or with the name *Gerland*, in *N.P. Tale* 563-4.
- 85 In 181 only P. has *stonde*.
- 86 Owing to the doubt in this matter the three occurrences of *stand* have not been included above among the correct northern details.
- 87 *Wiltou* 120 is not incorrect as are the forms *nadstow, sleepestow*, etc., offered by some MSS. In the latter *tow* prob. depends on the presence of a *t* in the preceding inflexion which did not appear in the North. In *wiltou* and *saltou* the *t*-inflexion was common to all areas and such forms are found in such markedly northern texts as *C.M.* (Cotton) or Minot's poems. But such present forms as *hastou* beside *þou has* are found in northern texts of fairly pure dialect such as the Harl. MS. of the *Northern Passion*.
- 88 A reduction of O.E. *wencel*, early M.E. *wenchel*.
- 89 Which seems certainly to be the final element in the word.
- 90 Mawer, *Place Names of Northumberland and Durham*, pp. 191 and 240.
- 91 Representing an O.E. **strōdor, *strōðor*, probably a variant form (originally from a single ancient noun, as O.E. *salor—sæl*) of O.E. *strōd* (*strōð*), O.H.G. *struot*. The sense in E. seems to have been "marshy land (overgrown with brushwood)". The shorter form is found in charters, and probably survives in various southern place-names, such as Strood in Kent and Stroud in Gloucestershire. See W. H. Stevenson, in *Phil. Soc. Trans.*, 1895-8 (p. 537), quoted also in Mawer, *op. cit.*; and Bosworth-Toller and Supplement, s.v. *strōd*. The existence of this native word should be added to the recent note by Onions and Gordon on *strothe* in Pearl 115 (*Med. Ævum*, i, 2, p. 128); it prob-

ably disturbed the development of the imported Norse *storð* similar in meaning, but only remotely related etymologically, if at all.

- 92 Smith, *Place Names of the North Riding*, p. 229.
- 93 Mawer, op. cit., introduction.
- 94 Surtees Soc., No. 87, ll. 4608, 4794, 7098, 7517.
- 95 A similar case of local colour in oaths is provided by the Oxford carpenter who in the *Miller's Tale* 3449 swears by *seinte Frydeswyde*.
- 96 Such a variation is not in itself impossible and might be compared with *pill*, *pull* "pluck, pull".
- 97 And in U.S.A. especially, according to *N.E.D.*, used of decoying birds, sense closely resembling Chaucer's use.
- 98 Found in *for-tyllan*, rel. to *tollian* as *fylgan* to *folgian*, etc. This variation, which is of ancient origin, suggests that the word is old (from a type **tollē-n*), even though there seems to be no record of a cognate form outside English.
- 99 It may be noted that *tylle*, *tyl* occurs four times in rhyme in *Handlyng Synne* (Lincs), 7091, 7614, 7721, 9036, whereas *tolle* occurs (probably) only once, not in rhyme, 9039: this text has been considerably southernized. *Till* is, however, easier to rhyme on than *toll*. But *Havelok* has *tilled* and not *toll*. *Ancren Riwele* and *H. Meidhad* Group appear to have both *tollin* and *tullen* (= *tyllan*: *u* = *ü*).
- 100 It would also help to explain the senses shown by the foreign word *toil* in English, if these were due to contact with a native *toll* "pull" of similar sound; see below.
- 101 Mere graphic confusion between *toll*, *toil*, *toill* is also obviously likely to occur.
- 102 They are derived, at any rate in form, from O. French *toellier*, *toillier*, *touillier*.
- 103 This same rhyme occurs also in same poem 6945. Contrast in same text *tolling* "enticing".
- 104 Which also illustrates the (northern) interchange of *ō*, *ū*, *oi*.
- 105 "Entice" is *tillid* in this text, 5479: so rather than "draw (physically)" as *N.E.D.*
- 106 According to Skeat's text.

- 107 Also *ge-tillan* and its derivatives are either *intr.* or have as their object the thing reached, not the thing extended.
- 108 *tillin* "reach" also seems a definitely S.W. word, apart from the debatable passages in *PPl.* and *D. Troy*. In the latter poem also occurs in a description of a storm, 3704: *þere takyll was tynt, tylude ouer borde*. But this is probably an error for *tylt-*, introducing yet another complication: *tilt* "tip up" *trans.* and *intr.* from O.E. **tyltan* [**tultj-* not West-Saxon **tieltan*, **tyltan* from *tealt* "unsteady", as *N.E.D.*, for *tilt* (*tult*) occurs in the N.W. and N.]; see *N.E.D.*, s.v. TILT.
- 109 Of the recent S. W. dialect forms *teel*, *tile* I cannot judge; but they seem rather formations from *teld-*, *tild-*, like *spene* beside *spend*.
- 110 Cf. the variants in *PPl.*, A, ii, 44 (cited in *N.E.D.*) *tentes itilled: iteldyde, teldit, teled*. Corpus, Cleop., and Titus also all offer *tildeð* for *tillen* in the above passage from *Ancren Riwle*. Cf. the same (Morton 279) *tildunge* "snare". The contact of this *till* with yet another *toil*, TOIL s.² and v.² "snare, ensnare" may be passed over since this *toil* seems post-medieval.
- 111 Perh. influenced by it. In *pullian* the vowel *u* between a labial and *l* is more normal and can be compared to the vocalism of O.E. *wull*, *full*, *wulf*.
- 112 He knew *tollen* and used it himself (in sense "attract") in translating Boethius.
- 113 They are a marked feature of MS. C, which has many other S.E. characteristics.
- 114 That a form *funne* existed is, however, possible. See *N.E.D.* s.vv. FON, FUN.
- 115 Cf. *at þi will*, rhyming *sal be still*, in *Ywain & Gawain* 1289. Error or alteration could have occurred in either *wille* or *tille* first, preferably the latter, and caused change in the rhyme-word. Cf. *at þe fol* in *Trinity*, alteration of *ouer all* of Cotton, in *C.M.* 4008.
- 116 I read it through for this purpose, so this assertion is probably, but not certainly, true.
- 117 There is a late northern *geen* = given (cf. Cotton MS. 2nd hand of *Cursor Mundi*, E.E.T.S., p. 958, l. 77, and 962, l. 14); but this is not likely to have been erroneously taken as "gone".
- 118 The mutated vowels in *gæst*, *gæþ*, or in *næ̅nne*, *næ̅nig* might conceivably have spread to other forms, though this would have been contrary

to the observed lines of development in Middle English. There is, in fact, no trace of such a development, and the North is marked, actually, by early rejection of the mutated forms. Chaucer uses *goost*, *gooth* (cf. rhymes in *C.T.* B. 3123, and *T.C.* iii. 1108) beside archaic *geeth* (e.g. in rhyme *L.G.W.* 2125). Mod. N. dialect *gēn*, *giən*, *nēn*, *niən*, etc., derive from M.E. *gān*.

- 119 Thus Professor Wyld in his *Short History* (2nd ed., p. 107) has doubtless compressed the evidence, but may be supposed to have selected the cream. He adduces as rhymes which show the fronting of O.E. *ā*: Rolle *mare—ware* “were” subj.; Barbour *gais* “goes”—*wes* “was”; *mair*, O.E. *mār* [*sic*]*—thair*, O.E. *þēr*. The only other evidence is *geen* from the *Reeve’s Tale* (and this is attributed to Scotland). But the first and third of these rhymes are clearly on identical vowels, and so prove nothing. M.E. *wāre*, *wōre* (pa. t. pl. and subj.) is abundantly evidenced; its origin, at least in part, is O.N. *váro*. So also is M.E. *þāre*, *þōre*, “there”, from O.E. *þāra*. The second rhyme has little evidential value, since it may depend on *was*, the usual form in such rhymes in *The Bruce*. The MSS., long after Barbour’s time, cannot be held to represent his distribution of the varying forms of “was”, and, in fact, palpably fail to do so.
- 120 This seems agreed; for those who would push back the northern development would also see the first traces of the southern as early as the thirteenth century. Wyld, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
- 121 An example which illustrates the sound-correspondence discussed is M.E. *no freese* “no risk” = “doubtless” (*Towneley Play of Noah*, 391), which appears to be a loan from this source; cf. O. Saxon *frēsa* danger, M. Dutch *vrees* (Frisian *frāse*, *frēse*); related to O.E. *frāasian*.
- 122 Such “false” applications do occur in mixed languages produced by the contact of cognate tongues. Examples can be found in the history of the relations of Norse and English, or of the German dialects. Cf. the note on Yorkshire dialect above. But for such a Flemish-English jargon there is little evidence. If there were, we should still be remote from Chaucer’s town of Strother.
- 123 Yet it is from this same piece that the error *meden* for *meden* (or perhaps *makeden*) is taken and used as evidence in the *Short History*, p. 168, for a phonetic change *a > e* in the thirteenth century.
- 124 Or as the frequent *woye* for *weye* “way”, or other oddities such as *wayko* “weak”, *dofende* (MS. L., B. 932, 933), *heor* for *heer* “hair” (P at line 56), and so on. Where any assistance is given by words in the

neighbourhood such errors take even more bizarre forms; but the *opinioun* in A 337 is quite as far away from *Epicurus* in A 336, which it has in alliance with *o/e* similarity turned into *opiournes* in MSS. O. and L., as *hepen* is from *ham* in, *R. T.* 112, 113; and *hepen* has doubtless contributed to *heem*, as the adjacent *he* has to *geen*.