

'ODD PREFACES':
FREDERICK JAMES FURNIVALL AND MASCULINITY IN
VICTORIAN SCHOLARSHIP

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SEPTEMBER 2000

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND RELATED
LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I investigate editorial prefaces written by Frederick James Furnivall (1825–1910) as an instance of the operations of masculinity in late-Victorian scholarly self-fashioning. I consider how relationships between men are manifested in the discourse surrounding the publication of medieval manuscript texts at a particular point in the emergence of the study of English literature both as a discipline and as a profession. I propose that Furnivall's prefaces – and his contemporaries' reactions to them – reveal the ways in which the self-presentation of scholarship and scholarly work at this time was bound up with representations of masculinity. In and through his prefaces – where, I would argue, models of masculine identity and networks of masculine relations are writ large – Furnivall exposes the tensions endemic to the construction of academic discourse as homosocial discourse. This can be seen in the cultural construction of his reputation (Introduction); in his representation of scholarly labour (Chapter 1); in his relationships with other scholars (Chapter 2); in his characterisation of the authors whose texts he edits (Chapter 3) and in his rhetoric of editorial practice (Chapter 4).

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In Chapter 1, I mention how it took Frederick Furnivall more than twenty years to deliver one particular manuscript. At times, this thesis has seemed to take just as long, especially to my long-suffering supervisors, Trev Broughton and Felicity Riddy. I am extremely grateful for their patience, encouragement and continuing enthusiasm in the face of my disappearances and crises of faith. They have made me a better researcher and a far better writer and I cannot thank them enough. All mistakes remain, of course, my own.

I would also like to thank the financial assistance of the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York and the British Academy Humanities Research Board, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. The staff of the Sydney Jones Library at the University of Liverpool, the J.B. Morrell Library at the University of York, the Brotherton Library at the University of Leeds and the British Library all provided essential help.

Financial and other support also came from many other people, and I am grateful to all my fairy godmothers: Helen and Barry Guy, Alison Munro, Trevor Spooner, Barbara and Ray Wilton, and Ella Young. I would also like to thank Steve Welch and the staff of Gillard Welch Ltd for the generous terms and conditions that have enabled me to complete this thesis.

For their understanding and consistent good humour over the years, I would like to thank Cordelia Beattie, Debbie O'Brien, Meg Gay (for Mad Dons and Englishmen), Alfred Hiatt (for the medievalist prisoners of conscience) and

Susannah Quinsee and Dominic Voyce (for everything). Thanks to Oz Hardwick for the loan of *A Volume of Personal Record*.

Many academics over the past years have inspired me, most without their knowledge, and I would like to acknowledge the encouragement given by Kate Chedzgoy, Ruth Evans, David Matthews, Jill Rudd, and Jocelyn Wogan Browne. Thanks to the audiences at various conferences for pertinent questions and for laughing in the right places.

Finally, biggest thanks go to Marsaili Ward, Christopher Ward and family, Jonathan and Caroline Ward and the rest of my family, for their immeasurable support and for understanding when I didn't want to talk about it.

INTRODUCTION

INVESTIGATING MASCULINITY AND MEDIEVALISM

In this thesis I investigate editorial prefaces written by Frederick James Furnivall (1825–1910) as an instance of the operations of masculinity in late-Victorian scholarly self-fashioning. I consider how relationships between men are manifested in the discourse surrounding the publication of medieval manuscript texts at a particular point in the emergence of the study of English literature both as a discipline and as a profession. I propose that Furnivall's prefaces – and his contemporaries' reactions to them – reveal the ways in which the self-presentation of scholarship and scholarly work at this time was bound up with representations of masculinity. In and through his prefaces – where, I would argue, models of masculine identity and networks of masculine relations are writ large – Furnivall exposes the tensions endemic to the construction of academic discourse as homosocial discourse. This can be seen in the cultural construction of his reputation; in his representation of scholarly labour; in his relationships with other scholars; in his characterisation of the authors whose texts he edits and in his rhetoric of editorial practice.

In this section, I describe the background of this study before tracing the theoretical framework I will be using to structure my analysis. In doing so, I locate this thesis in its academic context: at the intersection between the examination of Victorian masculinities and the interrogation of the history of medieval literary studies.

This is not the first critical appraisal of the life and work of F. J. Furnivall. In an attempt to answer the obvious question raised by my project – namely, who was Furnivall, and why study him? – it is instructive to examine critically some earlier

assessments of Furnivall and his work. From what standpoints, with what aims and what results have others viewed this man?

'UNCONTROLLED DISCOURSE': AARSLEFF ON BENZIE ON FURNIVALL

'The great puzzle about F. J. Furnivall', said Hans Aarsleff, writing in *Victorian Studies* in 1985, 'is his reputation':

He never wrote a scholarly book or even a first-rate article, but scattered his energies into a host of causes that were all mixed up together [...]. Furnivall's most important work was his founding of a number of literary and text societies for the publication of early English texts and Chaucer. For these he did dozens of editions to which he wrote prefaces that have probably done more than anything else to keep his name alive, simply because, owing to their often uncontrolled discourse on irrelevant subjects, they seem out of place in their contexts.¹

Aarsleff was reviewing *Dr. F. J. Furnivall: A Victorian Scholar Adventurer*, William Benzie's 1983 biography of Frederick Furnivall.² He was no more impressed by the execution of the work than he was by its choice of subject, deciding ultimately that 'Benzie's book is in several ways a serious embarrassment' (p.178).

¹ Hans Aarsleff, 'Dr. F. J. Furnivall: A Victorian Scholar Adventurer, by William Benzie', *Victorian Studies* 29 (1985), 175-78 (p.175).

² William Benzie, *Dr. F. J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer* (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1983).

Systematically questioning the validity of Benzie's inferences and references – and implicitly accusing Benzie of plagiarising Aarsleff's own 1967 work *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* – Aarsleff takes exception to Benzie's project from its opening words.³ In the preface to *A Victorian Scholar Adventurer*, Benzie sets out the parameters for his work. He describes his book as a 'critical biography' of Furnivall which 'examines and evaluates his work as a pioneer of nineteenth-century English scholarship and looks at those aspects of his life, character, and milieu that contributed to his achievement'. In doing so, he explains his aims for this evaluation. 'My intention throughout has been to allow Furnivall to emerge not as merely another Victorian eccentric but as one of the great founders of modern English scholarship' (p.xi). Aarsleff is satisfied neither by the structure nor the purpose of the book. A critical biography, he says, 'would have to assess the scholarship in detail and try to understand the man as a product of his milieu. It would have to question the tradition which has made a great figure out of an intellectually undistinguished and uninteresting man' (p.175). He concludes his review by calling for the expansion of Benzie's approach (with, it is hinted, a more rigorous methodology) into a wider project: 'Frank Lloyd Wright was fond of saying, "what the world needs is organic architecture." In the same vein one can say, "what the history of Victorian culture needs is good history of scholarship"' (p.178).

This thesis is not a history of scholarship. Nor is it a critical biography of Furnivall. Instead, I use Furnivall's life and works – particularly the 'uncontrolled discourse' of his prefaces – as the starting point for an exploration of the ways in which late-Victorian literary scholarship was gendered.

³ Hans Aarsleff, *The Study of Language in England, 1780-1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

One way of explaining the need for such a project is to consider what investments in scholarly identity Aarsleff's critique reveals. Aarsleff's review, of course, says as much about his own scholarship as it does about either Benzie or Furnivall. Taking 'the quality of scholarship' as his chief criticism of both author and subject, Aarsleff situates himself in contradistinction to both men. Finding Furnivall's scholarship wanting in direction, control and relevance, and Benzie's in accuracy, diligence and honesty, Aarsleff implicitly invites application of these terms to his own work – which, presumably, exhibits none of these failings. His objection to Benzie's 'unattributed "borrowing"' from *The Study of Language* is a more explicit defence of his position. Aarsleff is concerned with protecting the originality, both of thought and of expression, of his academic work. Importantly, though, this concern is voiced from within the academic community that creates and confers or denies the status of scholar to Aarsleff and Benzie alike. Benzie's book can only be 'a serious embarrassment' to those who have a professional investment in methodological scrupulousness and presentational accuracy. Anxious about the reflected stigma of Benzie's inaccurate scholarship, Aarsleff is also concerned with protecting the public validity and importance of his own work:

On matters that are most important – philology, scholarship, lexicography – [Benzie's book] is a repetition of Munro's folklore. I have found a good number of wrong references and several instances of wrong names. Manuscript sources have been widely used, even for matter long put into print, but the important collection in the Houghton Library at Harvard has been missed.⁴

⁴ Aarsleff, *Benzie*, p.177. See John Munro, 'Biography', in *Frederick James Furnivall: A Volume of Personal Record*, ed. by John Munro (London: Frowde, 1911), pp. vii-lxxxiii.

Problematic and questionable as he finds the book ('odd' and 'disturbing' are the formulations he uses to introduce Benzie's errors), Aarsleff does not question the underlying motivation of Benzie's project. His claim is not that, in tracing the life and career of 'a pioneer of nineteenth-century English scholarship' and in doing so allowing such a person 'to emerge' as 'one of the great founders of modern English scholarship', Benzie has chosen the wrong project. His complaint is that Benzie has chosen the wrong person as its subject. Characterising Furnivall as 'a middling scholar at best' and branding his lexicography a failure, Aarsleff measures Furnivall's 'incompetence' against other Victorian scholars, particularly the lexicographers James A. H. Murray and Richard Chenevix Trench (p.178). In Aarsleff's view, Murray's and Trench's places among 'the great founders of modern English scholarship' are assured.

This one review highlights a range of interpretative opportunities for a study of Furnivall and his work. By concentrating on Furnivall's place in the emergence of Middle English studies, I question the assertion that he is too uninteresting and undistinguished to sustain prolonged study. I take up Aarsleff's challenge to 'question the tradition which has made a great figure of' such a man, not because I believe that greatness has ever been bestowed, or that it should be. I seek neither to rehabilitate nor recreate Furnivall's reputation. Instead, from within the project to investigate the history of scholarship, I propose that Furnivall's work and the way it has been received can inform analysis of the wider perception of gender in Victorian scholarly labour.

Furnivall's prefaces – and his reputation because of them – are shown by Aarsleff to be a site of contested meaning, and it is upon these texts that my interpretation concentrates. Indeed, Aarsleff's review illustrates how a preface can be

treated as a location of evidence about the intentions and expectations of scholarship. Aarsleff primarily takes issue not with Benzie's failure to live up to external expectations of the quality of academic work (though he moves on to these quite swiftly), but with Benzie's inability to adhere to the generic definition of his work as a 'critical biography' that he sets up in his own preface. Although this is the only place in the text that Benzie describes his book in this way, other reviewers have commented on the phrase. David Benson, reviewing *A Victorian Scholar Adventurer* in *Speculum*, similarly calls into question Benzie's classification of his book as biography. When Benson refers to the work as 'William Benzie's "critical biography"', it is unclear whether the scare quotes reflect his distrust that such a genre exists, or his disbelief that this is what Benzie has produced. Ultimately, he judges the book to be successful as neither biography nor critique. 'It rarely gives us a convincing sense of the man [...]. Nor does the book contain as penetrating an analysis of the value and limitations of Furnivall's work as we would like'.⁵

I explore some of the generic characteristics of the preface later in this chapter, as well as discussing the usefulness of prefatory texts for the history of scholarship. Additionally, as I have shown in this reading of Aarsleff on Benzie on Furnivall, scholarly self-representation is legible, and usefully so, in other extra-textual discourses such as reviews, histories and biographies.

⁵ C. David Benson, 'William Benzie, *Dr. F.J. Furnivall: Victorian Scholar Adventurer*', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 1043-44.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES

It might seem at first that while both Benzie's book and Aarsleff's review of it are revelatory of their authors' attitudes to scholarship, they say little about gender and nothing about the masculinity of scholarly work. Considered in the light of recent works on Victorian masculinity, however, Aarsleff's discourse incorporates a familiar vocabulary that characterises scholars and scholarship as gendered.

James Eli Adams, for example, has written of the ways in which Victorians who were engaged in intellectual labour sought to claim for it the status of normative manhood. Victorian patriarchy, he argues, questioned the manliness of intellectual labour even as the products of that labour underwrote its power.⁶ Adams finds that while the male authors whose work he analysed use a variety of rhetorics to depict their intellectual labours, they appeal to a small number of models of masculine identity to justify such work as manly. These findings can be useful in an analysis of reactions to Furnivall's work. The models that Adams identifies – 'the gentleman, the prophet, the dandy, the priest, and the soldier' – are all, he says, 'typically understood as the incarnation of an ascetic regimen, an elaborately articulated program of self-discipline. As such, they lay claim to the capacity for self-discipline as a distinctly masculine attribute and in their different ways embody masculinity as a virtuoso asceticism.' Interpreting the symbolic capital rather than the economic

⁶ James Eli Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.1.

utility of self-discipline in nineteenth-century culture, Adams describes how 'energetic self-discipline' was used to distinguish 'manly character' (pp.1-19). Herbert Sussman similarly sees self-discipline as the fundamental tenet of the practice of Victorian masculinity. Taking the figure of monk as the metaphor through which early Victorian writers and artists were able to register male anxieties, Sussman describes how self-discipline is important to 'the central problematic in the Victorian practice of masculinity, the proper regulation of innate male energy'.⁷

Thus when Hans Aarsleff begins his criticism of Furnivall with the objection that his publication record is not sufficiently scholarly or 'first rate' to justify his reputation, he is interpreting Furnivall's work from within professionalised academia, using twentieth-century perceptions of scholarly reputation. His comments that Furnivall 'scattered his energies' and that his prefaces consisted of 'often uncontrolled discourse', on the other hand, reflect a residually Victorian concern with the regulation of energy in literary labour, and therefore implicitly question the manliness of Furnivall's work.

Other evaluations of Furnivall's achievements have subtly drawn attention to the ways in which the gender of scholarly labour is activated in reference to other, more explicitly masculine, employment. John Gross, in his influential book *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*, describes Furnivall as 'one of the great rock-blasting entrepreneurs of Victorian scholarship, the kind of man who if his energies had taken another turn might have covered a continent with railways'.⁸ Gross's description of

⁷ Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.4-5.

⁸ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 1969), p.169.

Furnivall's work also takes energy as its primary characteristic. His judgement is, here at least, more complimentary than Aarsleff's, but it too reveals ideological investments in the masculine nature of scholarly work. If, as Adams suggests, Carlyle's coinage 'Captains of Industry' gained wide currency in the nineteenth century 'because it attached to the economic power of the entrepreneur the status of a traditional martial ideal', Gross makes Furnivall's intellectual labour similarly analogous to the economic power and status of the industrial entrepreneur.⁹ For Gross, however, Furnivall's entrepreneurial energies were not enough to make up for his other shortcomings. While acknowledging that 'only a man of Furnivall's obstinacy could have accomplished what he did, when he did', Gross lays the blame for what he sees as the 'stunted' early development of university English teaching firmly at the door of people like Furnivall, if not of Furnivall himself. 'If only a sufficiently commanding and adult personality had concerned himself with the subject', bemoans Gross, suggesting Leslie Stephen as an ideal candidate. Furnivall was not such a person, he concludes: 'a subject dominated by Furnivalls was a subject for the emotionally retarded' (p.171). Furnivall's inability or refusal sufficiently to regulate his energies, by implication, denies him the appropriately masculine qualities of leadership and adulthood.

It is nothing new, then, to use Furnivall as the cipher to explore the foundations of medieval literary studies. We are often, consciously or not, following in the footsteps of Victorian scholars, whether they provide the texts with which we work or the models of seemingly outdated scholarship against which we pit ourselves. In 1979, Derek Brewer opened the Inaugural Congress of the New

⁹ Adams, p.6.

Chaucer Society with the Annual Chaucer Lecture. His subject was 'Frederick James Furnivall and the Old Chaucer Society'.¹⁰ Brewer's lecture seems prescient on two counts. He was engaged in tracing the origins of the Chaucer academy well before current attempts to map the history of the discipline, and despite – or perhaps because of – a perceptible discomfort with the vocabulary of gender, Brewer's lecture identifies a correlation of masculinity and scholarship, although it shies away from tackling these ideas directly. Here, I examine Brewer's lecture to show that the vocabulary of masculine relations (with women, with other men, with texts) has already been unquestioningly used in the analysis of the history of Middle English scholarship.

The tone of Brewer's lecture is evident when he outlines Furnivall's virtues and faults, for they are always thus intertwined. Admitting that 'Furnivall's energy, and impatience; his complete openness that allowed the wildest indiscretion; his lack of self-regard, and his self-indulgently hyperbolic expression all made him tiresome sometimes even to his friends', Brewer proposes that 'though he could not quite be our Sidney, our perfect man, we do well to honor [Furnivall] in the ideals which the New Chaucer Society would wish to follow' (p.2). Brewer is more equivocal, though, about other aspects of Furnivall's personality:

Furnivall was also true to his Shelleyan prototype in pressing for what I suppose we must now call Women's Lib. [...] Being a sensible man, he liked women. At the ABC Tea-shop in New Oxford Street [...], he was as charming to the waitresses as he was to lady scholars like Edith Rickert or Caroline Spurgeon. He treated everyone as equals, even women. (p.3)

¹⁰ Derek Brewer, 'Furnivall and the Old Chaucer Society', *Chaucer Newsletter*, 1 (1979), 2-6.

It is hard to tell whether in referring to ‘lady scholars’ Brewer is engaging a nineteenth-century vocabulary or attempting to negotiate the uncertain world of 1970s academia. In his reluctant acknowledgement of Furnivall’s incipient feminism Brewer is keen to emphasise Furnivall’s heterosexual masculinity: ‘there is no doubt that much of his appreciation of Chaucer was for the robust bawdiness and apparent realism of so many of *The Canterbury Tales*’ (p.2). This emphasis leads him to mention the failure of Furnivall’s marriage:

It is perhaps not surprising that so impetuous a man nevertheless made a not very successful marriage. He married [...] the sister of one of the student-teachers at the Working Men’s College, and I suspect that the unfortunate woman never understood him. It was not that he practiced a Shelleyan promiscuity; he was just impossible to live with. [...] Furnivall had an extremely hardworking girl called Teena as secretary. Mrs. Furnivall considered that Furnivall spent far too much time with the innocent Teena and eventually gave an ultimatum that he must give up either his secretary or his wife. Furnivall’s love of learning prevailed; and his wife left. (p.3)

I was intrigued as to why and how Derek Brewer chose to relate this anecdote, and at first I read Brewer’s description of Furnivall’s marriage as a mixture of gossip and all-lads-together innuendo. On closer reading, though, I realised that Brewer is also searching for an appropriate vocabulary and tone with which to discuss Furnivall’s sexuality in the context of his scholarship. I had read innuendo into ‘Furnivall’s love of learning’, equating it with his infatuation with Teena Rochfort-Smith; but, at the same time, Brewer is alluding to the very combination of desire and scholarship that I discuss in this thesis. Brewer’s discussion of the women in Furnivall’s life serves to highlight the masculinity of Furnivall’s academic work; the active heterosexuality which Brewer was at pains to stress in order to legitimise Furnivall’s feminism is at odds with his scholarship. Marriage and learning are incompatible, and Eleanor

Furnivall's inability to understand her husband's work leads to her replacement in his affections. In Brewer's reading, Furnivall leaves his marriage not for his secretary but for his scholarship. When Brewer 'suspects' that Eleanor Furnivall 'never understood' her husband, the silent implication is that Brewer the fellow scholar understands him better.

That Derek Brewer chose to recount these details of Furnivall's marriage breakdown is reminiscent of another, more famous, 'unsuccessful marriage' in Chaucerian criticism: those nuptials described by E. Talbot Donaldson in his article 'The Psychology of Editors of Medieval Texts':

A given line of Middle English poetry has, let us say, two main variant forms in the MSS; after careful analysis of the textual situation and long thought about the meaning, the editor, not unlike a bachelor choosing a bride, selects Line Form A for his text. For a time he lives in virtuous serenity, pleased with his decision. A year or more passes, and then one day it comes to him, like a bolt from the blue, that he should, of course, have chosen Line Form B for his text; in short, he married the wrong girl. She is attractive, she is plausible, she has her points, but he just can't live with her; he lies awake at nights enumerating her faults, which seem considerable when she is compared with her rejected rival, who now appears infinitely preferable. So the editor (who is the least reliable of all possible husbands) obtains a divorce – an enormously expensive one. [...] His marriage with Line Form B is now consecrated, and he settles down to live happily ever after. Then after a year or so, Wife B begins to prove incompatible in a different and even more annoying way than Wife A; and it occurs to him that if he could find someone who had the best characteristics of both A and B, without their objectionable traits, he could be truly happy.¹¹

That this is a masculinist description is perhaps quite obvious – the editor as 'bachelor choosing a bride'. As Carolyn Dinshaw has indicated, there are many examples of such gendered language in both the practical and textual criticism of

¹¹ E. Talbot Donaldson, 'The Psychology of Editors of Medieval Texts' in *Speaking of Chaucer* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), p.103.

Chaucer, and I will argue, in Victorian medieval scholarship as a whole.¹² To conduct a study of Middle English criticism in order to point out the recurrence of such gendered language would be perhaps amusing, but without analysis such a survey is mere taxonomy. Instead, I consider how a discourse on editorship such as Donaldson's can be applied to a more theoretical study of masculinity in literary academic discourse in general, and to Furnivall's work in particular. For if we are to sexualise the editing process, as Donaldson has done (and as Brewer was perhaps trying to do) what does this say about the role of gender and sexuality in the foundation of academy and discipline?

EDITORS AND AMATEURS

As my readings of Brewer and Donaldson reveal, the ways in which we talk about scholarship are already gendered. Both critics use active heterosexual masculinity as a framework for assessing of the practice and theory of Middle English textual scholarship. Brewer maps Furnivall's biography onto his scholarship, while Donaldson constructs a biography for editorial practice. The ways in which we talk about the history of scholarship are also already gendered. Kathleen Biddick has recently explored the methods used to institute medieval studies as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century, arguing that recent critiques of 'the "fathers" of

¹² Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.13.

medieval studies' have lulled medievalists into a (mistaken) disciplinary security. 'Medieval studies is still intimately bound to the fathers', she says. 'Our disavowal of them actually reflects an inability to historicize the discipline.'¹³ The idea that there were 'founding fathers' of medieval studies at all is of course a gendered construct, and any disavowal of this reflects an inability to consider the gender of the discipline.

Medieval studies has already construed its male scholars as lovers, husbands and fathers. As my readings of Aarsleff and Gross show, however, gender can be constituted in scholarship with reference to areas other than sex and family. Both these commentators invoke vocabulary that implies a non-adherence to the masculine norm (the failure to regulate energy and emotion in an appropriately adult way) when they describe Furnivall's non-normative scholarly practices and personality. There is a tension here, perhaps, between Brewer's willingness to consider – even celebrate – Furnivall's active heterosexuality as intrinsic to a consideration of his scholarship, and Gross's tacit characterisation of Furnivall as so insufficiently adult as to be 'emotionally retarded'.

However, for Brewer – and, tellingly, for the rest of the New Chaucer Society – Furnivall could not be 'our perfect man'. Nor is Furnivall readily perceived as a father of medieval studies. In an analysis of the relationship between Furnivall's politics and his medievalism, the German academic Renate Haas introduces the formulation, describing Furnivall as 'the "father" of English studies in Britain', only to qualify it in parentheses:

¹³ Kathleen Biddick, *The Shock of Medievalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p.1.

(That is, if we want to call him so in order to accentuate his fundamental achievements and the parallels to Jacob Grimm and Fredrich Diez, the founders of Germanic and Romance studies in Germany. For good reasons, our British and American colleagues have been less prone to building up father-figures and, in any case, Furnivall would have presented them with major difficulties.)¹⁴

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate whether Anglo-American literary studies have been less inclined than their German counterparts to invoke disciplinary fatherhood, or why they should be seen as having good reasons for doing so. Even leaving aside that tantalising claim, Haas's comment is intriguing. Why is it problematic to confer upon Furnivall the status of academic fatherhood, and is this for the same reasons that Brewer was unable to describe Furnivall as an exemplar of manliness?

Donald Baker perhaps provides a clue when, in his chapter on Furnivall in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, he endeavours to locate Furnivall's place among Chaucer editors past and present. Although Baker argues for Furnivall's inclusion in the history of Chaucer editing, he does so while conceding that the collective community of Chaucer editors exhibits an instinct to exclude Furnivall from their number. 'Whether we condescend in our own day of supersophisticated (perhaps too sophisticated) concepts of editing even to admit Furnivall into our ranks, he is the giant upon whose shoulders we all stand.'¹⁵

Baker in fact struggles satisfactorily to locate Furnivall's work and influence in the genealogy of Chaucer editing – that is, without jeopardising the reputations of

¹⁴ Renate Haas, 'The Social Functions of F. J. Furnivall's Medievalism', in *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Mediaeval English Literature and its Tradition, A Festschrift for Karl Heinz Goller*, ed. by Uwe Boker, Manfred Markus and Rainer Schowering (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), pp. 319-332 (p.319).

¹⁵ Donald C. Baker, 'Frederick James Furnivall', in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. by Paul Ruggiers (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984), pp. 157-169 (p.169).

other scholars or their editorial standards. Furnivall's Chaucer editions, remarks Baker, 'are perhaps not editions as we would use the term normally' (p.158). If Aarsleff's review of Benzie revealed concerns about the validity of twentieth-century scholarship, Baker's analysis of Furnivall, similarly, is as much a consideration of contemporary Chaucerian scholarship as it is a contribution to a historiography of published Chaucerian texts. Baker is uncomfortable labelling Furnivall an editor: 'As an *editor*, as I have remarked, his work cannot really be evaluated, for he never, in a sense *edited* anything. He printed, but how fully, how gloriously, he printed!' (pp.168-69). Despite his willingness to document the extent of Furnivall's work, Baker is wary of attributing legitimate academic status to this labour:

Furnivall's chief contributions must be said to have lain in the selection of the texts, seeing to it that they were well copied, printed (Furnivall raised the money), and well proofread (most of which work Furnivall did himself). Furnivall was clearly not a textual scholar.

Putative objections to Furnivall's practices structure Baker's analysis of his scholarship. 'But, however regretfully one must assess the genuinely editorial capacities of Furnivall, one must not, as we will see, be led into the assumption that Furnivall was merely an ignorant enthusiast' (p.158).

In vindicating Furnivall from the twin charges of ignorance and enthusiasm, Baker tackles the knotty problem of the accuracy – or otherwise – of Furnivall's scholarship. 'Our dismissal of [Furnivall's] more narrowly textual abilities', argues Baker, is due in part to Furnivall's tendency to admit to his own mistakes in his prefaces and footnotes:

Surely no editor has ever been so willing to admit his own error and seize upon a correction [...]. Furnivall fell upon accurate scholarship with enthusiasm and gratitude [...]. His works are

sprinkled with footnotes almost gleefully announcing that his conclusions or facts have been challenged and corrected by another scholar. (p.158)

David Benson, reviewing *A Victorian Scholar Adventurer*, saw Benzie's failure to assess Furnivall's 'carelessness' as one of the major weaknesses of his book. Baker's engagement with the issue serves to absolve Furnivall from some of the charges of inaccuracy that threaten his reputation: it was not that he could not recognise or did not care about accurate scholarship, merely that he did not practise it himself. In contrast to the terms of reference introduced by Aarsleff reviewing Benzie, Furnivall refuses to be embarrassed by his own errors. This, in turn, allows Baker to shore up the place of accuracy in 'the great tradition' of editing Chaucer. Rather than see Furnivall's narration of scholarly solecism as a fault, Baker thus presents it as a virtue: 'It is owing to Furnivall's own blunt honesty that we are as aware of his imperfections as we are' (p.158).

But who are 'we'? Throughout his analysis of Furnivall, Baker makes constant appeal to a community of Chaucer scholars for whom – and from within which – he writes. Commenting on how Furnivall, in his *Temporary Preface to the Six-Text Edition* [of the *Canterbury Tales*], narrates the process of choosing manuscripts with a 'mixture of the textual and the personal', Baker speaks for all Chaucer scholars. 'This method of assembling the texts combines those features which every scholar would approve with elements at which one can only stand aghast' (p.160). Even as he ultimately rejects Furnivall's enduring reputation as inaccurate, inconsistent and idiosyncratic, Baker does so by appealing to a sense of commonly accepted group behaviour – that which is 'just not done'. 'It just does not do to be contemptuous of work about which Furnivall cared so deeply. [...] It will not do to leave the impression of Furnivall as merely an inspired textual amateur'

(pp.165-166). And by invoking the military in his description of this group – referring more than once to its internal organisation as ‘ranks’ – Baker characterises the community of Chaucerian scholars as institutional, hierarchical, and male.

Although his analysis is mainly positive, and careful to debunk myths about Furnivall’s lack of learning, Baker never quite endows Furnivall with professional editorial status. He remains ‘a keen student’ and ‘not the best scholar’ (p.167, 169). Despite Baker’s assertions to the contrary, it is as ‘an inspired amateur’ that Furnivall is ultimately portrayed.

There appears to be a particular propensity for emphasising Furnivall’s non-professional status among those who have written about – and in turn helped to create – his reputation. David Benson, too, describes Furnivall as an ‘essentially amateur scholar’ (p.1043). On a purely pragmatic level, of course, that is exactly what he was. Furnivall did not earn his living from his literary labours. It is not Furnivall’s source of income, however, that Benson uses to determine his amateur status, but his lack of an institutional affiliation: Furnivall was an amateur scholar because ‘he never held a regular position in a university’. Derek Brewer, too, mentions that Furnivall ‘never had a university appointment’, but proposes that ‘he was the ideal College Tutor’ (p.3). It is unclear precisely what sort of academic appointment either Benson or Brewer imagined for Furnivall. As David Matthews reminds us, English studies did not appear in the old universities until the last decade of the nineteenth century, and ‘nobody “professed” Middle English until the 1890s’.¹⁶ David Benson shows an awareness of this dichotomy when he credits Furnivall with helping ‘to establish English as an academic subject’ even as he

¹⁶ David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765-1910*, Medieval Cultures, 18 (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p.26.

simultaneously ascribes to him the status of 'one of the great Victorian students of Middle English literature' (p.1043). Furnivall was a pre-professional scholar, working and writing before the institutionalisation of English studies. This, perhaps, contributes to a critical unwillingness to see him – look up to him, even – as a father of the discipline or even an adult within its history. But is there, in addition, something peculiar to Furnivall's work that invites the characterisation 'amateur'? And what investments in scholarship as a profession are revealed by this?

It is Derek Brewer again who provides a possible answer. When Brewer mapped out the history of Chaucer criticism in *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage*, he used professionalisation to mark the point of transition to modern criticism. Defining the breadth of his study, Brewer posits that:

The year 1933 seemed to mark the decisive point of change in the balance between the amateur and professional criticism of Chaucer. It marks the point of overlap between the long tradition of the amateur critic – amateur both as lover and as unprofessional – and the beginning of the professional, even scientific criticism in which the concept of love of an author would too often appear ridiculous.¹⁷

This dual reading of amateur as lover and amateur as non-professional is crucial for my analysis of Furnivall's work, introducing as it does the concept of homosocial desire. It was not only that Furnivall loved some of the authors whose texts he edited: homosociality was, in important ways, the motivation for and the methodology of his literary scholarship.

¹⁷ Derek Brewer, *Chaucer: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) p.2.

HOMOSOCIAL GEOMETRIES

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential work *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* first introduced the idea of 'male homosocial desire' as a means for literary interpretation.¹⁸ In the book, Sedgwick appropriates the word homosociality from 'history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex'. Homosociality's interpretative power, for Sedgwick, is suggested by its status as a neologism, 'obviously formed by analogy with "homosexual," and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from "homosexual"'. By co-locating the word with the idea of 'desire', Sedgwick reinscribes homosociality with sexuality (p.1).

This has two effects. Sedgwick's interpretation deliberately concentrates on men, and the formulation 'male homosocial desire' allows her to hypothesise 'a continuum between homosocial and homosexual'; a continuum, she says, 'whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted'. This is contrast to what Adrienne Rich has called 'the lesbian continuum',¹⁹ and what Sedgwick elucidates as the way in which the opposition between homosocial and homosexual is less thorough and dichotomous for women than it is for men:

However agonistic the politics, however conflicted the feelings, it seems at this moment to make an obvious kind of sense to say that

¹⁸ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁹ Adrienne Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose: Poetry, Prose, Reviews and Criticism*, ed. by Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1993), pp.203-24 (p.217).

women in our society who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the activities of other women, are pursuing congruent and closely related activities. (p.2-3)

Re-instating the potential unbrokenness of ‘the continuum between “men-loving-men” and “men-promoting-the-interests-of-men”’ thus affords Sedgwick an interpretative paradigm for ‘making generalizations about, and marking historical differences in, the *structure* of men’s relations with other men’. In addition to Sedgwick’s necessary restriction of her study to men – necessary because groundbreaking, and vice versa – this axiom also enables a wider project: analysis of ‘the ways in which the shapes of sexuality, and what *counts* as sexuality, both depend on and affect historical power relationships’ (p.1-3).

Sedgwick proceeds to use homosociality to interpret René Girard’s schematisation of the erotic triangle in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1972), particularly Girard’s formulation that in an erotic triangle there is a calculus of power structured by the rivalry of the triangle’s two active members.²⁰ ‘In any erotic rivalry’, explains Sedgwick, ‘the bond that links either of the rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds or “rivalry” and “love,” differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent’. In the ‘male-centered novelistic tradition of European high culture’ that Girard analyses, the erotic triangle most often consists of two rival males and one female. Thus there is a bond of desire between two men who compete for a woman’s attention that is as strong as that which connects each male to the female (p.21).

²⁰ René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. by Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972).

For Sedgwick's feminist theory – and this is where the elasticity of her formulation is so powerful – the triangle is useful for describing more than 'the received wisdom of sexual folklore'. In order to extrapolate this geometry into a wider arena, Sedgwick refers to Heidi Hartman's definition of patriarchy as 'relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women' (p.3). This, because it positions power relations between men and women as dependent on power relations between men and men, suggests for Sedgwick that 'large-scale social structures are congruent with the male-male-female erotic triangle'. This in turn enables her to map homosocial desire onto everyday relations between men to propose a special relationship between 'male homosocial desire' and 'the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power' (p.25).

For my purposes, the theoretical framework of *Between Men* is most useful precisely for talking about scholarly relations between men. Investigation of male homosociality in the emerging institutionalisation of literary study goes some way towards fulfilling what Sedgwick herself has exposed as a potential gap in her focus, the 'relative deemphasis of the many, crucially important male homosocial bonds that are less glamorous to talk about – such as the institutional, bureaucratic, and military' (p.19). When Sedgwick describes the erotic triangle as a tool 'for making graphically intelligible the play of desire and identification by which individuals negotiate with their societies for empowerment' (p.27), I propose that those can be *literary* as well as civic societies. Sedgwick's formulation of the homosocial as a tool for the investigation of masculine relationships in both literature and society is especially effective as she proposes that homosocial desire can be expressed in enmity as well as amity. This is because Sedgwick is,

using 'desire' in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of 'libido' – not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship. (p.2)

The bonds between men can thus be exhibited in a variety of forms: emulation and identification, desire, distrust. I will argue that Furnivall's literary relations and relationships exhibit all of these forms, and can be usefully interpreted using the homosocial paradigm.

Sedgwick's hypothesis asks the same question that I do in my reading of Brewer and Donaldson. 'What does it mean – what difference does it make – when a social or political relationship is sexualized?' and her answer, even briefly as I have outlined it here, leads through a sophisticated theoretical framework for linking sexual and power relations (p.5). To discover what it means, and what difference it makes, when a literary or editorial relationship is 'homosocialised' (and thus sexualised) will be the ongoing project of this thesis. The perception of Furnivall as an amateur scholar, constituted in part by the homosocial basis of his scholarship – amateur as 'love of an author' – is just one way of applying this process. In the following chapters, I explore how Furnivall interacted with both Middle English authors and other scholars using a discourse that made evident the homosocial nature of his studies.

The triangle, also, is a recurring structural theme in this thesis. Of course, we have already encountered the erotic triangle in connection with Furnivall. His extramarital relationship with Teena Rochfort-Smith is a classic erotic triangle, of the form female-female-male. While I would in no way want to ignore the experiences of Rochfort-Smith and Eleanor Furnivall or play down their significance, theirs is

not the particular dynamic I wish to explore. I am interested here, for example, in the way Derek Brewer read the situation. In Brewer's reading of the triangle, as well as being a rivalry between two women competing for a man's attentions, there was also a rivalry between Furnivall's wife and Furnivall's literary work – and, additionally, between Eleanor Furnivall and Derek Brewer himself. I use Sedgwick's original formulation of the homosocial triangle to explore Furnivall's relationships with authors and with other scholars in Chapters 2 and 3. Keeping Sedgwick's triangles in mind, in Chapter 4 I characterise editorial relationships using Gary Taylor's classification of the theory and praxis of textual criticism as triangular.

MASCULINITY AND MEDIEVALISM

Sedgwick always intended that her 'complex of ideas' should be useful. She hoped to situate her reading of homosociality 'in a dialectically usable, rather than an authoritative, relation to the rapidly developing discourse of feminist theory' (p.17). Sedgwick's work has been used in such a way, and not only within feminist theory, as part of a widening of the focus of gender studies. During the last two decades in the humanities and social sciences a theoretical discourse has been rapidly developing around the study of masculinity. Beginning life as an adjunct to both women's studies and gay studies, 'men's studies' in the 1980s adopted forms of 'consciousness raising', similar in shape if not in scale to the second wave of feminism that engendered the early disciplinarianisation of the literary, historical and

sociological study of women.²¹ As the critical study of gender has extended beyond the study of women, 'masculinity' has become an important component of gendered approaches to literature, history and society. This both reflects and is reflected by wider cultural considerations – including concepts of a 'crisis in masculinity'.²²

While the investigation of masculinity is being undertaken in a range of disciplines and with reference to almost all periods, it is in Victorian studies that much influential work has been done. In English studies, work such as that by Norman Vance and Norma Clarke – as well as the work by James Eli Adams and Herbert Sussman on literary and artistic masculinities discussed above – has provided a new range and depth of insight into the simultaneous power and instability of a plurality of masculine identities.²³ This in turn has been informed by the work of Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall and John Tosh and Michael Roper, which has exposed new areas for historical analysis.²⁴

²¹ The core text of the men's movement is Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men* (Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990). Other mythopoetic men's studies texts include Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (New York: Bantam, 1991). See also David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Harry Brod and Michael Kauffman, eds, *Theorizing Masculinities* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1994).

²² See, for example, Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999).

²³ Norman Vance, *Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Norma Clarke, 'Strenuous Idleness: Thomas Carlyle and the Man of Letters as Hero', in *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800*, ed. by Michael Roper and John Tosh (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). See also, among others, Trev Broughton, *Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late-Victorian Period* (London: Routledge, 1999); Carol T. Christ, 'The Hero as Man of Letters': Masculinity and Victorian Nonfiction Prose', in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, ed. by Thais E. Morgan (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp.19-31; Martin A. Danahay, *A Community of One: Masculine Autobiography and Autonomy in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993); Joseph Kestner, *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995).

²⁴ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Michael Roper and John

Thus far, recent interest in nineteenth-century masculinities by literary scholars has concentrated on male identities as they are legible in art, biography, criticism, fiction, poetry and prose. What has been missing is detailed study of the operations of masculinity among literary workers who were concerned not with a self-expressive production of texts but who worked in the service industries of literature. Those who were responsible for the cataloguing, publication and dissemination of literary artefacts not only contributed to the creation of the discipline, but also – by the ways in which they characterised both their work and themselves in relation to their work – to the self-fashioning of scholarly identity through masculinity. The second half of the nineteenth century, as literary pedagogy was on the cusp of institutionalisation, was a time when the professional status of literary production was particularly open to question. Men involved in work on literature – the organisation and dissemination of texts through publishing projects, and the creation and management of reputation through literary societies, for example – had to formulate for themselves an appropriately masculine characterisation of their work. They did this, I will argue, by appropriating the vocabularies and conventions used to describe and construct masculine relationships and selfhood in their own wider societies.

Recent studies of masculinity have already looked towards these activities. Michael Roper and John Tosh, acknowledging that the study of masculinity has to remain cognisant of women's subordination by men, describe how a shift in perspective facilitates consideration of 'how gender inhabits social structures, practices and the imagination'. 'Instead of trying to define boundaries between male

Tosh, 'Introduction: Historians and the Politics of Masculinity', in *Manful Assertions*, ed. By Roper and Tosh (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) pp.1-24.

dominance and categories of race or class,' they argue, it is more useful to 'explore how such categories are themselves fractured along gender lines':

This kind of perspective reveals new dimensions to activities which had previously been thought of as having little to do with gender: [...] activities as diverse as journalism, business strategy, apprenticeship and definitions of skill; even the process of history writing itself. (p.11)

Such activities could also include scholarship and the process of literary editing itself.

The association of the study of masculinity with the study of medievalism is a similarly timely one. As R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols say in the introduction to *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, medieval studies 'is currently wallowing in the question of its origins'.²⁵ This has activated a willingness to consider the history of the discipline more critically than, for example, the analyses of Chaucer editing discussed above which invoke an unproblematised 'great tradition' or 'critical heritage' in their titles. As part of a programme that simultaneously maps the history of the discipline and questions its founding principles, *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper* follows work such as that by Paul Zumthor, Brian Stock, Lee Patterson and, indeed, Hans Aarsleff, in engaging in a debate over the origins and future of medieval studies.²⁶ More recently, the work

²⁵ R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols, 'Introduction', in *Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*, ed. by R. Howard Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp.1-22 (p.2).

²⁶ Paul Zumthor, *Speaking of the Middle Ages* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Brian Stock, 'The Middle Ages as Subject and Object: Romantic Attitudes and Academic Medievalism', *New Literary History* 5 (1974), 527-47; Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature*: (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Hans Aarsleff, 'Scholarship and Ideology: Joseph Bedier's Critique of Romantic Medievalism', in *Historical Studies and Literary Criticism* ed. by Jerome J. McGann (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp.93-113.

by Kathleen Biddick and David Matthews mentioned above has investigated the discipline's nineteenth-century origins in more depth. Other disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, too, are engaged in similar projects, but medievalists particularly 'have come more and more to see that their assumptions regarding [the] period are as historically determined by the framing perceptions of the last century as they are by the artefacts of the medievalist's study'.²⁷

Some of those 'framing perceptions', I argue, are constituted as discourses of gender. Bloch and Nichols describe how their 'history of medievalisms' approaches themes that are not usually sanctioned by the medievalist: a shift in perspective similar to that advocated by Roper and Tosh. Areas that are thus opened to interpretation include:

Topics such as connoisseurship, professionalization, and popularization [...], the influence of family origins, crises and fantasies, as well as the influence of friendship, envy, ambition, and such imponderables as character, temperament, inclination, foible and even prejudice [...], and even the scholarly quarrel as a form of communication conceived to be productive of knowledge.
(pp.4-6)

As my discussion of some late twentieth-century studies of Furnivall has shown, Furnivall's career involves, among other things, questions of the boundaries of academic professionalisation. My consideration in this thesis of these interactions as markers of masculinity affords a critical insight into the interplay of gender and scholarship.

A shift in perspective is necessary, too, in order to find the textual evidence for such a critical history of medieval scholarship. Bloch and Nichols recommend

²⁷ Bloch and Nichols, p.2.

analysis of ‘the role of collections, journals, bibliographies, textual series, and authoritative manuals’, and include those texts that have been seen as marginal to the main body of academic writing: ‘letters and written records of private conversations, unpublished notes [...], title pages and prefaces of printed editions’ (p.6). These are texts whose status as worthy of study remains undefined: manuscript facsimiles, glossaries, dictionary entries, and, most importantly, editorial prefaces. As these also constitute the body of texts produced by literary labourers like Furnivall, there is an interesting tension here between the perceived marginal status of editors and the products of their labour, and the construction of nineteenth-century medieval scholarship as the origin and foundation of modern medieval studies.

Hans Aarsleff’s correlation of the history of scholarship with an idea of ‘organic architecture’ is thus more subtle and pertinent than might have appeared. The foundational status of this body of texts is singularly appropriate to the study of masculinity. The project of theorising masculinity in literary studies is a large-scale quest to make visible the woods that have been obscured by the trees that are the male writers, subjects and scholars who founded the discipline. It is a complementary project to inspect the architectures of medievalist literary studies which have been similarly invisible despite – or even due to – their prominence. Both masculinity and medievalism have been always present but seldom examined. To put together, then, the study of Victorian medievalism and Victorian masculinities is to give a new, more nuanced, dimension to both projects.

PREFACES

So far I have shown that Furnivall's work has elicited complex and varied responses, and I have outlined how I engage Furnivall's writing and reputation in a project that investigates masculinity in Victorian literary discourse. As Aarsleff was quick to point out, the body of Furnivall's scholarly writing consists of prefaces to edited texts. If I propose to study these prefaces, some consideration of the nature of the preface is necessary. As Jacques Derrida has asked, 'What do prefaces actually do?'²⁸

Ruth Evans, considering Derrida's question recently, described prefaces and prologues as 'frames for reading', designed to be external to the works they introduce and delineating the boundary between the inside and outside of the text.²⁹ A preface, she says 'is not intended as an object of study in its own right. Who, after all, goes to an art gallery to look at the frames?' Evans is not in fact questioning the validity of studying prefaces 'in their own right'. Her comments appear in a volume that considers prologues to vernacular works from the period 1280-1520 as a site of Middle English literary theory. Prologues, the editors propose, can be considered not only as 'repositories of information about the English vernacular' but also as 'opaque entities' that have a complex relation to both the texts they preface and the history of the vernacular itself (p.371). Derrida argues that this complexity occurs because

²⁸ Jacques Derrida, 'Outwork', in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (London: Athlone, 1981), pp.3-59 (p.8).

²⁹ Ruth Evans, 'An Afterword on the Prologue', in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory 1280-1520*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor and Ruth Evans (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999), pp.371-78 (p.372).

'prefaces, along with forewords, introductions, preludes, preliminaries, preambles, prologues, and prolegomena, have always been written, it seems, in view of their own self effacement' (p.9). The relation of a preface to its text is thus 'thoroughly contradictory', says Evans. 'Written last but read first, and treated as integral to the works they are supposed to stand outside of, prefaces in fact continually overstep the line, disorganizing the categories of center and periphery, *theoria* and *praxis*' (p.372). Aarsleff would perhaps be more than willing to consider Furnivall's prefaces disorganised. There is greater interpretative potential, I believe, in reading his prefaces and his contemporaries' reactions to them as deconstructing some of the formative categories of Victorian medievalist scholarship.

When Derrida questioned the activities of prefaces, he outlined some potential paths for their interpretation. 'Oughtn't we some day to reconstitute their history and their typology? Do they form a genre? Can they be grouped according to the necessity of some common predicate, or are they otherwise and in themselves divided?' (p.8). While there is not space within this thesis to reconstitute the history or the typology of the Victorian editorial preface, questions of genre and grouping can be useful ways of approaching Furnivall's texts. For example, from the discipline of applied linguistics, Carolyn Miller proposes that:

To consider as potential genres such homely discourses as the letter of recommendation, the user manual, the progress report, the ransom note, the lecture, and the white paper, as well as the eulogy, the apologia, the inaugural, the public proceeding, and the sermon, is not to trivialize the study of genres: it is to take seriously the rhetoric in which we are immersed and the situations in which we find ourselves.³⁰

³⁰ Carolyn R. Miller, 'Genre as Social Action', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70:2 (1984), 151-67 (p.155).

I would add the editorial preface to Miller's list of 'homely discourses'. When Miller extends the remit of genre analysis to include a wider range of texts, she also proposes that study of genre should include consideration of the social action which a genre is used to accomplish. 'What we learn when we learn a genre', she says, 'is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have' (p.165). Specifically, applied linguistics has been used to consider the social actions of academia, including the ways in which:

As students and struggling scholars, we may learn that we may create a research space for ourselves, we may promote the interests of our discourse community, we may fight either for or against its expansion, we may uncouple the chronological order of research action from the spatial order of its description and justification, we may approach unexpected sources for funding, or we may negotiate academic or editorial decisions.³¹

The study of editorial prose – which can perform all of these negotiations – affords an insight into the discipline of English Literature and its constituent texts. An editorial preface can be seen not only as the interface between the text and the reader; it can also reveal the editor's aims and ambitions – for the publication of a specific edition as well as for the large-scale study of such texts. If the preface can be perceived as a frame, it should also be considered as contributing to the 'framing perceptions' of medieval studies that Bloch and Nichols encouraged us to consider.

As I have shown, Furnivall's prefaces were and continue to be a site for controversy. Well before Hans Aarsleff described Furnivall's prefaces as 'uncontrolled discourse', Furnivall's writing had caused scholarly discomfort. The

³¹ John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.44.

Athenaeum, reviewing Furnivall's EETS collection *Manners and Meals in Olden Time (The Babees Book)* in 1867, commented that 'Mr Furnivall's prefaces have been marked by some eccentricity of expression, and some members of the Society have found their propriety a little shocked'.³² In the following chapters I consider the reasons for this reaction, as I explore Furnivall's prefaces, the reception they received and Furnivall's justifications for them. First, it is instructive to look at Furnivall's prefaces in more detail. This involves asking not only, 'What do Furnivall's prefaces actually do?' but also, 'How did Furnivall come to be writing prefaces in the first place?'

Frederick James Furnivall was born in Egham, Surrey, in 1825, the eldest son in a family of nine children.³³ His father was a successful physician who ran a private lunatic asylum near the family home. Furnivall was educated at schools in Surrey and at University College, London and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he read mathematics. After graduating in 1846, he studied law, and was called to the Bar in 1849.

Furnivall may have become a barrister by profession, but most of his time and energy was directed toward his extra-curricular interests, firstly in socialism and adult education and later in English literature. Having met John Malcolm Ludlow while studying law under Charles Henry Bellenden Ker, Furnivall became involved in the work of the Christian Socialists. In company with Frederick Denison Maurice, Charles Kingsley and Charles Mansfield, he helped to establish the London Working

³² [Anon.], 'Education in Early England. Some Notes used as Forewords to a Collection of Treatises on "Manners and Meals in Olden Time", for the Early English Text Society. By Frederick J. Furnivall', *Athenaeum*, 26 October 1867, 532-33 (p.532).

³³ See Sidney Lee, 'Frederick James Furnivall', in *The Dictionary of National Biography: Second Supplement, January 1901-December 1911*, ed. by Sidney Lee (London: Oxford

Men's College in 1854. Furnivall promptly lost his faith but continued to organise social and sporting activities, and teach classes in grammar and English literature.

A member of the London Philological Society since 1847, and its secretary from 1853 until his death in 1910, Furnivall was involved in the Society's 1858 proposal for a new historical dictionary of the English language. This project became the monumental Oxford English Dictionary. In 1864 Furnivall founded the Early English Text Society, ostensibly created in order to provide material for the Dictionary project, but encompassing a wider aim of popularising the reading of medieval texts. It was a subscription publishing society, run on more democratic lines than the aristocratic learned societies and printing clubs like the Roxburghe Club and the Camden Society that preceded it. Using subscriptions of a guinea a year, Furnivall intended to print 'the mass of medieval texts hitherto available only in manuscript and poorly printed forms'.³⁴ Furnivall went on to found similar societies for the study and publication of ballads (1868), Chaucer (1868), Shakespeare (1873), Wyclif (1881), Browning (1881) and Shelley (1886). By his death at the age of eighty-five, Furnivall had edited over a hundred texts for his various societies.³⁵

Furnivall was thus influential at a certain point in the history of Middle English studies. He brought a large number of texts into print, and was pivotal in a shift from a purely aristocratic access to and appreciation of medieval literature to a

University Press, 1912), pp.60-66; Munro, 'Biography' in *Personal Record*, especially pp.vi-xlix. Benzie, pp.9-39 and *passim*, draws mainly on Munro.

³⁴ [Frederick J. Furnivall], *Early English Text Society First Prospectus* (London: EETS, 1864), p.1.

³⁵ A list of Furnivall's editorial works can be found in the first section of my bibliography, pp.228-43.

more popularised and democratic one. This paved the way for the entry for the subject into the universities.

To begin with, Furnivall's EETS prefaces were marked by little unconventionality. The 'Preface' to *Arthur*, OS 2 and Furnivall's first edition for the EETS, comprises two and a half pages, citing the source of the manuscript, outlining the plot of the story, and briefly mentioning its dialect. Furnivall also explains how, as was to be the norm for EETS editions, expanded contractions are printed in the text in italics.³⁶

His next edition, *The Wright's Chaste Wife*, in 1865, is similarly brief, but begins to show signs of what were to become the trademarks of Furnivall's prefatory style. He addresses the reader with a tone that is direct to the point of being unforgiving:

Good wine needs no bush, and this tale needs no Preface. I shall not tell the story of it – let readers go to the verse itself for that; nor shall I repeat to those who have begun it the exhortation of the englisier of *Sir Generides*,

“for goddes sake, or ye hens wende,

Here this tale unto the ende.”– (ll. 3769-70.)

If any one having taken it up is absurd enough to lay it down without finishing it, let him lose the fun of it, and all true men pity him.³⁷

The aesthetic qualities of the text are not considered in Furnivall's preface. Whereas 'every reader' was to 'judge for himself' the 'poetical merit of *Arthur*', here the text should be read for its insights into 'the state of morals' of its time. Despite a wistful desire to know more about the poet's biography that locates him in reference to

³⁶ *Arthur*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 2 (London: EETS, 1864).

³⁷ *Adam of Cobsam: The Wright's Chaste Wife*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 12 (London: EETS, 1865) [preface unpaginated].

Chaucer ('He must have been one of the Chaucer breed, but more than this poem tells of him I cannot learn'), ultimately the edition provides 'a half-hour's amusement to any reader who chooses to take it up'. Furnivall narrates his discovery of the text itself as similarly serendipitous. 'Finding the present poem also on the paper leaves [of another manuscript he was consulting], I copied it out the same afternoon'.

Serendipity, too, is the reason given for the publication of Furnivall's next edition, *A Book of Quinte Essence*, OS 16, the (untitled) preface for which is dated 16th May 1866. 'The odd account of the origin of this Treatise – in its first lines – caught my eye as I was turning over the leaves of the Sloane Manuscript which contains it.'³⁸ Again, Furnivall's preface contains elements of the style that was to variously attract and irritate his readers. Manifest here, for example, is his socio-historical rationale for publishing texts, expressed with allusion to Furnivall's own politics. Having come across the text so accidentally, and having been drawn into it by its opening lines, Furnivall,

resolved to print it as a specimen of the curious fancies our forefathers believed in (as I suppose) in Natural Science, to go alongside the equally curious notions they put faith in in matters religious. And this I determined on with no idea of scoffing, or pride in modern wisdom; for I believe that as great fallacies now prevail in both the great branches of knowledge and feeling mentioned, as ever were held by man. Because once held by other men, and specially by older Englishmen, these fancies and notions have, or should have, an interest for all of us; and in this belief, one of them is presented here. (p.v)

In Chapters 2 and 3 I consider how the homosocial basis of Furnivall's concept of history was legible in his prefaces. I also analyse the reactions such comments

³⁸ *The Book of Quinte Essence*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 16 (London: EETS, 1866), p.v.

engendered in Furnivall's readers and reviewers. Similarly conspicuous in this preface is another recurrent trope: the inclusion of personal biographical detail, given to excuse incompleteness in its editing: 'The loss of my sweet, bright, only child, Eena, and other distress, have prevented my getting up any cram on the subject of Quintessence to form a regular Preface' (p.v). Indeed, Furnivall's introduction is noticeably short. Even – unusually for one of Furnivall's prefaces – set in double-spaced type the preface is barely one and a half pages long. As I explore in Chapter 1, Furnivall's use of the word 'cram' here – to describe simultaneously the content of a 'regular preface' and the process of gathering that information – reveals that where and how he chose to represent his scholarly labour was in marked contrast to other contemporary constructions of scholarly work.

From this point onwards, Furnivall's prefaces become longer and more diverse in their discourse. The 'Preface' to *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, despite being, as OS 15, technically the edition that preceded *A Book of Quinte Essence*, is dated as having been written two weeks afterwards. This preface runs to ten pages, and its diversity of tone and content provoked an exchange of reaction and counteraction in the periodical press which I discuss in Chapter 2. By 1868 Furnivall had rejected the Latinate 'Preface' and adopted the more Anglo-Saxon 'Forewords' (always plural), a coinage that he was to use throughout his career, and in Chapters 3 and 4 I discuss further the editorial practices of Furnivall's 'Forewords'.

THE BEST REASON IN THE WORLD

In 1952, Beatrice White began an essay on Frederick Furnivall with this assertion: 'I want to write about F. J. Furnivall's work for the best reason in the world, because I like it.'³⁹ Specifically, White locates her affection for Furnivall's work in her reading of his prefaces, particularly,

the way in which he leavened everything he wrote with the peculiar impish, insinuating, appealing charm of his personality. It was one of the delights of my youth to skim through the *Forewords* of Furnivall's EETS volumes. And what pleasure must these prefaces, so forthright, so friendly and so full of fun, have brought to many whose basic store of learning was, if possible, less than mine. (p.69)

I too reacted to the pleasure in Furnivall's texts. Eve Sedgwick, describing her choice of texts for analysis in *Between Men*, refutes the idea that she has delineated a separate male homosocial literary canon. 'In fact', she says, 'I have simply chosen texts at pleasure from within or alongside the English canon that represented particularly interesting interpretative problems, or particularly symptomatic historical and ideological nodes, for understanding the politics of male homosociality' (p.17). This method of 'choosing texts at pleasure' is essentially what I have done in choosing to consider Furnivall's prefaces here.

This thesis began life in a somewhat different guise, investigating masculine identities in the work of the fifteenth-century poet Thomas Hoccleve. Hoccleve's poems, although now undergoing something of a renaissance, have enjoyed little

³⁹ Beatrice White, 'Frederick James Furnivall', *Essays and Studies*, 5 (1952), 64-76 (p.64).

critical attention in the twentieth century. In 1995, when I began my research, the only complete works of Hoccleve available in print were Furnivall's 1892 and 1897 EETS editions: as I discuss in Chapter 4, like most twentieth-century readers I thus came to the text through Furnivall's editing. Much as Beatrice White did, I skimmed through Furnivall's 'Forewords' to his edition of *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*.⁴⁰

The 'Forewords' run to forty-seven pages, and are followed by an additional twenty-nine pages which constitute an 'Appendix of entries about grants and payments to Hoccleve, from the Privy-Council proceedings, the Patent- and Issue-Rolls, and the Record Office, by Mr. R. E. G. Kirk'. Furnivall's 'Forewords' are divided into five sections. He begins with a thirteen page section on 'Hoccleve's Life and dated Poems', which includes a discussion of the Ashburnham manuscript from which much of the edition is taken, and a page facsimile from it. Furnivall then continues with a more specific assessment of Hoccleve's life and works. He devotes four pages to discussion of Hoccleve's 'Love of Chaucer', five to 'His Patrons, Associates and Character', and eight to 'Comments on some of his Poems, Metre and Language', before concluding with two and a half pages that address 'Text copying, and Thanks to Helpers'.

The 'Forewords' are visually complex and somewhat confusing in layout. In addition to examples of Hoccleve's works, the text combines quotations from reference works in English, French and Latin; a page of facsimile text; a

⁴⁰ Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems* 1, ES 61 (London: EETS, 1892), II, ed. by Israel Gollancz, ES 73, (1927 for 1897), 2nd edn rev. by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, 1 vol (1970); Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *The Regement of Princes A.D 1411-12, from the Harleian MS. 4866, and Fourteen of Hoccleve's Minor Poems from the Egerton MS. 615 (Hoccleve's Works Vol.III)*, ES 72 (London: Early English Text Society, 1897), [reprinted Kraus 1988], pp.vii-xlix.

reproduction of a manuscript illustration of Chaucer; word lists; biographical details and comments on manuscripts and sources. The body text is frequently outweighed by footnotes, sometimes with their own footnotes so that there are three sizes of type on one page. The footnotes are in themselves a mixture of discourses, including quotations from Furnivall's correspondence, examples from gazetteers, rolls and Privy Council proceedings, lengthy extracts from Thomas Wright's edition of Hoccleve's major work, *The Regement of Princes*, family trees and Furnivall's personal recollections and anecdotes.

As I show in Chapter 4, these 'Forewords' are interesting for their judgement on Hoccleve's masculinity, and it was Furnivall's comment on the poet, 'We wish he had been a better poet and a manlier fellow' (p.xxxviii), that inspired the research that eventually took shape as this thesis. What really intrigued me, however, was how, in the last section of the 'Forewords' and after thirty-six pages of textual and contextual detail, Furnivall digressed into reminiscence, anecdote, and sentimentality:

The writing of these Forewords takes me back nearly ten years, to the time when the Phillipps MS was copied, the autumn of 1882. [...] I went across to work at MSS at Cheltenham, and to stop with the family of a young-lady lover of Shakspeare and Browning, who had been helpt by my Introduction to the Leopold Shakspeare and had written to me. Daily, after my work at the Hoccleve and Chaucer MSS in the Phillipps collection at Thirlestaine House, my gifted and sweet-sould young friend took me for one of the pretty walks round the town, sometimes through level meads, sometimes through Lackington churchyard, or by other paths to the Cotswold Hills, talking of the writers and people she honoured, telling me of her Indian life, her work at Cheltenham College, and in the evening singing me favourite songs.

Teena Rochfort-Smith is not named as Furnivall's 'young friend' within the text, but her name appears at the précis at the top of the page, and the dedication of the

edition. But the book is dedicated not to her but to her memory: for as Furnivall goes on to explain:

A pleasant time it was; and little did I then think that the happy and brilliant future which I lookt forward to for my young friend would be so soon ended by her sad burning, and her death a week after, on Sept. 4, 1883. The pain of that has now past, and the pleasure of the friendship remains.⁴¹

I found inclusion of this detail remarkable. Its content as biographical detail was fascinating, but its location was even more interesting. Had others read this and been as surprised by it? What reaction had such comments engendered among Furnivall's contemporaries? Thus I began to question the activities and effects of Furnivall's prefatory discourse.

Beatrice White's description of her encounter with Furnivall's writing also reveals another important area for consideration. When White mentions other readers of Furnivall's work it is as a profession of humility: those 'whose basic store of learning was, if possible, less than mine'. This could be the gateway to another, entirely different thesis. In a previous paragraph, White contrasts Furnivall's 'gargantuan' contribution to the work of the EETS with her own: 'I, who have edited only three volumes for the EETS'. While the history of women's involvement in the EETS and in Victorian medieval scholarship – and their own negotiation of scholarly identity – is an important and necessary project, it is one that it is not possible to address here.

This prompts another caveat. There may be fears that concentration on masculinity and the heterosexual male undermines the combined and separate

⁴¹ For more on the life and death of Teena (Mary Lillian) Rochfort-Smith, see Frederick J. Furnivall, *Teena Rochfort Smith: A Memoir* (London: [n. pub.], 1883).

projects of feminist and gay studies. Studying men, it can be argued, is what was being done for too many decades before women's and gay studies facilitated the academic inclusion of people marginalised and effaced by hegemonic masculinity. The critical study of masculinity, after all, might re-establish a masculinist stronghold on literary interpretation. There is a valid argument that such study effaces the women authors and subjects that feminist scholarship and increased gender awareness have fought so hard to make visible. One answer to this is that masculinity is never, and should never be studied as, existent in a gender vacuum, without reference to women and femininity. The power relations between men include and affect the power relations between men and women. While women are not my central focus, the masculine networks and relationships discussed here do not exist without women. Feminist studies in all its configurations continues to inspire and inform the study of masculinity in the way that Sedgwick hoped her particular theoretical framework would be used: as 'part of any reader's repertoire of approaches to her or his personal experience and future reading' (p.17).

Beatrice White mentions that she could 'quite believe' that Furnivall 'was an odd neighbour and poked dirt through your letterbox if he suspected you of stealing his pet cat', but she preferred to dwell 'on his endearing qualities, and not on his eccentricities' (p.75). Considerations of Furnivall's work have not yet dealt critically with the idea of his eccentricity. Those who have judged his work positively have done so in spite of his peculiarities, but have unquestioningly accepted the characterisation. Benzie wanted his 'critical biography' to legitimate Furnivall's reputation as a pioneer in literary study in contradistinction to his reputation as 'another Victorian eccentric'. As I have already shown, others – Hans Aarsleff and John Gross, for instance – were more than keen to dwell on Furnivall as an eccentric,

but have been unwilling to interrogate what such a description might mean. Of course, it is possible – even necessary – to question the validity of using an eccentric as a case study of masculine scholarly identity. What profit for the study of either medieval scholarship or masculinity can be made from studying a discourse that cannot be seen to reflect a majority or even a minority of men? In answer, I would say that the reactions to Furnivall's prefaces reveal his contemporaries' expectations of the appropriate language and content for scholarly prefaces. What purpose and ideological value does eccentricity have? What are the investments in normative behaviour – normative *scholarly* behaviour, normative *gendered* behaviour – that the label 'eccentric' reveals? Furnivall's contravention of these boundaries, I would argue, can help to trace the ways in which his scholarly community invested in scholarly discourse, scholarly identity and scholarly masculinity.

CHAPTER ONE

STRUGGLE, SACRIFICE AND SOFT LAWNS:
MURRAY, STEPHEN, FURNIVALL
AND THE MASCULINITY OF LITERARY LABOUR

‘Yes’, said Mr Brooke, with an easy smile, ‘but I have documents. I began a long while ago to collect documents. They want arranging, but when a question has struck me, I have written to somebody and got an answer. I have documents at my back. But now, how do you arrange your documents?’

‘In pigeon-holes partly,’ said Mr Casaubon, with rather a startled air of effort.

‘Ah, pigeon-holes will not do. I have tried pigeon-holes; but everything gets mixed in pigeon-holes: I never know whether a paper is in A or Z.’

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

When Hans Aarsleff described Furnivall’s prefaces as ‘out of place in their contexts’, he was probably thinking of the immediate textual context of each preface. The prefaces are also unusual when seen in their wider intellectual and academic contexts. Here I argue that it was the way that Furnivall undertook his projects – and the way he wrote about the way that he undertook them – that has led his scholarliness and his sanity to be called into question. It is therefore useful to compare Furnivall’s presentation of his working practices with other editors’ corresponding strategies for undertaking and representing literary work.

In this chapter I look at the ways in which Furnivall, as founding editor of the EETS, characterised his editorial work, and compare his strategies with those used by the editors of two other large-scale late-Victorian cultural-historical publishing projects: the *New English Dictionary* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Despite Simon Winchester’s recent revival of popular interest in the anecdotal history of the *NED*, little critical attention has been paid to the story of the work’s creation since K.M.E Murray’s biographical treatment.¹ But as writers on the *DNB*

¹ Simon Winchester, *The Surgeon of Crowthorne: A Tale of Murder, Madness and the Love of Words* (London: Viking, 1998); K. M. Elisabeth Murray, *Caught in the Web of Words: James Murray and the Oxford English Dictionary* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), hereafter cited parenthetically in the text. Richard W. Bailey, ‘Materials for the History of

have identified, these publications should be considered not only as reference resources but also as cultural events.² Correspondingly, the myths surrounding their production should be interrogated for their depictions of editorial work as gendered. Here, I consider how James A. H. Murray (1837-1915) editing the *NED* and Leslie Stephen (1832-1904) editing the *DNB* invoked masculinity in their representations of literary labour, and I contrast these case studies with Furnivall's own uses of manliness in descriptions of his work. Where and how these men defined their working practices, I argue, reveals some of the institutional and intellectual operations of gender in scholarship at this time. As we saw in the Introduction, Murray and Stephen have been proposed as being more capable, more influential – and thus more deserving of critical attention – than Furnivall in the history of Victorian English studies. Here, I propose that while Murray and Stephen and Furnivall faced similar re-negotiations of the status of scholarly labour through their work, their strategies and contexts for dealing with them were radically different.

the *Oxford English Dictionary*', *Dictionaries*, 8 (1986), 176-250, calls for a history of the *OED* that would include 'biographies of the editors [...] an evaluation of the work of assistants, volunteer readers and major figures who encouraged and advised the editors', and would also give attention to 'the origins of the *Dictionary*, details of editing and the contemporary reception of each fascicle' (p.176). See also John Willinsky, *Empire of Words: The Reign of the OED* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

² Trev Lynn Broughton, 'The *Dictionary of National Biography*: The Gender of a National Monument', *Auto/Biography*, 4:1 (1995), 51-60 (p.51); David Amigoni, 'Life Histories and the Cultural Politics of Historical Knowing: the *Dictionary of National Biography* and the late Nineteenth-Century Political Field', in *Life and Work History Analyses: Qualitative and Quantitative Developments*. ed. by Shirley Dex (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.144-166.

SLIGHT AND SCRAPPY

Furnivall ends the preface to his 1897 Early English Text Society edition of *Hoccleve's Works: The Regement of Princes* with this apology:

I am sorry that these Forewords are so slight and scrappy; but they have been written at intervals, other work or laziness coming between the bits, and putting the details of this text out of my head. Dictionary work is always going on; and marking words and cutting slips out of books and papers is so pleasant and easy, that it makes one neglect work that needs effort. Then there was the starting of my Hammersmith Girls' Sculling Club in May 1896, for working-girls in shop sewing-rooms, and their brothers and friends, with the after housing of them, and the getting-up Sunday whole-day outings, Socials, dances and classes. Last August I took my bundle of Hoccleve papers down to the pleasant farm in which we spent our holiday month, Axhill House, Ashill, 8½ miles south of Taunton. But, alas, I never untied the string. There was the nice soft lawn to walk on barefooted, or lie on, all the morning; beautiful lanes and cross-country paths to stroll over in the afternoon or evening; songs and pieces to listen to at nightfall; crops and cattle to look at and chat about; a grand view round three-fourths of the horizon to see from our hill; visits to pay, churches to inspect, neighbours' stories to hear; – bother Hoccleve! where could he come in, with the sunshine, flowers, apple-orchards and harvest about? But here, in his London – his, and yet how different from his, – the present scraps have been put together, mainly under the electric light in the British Museum. Let them serve until the old poet's next editor treats him thoroughly, as Prof. Schick treated Lydgate.³

For all their supposed slightness and scrappiness, Furnivall's remarks provide a useful case study of late Victorian editorial working practices, and a useful context for investigating descriptions and ideologies of editing as work.

³ Furnivall, *Regement*, pp. xix-xx.

It is immediately apparent that here Furnivall is not writing about the internal details of text he has edited. The previous twelve pages of the preface describe the poem's 'personal [...] political and social allusions', its sources and its manuscripts. These sections are not without passing comments that warrant further attention, and I return, for example, in Chapter 4, to Furnivall's discussion of Hoccleve's marriage: 'So Thomas Hoccleve grind [sic] and bore it; said "anything for a quiet life"' (p.xix). But it is unexpected departures such as those in the passage quoted above that Hans Aarsleff was referring to when he attributed Furnivall's lasting reputation to the strangeness of his prefaces, which seem out of place 'owing to their often uncontrolled discourse on irrelevant subjects'. Aarsleff's criticism exposes the way Furnivall's discourse embodies different levels of eccentricity. At a point where he could reasonably be expected to be writing about the text he has edited, Furnivall writes about anything and everything else: his philological, philanthropic and recreational activities. Juxtaposing work and leisure so obviously within the preface is perhaps merely inappropriate. That the footnotes to this passage contain further detail on these activities, and that they outweigh the body text, is perhaps 'irrelevant'. That there are footnotes at all attributes the same textual status to the detail of Furnivall's holidays as to the detail of Hoccleve's manuscripts, which is perhaps 'uncontrolled'. What makes the passage 'out of place'— with its attendant connotations of impropriety and unacceptability — is what it is that Furnivall does in his leisure time. If the image of Furnivall spending his holidays shoeless and conducting conversations about local churches and resident cows with equal enthusiasm is not enough to reveal his disregard of social decorum, the description of the Hammersmith Girls' Sculling Club manages to encompass Furnivall's socialist, proto-feminist, athletic, pedagogic, agnostic and anti-sabbatarian leanings in one digressive sentence.

For the study of Victorian editing, a densely allusive passage such as this is anything but ‘irrelevant’. Furnivall’s autobiographical account could provide the springboard for a consideration of the interplay of biography and scholarship in the editorial preface. Similarly, Furnivall’s unfavourable comparison of his own editorial work on Hoccleve with that of Josef Schick on Lydgate could precipitate an informative discussion of Victorian editorial theory and textual criticism, contrasting English and German scholarship. Here, however, I would like to use this passage to investigate the way in which Furnivall described – or conspicuously did not describe – his working practices. Writing about talking about crops and cattle at a point where he could have been expected to have been writing about the text in hand, Furnivall has dedicated this paragraph to a lengthy description of why he has not done enough work on his Hoccleve ‘Forewords’. What he writes about instead exposes some of the parameters of editing as work – and, I argue, editing as *men’s* work – at this time.

In the passage Furnivall contrasts his EETS work with his activities on behalf of the *New English Dictionary* project. ‘Marking words and cutting slips out of books and papers is so pleasant and easy, that it makes one neglect work that needs effort.’ James Murray, the editor of the *NED*, would have disagreed. In this chapter I use this comment as a point of comparison from which to explore differing representations of editorial labour. In this section, I consider the ways in which Murray perceived and presented the masculinity of his own editorial labours as anything but ‘pleasant and easy’.

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE PHILOLOGICAL SOCIETY

‘Dictionary work is always going on,’ wrote Furnivall. By this point, 1897, he had been involved in the *NED* project – to varying degrees and with varying success – for forty years, and he continued to read for the dictionary until his death, contributing an estimated 30,000 quotations in total.⁴ The dictionary was a fundamental and continuing influence on Furnivall’s editorial career, inspiring the founding of the EETS and informing Furnivall’s editing. Indeed, work by another dictionary volunteer was the catalyst for this edition of the *Regement of Princes*.⁵ As Furnivall’s comparison of dictionary work with his own editorial work shows, the dictionary also remained an ideological influence. Perhaps Furnivall was thinking how his editorial career might have been different if he had remained, as he was for seventeen years, editor of the *NED*.

The *NED* project’s gestation was a long and turbulent one. While work had nominally begun on it soon after the Philological Society published its *Proposal for the Publication of a New English Dictionary* in 1858, the first section, A to ANT, did not appear in print until 1884, and the work was not completed until 1928, to be reprinted as the twelve volume *Oxford English Dictionary* in 1933.⁶ Delays to the

⁴ C. T. Onions, ‘Historical Introduction’ to *The Oxford English Dictionary* 1 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1933), pp.vii-xxvi (p.xxi).

⁵ ‘Years ago, Dr. Helwig of Vienna read for our Dictionary, Caxton’s “pylgremage of the sowle” 1483, generally attributed to Lydgate. One of his slips was the same as one of my Hoccleve extracts. Dr Murray sent them to me; and on looking up the Caxton *Pylgremage*, I found that its poem was Hoccleve’s *Compleynte of the Virgin*.’ Furnivall, *Regement*, p.vii, n.3.

⁶ *Proposal for the Publication of a New English Dictionary by the Philological Society* (London: Philological Society, 1858); *Oxford English Dictionary: Being a Corrected Reissue with an Introduction, Supplement, and Bibliography of A New English Dictionary on Historical*

project took various forms. At its inception, there were wrangles over the aim, method and title of the work, and lengthy negotiations about who was to publish the volumes and how its financial burdens and projected rewards would be split.⁷ Changes in editor also caused delay. The project's first editor, Herbert Coleridge, having started out in 1857 as a member of the Philological Society's Unregistered Words Committee, which aimed to supplement deficiencies in Johnson and Richardson's dictionaries, became within a year the ostensible editor of a completely new English dictionary, as the Philological Society called for a nationwide project of volunteer readers to begin the task of collecting words and quotations. Coleridge's influence on the project's future can be traced most distinctly in two ways. In 1860 he organised the making of a set of fifty-four wooden pigeonholes, which were designed to hold 100,000 quotation slips. When these were full, he said, in about two years' time, publication could begin.⁸ One set of pigeonholes grew into a whole roomful, and publication did not begin for nearly twenty-five years. The eventual size of the project and the time it would take had been vastly underestimated, and this was to become a recurrent theme. The pigeonholes, however, remained the only way to organise the enormity of the project in its most tangible and fragile form: millions of pieces of paper.

Coleridge's other significant contribution was to die suddenly in 1861. This would greatly influence the next decade of activity and inactivity on the project. K.M.E Murray attributes his death to 'consumption brought on by a chill caused by

Principles ed. by J. A. H. Murray, Henry Bradley, W. A. Craigie, and C. T. Onions, 12 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933)

⁷ For the story of the origins of the dictionary, see Murray, *Caught in the Web*, especially chapters VII-X; also Hans Aarsleff, 'The Early History of the *Oxford English Dictionary*', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 66 (1962), 417-39 and Peter Sutcliffe, *The Oxford University Press: An Informal History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp.53-58.

⁸ James A. H. Murray, [Chapter XXXI], in *Personal Record*, pp.122-35 (p.126).

sitting in damp clothes during a Philological Society lecture'. Whether or not this was directly responsible, the somewhat apocryphal history of the *NED* records that anxiety over the dictionary haunted Coleridge to the last. He is alleged to have exclaimed, on being told his condition was terminal, 'I must begin Sanskrit tomorrow' and to have expired with specimen prints and quotation slips littering his bed (p.136). Due to either a solemn deathbed promise or pure pragmatism, one of his Philological Society colleagues – Furnivall – took on the mantle of editor. A fellow member of the Unregistered Words Committee, he had been heavily involved in the dictionary project from the outset.

Furnivall applied his positivism and enthusiasm to the project for the next fifteen years, but only occasionally. In doing so, however, he found his *métier* as a founder of societies. As editor of the *NED* he vaguely supervised the army of volunteer readers who were combing an entire canon of printed English literature, collecting quotations for the earliest and last occurrences of each word in the language. This task was hampered by the fact that many medieval texts were available only in manuscript or privately printed form, and to rectify this Furnivall founded the Early English Text Society in 1864. Perhaps because of this change of direction, he did not really take the *NED* project forward in his time as editor, and by 1874 he was looking for ways to reactivate the work. With the opening of protracted negotiations with potential publishers – who would pay an editor's salary – the following year, the project began to take shape more officially. Another member of the Philological Society had mentioned to Furnivall that he rather wished he could have a go at the work himself. Furnivall needed no more encouragement, and began addressing James A. H. Murray, a Scottish schoolteacher and self-taught linguist, as 'Mr Editor' forthwith.

James Augustus Henry Murray was born James Murray in 1837, the intellectually precocious eldest son of a tailor in Hawick in south-east Scotland.⁹ He left a local school at fourteen with a thirst for knowledge and an aptitude for botany and languages. Teaching was proposed as a potential career, but as he and his family were devout Congregationalists he was prevented from working in a Church of Scotland parish school. After spending three years assisting in his father's tailoring trade and taking casual work on local farms, Murray found a position as assistant master at Hawick United School in 1854. This, he hoped, would give him time to study for a university degree. His rise in 1857 to the position of head master at Hawick Academy thwarted this ambition, although he eventually attained an academic qualification, the Fellowship of the Educational Institute of Scotland, in 1863. Before he was able to acquire letters after his name he accrued some within it, adopting, to the amusement of friends and family, the initials 'A.H.' in 1855. Murray was a founder member and secretary of a local antiquarian society, the Hawick Archaeological Society, where he gave papers on subjects ranging from local geology to 'The Contributions of Philology to the History of Western Europe.' He married Margaret (Maggie) Scott, an infant school teacher, in August 1862, and they had a child, Anna, in January 1864. In September of that year, on medical advice to move south to improve the delicate health of both his wife and child, Murray took up a position as a clerk in the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China in Threadneedle Street, London. The move was not an immediate success. The baby Anna died before the family left Hawick, and Maggie lived little more than a year

⁹ K.M.E. Murray's biography of James A.H. Murray is drawn from unparalleled but unquestioning access to Murray family papers and family legend. Following Richard Bailey's comments (see note 1 above), a more critical consideration of Murray's life and the part he played in the creation of the dictionary is long overdue.

after the move. Murray found his work at the bank 'adverse to my tastes, and the course of my studies' (p.61). He had hoped to find more conducive work in the library of the British Museum, but, at twenty-seven, he just exceeded their upper age limit for applicants.

By 1870, however, his situation had changed. He had married again (to Ada Ruthven in 1867), produced two children and had returned to school teaching, as assistant master at Mill Hill School in north London. Becoming a member of the Philological Society in 1868 was the catalyst for this change in career: through the Society, Murray had come to the attention of the school's headmaster, Dr Richard Weymouth. He had also begun to publish on Scottish dialect, and was soon engaged by Furnivall on an edition of *The Complaynt of Scotland* for the EETS.

ANXIETY AND ACCEPTANCE

Furnivall would later claim that he nominated Murray for the editorship of the dictionary at Murray's own request. Murray denied this as 'absolutely untrue. I never requested, never intended to be Editor'.¹⁰ James Murray spent the rest of his life editing the dictionary. He died on 26 July 1915, working on the letter *T* until a few weeks before his death. When he officially became the editor of the *NED* in 1878 Murray thought that the project would be done in ten years. Yet he was already

¹⁰ Furnivall to Murray, 14 March 1892 (marginal note by Murray), Murray papers, in the possession of K. M. E. Murray.

aware in accepting the editorship of the dictionary he was taking on a huge task, and one that would necessitate great sacrifices. Having been engaged in preparing specimen pages of the dictionary for two years, Murray had been embroiled in complex financial and etymological negotiations with publishers, first with Macmillan and then with Oxford University Press, and was aware that the work would take up an immense amount of time. These experiences led him to spend ‘the most anxious fortnight my wife and I ever passed, or ever may’, trying to decide whether to accept the position of editor (p.155). But if negotiations over the financial terms by which the dictionary project would be published had been – and would continue to be – lengthy and problematic, this was not because Murray was demanding to be well paid for his labours. He was barely asking to be paid at all. His requests for his own payment were calculated to be,

only such remuneration as would actually leave me not a loser by taking my time from other work [...]. And as at present I do a considerable amount of unpaid work in the interest of English Literature, and for its own sake, I have considered, that I ought to reckon upon giving a portion of my time without remuneration [...] as my own contribution to English Literature.¹¹

The immediate financial implications of accepting the position took second place to concerns about the effect it would have on his future reputation and potential promotion. Having acknowledged that the work would fill, if not exceed, all his spare time as a schoolteacher, Murray realised that in order to edit the dictionary he would have to sacrifice all his pedagogical and philological extra-curricular activities, and thus jeopardise his chances of promotion to a headmastership. He had made plans to publish school textbooks on German and English grammar, which

¹¹ Murray to Bartholomew Price, 30 May 1878 (draft), Murray papers.

would have to be shelved. Yet the reputation conferred by the dictionary might eventually enable him to obtain the position he coveted: a university post.

In her biography of 'Grandfather Dictionary', K.M.E. Murray attributes the final decision to accept the position to Murray's wife. 'Eventually he made his decision – or rather Ada made it for him – saying that he should choose the Dictionary and do one big thing well, rather than dissipate his energies on a number of minor works' (p.155). K.M.E. Murray gives no reference for this comment, Ada Murray's thoughts, perhaps, survive only in family folklore. K.M.E. Murray's invocation of a familiarly Victorian idea of the proper regulation of male energies is no less powerful because of this, resonant as it is of Hans Aarsleff's criticism of Furnivall 'scattering his energies'. K.M.E. Murray makes another comment, however, on Murray's autobiographical construction of his life and work, which reveals his more interesting and more complicatedly gendered strategies for displaying masculinity. She admits that, in writing about how he came to be appointed editor of the *NED*, Murray may have taken liberties with the chronology of events. In his two accounts of the selection process, one written in 1880 outlining his career and the other an autobiographical letter written to Lord Bryce in 1903, Murray's version of events is 'not substantiated by the letters and minutes' that K.M.E. Murray drew upon as documentary evidence for her biography.¹² It appears, she says, that 'James deliberately dramatised and condensed the facts [...]. He liked a good story, and that he was taken by surprise when he found his editorship assumed was more dramatic than the reality' (p.363 n.27).

¹² The letter to Bryce was later published as George F. Timpson, *Sir James A. H. Murray: A Self-Portrait, with a Commemorative Poem by Sir Owen Seaman* (Gloucester: Bellows, 1957).

Murray, then, was anxious about a range of things. This account of how he came to be editing the dictionary, I propose, can be seen to anticipate anxieties about scholarly identity legible in Murray's later representations of his intellectual labour. The personal and professional sacrifices necessitated by intellectual work as a public and national duty appeared – and remained – in uneasy relation to the project's projected rewards of national and institutional recognition. That in later life Murray was creative with the chronology of his appointment (condensing his decision-making into the 'anxious fortnight') serves to highlight the importance of these anxieties. The description of Murray's re-arrangement of the narrative as 'dramatising' emphasises another important dimension in Murray's scholarly self-fashioning. In saying that Murray 'liked a good story', K.M.E. Murray means that he liked to *tell* a good story, and the implicit inclusion of an audience is, I will argue, central to Murray's characterisation of scholarly work. As an example, in what follows I trace the way Murray's description of the space in which his work was performed registers these anxieties as gendered anxieties about the place of his work, and thus himself, in society.

OF MONKS AND MEN

Having taken on the editorship, Murray's first concern was the physical manifestation of the dictionary. Few men on the Philological Society Council, Murray wrote to Furnivall on 14 December 1878, had any real conception of 'the mere physical difficulty' and 'the unknown vastness of the work on which I

embark'.¹³ For twenty years volunteers had been reading texts proposed by the Philological Society, writing words and their accompanying quotations on a separate half-sheet of note-paper, and sending bundles of these slips to the sub-editors of each letter of the alphabet. When Murray inherited the editorship of the *NED* from Furnivall he also inherited nearly two tons of crumbling paper slips. Accordingly, he had to organise a space in which dictionary work could be carried out. The practicalities of housing the raw materials of a dictionary, and providing a place in which Murray and any assistants engaged by him could work, prevented the creation of such a space within the Murray family's rented home. Fear of fire destroying so much paper rendered a nearby thatched cottage unsuitable. Murray's solution was to erect a corrugated iron building in a thirty feet by fifteen feet space in the front garden of the house. Following Coleridge's original plan, it was fitted with more than a thousand pigeonholes to house the quotation slips as they were sorted.¹⁴

The iron building became the official residence of the dictionary. *The Guardian*, reporting at the end of 1999 that the Second Edition of the *OED* in book form could soon be made obsolete by its CD-ROM and Internet-based incarnations, saw the story of the dictionary as the progress 'from converted garden shed to website'.¹⁵ This, of course, conflates the space of the project's creation with that of its application, for the convenience of illustrating progress. But the dictionary work's unconventional location has always proved similarly labile for its observers. K.M.E. Murray's panegyric biography proposes that 'the ugly little iron room with its

¹³ Murray to Furnivall, 14 December 1878, Murray papers.

¹⁴ Murray, in *Personal Record*, p.126; W. W. Skeat, *A Student's Pastime: Being a Select Series of Articles Reprinted from 'Notes and Queries'*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p.xxxii.

¹⁵ John Ezard, 'Literary Monster Moves on to the Web', *The Guardian*, 29 December 1999, p.5.

skylights, painted grey with a brown roof, looked rather like a chapel.' Visitors, she says, were 'shocked and surprised' by the building's 'spartan conditions,' and *The Christian Leader* of 14 July 1887 wrote that it looked 'like a tool house, washhouse or a stable.' Furnivall was never keen on the building, blaming it for bouts of staff ill health and referring to it as 'that horrid corrugated den' (p.173, 242). James Murray himself christened it the Scriptorium.

This title warrants closer attention. I argue that in calling his workplace a Scriptorium – and thus identifying his work with an exclusively masculine community and a hermetic ascetic regime – Murray had found a figure through which to register his anxieties about dictionary work. In the Introduction I drew upon Herbert Sussman's description of the ways in which Victorian writers and artists used the figure of the monk to mobilise fears about artistic manhood. Here I consider the monk as one of the models of masculine working practice available to James Murray as he edited the *NED*.

In *Victorian Masculinities*, Sussman sees the monk and the monastery as particularly suitable – because particularly malleable – metaphors for the contradictions inherent in the practice of Victorian artistic masculinity. The monk in his all-male environment enables artists to exemplify anxieties about their place in the psychic, sexual and economic worlds. The monk provides the limit case in one of the central problematics of masculinity: the tension between the proper regulation of innate male energy, where psychic discipline defines manliness, and the extreme constraint of desire, by which male energy becomes deformed:

In exemplifying the extreme position in the Victorian practice of manliness as reserve, the monk becomes a figure through whom Victorian men in a mode of historicized psychology could argue their widely varied views about self-discipline, the management of male sexuality, and the function of repression. (p.3)

The monk provides the limit case, too, for the relation of sexual to artistic potency, exemplifying debates about the best ways to turn sexualised male energy into the production of art. In addition, Sussman proposes that the monk in the monastery could provide a figure through which to embody anxieties about men's relations to their wider society. An all-male sphere where sexual energy is commuted into constructive labour, the monastery provided both a historicist coding for bourgeois industrial manhood's world of work and a fantasised affirmation of a chaste all-male society set apart from compulsory heterosexuality. Thus the monk provided a locus for anxieties about the contradictory place of the male writer or artist within the economic world. Narratives of the monk's first encounter with capitalism, says Sussman, variously show him channelling sexual energy into productive work and, conversely, remaining beyond the economic grasp of the male sphere (pp.1-7).

James Murray, using a monasterial metaphor to describe his place of work, similarly articulated an imaginative zone that located his intellectual work in an imagined all-male community, exempt from both the domestic and economic spheres. 'I have tried,' he wrote in 1908, 'as a husband & father, to do what should have been the work of a celibate and ascetic, a Dunstan or a Cuthbert: no wonder it has been a struggle'.¹⁶ Murray thus formulates an discrepancy between active heterosexuality and scholarly labour. Alienation from the domestic is necessary for effective work. When Ada Murray became incapacitated by cataracts in 1909, Murray lost not only moral support; 'ever since I began the dictionary [...] she has not done much *to* it, but [...] everything *for* it; everything to save *me* to it', but also 'the pivot on which the whole house revolved, the fly-wheel of the whole system [...]

¹⁶ Murray to Harold J. R. Murray, 23 June 1908, Murray papers.

and the loss of this help [...] doubled my tear-and-wear, distracting me daily with incessant details of domestic and social duty'.¹⁷ Murray's separation from the domestic also meant, to some extent, a surrendering of patriarchal authority. His main sacrifice, he complained, had been 'of the constant companionship of my own children; and I doubt if it was worth the sacrifice'.¹⁸ Throughout their childhoods, all eleven Murray children sorted dictionary slips for pocket money. Rosfrith Murray, James Murray's ninth child, 'remembered her father catching her by the pinny one day as he passed her in the hall, and exclaiming, "It is time that this young woman started to earn her keep."' (p.178). Despite an early setback when it became apparent that Rosfrith had not yet completely mastered the alphabet, she went on to be employed as an assistant in the Scriptorium from 1902 to 1929. Murray's sacrifice had been the companionship of his children as children rather than as workers, replacing paternal authority, at least inside the Scriptorium, with a more managerial role.

But if Murray was anxious to locate his work in a separate sphere from home and family, he was not able to substitute an effective sphere of work which could provide financially for his family. This too was a struggle. Murray's contract with Oxford University Press meant that, after an initial advance, he would be paid by the printed page, essentially a piecework rate of £1 a page. By 1882 and with publication still two years away, the lofty disregard for his own remuneration of 1878 had become a more pressing concern with economics:

I am not a capitalist, but a poor man, and have only saved a few hundred pounds in anticipation of the time when I should have to

¹⁷ Murray to Furnivall, 17 April 1910, Corpus Christi College, Melbourne.

¹⁸ Murray to Harold J. R. Murray, 23 June 1908, Murray papers.

spend some on the further education and starting in life of my boys, by annual savings to which the Dictionary put a stop [...]. I have had to say rather bitterly: 'I took up the Dictionary as a student, asking only to be repaid the income I sacrificed in its behalf, and to be furnished with the necessary assistance, and I find myself [...] with an incessant struggle to make ends meet, & failing in the struggle' [...] it is certain that we have all underestimated the cost to *somebody* [...] and that it is I on whom the consequences fall, & whom they threaten to crush.¹⁹

For Sussman, the artist-monk 'figures the paradox of artistic manhood – the domain of literature must be reserved for men, yet being situated outside the male sphere, such activity unmans the male writer and artist'.²⁰ Murray in his Scriptorium falls uneasily between these same two stools: his work is incompatible with and must be separated from domesticity, yet it does not allow him to provide for his family's present or, particularly, his sons' future.

At least, cloistered within a physical and metaphorical Scriptorium, Murray was able to replace his original doubt as to whether he should become the editor of the dictionary with a faith that lexicography was his vocation. 'The Dictionary is to me [...] the work that God has found for me and for which I now see that all my sharpening of intellectual tools was done and it becomes to me a high and sacred devotion.'²¹ A man who slept under a copy of Charles Kingsley's text 'Have thy tools ready, God will find thee work,' had recast the narrative of his intellectual self-development through a Kingsleyan work ethic (p.337). Doing God's work was still a

¹⁹ Murray to Henry Hucks Gibbs, 12 February 1882 (copy), Murray papers.

²⁰ Sussman, p.7.

²¹ Wilfrid Murray, *Murray the Dictionary Maker: A Brief Account of Sir James A. H. Murray, LL.D., D.C.L., D.Litt, Ph.D., Chief Editor of the Oxford (or New) English Dictionary* (Wynberg: Rustica, 1943), p.20.

struggle, however, and there were times when ‘earnest prayer every morning for help to do my work’ was not enough:

Many a time, unknown to anybody [...], when absolutely at the end of my own resources in dealing with entangled and difficult words, when all alone at night in the Scriptorium, I have shut the door, and thrown myself on the floor absolutely on God’s help, and asked him to use me as an instrument to do what He knew to be right; and I believe I have never asked in vain.²²

Murray family legend records earlier incidences of such divine intervention, notably the fortuitous appearance of a large black dog which led Murray out of danger on a beach at Hastings in 1872 (p.127). What is interesting about his description of the incidents in the Scriptorium, however, is the insistence that these occurrences, ‘unknown to anybody’, had no audience. Despite being ‘all alone’ in the Scriptorium, and emphasising that it was ‘at night’ when interruption would be unlikely, Murray still takes the trouble to ‘shut the door’ on the outside world before beginning his supplication. The Scriptorium’s role in Murray’s depiction of himself as editor was more perhaps complex than its monastic epithet suggests.

The absent presence of Murray’s audience is suggestive of what James Eli Adams has called ‘a crisis of heroic vocation [...] figured as an emasculating moment of self-conscious theatricality’ (p.45). While Adams, like Sussman, sees ‘the capacity for self-discipline as a distinctly masculine attribute’, he goes beyond Sussman’s interpretation by identifying a number of models of masculine identity (p.2). Adams contends that in their struggle to define a new model of artistic manhood, Carlyle, Dickens and Tennyson all construct a heroic masculinity whose definitive characteristic – self discipline – is dependent upon, and thus threatened by,

²² Murray to Aelfric C. R. Murray, 14 December 1906, Murray papers.

an imagined public gaze (pp.22-60). The centrality of the hero as spectacle forges, for Adams, new affinities between seemingly contradictory male identities: the prophet and the dandy. The dandy is dependent on the recognition of the audience he professes to disdain, and the prophet depends on an audience just as much as the audience depends on the prophet for guidance. Particularly, 'the ascetic self is an observable self', because 'the prophet can only manifest his inspired selfhood by presenting himself as spectacle to an uncomprehending audience' (pp.34-35).

This paradoxical dynamic is central to James Murray's intellectual self-fashioning. Murray's desire to discipline and transcend the self in order to produce a nationally and divinely ordained work is frustrated by his need to be observed doing so. For a man whose strict Congregationalism meant he refused to attend the theatre (p.319), James Murray enacted his working life with no little sense of theatricality. He did not discourage visitors to the Scriptorium, and in 1890 it was suggested that Oxford University Press should publish 'A Visitor's Guide to the Scriptorium', prepared by G.F.H. Sykes, one of the assistants, and approved by Murray.²³ The delegates of Oxford University Press declined, concerned about the effect that these interruptions had upon the speed of the dictionary's completion. The delegates' wish to discourage visitors went further in 1892 when Henry Lyttelton Gell, secretary to the delegates, proposed that opening the Scriptorium 'as a show place' should be forbidden.²⁴ Nothing formal came of this suggestion, however, and *Newbery House Magazine* noted in 1893 that Murray seemed to thrive on occasional interruption and

²³ *Printed Report of the Dictionary Committee*, 21 February 1890, unpublished Order Books of the Delegates of the Clarendon Press, p.409.14.

²⁴ Henry Lyttelton Gell to Furnivall, 7 December 1892, Murray papers.

the opportunity to talk about his work.²⁵ Murray's preface to Volume I of the *NED* acknowledged that 'the story of the origin and progress of the NEW ENGLISH DICTIONARY has been told at length in various literary journals and magazines, and is familiar to most persons interested in the study of the English language'.²⁶

One reason that the periodical press and other people had started to visit Murray in the Scriptorium was the publication on 29 January 1884 of Part I of the first volume of the *NED*. The ensuing publicity had another effect which was to influence Murray's work and his perception of it: he was granted a civil list pension. The pension, at £250 a year, meant that Murray could give up his teaching at Mill Hill School and become full time editor. This in turn meant that he would be free to relocate to Oxford and be closer to his publisher. Accordingly, Murray and his family moved to Oxford in 1885. They took the Scriptorium with them in name and concept if not in the same sheets of corrugated iron. A new Scriptorium was to be built, again in the garden of the Murray family home. In order to overcome objections by Professor Dicey, the Murrays' next door neighbour, that the Scriptorium would intrude upon his outlook, the building had to be sunk three feet into the ground. Murray was furious. Practically, this meant that the building was cold and damp in winter, but Murray was more concerned with the effect that this had on the visibility of his dictionary labours. To him, the Scriptorium was the location of both the site and the sight of dictionary work. The foundations of the

²⁵ 'A Sub-Editor', 'A few words about the New English Dictionary', *Newbery House Magazine* 8:1 (January 1893), p.12.

²⁶ James A. H. Murray, 'Preface to Volume 1', in *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888), pp.iii-xv (p.iii). See also Leslie Bivens, 'Nineteenth Century Reactions to the *O.E.D.*: An Annotated Bibliography', *Dictionaries*, 2-3, (1980-81), 146-152.

Scriptorium must be buried, he supposed, 'so that no trace of such a place of real work shall be seen by fastidious and otiose Oxford'.²⁷

The move to Oxford had been mooted years before. Then the delegates would have had to find Murray a lectureship or fellowship for financial support: now, the pension meant this would not be necessary. Murray, who continued to want the status of an academic position, found himself living in an ancient university city without any form of institutional position and thus unable to gain entry, physically, socially, and professionally, into university circles. Friends continued to encourage him to apply for various positions, including – showing either great faith in Murray's abilities or a lack of confidence in those of other members of the institution – the Sherardian Professorship in Botany: 'Now it strikes me this would exactly suit you. Of course Botany is not your speciality, but you know more of it than most Professors of their subject.'²⁸ Murray himself applied for fellowships at Trinity and Merton in the early 1890s and at Exeter in 1895. He was unsuccessful in both. Having graciously accepted the pension from Gladstone with the proviso that it was 'not for myself, but for the Dictionary,' he found the lack of academic appointment harder to bear. 'Alas! I was born too soon! People will just be beginning to appreciate the Dictionary, when it is too late for *me*.'²⁹

Murray's private characterisations of his dictionary work consistently complain about its lack of institutional recognition; especially from the delegates of Oxford University Press, 'who care nothing specially for English & do not realize *a priori* the grandeur of the work' (p.210). In the Scriptorium he had created,

²⁷ Murray to Bartholomew Price, 6 May 1885, Murray papers.

²⁸ Fred Elworthy to Murray, 21 November 1883, Murray papers.

²⁹ Murray to Henry Hucks Gibbs, 12 February 1882 (copy), Murray papers.

rhetorically at least, an all-male space for dictionary work, but he aspired to the intellectual recognition of another masculine institutional community, the university. In his struggle to depict his own work as appropriately masculine, Murray indulged in, and almost fetishised, the tokens and rituals of those institutions: academic dress, academic address and the ceremonial conferment of degrees.

CAP AND GOWN

When James Murray had taken up his appointment as a teacher at Mill Hill School in 1870 he had swiftly begun a programme of academic self-improvement. The Fellowship of the Scottish Educational Institute which he had gained at the age of twenty-six had not provided him with the two external signs of achievement that he craved: recognisable letters after his name and official academic robes. On the subject of the latter he wrote to the Secretary of the Scottish Educational Institute, proposing that:

Even in Scotland, it would be decidedly advantageous to teachers to wear them, for the Official status it would give [...]. In England, I need hardly say, any degree is practically valueless to a teacher, which is not accompanied by such a 'sensible sign' without which my own fellowship will, I find, be of no use to me.³⁰

He took a BA in 1873 as an external student at the University of London, passing Matriculation and Part I with honours but – when the death of his father in March

³⁰ Murray to Secretary of the Scottish Educational Institute (undated draft), Murray papers.

1873 prevented him from sitting the papers – only gaining a pass in Part II. Even with this qualification, it would still be difficult for Murray to realise his ultimate ambition, a university appointment. K.M.E. Murray notes that ‘he wanted a doctorate, but the thought of years of over-work to achieve this was depressing’, seemingly without irony considering that Murray would spend the rest of his life on a project he would never live to see completed – and, as I show, carefully characterising that project by both over-work and depression. Through a network of friends in Scotland, Murray sought the award of an honorary doctorate. After being turned down by St Andrews, with the help of testimonials from Furnivall and other members of the Philological Society he was awarded an honorary LL.D by Edinburgh University in 1874.

Murray was delighted with this award and the potential career prospects it opened. He was more delighted by the fact that he now had an academic gown – ‘the full-dress gown of extra Saxony light scarlet cloth, faced with blue silk, price eight pounds, ten shillings, with a black silk velvet bonetta cap for fifteen shillings’ (p.120). Murray wore his robes to give a paper at the Hawick Archaeological Society after his LL.D degree ceremony in Edinburgh. His BA ceremony came a month later, for which the Registrar of London University had stipulated that ‘appropriate Academical Costume’ should be worn. Murray wrote to ask whether he could wear the costume appropriate to the Higher Degree he had obtained at Edinburgh (p.121).

Murray went on to receive honorary degrees for his dictionary work from Durham, Freiburg, Glasgow, Wales, Cape of Good Hope, Dublin, Cambridge and finally, a year before his death, Oxford. He continued to be delighted by the public and institutional valorisation of his learning. Constance Jones, Mistress of Girton College, encountered Murray at the conferment of the LL.D from Glasgow in 1901, and found him literally piling on his honours:

He had been wearing a great variety of hoods when capped, and explained that he owned seven degrees and corresponding hoods, and that his wife had packed for him a selection of four, all of which he had worn, by way of compliment to the University that was giving him yet another. (p.292)

Murray's attachment to academic costume reveals a preoccupation with the performance of scholarship. He wore his academic cap to work in for the rest of his life, daily re-enacting the ritual of being 'capped'.

Despite the proliferation of academic honour, Murray found national recognition less easy to accept. On 9 June 1908 he received from Herbert Asquith the offer of a knighthood, 'as a slight & too long delayed recognition of a great work greatly conceived & greatly executed'. Murray's reaction was to write long letters to four of his children asking for their advice as to whether he should accept. Unless they thought he should accept on behalf of Ada and the family, he would refuse it. It was the wrong honour. An Order of Merit 'as the equivalent of an academic recognition of scholarly work', would have pleased him, but a knighthood seemed to be recognising commercial or civic success, 'as if I were a brewer or a local mayor'.³¹ This jeopardised his meticulous construction of dictionary work as exempt from the economic demands of the market. What little recognition Murray had already received, particularly the academic recognition he so craved, was also jeopardised by the knighthood: 'All the credit I have won in the world has been as Dr Murray and I cannot bear to have this title buried under any knighthood.'³² More importantly, to accept it would mean to give up the self-sacrificial construction of his work that he had cultivated for so many years. While he maintained the official line

³¹ Murray to Harold J. R. Murray, 11 June 1908, Murray papers.

³² Wilfrid Murray, p.113.

that his work ‘was so long so little appreciated, that I learned [...] not to care a scrap for either blame or praise,’ Murray admitted that he felt,

a great reluctance to come down from this position and accept the honour of this generation; I should prefer that my biographer should have to say ‘Oxford never made him a Fellow or a DCL, and his country never recognised his work, but he worked on all the same, believing in his work and his duty.’³³

Despite this self-effacing sentiment, Murray’s views on biography exhibited the same contradictions of asceticism and theatricality that he revealed in the Scriptorium. As Murray conflates his life with his life’s work, he presents dictionary work as a technology of the self, embodying an inherent tension between self-abnegation and self-promotion. Biography, he said, is ‘one of the hateful characteristics of a degenerate age’, because it devalues work by distracting the audience with the worker:

The idle world will not let the worker alone, accept his offering of work, & appraise it for itself, but must insist upon turning *him* inside out, and knowing all about him, and really troubling itself a great deal more about his little peculiarities & personal pursuits, than his abiding work.³⁴

Yet while Murray was carefully constructing a complex self-sacrificial narrative for his editorial labours, he was, paradoxically, fantasising about ‘my biographer’ who would one day pass judgement on his life and work. Murray wanted a Boswell of his own. He included a long excerpt from Johnson’s Preface – where Johnson is describing ‘similar difficulties’ to Murray’s – in his own ‘Preface to Volume I of *A New English Dictionary*’, but in private discourse made no rhetorical

³³ Murray to Oswyn A. R. Murray, 10 June 1908; Murray to Harold J. R. Murray, 11 June 1908, Murray papers.

use of Johnson in characterisations of *NED* work, and showed little sign of identifying with Johnson's labours. He seems to aspire to be not Johnson himself but Boswell's Johnson. Indeed, he fantasised specifically about this. K.M.E. Murray says that Murray was fond of recounting a dream he claimed to have had where Boswell and Johnson, in discussing the *NED*, are actually discussing its editor:

Boswell, in an impish mood, asked 'What would you say, Sir, if you were told that in a hundred years' time a bigger and better dictionary than yours would be compiled by a Whig?' Johnson grunted. 'A Dissenter.' Johnson stirred in his chair. 'A Scotsman.' Johnson began, 'Sir...' but Boswell persisted –'and that the University of Oxford would publish it.' 'Sir', thundered Johnson, 'in order to be facetious it is not necessary to be indecent.' (p.188)

This apocryphal tale has many claimants and, accordingly, versions vary. 'A.S. Peak, who repeated the story at a party in 1891 at which Murray was present, says that Murray said the real end was, "The University of Oxford is a respectable body and ought not to be spoken of with scurrility."' (p.366 n.60). With either punchline, the dream is an invocation of the institutional legitimation of Murray's learning in the face of his marginal political, religious and national status. Oxford University held a simultaneous fascination and repulsion for Murray. A place that would not recognise 'real work' when it saw it still held the power to legitimise Murray's work by granting it 'sensible signs' of recognition. But even if the institution granted such a sign to Murray's work by publishing it, it could also withhold these signs from Murray himself. In Murray's view, the university delayed as long as they possibly could in awarding him an honorary doctorate. When the award was proposed in July

³⁴ Timpson, p.10.

1914, Murray supposed 'they were afraid I would die first and make me a post-mortem doctor!'³⁵ He died a year later.

Murray accepted the honorary D.Litt. from Oxford, just as, having delayed just long enough that Asquith had to prompt him for an answer, he accepted his knighthood. But he remained convinced that no one understood the complexity, volume and sheer difficulty of the work he put into editing the dictionary. 'I wonder sometimes whether anybody will ever realize the work that the Dictionary costs', he complained in 1904, '[...] and it does not matter; once it did trouble me; now I know the work is too high & too intense for anybody to realize who only sees the result'.³⁶ It might have seemed from his diatribe on biography that this was what he had wanted: 'the abiding work' standing in place of the worker's biography. But for Murray, 'work' was both verb and noun, both product and process. If the world was to 'let the worker alone, accept his offering of work, & appraise it for itself', the minutiae and difficulty of Murray's everyday working practices – the story of the 'struggle' – would go unwitnessed. If Murray wanted public recognition of his finished work, he also wanted recognition of his work in progress. In formulating dictionary work as 'real work' Murray needed to show that it was hard work and active work. To do this he had to make public the detail of his daily working life. He could be observed by visitors to the Scriptorium, and if they were members of the press they could then redraw the scene for their readers, but in order actively to construct his working practices, Murray had to write them himself.

³⁵ Murray to Harold J. R. Murray, 4 November 1914, Murray papers.

³⁶ Murray to Edward Arber, 24 December 1904, Birmingham University Library, EA 149.

EDITOR'S LETTERS

Murray's correspondence took up a large amount of his time. In a lecture on dictionary making in 1910, he listed examples of the twenty or thirty letters he might have to write in any one week, 'to the Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew about the first record of the name of an exotic plant; [...] to the Editor of the Times for the context of a quotation from the Times of 30 years ago [...]' (p.201). Yet he refused to learn to dictate, or to use, as Furnivall suggested, pre-printed slips for his letters enquiring about the derivation of words (p.269). He needed to demonstrate the complexity of his work, and to do so publicly, and his letters served to shore up the difficulty of his work and the extent of his knowledge. Under constant pressure from Oxford University Press to minimise the size of the work and maximise the rate of completion, Murray battled to keep down the volume of his dictionary. He laboured to balance sufficient detail in each definition with the eventual size and cost of the whole project, accumulating enough detail on each word for a monograph. 'When you receive the new issue', he continued in his 1904 letter to his friend Edward Arber, Professor of English at Birmingham University, 'turn to the articles *pelican* and *penguin*, and try to realize what these articles cost. I could have written two books with less labour'.³⁷ Such exhaustive work of course took a long time. But even as Murray invokes his struggle for progress, he himself frustrates it. Ever the teacher, in a letter of 1880 he takes time he says he can ill afford to illustrate a contributor's errors: 'with 15 years' work ahead of me, 3 hours

³⁷ Murray to Edward Arber, 24 December 1904, Birmingham UL, EA 149.

is all I *ought* to spend on it. I have nevertheless spent three times three in testing your work at various points'.³⁸

Murray's sensitivity about academic distinction and his need publicly to expose his working practices can be seen to converge in an exchange of correspondence published in the *Athenaeum* in July 1893. Engaged on a national monument, Murray had an uneasy relationship with the public in whose name he was working. He felt himself ultimately responsible – and accountable – for a project whose method and object accorded it collective ownership. As each fascicle of the dictionary was published, it was reviewed in the periodical press and generated much published correspondence as the readers, many of whom had contributed to it, pronounced their verdicts on its accuracy. The section *Consignificant to Crouching*, published in May 1893, was no exception, and J.P. Owen wrote to the *Athenaeum* criticising Murray's definition of the word *cram*.³⁹ Owen's dispute rested on locating the origin of the word in the parlance of Cambridge undergraduates rather than of Oxford, as Murray had done. Owen bemoaned that 'Dr Murray and his coadjutors should have bestowed such entirely inadequate attention on these expressions'. Murray's incensed reply appeared in the periodical's next issue. Despite his fascination with the trappings of academia, Murray had no particular loyalty towards either Oxford or Cambridge. His objection was to the implied slur on his working practices. Owen, he says, 'knows absolutely nothing of the amount of attention or the amount of time bestowed upon the words, except from the results. There are scholars

³⁸ Murray to Constance M. Pott, December 1880 (draft), Murray papers.

³⁹ J. P. Owen, 'The "New English Dictionary"', *Athenaeum*, 1 July 1893, p.35.

who could tell a very different tale'.⁴⁰ Murray then takes this opportunity to spell out the daily minutiae of dictionary work, and his defence of one definition becomes a defence of the whole project and his work on it:

For the lexicographer, who, to produce one part of the Dictionary in a year, must, every day of every week, write, print, revise, re-revise and send to press, the history of twenty-five words in all their senses, a monograph upon every sense of every word is absurdly impossible; and if it were possible, the public would not buy the hundred volumes to which the work would extend. (p.97)

Pelican, penguin, cram: Murray could have written a book on each, but the public would not buy it. Despite his desire to separate the work from market forces, Murray was ultimately accountable for the project's commercial success as well as its accuracy. Trying to produce the key to all etymological mythologies in a form that would actually sell meant that the published work would never and could never reflect the work that had gone into it.

Murray was particularly incensed by Owen's charge that his definition was 'misleading', and publicly resolved to use the dictionary for revenge. He would, he said, include Owen's words in the definition of *mislead* when the dictionary got to M, so that 'posterity may not forget the one discerning man who has detected in our exhibition of the facts a base attempt to mislead the unwary' (p.97). Owen, in a reply published two weeks later, singles out this sentence for particular criticism. It 'might be more naturally expected from a young lady when some one has inadvertently stumbled against her daintily shod footlet, than from a mighty scholar, whom indiscriminating admirers have impelled to assume the god'. Owen dismisses Murray's threat to quote him in the dictionary as undermining exactly what he

⁴⁰ James A. H Murray, 'The word "Cram" in the "New English Dictionary"', *Athenaeum*, 15

sought to protect: Murray's 'great reputation, and of the nationally important work on which he is engaged':

There are wider interests involved in the 'N.E.D.' than the self-love of an obscure person like myself, or even than that of the learned doctor; and it ought not to go forth that every scribbler who thinks fit to point out specks (whatever may be his motives) in this gigantic undertaking is safe of a corner among the crowd of immortals, simply because he may happen to tread on some corn of the editor's. ⁴¹

The correspondence between Murray and Owen illustrates important themes in the characterisation of scholarly practice. James Murray's sensitivity to lack of praise for – and criticism of – the dictionary becomes a debate about the gender of scholarly labour. Such sensitivity is seen as unmanly – both womanly and youthful – and his position as editor is an undeserved elevation to godlike status. Murray's haste to legitimise the processes and the status of his work calls into question the manliness of his too-explicit personal involvement in the dictionary project, and thus of his work on the dictionary itself.

Of course, it is unlikely that these scholars would have engaged so readily and so personally in a debate over the definition of *pelican* or *penguin*. Murray's public delineation of the unrelenting rhythm of dictionary work alongside a defence of its thoroughness highlights the conflicting pressures he felt himself to be under. That it appears in a squabble about a word whose definition not only attributes value to scholarly labour but also traces its etymology to one (or other) of the ancient universities renders legible the complexity of Murray's intellectual self-fashioning. Perhaps Murray's sensitivity to this particular criticism is in part a fear that his own

July 1893, p.96-97 (p.96).

⁴¹ J. P. Owen, 'The word "Cram" in the "New English Dictionary"', *Athenaeum*, 29 July 1893, p.161.

work was becoming 'cramming' under pressure from Oxford University Press and from influential periodicals such as the *Athenaeum* itself, which had pronounced in 1868 its disbelief that the dictionary project would ever be completed.⁴² Cramming, certainly, was something from which Murray had explicitly to distance himself:

I may add that the small-type note appended to the definition of *cram*, 'always depreciative or hostile', which Mr Owen is pleased to call 'Dr Murray's own dictum,' was considered and approved by at least a dozen scholars, including some of the best living authorities on English. Its usefulness as a statement of fact is not at all impaired by the other fact that Mr Owen rather likes, and perhaps finds it useful, to be known as a 'crammer.' Were there not cynics who, for reasons best known to themselves, rather enjoyed being called 'dog'?⁴³

Readers of the *Athenaeum*, of course, had been involved, on a larger scale, in another dictionary project, the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Unlike the *NED*, whose strength was in its comprehensiveness, the *DNB*'s validity was formulated through its exclusivity, and the criteria applied to the selection of its subjects were, and remain, integral to the work's cultural standing.⁴⁴ The *Athenaeum* and its readers were actively involved in this choice, as the periodical published lists of potential candidates for the dictionary. More than one type of dictionary work, then, was 'always going on' at this time. In the next section I explore how Leslie Stephen

⁴² *Athenaeum*, 16 May 1868, p.698.

⁴³ Murray, 'The word "cram"', p.77.

⁴⁴ Broughton, 'The *DNB*', p.54.

editing the *DNB*, and negotiating similar ground to James Murray, came up with a subtly different vocabulary with which to describe his work.

DICTIONARY AND DRUDGERY

Although Furnivall relinquished the editorship of the *NED* to James Murray in the 1870s, he continued to be interested in similar projects, and editing the dictionary was only one of his potential occupations. Literary work provided him with little in the way of financial remuneration and, having given up legal practice in 1873 at the age of 48, Furnivall continued to apply, unsuccessfully, for various paid positions until he was granted a civil list pension of £150 a year in 1884. One such application was in 1882, for the position of sub-editor of a new biographical dictionary proposed by George Smith, publisher of the *Cornhill Magazine*. Originally designed to be international, the *Dictionary of National Biography* was limited to British lives on the advice of Leslie Stephen, who was editor from the project's inception in 1882 until 1891. The first volume of the *DNB* appeared in 1885, and Leslie Stephen lived to see the completion in 1900 of the sixty-three-volume work under Sidney Lee, the sub-editor he eventually appointed on recommendation from Furnivall.

Leslie Stephen and James Murray, both editing monumental dictionaries in the last decades of the nineteenth century, faced similar problems in the conduct and characterisation of their work. Both the *NED* and *DNB* projects were large-scale, paper-intensive, time-consuming and costly. Thus both editors had to employ the familiar editorial tasks of proof reading, correction and revision on an unfamiliar

scale. On top of these primarily textual tasks Murray and Stephen were called upon to display an entirely new area of expertise: the management of human resources. The *NED* and the *DNB* projects were distinct from previous dictionaries – and the demands on their editors distinguishable from those on their predecessors Samuel Johnson and Alexander Chalmers – because the work involved a vast number of volunteer contributors whose work had to be overseen. Editing now encompassed, in addition to specific ability in or aptitude for biography and lexicography, a new combination of administrative skills: clerical organisation, budgeting, recruitment, advertising, delegation and extensive correspondence.

So at a time when male writers and artists were struggling to find appropriately masculine models for intellectual labour, editors such as Murray and Stephen had to find a vocabulary for a newly defined editorial role that involved both academic and professional skills. When Leslie Stephen was considering appointing a sub-editor in 1882, he was unsure where to locate the vacant position in relation to these two sides of literary labour. ‘I cannot say whether [...] I should be in want chiefly of a man of business superiority or of a man of antiquarian or other knowledge.’⁴⁵ He knew that he would need ‘a man of knowledge, good at abstracting, looking up authorities, and so forth, and an efficient whip in regard both to printers and contributors’.⁴⁶ As Stephen’s ready acknowledgement of the ‘business’ of the *DNB* implies, he did not separate his editorial work from its funding or its marketplace in the same way that Murray did. There was no Scriptorium for the famously agnostic Stephen; *DNB* work was conducted in an office next door to

⁴⁵ Gillian Fenwick, *Leslie Stephen's Life in Letters: A Bibliographical Study* (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1989), p.229.

⁴⁶ C. H. Firth, *Memoir of Sir Sidney Lee*, in *Dictionary of National Biography 1912-1921* (London: Smith, Elder, 1927), pp. xiii-xxvi (p.xv).

the project's source of finance, the premises of Smith, Elder & Co. A speaking tube connected the editor to the publisher's office.⁴⁷ But if, unlike Murray, Stephen did not adopt a specifically monastic vocabulary to describe his work, like Murray he did 'struggle with the dictionary'.⁴⁸ Here I explore the ways in which Stephen registered the frustrations and problems he experienced.

From the start of his editorial work on the *DNB*, Stephen seemed conscious of the need to express the difficulty of his work even before the extent of that difficulty had become evident. Confident that his editorial task would be relatively simple, he wrote to Charles Eliot Norton in March 1883:

The said dictionary is more or less launched, and, like other work, so far as my experience has gone, it is rather a humbug: that is, one talks a great deal and lets other people talk more about the immensity of the task, and, after all, one finds it to be tolerably simple when it is once got a little into order. (p.376)

While it is difficult to pin down exactly what Stephen means by 'humbug' – which is of course part of the word's bathetic potency – there is perhaps a clue in Stephen's use elsewhere of the term as the antithesis of all that is admirable in a man. Writing in 1884, again to Norton, of his proposed memoir of Henry Fawcett, Stephen expresses his affection for his late friend, who 'was a very noble and very simple fellow, without a particle of humbug in him' (p.386). If 'humbug' implies that which is not noble, not simple and not conducive to fellow-ness – a word simultaneously

⁴⁷ Firth, p.xix.

⁴⁸ Frederic William Maitland, Stephen's biographer, entitles his chapter on the period 1882-1891 'The Struggle with the Dictionary'. *The Life and Letters of Leslie Stephen* (London: Duckworth, 1906), pp. 373-404, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

located within male kinship and academic institutional networks – Stephen could have chosen no better description of his dictionary work.

Stephen's early confidence that the work would be 'tolerably simple' was not borne out by his later experience. He seemed prepared for the 'great mass of information' the project would generate, but not for the way that managing contributors and their copy tested his skills and patience.⁴⁹ His struggle was not, like Murray's, with public lack of admiration for his work, but with his own inability to find the work intrinsically admirable. In his *Mausoleum Book* of 1895, Stephen looks back on *DNB* work as 'a very laborious and what for me in particular was much worse, a very worrying piece of work. I had to manage whole droves of contributors'. As editor of the *Cornhill*, Stephen was accustomed to managing contributors, but the contributors to the *DNB* were a different, larger and more varied constituency, most of whom 'were unknown to me even by name at starting'. Faced with this unknown quantity, Stephen had to 'detect the impostors of whom there were plenty at starting, and gradually to sift out from them the really trustworthy contributors'.⁵⁰

It was not just the contributors' names that were unfamiliar. They were a breed apart, 'a most fretful and unreasonable race of men, the antiquaries'. Stephen found their working methods and personalities in great contrast to those with whom he had been accustomed to working, and very different from his own practices:

The antiquarian is a more troublesome creature to tackle in some respects than the average contributor to a magazine. He is not so humble. He thinks me an inferior animal because I don't care for the obscurest sweeping of minute information and treats me from a

⁴⁹ Leslie Stephen, 'A new "Biographica Britannica"', *Athenaeum*, 2378 (1882), 850.

⁵⁰ Leslie Stephen, *The Mausoleum Book*, ed. by Alan Bell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), p.86.

pinnacle of moral complacency. I don't know that he is worse than a poet, but he is nearly as bad.(p.379)

Managing these contributors was so 'troublesome' to Stephen's established scholarly self that he had to designate them as various Others. Antiquarians were such a different 'race of men' that they were barely men at all. En masse they were animals: 'droves' and 'creatures'. 'Fretful and unreasonable' contributors who needed 'pacifying' were children. And those who wrote without Stephen's disciplined brevity and conciseness were simply mad:

My greatest worry is in struggling against the insane verbosity of the average contributor. I never knew how many words might be used to express a given fact. I read piles of MS., cutting right and left, and reducing some 'copy' to a third of its original mass. (p.383)

Consequently, the skills that handling these contributors and their work necessitated were not ones that Stephen aspired to. Unlike Murray, who wanted to publicise the cumulative detail of his processes and practices, Stephen was unfamiliar with and frankly unenthusiastic about the minutiae of dictionary work:

I had again to superintend and investigate a great quantity of wearysome and petty detail, and virtually to learn a new art, for I had never taken any special interest in the minute researches upon which the value of such a book depends; and I had to become familiar with the right mode of setting about the task and in short, to puzzle out the whole thing for myself.⁵¹

Stephen, 'a careless workman' on a 'treadmill', expressed his alienation from the work by adopting mechanical metaphors, attributing to the dictionary a power and will greater than his own. When James Murray had done the same it served to

⁵¹ Stephen, *Mausoleum Book*, p.86.

consolidate the human achievement and to introduce another detailed enumeration of Murray's working hours:

It is like the work of a machine & not of human beings struggling with some of the most difficult problems of human history – why, the history of the verbal suffix, *-ing*, alone took me nearly 3 weeks of research, and then two whole days to write it.⁵²

But Murray knew he was supplying the 'libraries of heaven'.⁵³ Stephen locates his 'infernal' dictionary labour somewhat lower. 'The damned thing goes on like a piece of diabolical machinery, always gaping for more copy, and I fancy at times that I shall be dragged into it, and crushed out in slips.'⁵⁴ While the two editors' descriptions are similar in that they attribute physical hardship to intellectual labour, they differ in their ideological investment in detail. Murray values the mastery of detail, but Stephen disparages similar tasks as monotonous. In doing so he imbues the metaphor with resonances from the intellectual history of dictionary making. Samuel Johnson's enduring characterisation of the lexicographer as 'harmless drudge' is given new life in Stephen's descriptions of his own dictionary editing. Stephen's letters consistently conflate 'dictionary and drudgery'. In October 1884 he maintained 'still a sort of idle fancy that I should be better employed in writing than in drudgery of this wearisome kind'. Later he remained 'knee-deep in dictionary and drudgery' (p.383, 387). Stephen gives his dictionary work not only a physical presence, 'That damned Dictionary is about my bed and about my path and spies out all my ways, as the psalmist puts it', but also a physical strength to be reckoned with. 'A sight of Cornish wrestling' on holiday prompts him to use a metaphor of combat:

⁵² Murray to Arber, 14 January 1900, Birmingham UL, EA 148.

⁵³ Wilfrid Murray, p.19.

'I gained strength enough to try another fall with the Dictionary.' For even on holiday the work intrudes on his leisure time: 'A hideous packet from the Dictionary has come, which I have not yet had the courage to open. As soon as I have finished this [letter], I must spend some hours of lovely holiday weather in my accursed drudgery' (p.385, 383, 390).

Stephen began to take prescribed holidays from the dictionary, and later in life he would trace his illness back to his biographical labours. In the mid-1880s the combination of 'a good deal of labour' on his life of Fawcett, and 'steady labour on the dictionary [...] told upon my strength'. A holiday in 1887, which at the time he felt merely 'desirable', is seen with hindsight as 'a necessity', but is presented as too little to prevent his eventual resignation from the *DNB*. 'It is plain that I was overworking. After my first collapse in 1888, I struggled on but had to drop a part of my work in 1890 and the whole in 1891'.⁵⁵ He was just not prepared to make Murray's sacrifices. 'And as for the work itself – the dictionary – nobody can think less of it than I do. I should be very sorry to sacrifice either myself or my family to such an idol' (p.395). But if Stephen's rhetoric did not invoke the self-abnegation that Murray registered through the figure of the monk, it did make a similar separation of dictionary work into an all-male world:

As for the Dictionary, I have put it into commission upon such terms that if I have to retire, it will, I think, be able to go on under its present management; and if I am strong enough I may after a few months take the helm again, though I must never again try to be, as I was, both captain and mate, beside occasionally acting as sailor before the mast. I shall only, at the outside, be a kind of president of a committee of management. (p.401)

⁵⁴ Fenwick, p.20.

⁵⁵ Stephen, *Mausoleum Book*, p.88.

Although the metaphor changes here from martial to managerial, from naval captain to captain of literary industry, it consistently locates dictionary work in male institutions. Stephen's self-imposed exile is less a physical and more a mental removal from the domestic and social world: 'The only reason I ever get anything done is that I do not waste time in the vain effort to make myself agreeable. I stay in my shell and do a little bit of work most days.' Indeed, his removal from the feminine is so great that, although keen to emphasise his overwork in other contexts, he feels the need to play it down in front of women. 'The feminine mind has every merit; but it is haunted by a strange illusion that men overwork themselves. I have never in my life worked hard' (p.385). The construction of dictionary work as hard work was, like the work itself, something that had to happen between men. F.W. Maitland, Stephen's first biographer, explicitly attributes a masculine reserve to Stephen's selective narration of his struggle with the dictionary:

To a few very intimate friends he had been groaning over the Dictionary. Only to a few. This I will say of Stephen: he manfully consumed his own smoke. If he wished 'to howl like Carlyle,' he never howled in public. Nor in private either. Already in those days I knew him well. I heard some powerful language about the Dictionary, about the old man of the sea, slough of despond, Serbonian bog, and the like, but it used to make me laugh, and Stephen would not have tolerated me if I had not laughed. He never complained; he swore, I admit, though his execratory vocabulary was by no means copious; but he never complained. (p.395)

It might seem from the quotations above that Stephen did little else. Maitland, legitimising the veracity of his biography ('already in those days I knew him well') is also shoring up the mythology of *DNB* work as selfless struggle.

In 1887 James Murray was also taking a prescribed holiday from dictionary work. Murray's need to render legible the monotony and difficulty of his work was realised in the same way as Stephen's disgust over the drudgery of his own: in

opposition to leisure time and 'lovely holiday weather'. One of Murray's sacrifices has been the 'recurrent and frequent holidays' of the school year.⁵⁶ He suffered bouts of ill health throughout his editorship, possibly from working in the damp and cold Scriptorium. His holidays enabled him to recoup his physical strength. Rhetorically, they enabled him to reinforce his indispensability. It was a reciprocal sacrifice. He complained of the 'enormous personal cost' of any time away; for on his return,

the accumulation of proofs, revises, 2nd. revises, finals [...] to say nothing of the pile of letters etc. a yard deep is so appalling that I feel inclined to sit down and weep, and vow that I will never go away again! [...] Such has been my fate since I gave up my liberty to be the slave of the Dictionary! It never leaves me, it always weighs on me. (p.257)

Murray invokes slavery in the tropes used to justify the difficulty of his work. This is not so different from Stephen's 'drudgery'. Presenting dictionary work as so hard that it risks physical collapse, so exhausting that the editor is forced to take holidays just to have the strength to carry on, both men invoke manual labour and servitude in their construction of intellectual labour.

Thus James Murray and Leslie Stephen both characterised their dictionary work as hard work: difficult, monotonous drudgery. As editors, they had to organise both textual and human resources, and this was sometimes frustrating. The work was as exhausting as manual labour, leading to enforced holidays or physical collapse. It had to be conducted in a specific place, away from home and family, and necessitated the sacrifice of leisure time and favourite activities. At the depths of his despair over disagreements with Oxford University Press, and on the point of resignation, Murray wrote to a friend describing his dictionary work in a way that

⁵⁶ Timpson, p.20.

encompassed all of these tropes: the separation of intellectual work from the heterosexual and domestic spheres, the representation of intellectual labour as physical labour, the incompatibility of leisurely philology and the impossibility of recognition:

I leap once more at the thought of being free from the eternal grind, of having romps with my boys, & walks with my wife, & excursions into the fields of literature, & hours in my garden, and time to enjoy existence, from each and all of which I have had to cut myself off to till this thorny, stony, & thankless ground. And I say: I will do it no more. (p.228)

This investment in scholarship as hard labour was the context in which Furnivall's prefaces appeared. In the next section I explore how he, and they, used different strategies for representing scholarly work.

A BUNDLE OF PAPERS

Frederick Furnivall, then, was not the only person engaged in producing national textual monuments at this time. As founder of and an editor for the Early English Text Society, Furnivall faced similar problems to those of Murray and Stephen. He too had to adopt many roles while running the Society: he had to recruit subscribers and manage subscriptions, find editors and superintend their work, negotiate access to manuscripts, correspond with printers, and complete his own editing. In short, he had to master, like the *NED* and *DNB* editors, a new combination of administrative and academic skills. However, Furnivall's characterisations of his work differ from

those presented by Murray and Stephen in both kind and context. While I would not want to deny Furnivall's often deliberate eccentricities, I propose that although his prefaces reveal a similar preoccupation with rendering scholarship as masculine, they do so in a different way. The contrast between Murray's letter describing the 'eternal grind' and the passage from Furnivall's Hoccleve preface with which I began this chapter shows some of the differences in the ways that these men represented their editorial labour. In the final section of this chapter I use that passage and other extracts from Furnivall's prefaces to explore how and where he represented his literary work. I argue that, in two ways, Furnivall's representations cross the boundaries with which Murray and Stephen cumulatively delineate their work. Furnivall does not enforce the same separateness in the time and space of work and leisure, and he does not separate public and private discourse. Finally, I propose that, while Furnivall does not make the same recourse to models of monastic and industrial manhood to justify his work, both the EETS project and Furnivall's editorial work for it were fundamentally informed and structured by homosociality.

We left Furnivall lying barefoot on a soft lawn, disinclined pick up his notes. As I have shown, James Murray and Leslie Stephen both used their holidays as a point of contrast from which to emphasise their working practices. If Furnivall was under the same pressures, it is perhaps not surprising that he introduces his own holiday in his Hoccleve preface. A description of how this leisure time was intruded upon by the great pressure of his editorial duties could serve useful purpose as the public exposure – and thus validation – of his diligence and devotion, and the ensuing public recognition of this could then go some way to assuaging Furnivall's anxieties about the lack of manly action and discipline in his scholarly work. Such anxieties,

though, are conspicuously absent here. Furnivall's acknowledgement that his editorial work 'needs effort' is as far as he goes in representing scholarly work as hard work. Murray and Stephen characterised their work as massive, weighty, and valuable. Furnivall's work, a bundle of papers tied up with string, is lightweight, easily portable and easily ignored. Both dictionary editors had to take holidays in order to prevent collapsing under the pressure of their work. Furnivall's Hoccleve work, and 'other work' to which he is committed, collapses under the pressure of his holiday.

Even back at home Furnivall's Hoccleve work was subject to various distractions, of which 'dictionary work' was just one. Where Furnivall did his editorial work is, I would argue, as ideologically important as where Murray did his. While the *NED* could be found in Murray's Scriptorium, and the *DNB* in Leslie Stephen's offices, the Early English Text Society's office was Furnivall's home, and during his nominal editorship of the *NED* project between 1861 and 1876, Furnivall's home also served as the repository for dictionary slips. As John Tosh has explored, at this time it was not unusual for middle class professional men (particularly the clergy, doctors, and men of letters) such as Furnivall to conduct work in the home. But Tosh emphasises the separateness of this room: it was a space 'not so much sited *within* the home as carved out *from* the home'.⁵⁷ Arthur Munby, visiting Furnivall, who he knew through the Working Men's College, in 1862, witnessed him making no such interior division between work and domesticity:

After dinner, I went to Ely Place by appointment, to see Furnivall. Found him in a strange dingy room upstairs: the walls & floor and chairs strewn with books, papers, proofs, clothes, everything – in

⁵⁷ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.60.

wondrous confusion; the table spread with a meal of chaotic and incongruous dishes, of which he was partaking, along with ‘Lizzy’ Dalziel, the pretty lady’s maid whom he has educated into such strange relations with himself [...]; & her brother, a student of our College. F., who was pleasant & kindly to me as ever, was enjoying a vegetarian banquet of roast potatoes, asparagus, & coffee!

Much like the inclusion of Furnivall’s recreational itinerary in the textual space of his Hoccleve preface, this (dis)organisation of domestic space – proofs and clothes in ‘wondrous confusion’ – shows an unwillingness to compartmentalise social activities and philological work. As indeed does Furnivall’s choice of after-dinner entertainment:

Presently came Hantler, the jovial goodhumoured builder, in his uniform as a captain of the 19th Middlesex [...] And William Sutton, also of the College. After the meal, which lasted from 7 to 9, all four of them set to work, arranging and writing out words for the Philological Dictionary, of which Furnivall is now Editor in place of poor Herbert Coleridge.⁵⁸

Cutting dictionary slips at home with his friends and future wife, Furnivall has not made Murray’s sacrifices of separation from the domestic and the familial. In this way, dictionary work can be ‘pleasant and easy’. And in describing it as such, Furnivall does not tell the same story of physical hardship and mental difficulty upon which Murray depends to legitimate his work.

Furnivall thus conducts his work alongside – and as part of – the freedoms from which Murray ‘cut himself off’. This is no more obvious than in a preface of 1870, where Furnivall, writing from his family home in Surrey, again acknowledges and excuses his text’s shortcomings:

⁵⁸ Derek Hudson, *Munby, Man of Two Worlds: The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910* (London: John Murray, 1972), pp.123-24.

The notes I have added would have been longer and better, had I been at home among my books, but this, and divers other bits of work, have dawdled on during our four-months' stay here, from the time when I began to write in the garden.

The setting is different, but the excuse is the same: 'Games with my boy, long walks with my wife under "the glad light green" of Windsor-Park beeches [...], chats, pleasant outdoor country-life: who can work in the middle of it all? I can't.'⁵⁹ Murray has sacrificed 'romps with my boys, & walks with my wife [...] & hours in my garden'; Furnivall indulges in them. He may be protesting the incompatibility of scholarly work and countryside, but in practice he does not enter into Murray's separation of labour from the pastoral. Murray locates his dictionary work, here rendered as backbreaking agricultural labour, as separate from and in opposition to leisurely gardening, both literal horticulture and metaphorical 'excursions into the fields of literature'. Furnivall, able 'to write in the garden' and to write the garden into his preface, combines all three.

Once he had taken on the dictionary, James Murray was never again able to publish in the fields of literature, and it was only when Leslie Stephen gave up his dictionary work that he was able to return to work on 'things more interesting to me'.⁶⁰ But while both Murray and Stephen had to turn down other work in order to concentrate on their respective dictionaries, Furnivall was constantly establishing new societies and juggling diverse projects. Commissioned to edit *Robert de Brunne* for the Rolls Series on 31 March 1865, Furnivall had still not delivered the manuscript by 1886. In answer to politely threatening letters on behalf of Maxwell

⁵⁹ *Andrew Boorde's Introduction of Knowledge and Dyetary of Helth*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, ES 10 (London: EETS, 1870), p.110.

⁶⁰ Maitland, p.401.

Lyte, Deputy Keeper of the Rolls, Furnivall replied that he 'took all my books to Yorkshire but never opened them. Lawn tennis, cricket, walks, picnics, getting up a Concert and Dances, occupied all the holiday. Then, since my return, there's been the practice for our Sculling Four Race next Saturday'. Lyte threatened the safety of Furnivall's civil list pension, warning that the work 'undertaken by you for Her Majesty's Government many years ago should have preference of all other literary studies, however interesting and attractive'.⁶¹ Furnivall, using an identical construction to excuse a lack of work – the good intentions of taking books and papers to the holiday destination, the admittance of failure to take them in hand, followed by the list of better things done instead, and an identical tone of informality reminiscent of a travelogue or personal letter – in a private letter as in a published preface, disregards the boundaries of work and leisure, and public and private discourse. These boundaries, of course, are familiar as those that James Murray and Leslie Stephen use to underscore the value and manliness of their work. Family, home, nature and leisure are incompatible with the hermetic, ascetic, urban workplace and the strict demarcation of working hours. Murray and Stephen describe their work in opposition to, and as incompatible with, the very domestic and leisure pursuits that Furnivall inscribes into his descriptions of his working practices.

⁶¹ Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1836-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.117.

'IT HAS BEEN A BORE TO DO THIS'

If where Furnivall did his work is significant in an analysis of his scholarly self-fashioning, where he wrote about where he did his work is even more important. Furnivall not only lets 'other work and laziness' get in the way of his scholarship, but will also cheerfully admit his fluctuating levels of interest and industry in print. By writing scholarly practice, and lack of it, into his text, Furnivall's editions publicly narrate their own genesis. The working history of the *DNB* and the *NED* is legible only in the correspondence and autobiographical writings of the projects' editors. James Murray's resentment at his lack of funding and recognition is not legible in his preface to the *NED*, and he was not even able, as promised, to resurrect his spat with J.P. Owen over the definition of *cram* by quoting him in the definition of *mislead*. Other editors had been taken on by the time the *NED* got to *M*, and the editing of *mislead* was passed to Henry Bradley and C.T. Onions. Similarly, Leslie Stephen's frustrations at, for example, Alexander Balloch Grosart's breach of copyright, which at one early point seemed to jeopardise the whole *DNB* project, had no public textual outlet. What could be said in private about the work was, as we have seen, somewhat different from what could be said in public, and what could be said in public, for example in a letter to a periodical, was different again from what was actually included in the published text.

Furnivall, on the other hand, was only too keen to record editorial disasters and displeasure in the text. So as well as holiday stories, Furnivall's prefaces include letters of correction and confessions of how mistakes by editors, including Furnivall himself, waste time, page space and money. In the 'Forewords' to the 1893 EETS

edition of John Capgrave's *Life of St Katherine*, Furnivall devotes three pages to description of the shortcomings of the text's original editor. This 'apology for the text' narrates the edition's shaky progress towards publication. Furnivall only came to be writing the foreword because 'Dr. Horstmann chose the wrong MS'. Horstmann had copied and sent to press one manuscript before finding another, which was closer to Capgrave's autograph form, should perhaps have been used as a copy-text. Furnivall was not pleased at what he saw as a waste 'of money that would have printed 130 pages of another MS':

I could not help telling Dr Horstmann that his edition was a 'mess'; and I think his feeling is that it is so, must have been one of the reasons that made him throw it up. I don't pretend to set myself over him as a person who hasn't made as bad or worse messes; no doubt I've made plenty more. The only thing is to confess the blunder, and beg our members to excuse it. All our workers can't be of the first class; we must often put up with some of the third and fifth [...]. No very great harm has been done.⁶²

Presumably Furnivall expressed his irritation just as forcefully to Horstmann himself, with the result that the EETS was left with 130 pages of inferior manuscript already in type and no editor. Furnivall then had to take over the preparation of the edition for the press:

As our subscribers expect forewords of some kind to their volumes, I have knockt the present ones together [...] It has been a bore to do this, as other pressing work had to be set aside for it; but no one else could be got.⁶³

⁶² *John Capgrave: The Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 100 (London: EETS, 1893), p.xxviii.

⁶³ *Capgrave*, p.xxxi.

Other editions, too, come out under Furnivall's name because 'no one else could be got'. More than once Furnivall explains that he is writing an EETS preface because the original editor has fallen ill or died, and it has fallen to him as 'the society's servant-of-all-work'.⁶⁴ This presents a construction of his work similar to but subtly different from Stephen's treadmill-bound workman or Murray's description of himself as 'a galley slave chained to the oar'.⁶⁵ Furnivall's servitude to the EETS was an invocation not of historicised (and histrionic) thralldom but of domestic service. He was a 'man-of-all-work' rather than a man forced to submit to an industrial process.⁶⁶ But there were limits to the work this servant was prepared to do. Furnivall never reached the state of complete subordination to his work that so exhausted Murray and Stephen. When the going got tough, Furnivall went to bed:

I cannot give time to hunt out the sources for the fictional Life [of St Katherine] or write notes on the text [...]. At 67, and with five years' work in arrear, I am content to shirk; and now I am off to bed.⁶⁷

The only sign that Furnivall requires acknowledgement for his pains is that he includes the exact time that he finished this preface: '1 a.m.'. Furnivall's distinguishing feature remains that he is 'content to shirk', and willing to describe within the text all the shirking of and boredom with scholarly work as well as his enthusiasm for it. Furnivall, it seems, has no sense of the preciousness of his own

⁶⁴ *William Lauder: The Minor Poems*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 3 (London: EETS, 1870), p.xiii.

⁶⁵ Wilfrid Murray, p.107.

⁶⁶ *Lauder*, p.xxv. Also *The English Conquest of Ireland, A.D 1166-1185*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 107 (London: EETS, 1896), p.vii.

⁶⁷ *Capgrave*, p.xxxi.

labour – he does not feel, like Stephen, that he would be better suited doing something else, nor, like Murray, that lack of appreciation for his methods and his finished product depreciates the value of his work. If readers of Furnivall's editions are left in no doubt as to the work that has gone into creating them, they are also aware of the work that has not.

In admitting boredom, what John Tosh has called the acceptable face of male discontent, with and in the text, Furnivall subverts the conventional use of the preface as apologia by refusing to adhere to the ideology of scholarly diligence.⁶⁸ 'If any one thinks it a bore to read these Prefaces, I can assure him it was a much greater bore to have to hunt up the material for them.' But he also dismisses the ideology of readerly diligence. 'If any one groans over the length of these extracts, he can relieve himself by skipping them'.⁶⁹ When James Murray made a similar apology for the length of his preface to his 1872 EETS edition of the *Complaynt of Scotland*, the reader's thoroughness is not just understood but anticipated:

I have endeavoured by clearness of arrangement, to put it in the power of readers to find at once what they want; and I hope that they will in return, and in consideration of the very great labour which the work had cost me, look leniently upon the numerous points in which, under a heavy pressure of other work, I may have failed to satisfy their ideas of an Editor's duty.⁷⁰

By locating any editorial failure in the 'ideas' of his readers, Murray implies that he has fully satisfied his own ideas of the editor's duty: 'clearness of arrangement' has

⁶⁸ Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.179.

⁶⁹ *Early English Meals and Manners: The Babees Book*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 32 (London: EETS, 1868), p.i.

⁷⁰ *The Complaynt of Scotland*, ed. by James A. H. Murray, ES 17, 18 (London: EETS, 1872-73), p.cxxiii.

been achieved, 'very great labour' has been expended at personal cost – and the reader's failure to recognise any of this is almost assumed.

However, Furnivall had his own concept of an editor's duty, and through it his own way of legitimising the masculinity of literary labour. Murray wrote to Furnivall in 1890, depressed about lack of praise for the dictionary, despondent of its completion and seeking solace. Furnivall's reply explicitly correlates manliness and scholarly work:

As to work, the motive for it is not to get praise, or have one's vanity flattered, but to get knowledge increast & good work done which other folk may carry on. Only a girl wants continual praise. If a man knows himself that his work is honest, & a few friends know it too, that's enough, let the rest of the world call him a dd. fool if it likes.⁷¹

Furnivall, happy to narrate his work – and admit to a neglect of work – from within a domestic or recreational setting, locates the masculinity of his work not in how it was undertaken but why. Privileging homosocial bonds – 'a man' and 'a few friends' – over hard labour, Furnivall situates his work for his literary societies in a homosocial circle. And it didn't seem to matter if this was a very small circle. When Murray replied that it was the fear of devoting his life to a work that no one wanted, rather than a concern with personal gratification, that troubled him, this was met by Furnivall's assertion that 'The Dicty has to educate folk into wanting it, & ought to be produced tho' only 6 men cared for it'.⁷² The vast national undertaking, rather than having to satisfy a demanding public, could – and should, it seems – be

⁷¹ Furnivall to Murray, 18 March 1890, Murray papers

⁷² Furnivall to Murray, 19 March 1890, Murray papers

published just for Furnivall's coterie. Yet Furnivall's aims for both the *NED* and the EETS were anything but elitist.

FOREFATHERS AND SONS

The Early English Text Society as Furnivall conceived it in 1864 was a monumental undertaking. When he wrote that the society's aim was to put into print the 'vast mass of our early literature', mass meant majority as well as volume. Furnivall wanted to print it all. Despite this, neither Furnivall's contemporaries nor later historians of Victorian scholarship have seen a project that planned the comprehensive copying, editing, printing and publication of practically the whole of the country's vernacular manuscript and early printed book collections, relying on voluntary labour and subscription funds, as an unusual or unrealistic undertaking. The society's stated aim was to make such editions 'accessible to the student of moderate means'.⁷³ Although more assertively pedagogical and democratic, the EETS was, then, like the *NED* and *DNB*, a quintessentially late-Victorian plan: monumental, ambitious and nationalist. But if putting a library of affordable texts within the reach of all who wished to read them – and in doing so to increase the numbers of that constituency – was the Society's stated objective, what would now be called its mission statement was more explicitly gendered. Furnivall wanted

⁷³ [Frederick J. Furnivall], *Early English Text Society: [First] Report of the Committee* (London: EETS, 1865) p.2.

subscribers to the EETS 'to make their forefathers' speech and thoughts better known to this and future generations'.⁷⁴ A project whose cause was improved textual access to – and thus ownership of and pride in – the English cultural past, wanted, as its effect, moral improvement for England's present and future.

When Furnivall's contemporaries showed perceptible discomfort with this work, they were uncomfortable less with the Early English Text Society as a scheme than with Furnivall's often discursive and sometimes controversial 'Forewords'. Furnivall disrupted some carefully constructed linguistic boundaries in his published writings, and in doing so jeopardised some equally carefully constructed representations of masculinity. He did this, I propose, because he had his own agenda for invoking masculinity in literary work. When Leslie Stephen announced the *DNB* project, he was firm in his belief that the work would need discipline:

A writer in a dictionary must be historical, not controversial or discursive; he must credit his readers with some knowledge of surrounding facts; he must put what he has to say in a pithy or condensed form; [...] in short, he must be strictly biographical.⁷⁵

Furnivall's original instruction to sub-editors of the *New English Dictionary* in 1862 shows that he saw an additional duty to be fulfilled:

Lastly, having finished with the strict business of an Article, I exhort you [...] to indulge in a little chat with your Reader, noting for him the chief points of interest in the history you have set before him, moralizing shortly on them if you will, and giving any additional facts [...] in short, telling him all you wish him to hear.

⁷⁴ *The Stacions of Rome, The Pilgrims Sea-Voyage etc*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 25 (London: EETS, 1867), p.ix.

⁷⁵ Stephen, 'Biographica Britannica', p.850.

Being good sense and well put, as of course it will be, Editor and Publisher will be only too glad to find room for it.⁷⁶

Under Furnivall's editorship, one imagines, the *NED* and the *DNB* would have been vastly different documents. But the contrast here is between more than just discipline and indulgence, or conciseness and verbosity. Furnivall sees a moral imperative in philological work that does not replace 'strict' adherence to scholarly principles but is supplementary to it.

In order that contributors to the *DNB* knew what being condensed and pithy was all about, they were sent Stephen's life of Joseph Addison as an exemplar of style and brevity. Stephen was thus the model for his contributors' work and the measure by which it was judged. Furnivall locates his editorial model somewhat further afield. Furnivall's comment on Schick's Lydgate edition in the Hoccleve preface shows that he can already imagine someone who could make up for his own editorial deficiencies. But it is not Josef Schick. Furnivall finds his editorial model not in current German scholarship but in future English editing; 'the old poet's next editor' will improve upon Furnivall's expedient edition. Furnivall had tried to put this approach across to James Murray in 1887. Co-operation, said Furnivall, meaning more than one editor, would speed up the progress of the dictionary. Murray, perhaps fearing privately a loss of control, feared openly for a loss of efficiency. Furnivall was dismissive. 'Well & good: I shall be content, & let my boy wait for the 2nd edn & his son for the 3rd [...]. No first try can produce a perfect work'.⁷⁷ Duty is owed not only to the present public but also to future generations. Furnivall's gendered

⁷⁶ Frederick J. Furnivall, *Circular to Sub-Editors*, 15 September 1862, in K. M. E. Murray, *Caught in the Web*, p.138.

⁷⁷ Furnivall to Murray, 9 November 1887, Murray papers.

rhetoric ('my son' and our 'forefathers') situates his work at the centre point of national patrilineal descent. This location of the edited text in time by placing it within a male genealogy is fundamental to the underlying concepts of Furnivall's editing, and I return to the idea of editorial fatherhood in Chapter 4. In the following two chapters I would like to look at the wider gendered context of these male relations: male relations. For fatherhood and sonship are, of course, homosocial as well as familial relationships.

In the 'Forewords' to his Hoccleve *Regement*, Furnivall takes us not only on holiday with him but also into the British Museum, where he is at last able to organise his prefatory scraps. These peripatetic working practices are also evinced in other prefaces. His EETS prefaces, especially the later ones, often end with a reference to the place where they have been written. In amongst those written at home, in the British Museum, and at Furnivall's legal chambers, are those written from less conventional offices: the hillside at 'Riddlesdown, below Croydon', or 'on Kingston and Sunbury meadow banks':

In the bright air on this chalk down [...]. The wild thyme under foot gives out its sweet scent, the tender graceful harebell nods, the golden lady-slipper glows, the crimson ground-thistle gladdens in the sun, the fresh blue sky and fleecy clouds look down well pleased. Would that Chaucer and Shakspeare were here!⁷⁸

This invocation of Chaucer and Shakespeare shows how Furnivall's prefaces use the countryside to do more than just blur of the boundaries between work and leisure time, and work and leisure space. As the Hoccleve preface showed, and as David Matthews has explored, Furnivall found English literary history in the English

⁷⁸ Francis Thynne: *Animadversions uppon Chaucer's Workes...1598*, ed. by Frederick J. Furnivall, OS 9 (London: EETS, 1875), p.cxvii.

landscape.⁷⁹ Accordingly, perhaps the real reason that Furnivall was unable to complete his Hoccleve work in the country was that it was not Hoccleve's countryside. But in 'his' London, Hoccleve can come in, and Furnivall can complete work that puts fifteenth-century men and nineteenth-century men in the same social circle.

However, 'Bother Hoccleve!' bothered some of Furnivall's readers. In the following chapters I consider why Furnivall's prefaces were seen as 'odd', and how he justified such criticism by declaring that he was 'entitled to write Prefaces as to a circle of my friends'.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Matthews, p.180.

⁸⁰ *Stacions of Rome*, p.viii.

CHAPTER TWO

‘I NEVER CARED A BIT FOR PHILOLOGY’:

PROMOTING MIDDLE ENGLISH

His intimate friends called him 'Candle-ends',
And his enemies, 'Toasted-cheese'.

Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*, 1876

In 1877, engaged in negotiations to find a publisher for the *New English Dictionary*, the Rev. Walter William Skeat (1835-1912) wrote to his friend James A. H. Murray. In his letter he discussed – and despaired of – a fellow member of the Philological Society, Frederick Furnivall:

Somehow, he isn't believed in at the Universities [...] It has arisen from his odd prefaces etc, & modes of expression – And your present chance, a good one, will all come to grief unless you listen to all he says, & then systematically & effectively disregard it all in practice.¹

Skeat was warning James Murray that Furnivall's good-intentioned interference might capsize the *New English Dictionary* project before it had properly started. Furnivall, having almost single-handedly wrecked preliminary discussions with Macmillan about publishing the Philological Society's dictionary, wanted Skeat to take the project to Cambridge University Press. Skeat was more inclined to approach the Delegates of Oxford University Press, and it was near the start of what were to be two years of delicate negotiations that Skeat made his comment to Murray. At the start of the talks with Macmillan in 1876, Skeat had given a similar warning of Furnivall's impetuosity:

¹ W. W. Skeat to Murray, n.d [November 1877], Murray papers.

If [negotiations] can be managed without Mr Furnivall till all is fairly in order, it will certainly be best. Without doubt, he will publish all he knows at the earliest opportunity. I have told him plainly, often, that this is often annoying: but, though he is at heart one of the best of men, he will not take that hint.²

By 1882, James Murray had found out Furnivall's idiosyncrasies for himself. The two men disagreed over the sub-division and classification of compounds in the dictionary, with Furnivall pushing for detail and Murray resisting on the grounds of lack of space and time. Murray, mindful of the tactics Furnivall resorted to when he did not get his own way, wrote to Bartholomew Price, secretary to the Delegates of Oxford University Press, in order to put his side of the story:

Mr F. J. Furnivall (who has an itching for annoying people) has been worrying me for some time [...]. As there is no saying what he may do in one of his mad fits – print a letter abusing me perhaps [...] I write simply to inform you. I do not choose to accept Mr Furnivall's dictation as to any point of the Dictionary, because I do not believe in the soundness of his judgement or the sufficiency of his scholarship; and therefore he tries to get me into trouble.³

Furnivall's propensity for bombarding both friends and adversaries with letters and postcards, and for conducting personal disagreements in published correspondence, was well known among his circle of acquaintances. Sidney Lee, writing Furnivall's entry in the *DNB*, summed up this aspect of Furnivall's character and career:

Devoid of tact and discretion in almost every relation of his life, he cherished throughout his career a boyish frankness of speech which offended many and led him into unedifying controversies.

² Skeat to Murray, 6 April 1876, Murray papers.

³ Murray to Bartholomew Price, 19 June 1892, Murray papers.

He cannot be absolved of a tendency to make mischief and stir up strife.⁴

Skeat, Murray and Lee have many things in common. They were all members of a community of literary workers involved in the study and publication of English culture – its language, literature and Lives – whether through ‘the Universities’ (Skeat) or through massive publishing projects (Murray and Lee). They were all members of, and all edited texts for, the Early English Text Society. And, perhaps surprisingly considering the opinions expressed in the extracts above, they were all Furnivall’s friends. All three contributed memorials to the *Volume of Personal Record* published the year after Furnivall died, with Sidney Lee describing Furnivall as a ‘warm and unselfish friend’.⁵

With friends like these it is perhaps not surprising that Furnivall’s career, while characterised by friendships with a wide range of people, was punctuated by controversies and public disagreements.

In the previous chapter I showed that the ways in which Furnivall and Murray characterised their working practices revealed different approaches to and vocabularies for the manliness of editorial labour. Here, I propose that the differences and similarities between the ways that Furnivall and Skeat represented their work can say something about the history of the academic study of English literature. When Skeat was writing to Murray about Furnivall in 1877, all three men

⁴ Sidney Lee, ‘Frederick James Furnivall’, in *Dictionary of National Biography: Second Supplement, January 1901-December 1911*, ed. by Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder, 1912), pp.61-66 (p.65).

⁵ Skeat and Murray concentrate on tracing Furnivall’s involvement in the beginnings of the *NED* project. While Skeat includes a mock-Chaucerian verse about Furnivall, Murray’s entry is somewhat chillier than the effusive memorials in the rest of the volume. *Volume of Personal Record*, pp.94-96; 122-35; 174-80.

were involved the *NED* project on an equal footing, at least financially: none of them were being paid for their work. By 1878, Skeat had been elected as the first holder of the Elrington and Bosworth chair in Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge University and James Murray had been appointed editor of the *NED* by the delegates of Oxford University Press. Despite Murray's enduring conviction that he was never personally accepted at or appreciated by Oxford University, its crest on the title page of his dictionary was an institutional endorsement of his work. Walter Skeat's characterisation of Furnivall's prefaces as 'odd' implies that he – and 'the Universities' – held expectations of the correct language for a preface, expectations which were either unknowingly unfulfilled or deliberately ignored by Furnivall. Skeat invokes institutional validation ('the Universities') as a judgement of intellectual authority ('prefaces and modes of expression'). David Amigoni, however, discussing the *DNB*, has warned against conflating the intellectual and the institutional. In the light of the medley of institutional determinants that produced the *DNB*, he argues, the most appropriate way to frame such a text is to consider it as actively constructing the intellectual through its institutional conditions of existence.⁶ Skeat, it would seem, is actively constructing the intellectual Furnivall through his institutional condition of non-existence: the Universities don't believe in Furnivall. And they continued not to believe in him. Furnivall continued to write 'odd prefaces' and to conduct his work outside the sanctions of the ancient universities, never obtaining, like Skeat, a university position or being published, like Murray, by a university press. As I will show, it was Furnivall who introduced Skeat to the Early English Text Society and to editing the Early English text in the

⁶ David Amigoni, *Victorian Biography: Intellectuals and the Ordering of Discourse* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p.11.

1860s. Despite this, by the end of the century Skeat and Furnivall were on different sides in the institutionalisation – and nascent disciplinarianisation – of the study of English literature. In what follows I explore how the differences between what Skeat and Furnivall believed they were doing when editing for the EETS, and why they thought they were doing it, can be traced through their different career paths.

To consider the reception of Furnivall's 'odd prefaces', and indeed of his 'boyish frankness of speech', then, is to consider how the Early English Text Society actively constructed its intellectuals through its texts.

SKEAT AND THE ANXIETY OF IGNORANCE

Affectionately perplexed by Furnivall's unbounded enthusiasm, Skeat had written to Furnivall in 1866: 'Your 'go-ahead-itiveness' puzzles me sometimes, but it's an element of success, so go-ahead, old fellow, say I, and good luck go with you.'⁷

David Matthews has used this comment as the title for his examination of Furnivall's place in the history of Middle English Studies, one of the few critical studies in recent years to take a balanced view of Furnivall's influence on the subject. Derek Pearsall, for example, considers that 'much of Furnivall's work was useless'.⁸ In

⁷ Skeat to Furnivall, 22 January 1866, Furnivall papers, King's College, University of London, 1/1/1.

⁸ Matthews, pp.138-61; Derek Pearsall, 'Frederick James Furnivall (1825-1910)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, ed. by Helen Damico, with

using 'go-ahead-itiveness', the arch-etymologist Skeat had had to coin a term to express Furnivall's peculiar blend of eagerness, outspokenness and simultaneous open- and narrow-mindedness, what a contemporary observer called 'bumptiousness' and Derek Pearsall sees as 'egregiousness'.⁹ The enduring problem of how to describe exactly what it was that was so irritating about Furnivall was made doubly difficult for Skeat by the fact that he respected and was involved in much of what Furnivall did, and that he thought him 'at heart one of the best of men'. The 'go-ahead-itiveness' comment, for example, comes at the end of a passage in which Skeat was writing to Furnivall to congratulate him on 'the state of things' in the Early English Text Society at the start of 1866,

and to thank you very heartily for all your own personal exertions; for I believe that, after all, we owe you very much, and that the general public hardly perceives from the List of Texts, how much trouble you really take; and how much work you do that hardly appears.¹⁰

As we saw in the previous chapter, the appearance of work, the trouble it took and the general public's perception of it were important factors in the characterisation of scholarly work as manly work. For Skeat, and ultimately for Furnivall, how certain areas of the public perceived and described philological work affected the way they and their texts were (and continue to be) seen.

Donald Fennema and Karmen Lenz, II: *Literature and Philology*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 2071 (New York: Garland, 1998), pp.125-38, (p.135).

⁹ H. R. Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1913), p.160. Steeves implies in a footnote that the scholar in question was the Rev. Joseph Woodfall Ebsworth, with whom Furnivall founded the Ballad Society, and to whom Steeves and Benzie (pp.157-62) attribute its eventual failure; Pearsall, p.131.

¹⁰ Skeat to Furnivall, 22 January 1866, Furnivall papers, King's College, 1/1/1.

AN ABUNDANT SHOWER OF CURATES

Walter William Skeat was born in 1835 and educated in London and Christ's College, Cambridge, where he, like Furnivall, studied mathematics.¹¹ His chosen career as a country curate was cut short by an illness (which may have been more expedient than life-threatening) and in 1863 he returned to Cambridge, financially supported by his father, to lecture in mathematics at his former college and pursue his interests in the English language and philology.¹² Thus, 'fond of Early English and with some leisure', he was conveniently at hand in Cambridge when in 1864 Furnivall 'began to cast about for editors' for his newly formed Early English Text Society. When Furnivall asked Skeat to re-edit *Lancelot of the Laik*, previously edited by Joseph Stevenson for the Maitland Club in 1839, Skeat demurred on the grounds that he did not actually know how to read a medieval manuscript. Furnivall dismissed this objection on two counts: Skeat had access to the manuscript in the Cambridge University Library, and he could learn (p.xxi).

Skeat's first encounter with the text was not promising. 'After puzzling over the first page for a couple of hours, I was not conscious of having advanced beyond some twenty lines; and so retreated for that time' (p.xv). Luckily, Skeat was introduced, by Furnivall, to 'a teacher at hand such as few men ever had', the

¹¹ For a Life of Skeat, see Charlotte Brewer, 'Walter William Skeat (1835-1912)', in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, ed. by Helen Damico, with Donald Fennema and Karmen Lenz, II: *Literature and Philology*, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities 2071 (New York: Garland, 1998), pp.138-49. Also Brewer's *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.91-112.

¹² W.W. Skeat, *A Student's Pastime: Being a Select Series of Articles Reprinted from 'Notes and Queries'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), p.xx; hereafter referenced parenthetically in the text. On Skeat's illness, see Matthews, p.220, n.58.

University librarian Henry Bradshaw. Thus assisted Skeat 'gradually gained the courage' to propose that there were fundamental errors in the previous edition of the text. Looking back with some satisfaction on the incident in 1896, Skeat admitted that:

The announcement, in my preface to *Lancelot*, published in 1865, that the Maitland Club edition contained some strange errors – it must have been printed from a faulty transcript without any subsequent collation – created, at the time, quite a nine-days' wonder. It showed, at any rate, that the editors for the Early English Text Society really aimed for reasonable accuracy. (p.xxvi)

Furnivall's 'odd' prefaces, in Skeat's view, had prevented his acceptance by the academy. In contrast, Skeat's very first preface had an opposite influence; creating a reputation for editorial acumen for himself, and a concomitant reputation for editorial accuracy for the EETS. His edition of *Lancelot*, what Matthews calls his 'prentice work', provided the gateway to other, bigger editorial projects. And his subsequent edition of *Piers Plowman* was not only greater in scale: to Skeat it was greater in value. Matthews describes Skeat's tentative readings of the *Lancelot* manuscript as 'humble' and contrasts them with the supreme confidence he exhibits in his later *Piers Plowman* and Chaucer editing.¹³ In retrospect, however, Skeat's description of the manuscript is far from humble. It was 'a poem of no great value', the editing of which allowed him to progress to 'more important work' (p.xxv-xxvi). Skeat's re-edition of *Lancelot of the Laik* was crucial not only in launching him as a credible editor and scholar of Early English but also in the continuing influence that the experience had on his editorial policies. Skeat's career, thus begun by pointing

¹³ Matthews, p.152.

out the mistakes of a previous editor, was predicated on contrasting the accuracy of his work with that which had gone before.

Skeat went on to produce a number of monumental and influential editions of medieval texts, including the revolutionary three-text edition of *Piers Plowman* (the 1867-1885 A, B and C editions, and the subsequent parallel text edition of 1886), an *Etymological Dictionary* (1882-4), and his six volume *Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1894-1900). Although he became a Professor of Anglo-Saxon, he was also instrumental in the introduction of Middle English studies to the universities. Skeat personally organised the funding for the first lecturer in English literature at Cambridge, an activity he would later describe as his life's 'chief anxiety' (p.lvii).

Posterity has judged Skeat a better and more influential editor, especially of Chaucer, than Furnivall.¹⁴ At the time of his death, the comparison between the two men was seen somewhat differently. Kenneth Sisam's *DNB* entry for Skeat figures his intellectual work not as back breaking toil but as domestic work: 'He would take part in a fireside conversation, all the while sorting glossary slips as tranquilly as a woman does her knitting'. Sisam is tentative in his judgement that Skeat 'perhaps gained as much ground for his subject by quiet sapping as Furnivall did by storm.'¹⁵ The comparative brevity of the article (two columns, compared with Sidney Lee's nine and a half on Furnivall) may be due in part to Skeat's insistence that no biography was to be written of him after his death. Skeat's two sons accordingly 'spent weeks tearing up old letters' after their father's death, and his descendants still

¹⁴ See A. S. G. Edwards, 'Walter Skeat (1835-1912)' in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. by Paul Ruggiers (Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books, 1984) pp.171-89; Brewer, 'Walter William Skeat (1835-1912)', p.145.

¹⁵ Kenneth Sisam, 'Skeat, Walter William', in *The Dictionary of National Biography: 1912-1921: with an index covering the years 1901-1921 in one alphabetical series*, ed. by H. W. C. Davis and J. R. H. Weaver (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), pp. 495-96 (p.496).

comply with his wishes today.¹⁶ Because of this, would-be biographers of Skeat have had to rely on his autobiographical introduction to his 1896 book *A Student's Pastime*. Even without Skeat's autobiographical details, the book is fascinating. Apart from the introduction, *A Student's Pastime* is 'entirely occupied with selected extracts from the articles contributed by me at various times to the well-known weekly periodical entitled *Notes and Queries*' (p.lxxi). This particular student's pastime, it seems, was writing to magazines giving the correct etymology of phrases such as *hugger-mugger*, illustrations of 'difficult words' like *beef-eater* and of 'phrases of interest' such as *dead as a doornail*. Skeat had not restricted his correspondence to *Notes and Queries*, and ends his introduction with a suggestion for further works:

I have contributed a number of articles, on linguistic and literary subjects, to many other publications besides *Notes and Queries*. If the reception of the present book is sufficiently encouraging, it will be easy to produce another volume, or even two more, of a like kind. (p.lxviii)

Whether due to a muted public reception or authorial disinclination, Skeat did not go on to publish any more collections of articles. But, thus prefaced by the story of Skeat's life, the letters to *Notes and Queries* remain a succinct summary of his life interests.

Skeat, of course, was not the only member of his literary and academic circle to write to the publication. Furnivall saw *Notes and Queries* as both confessional and soapbox, as a public space for the textual mediation of male scholarly relations. In 1873, Furnivall explained approvingly to Ballad Society members how the 'son of a

¹⁶ Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman*, quotes a letter from Skeat's grandson, Theodore Cressy Skeat: 'My grandfather certainly was most anxious that no biography of him should be published, and my father religiously obeyed this so far as he was able' (p.91).

bookseller in Brighton' had resolved to give up his habit of modernising 'old printed texts' and inserting into them passages of his own making. His emendations were 'confesst by the writer – much to his credit – to the Editor of *Notes and Queries*, and the confession was made public in an editorial "Notice to Correspondents."¹⁷ And while anyone could admit to their own errors within its pages, *Notes and Queries* could also serve as a public space in which someone could be exposed, by others, to the judgement of their peers. When in 1868 Furnivall wanted to express his own frustration at a perceived solecism in W. Carew Hazlitt's scholarship, he threatened him with verbal, physical and periodical punishment. 'I *do* feel inclined occasionally to swear at you, and write to N & Q about you. [...] You ought to have a shaking.'¹⁸ The more emotionally restrained Skeat had been a prolific correspondent to the publication for many years, and to produce his book had had to select around four hundred contributions and edit them for publication. His criteria for selection reveal much about how he saw his literary work. Some observations and illustrations, having 'since found their way into books', were excluded (p.lxxi). Other etymologies, however, were included despite having been repeated in a more permanent form, 'because I had much to do with their enunciation or explanation, and their appearance in *N. and Q.* has become a matter of history' (p.lxxii). Skeat thus locates his contributions to *Notes and Queries* as part of – and important in – the wider history of the study of the history of the English language.

'The number of articles which are omitted because the suggestions which they expressed have been disproved,' he adds, 'is very small.' When he did find himself prey to mistakes, 'and of course I have found mistakes in ideas of my own',

¹⁷ Ballad Society Report, 1873, p. 3.

¹⁸ Furnivall to Hazlitt, 14 October 1868, British Library, MS 38900, fols. 158-59.

Skeat's instinct was to distance himself from the ideas as swiftly as possible, 'to drop the notions like a red-hot coal' (p.lxxvii). But Skeat, it would appear, was seldom wrong. Unlike, to take examples of other people's mistakes with which he illustrates just one page from his 'Introduction', Spenser, Keats, Blackmore, Browning, Richardson and Caxton. 'And then there are the critics! [...] And then there are the editors!' (p.lxxvi).

Why, then, did Skeat write to *Notes and Queries* so often? One purpose in acquainting the readers of *Notes and Queries* with quotations from 'all kinds of books of all periods' was to promote 'the interest to be derived from the study of our splendid literature':

It is just as easy, for a mind not already debilitated by the perusal of magazines, to cultivate a taste for the Elizabethan as for *Tit-bits* and the *Yellow Book*. All that is needed is to read the former *first*. The works of our best authors form a true 'Pastime of Pleasure,' and are a source of rational recreation; magazines are good for killing time in hours of intentional idleness. (p.lxxviii-iv)

It is perhaps not surprising then that Skeat reprinted his letters to *Notes and Queries* in book form. Taking these exhibitions of his learning out of the debilitating and idle space of a magazine, and reprinting them as a book allowed Skeat to cast his leisure 'pastimes' as a reader and an editor of, 'the works of our best authors', as 'rational recreation'. As well as improving the popularity of Elizabethan literature, the book, he hoped, widened the potential audience for his displays of learning. This, after all, was a man who reprinted 'a considerable portion' of the 'Preface' to his *Etymological Dictionary* here because 'few people read a preface to a dictionary printed in a quarto form' (p.xxxix).

Skeat's letters to *Notes and Queries* were not only designed to widen the lay readership of vernacular English literature. His contributions were part of a larger

campaign against amateur etymology: ‘guess-work’, which he characterises with increasing animation as ‘sad’, ‘discreditable’, ‘dishonest’ and ‘grotesque’. It had been a successful campaign:

It is a pleasure to observe that [...] guess-work is no longer adored with that blind admiration which it once evoked. [...] Towards which hopeful change in public opinion I claim to have contributed somewhat, by means of the very articles which are here collected and reprinted. (p.lxxviii)

Skeat’s work was not just ‘rational recreation’. As he had begun to study Anglo-Saxon with ‘the sincere intention of assisting in the promotion of English scholarship’ (p.xxi), and had ended up involved in the paid, institutionalised study of English literature in the Universities, it was his profession. Accordingly, in Skeat’s writing can be found a legible concern to characterise his work as specialist knowledge. Behind Skeat’s quest against ‘guess-work’ and on behalf of literature is the larger project to envisage and instate etymology and the study of English as a scientific and therefore legitimate area of study. He compares the necessity for ‘accurate quotations with exact references’ in etymology with the ‘specimens’ and ‘facts’ of geology. The nascent study of English literature, as an ontology structured by accuracy and exactness, had to be conducted by experts. Quoting a letter he wrote to *Notes and Queries* in 1890, Skeat explores this point. A previous letter to the publication had stated that ‘people who touch on specialist points should have specialist knowledge’. Skeat falls on this comment with gratitude, even as he disputes its vocabulary:

This is what I have been saying for years with respect to the English language, concerning which floods of untruths are continually being poured out by persons absolutely ignorant of the fact that its study does require special knowledge, and is full of

‘specialist points’ – a phrase, by the way, that is a little awkward. (p.lxxvii).

Skeat’s insistence that the study of literature was a skilled occupation contradicted the gentlemanly antiquarianism of many of the readers of *Notes and Queries*. ‘Because I have said this plainly I have been told that I am rude, and it has been plainly hinted that I can be no gentleman,’ he adds. Writing so frequently to *Notes and Queries*, the man who did not stint to point out the errors of Caxton and Spenser often found himself directly correcting the mistaken beliefs of his contemporaries, who, far from seeing every correction as building blocks in an edifice of national linguistic and etymological accuracy, sometimes took things personally. Skeat affects surprise that these corrections were not always taken in the spirit in which they were made:

I have always attacked the ideas, not the persons who utter them. The trouble is, of course, that the originators do not like it, and are far too apt to hide the weakness of their case by assuming that they are personally affronted. Surely this is hardly in accordance with common sense. If a man has a good case, he can base it upon facts and quotations; and it is no answer to tell me, when I ask for proof, that it is ungentlemanly to dare to contradict. (p.lxxiv)

Skeat’s answer was to compare the discursive strategies, as well as the processes, of etymology to other sciences, for ‘it is only in the case of etymology that such tactics are resorted to. If the question were one of chemistry, botany, or any form of science, the appeal would lie to the facts.’ The rigorous practice of objectivity applied to the discourses surrounding the study of English as well as to the methods of conducting it.

Skeat's tone might have provoked charges of rudeness, but this was little compared to the outrage generated by Furnivall. A year before Furnivall threatened to write to *Notes and Queries* about Hazlitt, Skeat had occasion to write to *Notes and Queries* about Furnivall. The exchange of letters is not reprinted in *A Student's Pastime*, presumably because Skeat thought it came under the category of 'questions which were chiefly of interest at the moment'. Nevertheless, it exposes Skeat's ideas about the Early English Text Society, which, coming from within this construction of literary work as skilled and exact, were, I argue, importantly different from Furnivall's.

If one were looking for proof of the oddness of Furnivall's prefaces, the 'Preface' to his 1867 EETS collection *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ* could be tabled as evidence.¹⁹ It opens with an anecdote about (telling an anecdote to) Mrs Gaskell and closes by thanking the Archbishop of Canterbury for the loan of 'his pretty little manuscript' (p.vii, xii). In between, Furnivall is nothing if not forthright in the expression of his opinions. Considering the texts of 1430, he imagines how his own times will be seen by a twenty-fourth century Furnivall:

The early Englishman, like the modern one, was a religious and superstitious person, and as any one in 2360 A.D. should know of us, that in many educated (or deducated) person's minds now, baptism by an episcopally-ordained clergyman is necessary to salvation, that a man's being drowned on Sunday is a just judgement of God, whereas a similar death on Monday is a sad accident, with a hundred other like notions. (p.viii)

¹⁹ Frederick Furnivall, ed., *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ: The Parliament of Devils, and Other Religious Poems, Chiefly from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth MS. no. 853, OS 25* (London: EETS, 1867), ppvii-xxii.

These comments are supplemented, and almost overwhelmed, by footnotes. At the word 'dedicated', Furnivall propounds that 'we sadly want some word like this [...] to denote the wilful down-leading into prejudice and unreason, in Politics at least, so prevalent in England [...] to support unjust social arrangements and abuses [...]'. At 'notions', he engages in a lengthy comment, illustrated by quotation from *The Spectator*, on Puseyism. His concern in doing so is to register that 'however comical the view stated, and a thousand like ones, may seem to our man of 2360 A.D. they were equally so to many in 1866 A.D.'. Looking both back to 'the Early Englishman' and forward to the man of 2360, Furnivall places himself in the middle of a 900 year continuum of English men. The assumption implicit this conceit is that the man of 2360 will come across Furnivall's text (when he re-edits it?) and thus be enlightened as to the state of the nation in both 1866 and 1430. But the point Furnivall is explicitly making is not about continuity in reading and editing English texts but about continuity in English masculinity. The poems reveal 'the plain good sense and practical going straight at the main point which Englishmen pride themselves on.' This transhistorical national masculinity is a justification for continuing to read the poems even in their sociological otherness. So, continues Furnivall:

We should know of our forefathers what their religious belief and superstitious fancies were. Mary-Worship, Parliament of Devils, Stacions of Rome, St Gregory's Trental, and what not; let us have them all: all the nonsense, as well as the expressions of the pure simple faith, that through life and death our men of old held on to.
(p.viii)

One EETS subscriber, confronted with these observations, was prompted to write to *Notes and Queries* to complain about Furnivall's 'unpleasant tone'. The above extract, which he gave as illustration, was just one passage 'to which exception

might be taken'. In it, the subscriber implied, Furnivall had been indiscreet theologically as well as non-discrete intellectually.

What is to be thought of one who masses together, as if they were all of a piece, the diverse items enumerated in this extract? Or again, is Mr. Furnivall unaware that there are still people in England who do not consider *all* these different items to be *nonsense*, and yet are perhaps as capable of seeing the ins and outs of a question, or of judging the reason or unreason of an argument, as he is himself?²⁰

The indignant subscriber, signing himself 'G.R.K', threatened that such passages could 'deter [...] persons from subscribing to the Early English Text Society, and from purchasing their books.'²¹

It was not Furnivall but Skeat who wrote to *Notes and Queries* in the Early English Text Society's defence. Skeat says he is qualified to defend the EETS because he is 'one who, without the faintest prospect of any reward but the goodwill of readers, devote [sic] more than half my time' not just to editing for the society but 'to endeavouring to prove that the books issued by the society can rival any ever issued in accuracy and value'. His defence is therefore not of Furnivall, whom he allows 'may have used an indiscreet phrase in a preface'; it is of the Early English Text Society – or rather, of the Early English Society's published texts. Skeat adduces 'accuracy and value' – summed up as trustworthiness – in his defence of the text, criteria which can be tested and tried by 'every one who has any regard for England and its wondrous language'. In doing so, he succeeds in separating the constituent parts of the EETS – Englishness, the Early English text, and the society

²⁰ 'G.R.K.', 'Early English Text Society', *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series 21 (1867), 232.

²¹ The EETS lists of subscribers suggest the most likely candidate for 'G.R.K.' to be have been Rev Canon Kersley of Kings Lynn. He remained a subscriber until 1887.

of readers and editors – from the indiscretions of its founder. Though Furnivall's transgressions risk the endeavours of 'all the other editors', his outspokenness 'does not really detract from the value of the text itself, or make it less trustworthy'.²²

It was not, I suggest, Furnivall's habit of wearing his liberal heart on his prefatory sleeve that Skeat, and 'the Universities', found 'odd'. Nor was it the way he made publicly legible the occasional boringness of scholarship and refused to characterise scholarly work as hard work, although both of these tendencies undoubtedly contributed to Furnivall's oddness. Furnivall, in the offending extract, was propounding what he saw as the *raison d'être* of the Early English Text Society as encouraging synchronic and diachronic homosociality: 'Us' (the members of the EETS) knowing 'our forefathers'. Skeat saw the value of the society as residing in the edited text. This, I propose, can be seen more clearly in Skeat's editorial prefaces.

SKEAT'S EDITING

At first sight, however, Skeat's and Furnivall's prefaces seem to be making identical recourse to national masculinity in their promotion of national literature. Skeat's

²² W. W. Skeat, 'Early English Text Society', *Notes and Queries*, 3rd Series 22 (1867), 241.

Piers Plowman can provide 'the student who is desirous of understanding this period aright' with the tools for a balanced history of England.²³

Langland and Chaucer are 'strangely [...] and fortunately [...] in great measure each the supplement of the other'. Langland's descriptions of 'the homely poor' provide a balance to Chaucer's descriptions of the rich, and 'the holiday-making, cheerful, genial phase of English life'. *Piers Plowman*'s intrinsic value, for Skeat, is similar to that which Furnivall found in his *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*: it provides an index of transhistorical national character. 'Replete with interest and instruction', which is the measure of 'the works of a true poet' the poem is 'worthy to be honoured by all who prize highly the English character and our own dear native land.' Skeat thus presents *Piers Plowman* not as literature but as comparable with – and superior to – history:

The vivid truthfulness of its delineations of the life and manners of our forefathers has often been praised, and is it difficult to praise it too highly. [...] As indicating the true temper and feelings of the English mind in the fourteenth century, it is worth volumes of history. (p.iv)

The qualities of 'the English character' – which, evident in Langland's poem, are attributed to Langland himself – have two parts:

The extreme earnestness of the author and the obvious truthfulness and blunt honesty of his character are in themselves attractive and lend a value to all he utters, even when he is evolving a theory or wanders into abstract questions of theological speculation. (p.v)

²³ W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman... The 'Vernon' Text; or Text A*, OS 28 (London: EETS, 1867), p.iv.

This is pleasing enough, 'But', continues Skeat, 'we are the more pleased when we perceive, as we very soon do, that he is evidently of a *practical* turn of mind, and loves best to exercise his shrewd English common sense upon topics of every-day interest'. Earnestness, blunt honesty and common sense are promoted as recognisable facets of English manhood. These qualities are then appropriated by Skeat in order to emphasise the superiority of *Piers Plowman* over other histories of the period – not by discussing the text's aesthetic values but through its depiction of sociological detail:

How often does the student of history grow weary of mere accounts of battles and sieges and the long series of plunders and outrages revenged by other plunders and outrages which require to be again revenged in their turn, and so on without end, and long to get an insight into the inner every-day life of the people, their dress, their diet, their wages, their strikes, and all the minor details which picture to us what manner of men they really were! (p.v)

'What manner of men they really were', as I explore in Chapter 3, is what Furnivall aspired to find in his reading of Early English texts. But Skeat, having set up the Chaucer-Langland dyad as an index of recognisable English character, and having presented *Piers Plowman* as a point of access to that character – that is, having defended the poem's place in the canon and having promoted its relevance as history – chooses this moment to emphasise the poem's philological alterity.

Reinforcing the difficulty of the linguistic skills needed to read it, Skeat warns his readers that they may never reach the improving elements in the text. 'There is a danger that some who take up "Piers Plowman" may be at first somewhat repelled by the allegorical form of it, or by an apparent archaism of language'. At the word language Skeat digresses into a footnote on the learning of 'old English' which

at once shores up his own editorial authority by emphasising the enormity of such learning, and encourages the reader to attempt it:

To acquire a *thorough* knowledge of old English is, indeed, almost the work of a lifetime. But *some* familiarity with it, enough to enable one to understand a large portion of our early literature, may be picked up in a few weeks – almost in a few days. It is amazing to find what a bugbear “old English” is to many Englishmen; they look upon it as harder to learn than Chinese. Yet any one who will take the trouble to master one or two of the Canterbury Tales has the key to much of the wealth of our early English literature; and the man who will *not* take the trouble to do this deserves to be guided by guesswork rather than by evidence in his notions of English grammar; as he probably will be. (p.v)

With Middle English given all the exotic strangeness of an Oriental language, only the reader who expends ‘a little thought and care [...] a little painstaking consideration’, and will ‘fully’ enter into ‘the spirit of the poem’ will be rewarded with the key to a cultural-historical representation of national identity.

The different assumptions underlying Furnivall’s and Skeat’s editing thus become apparent. When Skeat uses the preface to the sixth volume of his Chaucer ‘to describe somewhat more particularly the chief objects which I have had in view’ in editing it, he emphasises the erudition and painstaking accuracy of his editing:

In the first place, my endeavour has been to produce a thoroughly sound text, founded solely on the best MSS. and the earliest prints, which shall satisfy at once the requirements of the student of language and the reader who delights in poetry.²⁴

²⁴ W. W. Skeat, ed., *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894-1900), vi, p.ix.

Furnivall also had a wide constituency in mind for the EETS. But over and above teaching readers about Early English language and literature, he aimed to use the text to illustrate social history:

To the Historian and Antiquary the Society's work yields rich fruit; to the Tory who glories in the past, it appeals with strongest claim; to the Liberal who pleads, as cause for modern justice, the ancient tale of poor men's wrongs that starts before the Conquest, the Society makes heard the voice he listens for.²⁵

It is not hard to discern which of these readers was Furnivall the editor. On being honoured, a few months before his death, for devoting his life to English philology, Furnivall is said to have replied 'I never cared a bit for philology; my chief aim has been throughout to illustrate the social condition of the English people of the past.'²⁶

Skeat and Furnivall, then, differed in their approaches to editing. This is apparent in their prefatory writings. The methodical justifications of Skeat's texts are strategically different from Furnivall's cavalier announcements of his procedures.

Furnivall includes this description of his working practices in the 'Forewords' to the

Tale of Beryn:

The proofs were read twice by me with the MS., and I believe the text is a faithful print of it; though unluckily, when editing it, I was affected for a time with the itch of padding out lines by needless little words in square brackets. The reader can easily leave them out in reading when he finds them unnecessary, or gratify his resentment at such impertinences by drawing a pen through them.²⁷

²⁵ *Stacions*, p.lx.

²⁶ *Personal Record*, p.43.

²⁷ Frederick Furnivall and W. G. Stone, eds, *The Tale of Beryn*, ES 105 (London: EETS, 1909), p.xi.

Furnivall, a subjective and active editor, assumes that his readers will also approach the text in a subjective and active way. In contrast, Skeat has sublime confidence in his own editorial authority, presents his texts as authentic because of it, and is concerned with conferring that authority on the other EETS publications. In his preface to *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, Skeat asserts that:

I have myself carefully read the proof sheets with the MS. *twice*, and it may therefore be assumed that the complete correctness of the text is established. It seems to me that this is altogether the most important part of a *Text* society, in order that the student may never be perplexed by the appearance of words having no real existence.²⁸

And when Skeat allows the reader to emend his text, here of Boethius, there must be a scholarly rather than an emotional reason for doing so:

I have introduced modern punctuation. As I am here entirely responsible, the reader is at liberty to alter it, provided that he is justified in so doing by the Latin text.²⁹

Setting his Chaucer work up against the ‘negligence, superficiality, and incapacity’ of previous editors who had attributed spurious works to the poet, Skeat places himself firmly at the beginning of a new era of Chaucer editing. One of his main concerns is the formation and legitimisation of the Chaucer canon. He is not alone at this frontier, for the ‘one correct method of drawing up a canon of genuine works’ is:

That adopted by Mr Henry Bradshaw, formerly our Cambridge University Librarian. It is simple enough, viz. to take a clean sheet of paper, and enter upon it, first of all, the names of all the pieces

²⁸ Frederic Madden, and Walter William Skeat, eds, *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*, ES 4 (London: EETS, 1868), p.ii.

²⁹ Skeat, *Chaucer*, II, p.xlvii.

that are admittedly genuine: and then to see if it can fairly be augmented by adding such pieces as have reasonable evidence in their favour.³⁰

As this method is hardly a method at all, Skeat must have other reasons for describing so literally the process of writing a list. The creation of a formula for scholarly labour serves to take the subjectivity out of the formation of the canon, while the shared authority of the process with the 'Cambridge University Librarian' gives the process added status. When Skeat describes his editorial policy he situates his editing skills as correspondent with those of the scribes:

It was also desirable, or rather absolutely necessary, that the recent advances in our knowledge of Middle-English grammar and phonetics should be rightly utilised, and that no verbal form should be allowed to appear which would have been unacceptable to a good scribe of the fourteenth century.³¹

Ultimately, as Skeat makes clear in a footnote, he is providing direct access to fourteenth-century language, and this is privileged above access to fourteenth-century lives:

There can be no harm in stating the simple fact, that a long and intimate acquaintance, extending over many years, with the habits and methods of the scribes of the fourteenth century, has made me almost as familiar with the usual spelling of that period as I am with that of modern English. It is little more trouble to me to write a passage of Chaucer from dictation than one from Tennyson. It takes me just a little longer, and that is all. (p.ix, n.1)

Skeat, then, is at one with the scribes, or at one with the knowledge and skills of the scribes. When Furnivall connects with men of the fourteenth century, he communes

³⁰ Skeat, *Chaucer*, VII, p.lxxiv.

³¹ Skeat, *Chaucer*, VI, p.ix.

with them on a personal and political level. And Skeat's comparison of Chaucer and Tennyson is all the more interesting when juxtaposed with the use Furnivall makes of the two poets in his own preface to the *Canterbury Tales*:

I am bound to confess that my love for Chaucer – and he comes closer to me than any other poet, except Tennyson – would not by itself have made me give up the time and trouble I can so ill afford to bestow on this task.³²

I return to Furnivall's love for Chaucer in the next chapter. But here, in essence, is the contrast between Skeat and Furnivall. Furnivall's 'long and intimate acquaintance' is with the personalities of the poets themselves, while Skeat's is with 'the habits and methods of the scribes'. Furnivall can, or rather will, 'ill afford' the 'time and trouble' of producing an edition; Skeat measures his prowess at Middle English by trouble and time: willingly taking a 'little more' trouble and 'just a little longer', his skills honed 'over the years'. Emphasising the 'practical usefulness' of his edition, and his painstaking work 'in the interest of every true student', Skeat is careful to acknowledge any omissions in his work. Skeat's prefaces shore up the authority of literary and linguistic scholarship through their insistence on the diligence, experience and thoroughness of editing, in the disciplinarianisation of scholarship and in the discrete separation of discourses. Skeat, who saw his readers as students and edited English texts as an academic even before there was an English academy, was 'believed in at the Universities' in a way that Furnivall was not partly because, as he shows in his prefaces, Skeat believed in the university.

³² *Temporary Preface*, p.3.

TEA FOR TWO

Even if their motivations and methodologies were different, Skeat believed in the products of Furnivall's work. If Skeat mentions Furnivall in his prefaces, he is usually paying tribute to Furnivall's work in printing facsimiles of Chaucer manuscripts:

As regards the text, my chief debt is to the Chaucer Society, which means, practically, Dr Furnivall, through whose zeal and energy so many splendid and accurate prints of the MSS have been produced, thus rendering the actual readings and spellings of the scribes accessible to students in all countries.³³

When Furnivall mentions Skeat in the 'Preface' to his EETS edition of *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, they are having tea. Furnivall had gone to Cambridge in 1868 to copy the poem, and Skeat had shown him the Oriel MS of *The Vision of Piers Plowman*, which he was copying for his edition of the B Text:

I turned to the paper leaves at its end, and what should they contain but an earlier and better version of the Caxton I had just copied part of? I drank seven cups of tea, and eat five or six large slices of bread and butter, in honour of the event.³⁴

'Furnivall?' said a colleague at a conference where I had given a paper outlining some of these ideas, 'Didn't he write that thing about eating bread and butter?' In academic circles comments like these in Furnivall's prefaces were, and continue to

³³ Skeat, *Chaucer*, VI, p.xviii.

³⁴ Frederick Furnivall, ed., *Caxton's Book of Curtesye, printed at Westminster about 1477-8 A.D., and now reprinted, with two MS. copies of the same treatise, from the Oriel MS. 79, and the Balliol MS.354, ES 3* (London: EETS, 1868), p.v.

be, definitive of his oddness. Although Furnivall founded the EETS with great confidence that the burgeoning Victorian middle class of 1864 could and would support the public appreciation of Early English literature, by his death in 1910 the EETS and the editing and appreciation of Middle English were almost exclusively the preserve of the universities. Skeat, as I have explored, was part of this, as was the Early English Text Society's programme of competitions and prizes for the study of Early English in schools and by undergraduates. While at its beginning, the EETS had few members who were academics, it must be remembered that at its beginning the EETS had few members at all. Skeat was proud to recount to the readers of *Notes and Queries* that 'the number of subscribers in 1866 was about treble that of 1864', but translated into actual numbers this was a rise from 145 to 409 members. No one could call this anything but a minority. The Camden Society, founded in 1838, had 1000 members by the end of its first year.³⁵ Furnivall soon found that he was recruiting new editors and editing texts faster than he was recruiting new subscribers to pay for them, and he continued to be openly perplexed that more people – or more of the right sort of people – did not join:

Though the committee are sorry to terrify or disgust anyone, they must say that the men they want are the 'resolute' members referred to in the last Report; men who do not think the right way to get through their work is to be afraid of it or let their stomachs turn at it; but men who know they have a work to do, and mean to do it; men who can look 270 MSS and books in the face and say quietly, 'Well, at 9 a-year, we shall clear you off in 30 years;' who can look at £60,000 worth of work, and say, 'At £1000 a-year, you're to be cut down in 60 years; and if I can manage 30 of them, my boy can settle the other 30.' [...] May not a Society of that Middle Class which has in great measure superseded the Upper as

³⁵ H. R. Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1913), p.123.

the mainstay of General Literature and Art, expect to do the same in the case of Antiquarian Literature?³⁶

The academic establishment remained sceptical of Furnivall, although this did not prevent some of them from joining. Frederic Madden, keeper of manuscripts at the British Museum, was unenthusiastic about the EETS at its founding. 'I don't think the scheme will succeed, nor do I place much confidence in Mr. F and his friends. However, I shall subscribe to the undertaking, as the motive is good, whatever the result is.'³⁷ By 1868, however, for Madden the gap between Furnivall and his friends, namely Skeat, was insurmountable:

I never saw Mr Skeat in my life but from the whole tenor of his correspondence I feel a great respect for him. As to that jackanapes Mr Furnivall, I think it is a matter of great regret that he should be allowed to edit any works of the Society. His style of writing is thoroughly disgusting, and his ignorance is on a par with his bad taste.³⁸

Others refused to join precisely because of Furnivall. 'Put Furnivall in an asylum and I will join E. E. Text Society at once!' declared E.A. Freeman, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, in 1873. Freeman had particular reasons for denouncing Furnivall:

I was not going to be bullied into joining it by the outrageous abuse which the Society's madman [...] thought good – I know not wherefore – to hurl at me in some of his prefaces. Why do not some of the sane members of the Society chain him up [...] or gag him.³⁹

³⁶ EETS Reports, Fifth report, 1869, p.22

³⁷ *The Diary of Sir Frederic Madden*, 12 February 1864, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Hist. c. 177. 37.

³⁸ *Diary*, 25 March 1868, Bod Lib, MS Eng. Hist. c. 180. 294.

³⁹ E.A. Freeman to Murray, 27 July 1873, Murray papers.

Freeman's review of Furnivall's 1866 EETS collection *Political, Religious and Love Poems*, and the 'abuse' Furnivall hurled back at him, is worthy of closer attention. It revealed that it was not just Skeat who found Furnivall's 'prefaces and modes of expression' odd, and not just Madden who found 'ignorance and bad taste' in his writing. In the next section I explore how what Furnivall said in his preface, what Freeman said in his review, and what Furnivall said in reply (and where he said it), sparked a series of criticisms and counter-accusations. It is a debate that concerns unwieldy theories about the propriety of editorial discourse as well as piddling arguments over typography.⁴⁰

'A PIG-STYE'

Furnivall's 1866 EETS collection *Political, Religious and Love Poems* was, he admits in the 'Preface', 'somewhat of a medley, partly for the reason that the Lambeth MS whence it is mainly drawn [...] is so too'.⁴¹ The reasons Furnivall gives for including each poem are also something of a medley: as diverse as the poems themselves, he gives them in great detail. Lydgate's *Hors, Shepe, & Gosse* appears

⁴⁰ On 'piddling quibbles about commas' in the Froude-Carlyle controversy, see Trev Lynn Broughton, *Men of Letters, Writing Lives: Masculinity and Literary Auto/Biography in the Late-Victorian Period* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp.83-112 (p.86).

⁴¹ Frederick Furnivall, ed., *Political, Religious and Love Poems: From the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth MS. no. 306, and other sources OS 15* (London: EETS, 1866), pp.ix-xix (p.ix).

because, although its title had been ‘worrying’ Furnivall for years, ‘I had never found or made a spare half-hour at the Museum to take the Roxburghe Club reprint out and read it.’ Its inclusion will give ‘some fresh hundreds of people as well as myself [...] a troubleless opportunity of knowing what the poem says’ (p.ix-x). Other poems are included because they too ‘are sure to meet some eye that has not seen them before’. Furnivall prints some more poems because of their applicability to contemporary life, and others because of their peculiar difference from it:

The wise advice given [...] to purchasers of land, to all mixing with their fellows, and to housekeepers, are in great part applicable now. The six following little bits were put in, either for their oddity, or because I fancied them, not because Directions how to cram Chickens with black Slugs were considered to be a Political Poem. (p.xv-xvi)

Availability, accessibility, applicability and oddity are thus criteria for inclusion. But another set of poems is only included by default. A number of political poems destined for this collection had been drawn to Furnivall’s attention by Skeat as the two men were ‘looking through the Piers Plowman MSS. in the British Museum, [...] to choose the best for the Society’s three-text edition’. Furnivall copied them all, only to find that all except one had already been printed in Thomas Wright’s 1859 *Political Songs from the Rolls*. In a footnote, Furnivall adds his reasons for explaining these events so clearly:

There is a kind of comfort in narrating one’s little troubles. The reader will sympathize if he knows how very small a man feels when he looks at his eagerly-made copy of a good poem, by the side of an after-found print of it. (p.x)

Furnivall, then, was susceptible to feeling his scholarly masculinity threatened by making mistakes. But for Furnivall the way to absolve such mistakes was not to drop

them 'like hot coals' as Skeat did, but to introduce them into homosocial discourse.

A trouble shared with other men is a trouble halved.

In fact, Furnivall had his friends to thank for filling the space left vacant by these 'cancelled poems':

Mr Skeat with much goodwill copied *Whi art thou Froward* [...], and (on Mr Bradshaw's recommendation) *The Parliament of Love* and *The Seven Deadly Sins* [...]. Mr W. Aldis Wright has performed the same kind offices for the two poems in the Northern Dialect [...]; and Mr Edmund Brock for *The Fifty First Psalm* [...]. Mr Cockayne gave me the first version of *Rats Away* [...], and Mr George Parker the second verse, and a revise of the whole. (p.x-xi)

With William Rossetti contributing notes to the *Stacyons of Rome*, the preface begins to show how homosociality was a method as well as a motive in Furnivall's scholarship. But it would be a mistake to assume that these men worked together unproblematically.

In particular, Bradshaw's contribution to the edition, and to the preface, does not end there. Concluding his preface, Furnivall makes a characteristic apology for the text, or rather, for someone else's reactions to the text. 'I am sorry that the way in which the text of one of these Poems is here printed, has led one learned and much esteemed friend [...] into calling this volume a pig-stye' (p.xviii). Having already set in type a version of *The Complaynt of Christe* from Lambeth MS 306, Furnivall found an earlier version of the text in Lambeth MS 853. He decided to include both versions of the poem in parallel texts on facing pages 'as an instructive instance to readers in general, and a caution to careless people like myself, of how one of those scribes to whom we owe almost all our knowledge of our forefathers' minds, had chanced to go astray'. Furnivall revels not only in the admission of the error but also in the insult, 'admitting that beings of the species "gruntare, grunnitor" can find

space for their calling within the leaves of the book'. Even after he has defended his decision he reiterates his delight in the term of abuse. 'Should this decision make any reader or reviewer grunt again "Pig-stye," I can assure him that the repeated exclamation will be taken as good-humouredly as the first one was' (p.xix).

The 'learned and much esteemed friend' is not named in the 1866 preface, but in the description of him as one 'who (unluckily for us) devotes his spare energy to denouncing the Committee in general and me in particular' it is not difficult to detect the stout form of Henry Bradshaw. Indeed, while Bradshaw is not named in the original preface, his name is inserted in the 1903 reprint. He was safely dead by this point, but it seems unlikely that Furnivall would have declined to name him for fear of repercussions. Furnivall had openly referred to Bradshaw's criticism in a letter to him earlier that year. Furnivall and Bradshaw were to disagree about editing repeatedly throughout their friendship and correspondence, much of which is taken up with Furnivall alternatively cajoling and commanding Bradshaw to publish his work. Bradshaw continued to denounce Furnivall's editing even as, like Skeat, he made use of its output. 'You are very aggravating sometimes, particularly about the poisonous way in which you insist on editing and prefacing your books, but I am afraid I cannot take away my subscription from you.'⁴² They were still friends, however, and Furnivall had written to Bradshaw of the personal misfortune that had surrounded his editing of the collection. The death of Furnivall's daughter, Eena, 'and other distress' is given as the reason he was unable to complete the preface to his previous EETS edition, dated 16 May 1866. Furnivall's preface to *Political, Religious and Love Poems* is dated as having been written two weeks later, and his

⁴² G. W. Prothero, *A Memoir of Henry Bradshaw* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1888), p.218.

grief, though less obvious, is still legible. The poems to the Virgin Mary contain he says, 'a truer pathos, and touch deeper chords' than anything else in the volume:

**And who that has heard a mother's passionate cries for her lost one, – those terrible appeals that cut to the heart, can refuse his sympathy with the stricken mother (though he holds her only a poet's fancy), who swooned at Calvary when her 'dear child' died?
(p.xviii)**

The other distress was financial. The death of Furnivall's father in 1865 had given him the inheritance he desperately needed, but he lost almost all of it when the Overend and Gurney Banks collapsed. 'Troubles never come singly,' he wrote to Bradshaw, '& after the loss of our dear little one comes now the breaking of the two banks we had shares in, & the consequent liability. I take refuge in my pigstye.'⁴³

If this preface is remarkable for its inclusion of great detail about Furnivall's 'little troubles' (and for the exclusion of his bigger ones), it is also important as one of the only places where Furnivall explains his philosophy of editing. This has been to the chagrin of scholars attempting to locate Furnivall's position on textual criticism. It is virtually impossible, says Charlotte Brewer, 'to turn up any explicit statement by Furnivall of his views on editing that fully acknowledges his position in relation to others'. As we saw in the Introduction, David Benson calls for a closer 'analysis of the value and limitations of Furnivall's work', especially his 'carelessness'.⁴⁴ These criticisms contain, I argue, the very vocabulary with which Furnivall did in fact express his position on editing. Brewer meant that nowhere does Furnivall align himself with one or other proponent of current editorial theory.

⁴³ Furnivall to Bradshaw, 19 May 1866, Cambridge University Library, Bradshaw papers, MS Add. 2591 (1), fol. 302.

⁴⁴ Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman*, p.88; C. David Benson, p.1044.

Furnivall's 'views on editing' were simply that his practice of editing was inspired, influenced and structured by his relations with other people: with his subscribers and with a generalised concept of 'the English people'. The value and limitations of Furnivall's work should be considered from within this practice, using Furnivall's own concepts of value and limitation. Both of these resided in the expedient printing of texts:

Of the pieces now issued some have been printed elsewhere, and of most, perhaps better texts exist; but the time that it takes to ascertain whether a poem has been printed or not, which is the best MS. of it, in what points the versions differ, &c., &c., is so great, that after some experience I find the shortest way for a man much engaged in other work, but wishing to give some time to the Society, is to make himself a foolometer and book-possessor-ometer for the majority of his fellow members, and print whatever he either does not know, or cannot get at easily, leaving others with more leisure to print the best texts. *He* wants *some* text, and that at once. (p.ix)

This is not, he adds in a footnote, 'intended as a justification for an Editor to take no trouble about his work. It only asks that he may be allowed to judge how the trouble he can, and must, take, can best be applied.'

PREFACES AND PERIODICALS

Some reviewers took exception to Furnivall's honesty. John Douglas Cook's *Saturday Review* had been favourably inclined to the EETS at its inception, and

reviewed at least two-thirds of the society's output in its first four years.⁴⁵ Although the periodical did not share Furnivall's particular enthusiasm for Arthuriana ('We must confess we are tired of King Arthur'), its anonymous reviewers had, at first, no particular dislike of Furnivall's editing.⁴⁶ It did, however, express an early dislike for stylistic characteristics that were to epitomise Furnivall's writing. Criticism of G.H. Kingsley's 1865 EETS edition of *Thynne's Animadversions* even held Furnivall up as an example of restrained and scholarly preface writing:

With Dr. Kingsley quite a new spirit has come over the publications of the Early English Text Society. Hitherto such prefaces and commentaries as the editors have given us have been eminently sober and to the point. [...] But Dr. Kingsley seems to despise such small matters as soberness and accuracy. Through his whole preface he shows a vein of somewhat ponderous friskiness, which surely is quite out of place in so grave a business as editing Early English Texts. We do not remember Mr Furnivall ever quoting Mr. Pecksniff, or Mr. Morris getting merry about 'literary notes'.⁴⁷

As the *Saturday Review* reveals, literary periodicals expected a sober and accurate Early English Text Society: in short, Skeat's EETS rather than Furnivall's. That Kingsley has exhibited friskiness and made 'sarcastic allusions' is bad enough, but the reviewer is more affronted by his linguistic ignorance and 'blundering', drawing attention to Kingsley's difficulties with Latin, Hebrew and, particularly, 'our old friend the letter *Thorn*'. Most people, the reviewer explains, find it hard to get any printer to print this character; 'they *will* always change *p* into *p'*'. But Kingsley has

⁴⁵ Merle Mowbray Bevington, *The Saturday Review: Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 251.

⁴⁶ *The Saturday Review*, 23 June 1866, p.760.

⁴⁷ *The Saturday Review*, 20 January 1866, pp.80-81.

filled the text with thorns, having inserted p not only in place of P but also in place of p:

Of course we shall be told that all these things are trifles, most likely misprints. We answer that accuracy and inaccuracy are not trifles, and that an editor of a philological work, who is either so ignorant that he cannot read his text, or so careless that he lets pass misprints which turn that text into nonsense, displays exactly the same *crassa ignorantia* as an architect who can do everything except build a house, or a surgeon who can do everything except cut off a leg. (p.80-81)

It is from within this construction of the Early English Text Society as a ‘grave and discreet’ body, and of editing Early English Texts as a sober, accurate and professional occupation, that the *Saturday* reviewer, E. A. Freeman – for it was he – turned, in December 1866, to Furnivall’s preface to *Political, Religious and Love Poems*.

Freeman objects to both the preface’s overriding tone and the description of Furnivall’s editorial theory within it. Furnivall’s tone is out of place in a public discourse. ‘The sort of garrulity and small jocularly with which he amuses himself in his preface is altogether out of place in any writing which is meant to take its chance in the wide world’.⁴⁸ Furnivall’s ‘little troubles’, his ‘confidences’ and his ‘little familiar squibs’ are suitable for ‘a set of intimate friends, any one of whom is entitled to poke any other under the ribs, but they are offensive in a volume introduced by a grave firm to the general public.’ Freeman recognises – and objects to – the explicitly homosocial structure of the EETS made manifest in Furnivall’s preface.

⁴⁸ *The Saturday Review*, 22 December 1866, pp.764-65.

Although Freeman introduces Furnivall's description of his editorial practices as 'more serious', he finds the intimacy of tone as objectionable as the admissions of expediency. Furnivall's comment, 'some text, and that at once', was supposed honestly to express the wider EETS project of disseminating as many texts as possible as quickly as possible. Freeman reads it as an admission of desperation:

We may sympathize with the clergyman whose stock of thought is used up, and who is still called on to preach his two sermons a week. We may sympathize with the barrister who has to defend a cause though he knows that both law and fact are against him. Each of them is placed in the painful position of being obliged to say something, though he has really nothing to say. But we cannot understand that Mr. Furnivall can really be placed in the position of having to print something, whether or not he has anything to print or not. (p.764)

Accuracy, consistency and knowledge were the hallmarks of professionalism, without which the execution of Kingsley's editing could not be ascribed professional status ('an architect [...] a surgeon,'). But Furnivall's editing lacks professional status because he,

reminds us of the academical dignitary who was said to be so anxious to carry his point that he did not care what point he carried. So Mr. Furnivall seems to be so anxious to print his poems that he does not care what poems he prints. (p.764)

Furnivall retaliated to this criticism in the preface to his next EETS edition, *The Stacions of Rome*. Furnivall compulsively reused paper, writing letters on the backs of other letters, for example, and his prefaces often bear the same palimpsestic traces of his life. Whether unwittingly or deliberately, Furnivall's reply to Freeman acknowledges that he was being criticised for mixing the discourses of personal correspondence and professional preface writing – he added a postscript to his preface:

P.S. – The reviewer in the *Saturday Review* of Dec 22, 1866, does not understand in what sense we publish our texts. We print them mainly for our Members, but [...] sell each of our texts separately to any person wanting it. [...] We sell, perhaps, an average of five copies of each Text separately, against 400 odd issued to Members. (p.vii)

Crucially, Furnivall explains that this governs his tone of preface:

This is why I conceive myself entitled to write Prefaces as to a circle of my friends, for such I look on Subscribers as being. Did I consider a *Saturday Reviewer* and the public as part of my audience, I should certainly write in a different tone to them. (p.viii)

Here, at last, is Furnivall's admission that there are discrete discourses for public and private communications. Or is it? As he proceeds to demonstrate exactly what he would say to each of those sets of readers, Furnivall shows that he is only acknowledging such conventions deliberately to flout them:

To the public [...] I should say, what a very stupid public it is for not supporting more vigorously the best and most liberal Early English printing Society that has ever existed: that there are several thousand well-to-do men in this country who can easily spare a guinea a year each to make their forefathers' speech and thoughts better known to this and future generations; and they ought so to spare it. (p.ix)

To the *Saturday Reviewer*, Furnivall is even more forceful. Furnivall was well aware that his anonymous reviewer was Freeman, and his puns on Freeman's name reveal this to his readership. 'To the Saturday man I should say, that the libertinism of his comments was often unworthy of a Free man'. Furnivall goes on to suggest that Freeman should subscribe to the Early English Text Society 'and print a text for it with his *Saturday* pay', while the periodical's owner, John Douglas Cook, 'the chief

Cook who presides over the making of the weekly pudding', should exercise restraint over his reviewer (p.viii-ix).

In a lengthy footnote appended to the word 'libertinism', Furnivall adds fuel to the debate by returning to Freeman's review of Kingsley's *Thynne*. Furnivall reprints here a long extract from *The Reader*, 'one of our literary journals now discontinued', of February 1866, which protests at the 'tone of ungentlemanlike assumption and petulant insolence' of the review of Kingsley. While admitting that Kingsley was 'evidently not a careful corrector of the press', *The Reader* takes great delight in revealing that Freeman's correction was in itself wrong. 'This unlucky boy did not know, or did not notice, that he or his printer has put an Anglo-Saxon w (p) for the th (þ)' (p.viii).

Freeman answered when the *Saturday Review* reviewed the *Stacions of Rome*. 'We have had the great misfortune to give deadly offence to Mr. Furnivall; but it is some comfort that the British public, including almost "every man of culture," are sharers with us in our misdeeds.' Furnivall was spoken highly of in that review; 'it is only since that time that he has crowded his prefaces with petty gossip and bad jokes'.⁴⁹ Blundering and bad jokes, then, were the definitive of the 'oddness' of Furnivall's forewords.

Freeman's objections to Furnivall's preface are summed up when he says 'We deny the right of any man to chatter in public about "foolometers and book-possessor-ometers"'. Twenty years later he was to echo the line in his famous articulation of the fears of many historians and others about the institutionalisation and formal recognition of English literature as a discipline at Oxford. When in 1887

⁴⁹ *The Saturday Review*, 30 March 1867, 411-12.

the preamble of a statute was passed at Convocation for the creation of a School of Modern European Languages, the emphasis was still that the study of literature would be essentially historical, and founded on the study of language. It was in this debate that Freeman asked 'What is meant by distinguishing literature from language if by literature is meant the study of great books, and not mere chatter about Shelley?'⁵⁰

That Freeman would be so identified with the antagonism towards the disciplinarianisation and professionalisation of English literature adds extra texture to his criticisms of Furnivall. By Furnivall's death, the Middle English study he had popularised was firmly ensconced in the universities that didn't believe in him. How it got there, I would argue, can be traced in the rhetoric of, and reactions to, Furnivall's and Skeat's prefaces. Furnivall may have founded the EETS, and conducted his editing for it with pragmatism, practicality and expediency – 'some text, and that at once' – but what he founded was a society. It was Skeat's self-consciously disciplined editing that enabled the formation of a discipline.

⁵⁰ Stephen Potter, *The Muse in Chains: A Study in Education* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), p.194.

CHAPTER THREE

FURNIVALL'S SOCIETIES AND THE MASCULINE HERMENEUTIC

He brought an eye for all he saw;
He mixed in all our simple sports;
They pleased him, fresh from brawling courts
And dusty purlieus of the law.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'In Memoriam', 1850

Conducting a 'detailed examination' of *The Dethe of Blaunche the Duchesse* in the preface to his 1871 parallel text edition of Chaucer's minor poems, Furnivall finds the poem for the most part 'full of beauties' and 'quite worthy of Chaucer'.¹ But he expresses disappointment in the poem's ending:

The sudden and (to me) clumsy wind-up of the poem. [...] I hope Chaucer felt ashamed of himself for this most lame and impotent conclusion to the *Dethe of Blaunche* every time he read it: he ought to have been caned for it. (p.42)

In their recent studies of the reception of Chaucer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, within and beyond the academy respectively, both David Matthews and Steve Ellis find this remark worthy of comment.² Matthews describes Furnivall's style of writing, and indeed 'this trope of personal contact with the poet', as 'overtly emotional', giving as supporting evidence Furnivall's response to the portrait of Chaucer in Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* (MS Harl 4866): 'One feels one would like to go to such a man when one was in trouble, and hear his wise and gentle speech.'³ For Ellis, 'he ought to have been caned for it' is an example of

¹ Frederick James Furnivall, *Trial Forewords to My Parallel Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems: for the Chaucer Society: With a Try to Set Chaucer's Works in Their Right Order of Time* (London: Chaucer Society, 1871), p.42.

² Matthews, p.180; Steve Ellis, 'Popular Chaucer and the Academy', *Studies in Medievalism*, 9 (1997), 26-43 (p.26).

³ Matthews, pp.181; *Trial Forewords*, p.93.

Furnivall's 'disarmingly "unacademic" manner'; as is Furnivall's appreciation of the poem's 'eye for all the points of a woman – no man knew 'em like Chaucer'.⁴

In this chapter I propose that both being caned and appreciating women are integral to Furnivall's response to Chaucer. They represent key stages in the story of the attainment of manhood which is, I argue, the story Furnivall was tracing in his Chaucer work. Further, I posit that this need to distinguish a model of normative masculinity in the author is also evident in Furnivall's studies of – and societies for – later writers such as Browning and Shakespeare. I go on to argue that Furnivall's Chaucer studies, particularly, were motivated and structured by homosocial desire.

In David Lodge's *Small World*, Persse McGarrigle produces an off the cuff proposal for a book that examines the influence of T. S. Eliot on Shakespeare. To approach Furnivall's Chaucer and Hoccleve studies by first looking at the Browning and Shakspeare Societies might seem equally absurd; not least because Furnivall's interest in Shakespeare and Browning post-dated his work on Chaucer. But it is a useful approach because Furnivall, through commentaries on his own scholarship, invites comparison of these various societies and their objectives. The similarities – and crucial differences – between these societies reveal the bond between men to be a central preoccupation of Furnivall's work.

⁴ Ellis, p.26; *Trial Forewords*, p.42.

THE INFLUENCE OF BROWNING ON SHAKESPEARE

'I do heartily desire the spread of the study and the influence of Robert Browning,' declared Furnivall in his opening speech at the inaugural meeting of the Browning Society in October 1881. In Chapter 1 we saw Furnivall's enthusiasm for including within his editorial prefaces stories about the beginnings of the work in hand, often acknowledging others involved in each project and on occasion recording and refuting objections to it. The same tendency to narrate the genesis of a project can be found in the proceedings of the societies he founded, and the Browning Society's first meeting was a perfect opportunity for Furnivall to explain the new Society's origins. The speech he made was later published in the Browning Society's *Monthly Abstract of Proceedings*, as a pamphlet entitled *How the Browning Society Came into Being*.⁵ It is beyond the scope of this thesis fully to explore the reception of and reactions to the formation of the Browning Society, or to consider the influences that the Society had on the readership and reputation of Robert Browning, or indeed of Frederick Furnivall.⁶ But Furnivall's description of how and why he founded this particular society can show how and why he founded his other societies, in particular the New Shakspeare Society (founded in 1873), and the Chaucer Society (1868).

It is a Sunday morning in July 1881, Furnivall tells his audience of 300 nascent Browning enthusiasts, and he is on his way to Robert Browning's house. He

⁵ Frederick Furnivall, *How the Browning Society Came into Being: With Some Words on the Characteristics and Contrasts of Browning's Early and Late Work* (London: Browning Society, 1884), p.2

⁶ On Furnivall and the Browning Society, see William S. Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter: The Correspondence of Robert Browning and Frederick J. Furnivall, 1872-1899* (Washington: Decatur House, 1979) and Benzie, pp.220-43.

is taking Emily Hickey, a friend and writer of devotional poems, to meet the poet, having been prompted to effect such an introduction by Hickey's admiration of Browning and her disclosure that she 'was in some points more toucht by him than by Shakspeare':

I said to her, 'What do you think of a Browning Society? Would you help me in one?' She answered that she had sent me a letter – which never reached me – suggesting the Society, and that she'd certainly help. In our walk over to Warwick Crescent, I made up my mind that the Society was to be formed.⁷

Furnivall explains that the idea for such a society had come upon him before, but the plan had had to be put aside due to 'pressure of work'. Furnivall had by this point founded four such literary societies:

And as all my other Societies had been founded on behalf of poets not sufficiently studied, or who had not had their due meed of honour from their generation, or – as in the case of Shakspeare – were not being studied in the right way, I became more or less conscious that if I ever started a Society for the study of a living poet, that Society would be a Browning one. (p.1)

Like the others, this society aimed to create a social space for the discussion, appreciation and publication of texts, and, in doing so, to encourage as wide a constituency as possible to take part in such activities. *Why* the Browning Society had come into being could thus perhaps have been easily surmised by Furnivall's audience. Facilitating study, honour and admiration, the Browning Society would be much like Furnivall's other societies in being part fan club. And the Browning Society's aims were indeed the study and appreciation of Browning's works. On closer inspection, however, the reasons Furnivall gives for advocating the study of

⁷ *Browning Society*, p.1.

Browning are less concerned with the explanation of Browning's words than with the promotion of the exemplary nature of his character. Importantly, this too is presented within the context of Furnivall's other literary studies:

Having lived for some years with Chaucer and Shakspeare, to try and know what a man is, and what a poet is, I declare my conviction that Browning is the manliest, the strongest, the life-fullest, the deepest and thoughtfulest, living poet, the one most needing earnest study, and the one most worthy of it. (pp.2-3)

Embedded here are the main points I will be exploring in this chapter: the intriguing transposition of personal and literary knowledge, and the identification of exemplary masculinity. Furnivall knew Robert Browning personally, having been introduced to him by Tennyson in 1874.⁸ But despite having lived for some years if not with Robert Browning then near enough to call on him for tea, it is only by forming a society for the 'earnest study' of his works that Furnivall can truly know the man, or what kind of man he is. Although Furnivall as a member of Browning's social circle was well placed to comment on Browning's personality and character – and indeed did so on other occasions, describing him as 'a noble and generous spirit, a manly man' – here manliness and strength are not personal qualities.⁹ Rather, Browning's superlative manliness is a function of his poetry:

For myself, when urging on folk the study of Browning, I always admit his faults, his often failure in moulding his verse, his want of lucidity, his habit of going off at tangents, &c.; but I insist that for manliness, strength, vividness, penetration, humour, buoyancy,

⁸ 'Recollections of Robert Browning. By Dr. F. J. Furnivall, Founder of the Browning Society', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 December 1889, p.1-2 (p.1).

⁹ 'A Few More Words on Robert Browning. By F. J. Furnivall', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 18 December 1889, p.3 .

characterisation, insight into music and art, he has no equal in modern poetry.¹⁰

In a way, concentrating on the invocation of manliness in Furnivall's rationale for the Browning Society deliberately ignores the comment that Browning's poetry is a body of work 'most needing earnest study, and [...] most worthy of it'. Others have been more ready to see the equation of difficulty and value legible here as the premise upon which all Furnivall's societies are based. This is not a formulation that Furnivall himself emphasises. Here he plots three reasons for having a literary society: the rectification of, variously, the insufficient study of a poet, the inadequate honour accorded to him or simply the incorrect appreciation of his works. But as Furnivall's story about forming the Browning Society has been retold, the idea of poetic impenetrability is brought to the fore. As Caroline Spurgeon recounts it in the 1910 *Volume of Personal Record*, this was the account Furnivall used to give of the founding of the Browning Society:

Some lady said to him one afternoon, casually, 'I wonder you don't found a Browning Society, for Browning's works are every bit as obscure and undecipherable as any of your Early English texts.' 'You are quite right,' was the Doctor's reply, and on the way home he bought a pound's worth of stamps, sat up all night writing letters to suitable people on the subject, and by the evening of the following day the first members had joined.¹¹

By the time Derek Brewer re-tells the anecdote in 1979, Emily Hickey has become 'a girl at a party' but, in her remark to Furnivall – "'Browning is just as difficult as early English; why don't you found a society for him?'" – the idea of difficulty

¹⁰ Esther Defries, *A Browning Primer: With an Introduction by Dr. F. J. Furnivall* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892), p.vi.

¹¹ *Personal Record*, p.184.

remains.¹² Recast in these terms, the anecdote suggests that the reason for having a Browning Society, and by implication the reason for having any of Furnivall's societies, is literary pedagogy: its main purpose being the study, interpretation and explication of Browning's impenetrable poetry. As scholars, Spurgeon and Brewer perhaps find the confluence of difficulty and literary value a useful one in explaining the place of Furnivall's societies in the history of their discipline. Central to that history, I would argue, is the way that, as the impression of impulsiveness intensifies and the concept of 'difficulty' is reified, Emily Hickey becomes increasingly anonymous. In Chapter Four I explore the centrality of the feminine to the homosocial bonds of Furnivall's work

Spurgeon introduces this anecdote to show Furnivall's 'all-conquering power'; Brewer to illustrate Furnivall's impetuosity, and in his account the impulsive purchase of the stamps segues into Eleanor Furnivall's inability to understand her husband's literary activities, Furnivall's infidelity and the couple's eventual separation.¹³ Furnivall's narrative of how the Browning Society was formed has thus been cited as evidence of both his energy and his eccentricity. But neither Spurgeon nor Brewer question why Furnivall felt the need to explain the origins of the Browning Society so thoroughly, or indeed at all. The anecdote is only in part attributable to Furnivall's fondness for relating the minutiae of his working practices. When Furnivall had founded the Early English Text, Chaucer, Ballad and New Shakspeare Societies (and he enumerates this list, with dates, in his speech to the Browning Society), a few commentators had wondered at his suitability for the task

¹² Brewer, 'Furnivall and the Old Chaucer Society', p.3.

¹³ 'His wife once plaintively remarked to the German scholar [Alois] Brandl, who records this story in his obituary notice in *Archiv*, "my husband spends pounds in postage".' Brewer, 'Furnivall and the Old Chaucer Society', p.4.

in hand.¹⁴ And, as we saw in the Chapter 2, the decorum of Furnivall's writing for those societies had sometimes been questioned. But never before had the propriety of the Society itself come under scrutiny. At the inaugural meeting Furnivall, delighted with the Browning Society's initial membership, exhibited typical optimism for its future growth. 'We are over 70 Members now. That means 100 before the end of the year; and I hope 150 by next July.' But that the membership had reached such a number at all was equally a cause for celebration, considering, as Furnivall acknowledges, 'how many objections have been made to us':

One of the most general [objections] is, that no Society should be founded to study and illustrate the works of a living poet. As a ducal correspondent of mine put it, 'My dear Furnivall, I think it is 300 years too early for a Browning Society.' (p.2)

Until this point in the 1880s, Furnivall's textual and historical interests, and the societies he had founded to further them, had been confined to Early English. As loosely as Furnivall defined this period – and in Furnivall's view 'Early English' meant anything from the seventh century up to and including Shakespeare – it was clear that a Browning society was a marked departure, and as such could have been expected to attract comment and even censure. What is perhaps surprising is that Furnivall, accustomed – as we saw in the last chapter – to having to convince his readers and critics of the validity of reading Early English texts as cultural heritage *in spite of* their sociological and philological otherness, now had to defend the opposite charge. Browning was too modern to have a literary society founded in his honour. In answering these objections, Furnivall exposes how being a contemporary

¹⁴ Furnivall admitted as much: 'There has been some opposition to the formation of the [New Shakspeare] Society; partly due to myself, because I am unknown as a Shakspearean student.' *New Shakspeare Society Transactions*, 1874, p.x.

of the poet is in fact the position to which the members of the Browning Society – and of the Chaucer and Shakspeare Societies – should aspire:

To all such folk, I can only say: ‘You’ve never founded a Chaucer or Shakspeare Society, and had to worry and bother over this word and that, this allusion and the other; the man Shakspeare’s sonnets were written to, the lady of Chaucer’s early love, and all the thousand and one puzzles these poets’ works present [sic]. If you had, you’d never have thought it superfluous, for a set of the contemporaries of each poet to have cleared [sic] up all your bothers for you. You’d have blest them every day of your life.’ (p.2)

In explaining the pertinence of a Browning Society, then, Furnivall reveals his literary societies to be homosocial in purpose and design. Those societies aimed to effect the identification and understanding of literary masculinity – ‘what a man is, and what a poet is’; their activities of studying, editing and publishing an author’s works are akin to ‘living with’ a poet; and their ultimate goal is to provide knowledge of the poet equivalent to that available to his circle of friends.

If the isolation of an interest in exemplary masculinity affords a new perspective on Furnivall’s Browning Studies, then by reflection Furnivall’s Chaucer and Shakspeare Societies can also be considered anew. Before I explore the way in which the Chaucer Society can be seen not only as the way Furnivall ‘lived with’ Chaucer but also as the way he sought to know ‘what a man was’, I would like to consider the other writer that Furnivall brings into the equation. Furnivall’s writing on Shakespeare, I argue, can provide a more nuanced understanding of his work on Chaucer.

THE INFLUENCE OF SHAKESPEARE ON CHAUCER

Furnivall's passing comment that he had inaugurated a Shakespeare society because the poet was 'not being studied in the right way' deserves closer attention. In 1873 Furnivall founded a New Shakspeare Society: 'New' because a previous Shakespeare Society had been founded in 1840 (and, mainly because it was disgraced by scandals surrounding forgeries, disbanded in 1853'); 'Shakspeare' not 'Shakespeare' because Furnivall insisted that autograph evidence did not allow for any other spelling.¹⁵ This New Shakspeare Society would consider 'the oneness of Shakspeare' and promote 'the intelligent study of him and print texts and illustrate his work and times'. 'Intelligent study', designated in direct contrast to the 'antiquarian illustration, emendation, and verbal criticism' of the previous society, this time meant 'a very close study of the metrical and phraseological peculiarities' of Shakespeare's works, which would be combined with biographical evidence about Shakespeare's life. Such 'close study' was conducted with scientific methodology influenced by the German scholarship of Georg Gervinus and August von Schlegel.¹⁶ Scrutiny of the versification of the plays produced statistical analysis of their stylistic features such as metre, rhyme and run on lines. This analysis would then be tabulated to provide a chronology of the plays on the principle that the more refined the versification, the later the play was written.

¹⁵ On the 'old' Shakespeare Society, see Samuel Shoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp.383-526. For Furnivall's opinions on how to spell Shakespeare, see Frederick Furnivall, 'On Shakspeare's Signatures', [reprinted from the *Journal of the Society of Archivists and Autograph Collectors*] (London: [n. pub.], 1895).

¹⁶ See Furnivall's 1874 pamphlet, *The Succession of Shakspeare's Works and the Use of Metrical Tests in Settling it, &c.: Being the Introduction to Professor Gervinus's 'Commentaries On Shakspeare'*, Translated By Miss Bunnell (Smith, Elder, & Co., 1874)

Consequently, this would not only help in the study of ‘the growth, the oneness of Shakspere’ but would also determine authorship and thus stabilise the Shakespearean canon.¹⁷

Like the Browning Society, and perhaps even more so, the New Shakspere Society is an area ripe for further research and analysis. Here, however, I would like to consider Furnivall’s Shakespeare in the light of Furnivall’s Browning. It is perhaps unsurprising that, in a contemporary such as Browning, Furnivall should look for and find an epitome of Victorian literary manliness. But that he should so strenuously apply the same criteria of normative masculinity to the lives and writers of the seventeenth century – and earlier – is worthy of closer investigation.

The ultimate aim of the New Shakspere Society was to ‘get [Shakespeare’s] plays as nearly as possible in the order in which he wrote them’. This would serve to rectify the failures of previous critics:

The study of him has been so narrow, and the criticism so wooden, that no book by any Englishman exists which deals in any worthy manner with Shakspere as a whole, which tracks the rise and growth of his genius from the boyish romanticism or the sharp young-mannishness of his early plays, to the magnificence, the splendour, the divine intuition, which mark his ripest works.¹⁸

As the rhetorical constructs ‘Shakspere as a whole’ and the ‘oneness of Shakspere’ reveal, Furnivall’s New Shakspere Society aimed to establish a type of criticism that would make the life and character of the poet visible through his works. The ‘faithful student of Shakspere’ would thus be able ‘to pierce through the crowds of forms that

¹⁷ Fredrick Furnivall, ‘Founder’s Prospectus of the New Shakspere Society’, *New Shakspere Society Transactions*, 1874, Appendix, pp.6-7.

¹⁸ ‘Founder’s Prospectus’, p.6.

exhibit Shakspere's mind, to the mind itself, the man himself, and see him as he was' (p.7). That Shakespeare 'as he was' was a man worth knowing was beyond question, for 'who can read his plays without feeling that in all that's frank, and generous, and beautiful, all that's noble, and to be revered in their characters and them, there is a part of Shakspere himself?'¹⁹

Of course, 'boyish romanticism' and 'sharp young-mannishness' are ideologically laden and, more importantly, gendered constructs. As too, because of their contiguity, are 'magnificence' 'splendour' and 'divine intuition'. While emulating a homosocial position equivalent to those who knew Shakespeare 'as he was', members of the New Shakspere Society were ultimately more privileged than Shakespeare's contemporaries because they were able to know the whole of Shakespeare's life, and especially his progression into manhood.

What Furnivall is doing here and, I will argue, in the case of Chaucer, is identifying in Shakespeare an exemplary masculinity. Chronological study of the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer allow the reader to follow a virtuoso performance of the story of the attainment of manhood. The 'masculine plot', as Sussman describes it, is the story of how men achieve manhood by passing through a series of recognisable stages. Furnivall, in making the identification of this progression the central concern of his textual appreciation, predicates his literary work on a form of interpretation I am calling the 'masculine hermeneutic'.

In the absence of a set of Shakespeare's contemporaries who could have 'cleared up all the bothers' of the bard's life (indefinite literary allusions and lost

¹⁹ Frederick Furnivall and John Munro, 'Shakspere: Life and Work' in *The Leopold Shakspere: The Poet's Works, in Chronological Order, from the Text of Professor Delius, with an Introduction on Shakspere's Life and Work by Frederick Furnivall and John Munro*, 12 vols (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877) 1, p.167.

biographical details, for example), some parts of Shakespeare's biography were hazier than others. So despite this all-encompassing faith in the autobiographical veracity of Shakespeare's works, at times Furnivall had to marshal other witnesses to fill in the gaps in biography that could not be adduced from picking out 'the extra-dramatic bits from the plays' and combining them with 'the like bits from the poems'.²⁰ For matters such as describing Shakespeare's early life, the ideological importance of which I trace below, Furnivall had to rely on his own historical and literary studies. In 1877 Furnivall edited, with John Munro, *The Leopold Shakspeare* in forty volumes, the first of which was an introduction entitled 'Shakspeare: Life and Work'. His first chapter covers 'Shakspeare's Parents, Boyhood, Education, Marriage and Departure from Stratford'. Here Furnivall's reading of Shakespeare's plays as biography is taken to extremes. By extension all texts contemporary to Shakespeare's childhood, and specifically those which Furnivall has already edited, can be made to provide biographical evidence of Shakespeare's early life. Francis Seager's courtesy book, *Schoole of Virtue and Booke of Good Nourture for Chyldren*, the text of which Furnivall printed in his EETS *Babees Book* of 1868, for example, is the inspiration for a long rumination on how 'our chestnut haird, fair, brown-eyd, rosy-cheekt boy went to school, and waited on his father and mother and their guests' (p.17).

Furnivall also imagines the young Shakespeare among the crowds that watched Elizabeth I's visit to Kenilworth Castle in 1575, as detailed in *Robert Laneham's Letter*.²¹ Enthusiastically optimistic that the authors of these texts could

²⁰ 'Life and Work', p.160.

²¹ *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books; or Robert Lanehams Letter*, ed. by Fredrick Furnivall (London: Ballad Society, 1871).

be the set of Shakespeare's contemporaries that he had wished for, Furnivall appears to be anxiously scanning the crowd for a glimpse of the young Shakespeare, and his desire to provide a historical context for Shakespeare's childhood is evident. That it is also possible to catch a glimpse of the young Furnivall in some of these scenes is somewhat more peculiar. Furnivall's need to find, or construct, continuities between his own childhood and that of Shakespeare is as strong as, if not stronger than, his need to illustrate historical context. Thus in 'Shakspeare: Life and Work', conjecture about Shakespeare's boyhood soon becomes entwined with reminiscence about Furnivall's own. On the arrival of a younger sister, did young Shakespeare, ponders Furnivall, 'wonder, as we did, where the babies came from, and look under the gooseberry-bushes for them: or did he, later on, consult with his brothers and others how the youngest baby could most conveniently be made away with?' And a comment on Shakespeare's schooling is accompanied by a footnote that gives explanatory detail not on boys' education in sixteenth-century Warwickshire but on Furnivall's own experiences in 1830s Surrey:

At any rate, the question of his school naturally turns up in 1571, when he became seven¹ [...].

¹ I went to a boarding-school at six-and-a-quarter, and recollect still, jumping with delight when the carriage drove round to take me. But after a quarter's taste of the cane, &c., tears came on going back for the autumn half. (p.15)

The subject of corporal punishment recurs, with Furnivall imagining how 'Shakspeare, no doubt, got whacks on the hands and back with a cane – to say nothing of being bircht over a desk, or hoisted on another boy's back – for making mistakes, like the rest of us in later time' (p.20). This might imply pure masochistic reminiscence on Furnivall's part. But we cannot reject these comments as purely

sentimental, however whimsical – or downright mawkish – Furnivall becomes. Admitting that ‘Shakspeare, and his life as a Stratford lad, must be left to the fancy of every reader’ (p.24), Furnivall expounds at length on ‘his own notion’ of the boyhood of Shakespeare:

Taking the boy to be the father of the man, I see a square-built yet lithe and active fellow, with ruddy cheeks, hazel eyes, a high forehead, and auburn hair, as full of life as an egg is full of meat, impulsive, inquiring, sympathetic; up to any fun and daring; making love to all the girls; a favourite wherever he goes – even with the prigs and fools he mocks; – untroubled as yet with Hamlet doubts; but in many a quiet time communing with the beauty of earth and sky around him, with the thoughts of men of old in books; throwing himself with all his heart into all he does. At this time we may infer, too, with some certainty, that he noted the many rural scenes around him, took stock of the wild flowers and the birds, and learnt much of the lore of dogs and horses which he displays in his works. His frequent references to sports, hawking, coursing, and hunting, make us believe that he must have indulged in them personally. His frequent references to boyish games seem to show that his childhood was a happy one. (p.24)

In what follows I consider why Furnivall might have wanted to imagine a boyhood for Shakespeare. I also consider why he might have wanted to imagine this particular boyhood, with its action, athleticism, homosocial friendship and heterosexual flirtation, domestic contentment, and enjoyment of the English countryside and its sporting pursuits.

Painting such a detailed picture of Shakespeare as a boy exposes Furnivall’s desire to find identifiable elements of boyhood – that is, elements that can be identified and that can be identified with – in the early life of the author. As he moves from tracing boyhood as a contingent historical experience to marking boyishness as a transhistorical masculine essence, Furnivall displays an investment in a gendered construction of boyishness. Furnivall’s invocation of the boy Shakespeare, or indeed of ‘boyish romanticism’, presupposes that boyishness was a

recognisable and ideologically plausible concept. Claudia Nelson has described a late nineteenth-century 'shift from an ideal for boys that was essentially androgynous to one that was self-consciously masculine'.²² This 'gradual displacement of mid-century religiosity by late-century biology' saw children's literature replace an ideal of childhood – consisting of androgynous self-discipline and spiritual perfection – with an ideal of boyhood consisting of manliness found in 'well developed muscles and an eye to the main chance'.²³

As Susan P. Casteras has explored, the imaginative reconstruction of the boyhood of the male genius was a recurrent trope in narrative paintings of the mid- to late-Victorian period.²⁴ Casteras notes how artists who painted scenes of the genius as a boy, 'providing spectators with keyhole glimpses of both ordinary and extraordinary moments in the youths of exceptional men,' served various cultural imperatives: ratifying the gender of genius, soothing anxiety over British art, and providing allegories of empire (p.117). In particular, 'genre scenes of everyday life' conflated the historical, the everyday and the universal, to both romanticise and personalise history:

Scores of paintings self-consciously mirrored the deeds, heroes, look, and feel of contemporary life by stressing familiar systems of meaning through the use of elaborate, symbolic detail. History paintings, chronicling the private aspects of 'great men,' readily fit with such a devotion to realism and symbolism. (p.120)

²² Claudia Nelson, 'Sex and the Single Boy: Ideals of Manliness and Sexuality in Victorian Literature for Boys', *Victorian Studies* (1989), 525-550 (p.525).

²³ Nelson, p.543.

²⁴ Susan P. Casteras, 'Excluding Women: The Cult of the Male Genius in Victorian Painting', in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History and the Politics of Gender* ed. by Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 116-146.

It might seem, then, that Furnivall's description is unremarkable. Furnivall's boy Shakespeare, with his high forehead and insightful mockery of 'prigs and fools' is both phrenologically and psychologically recognisable as a character in 'the old, old story of the early manifestations of genius' (p.122). Furnivall even admits that he has ascribed precocious and possibly anachronistic reading habits to the young Shakespeare. His vision of Shakespeare communing with 'the thoughts of men of old in books' is glossed with a footnote that concedes 'I don't press the books point, except that they were story-books such as then existed'.²⁵

But Casteras, perhaps, maps too easily 'the contrast between male and female realms and modes of behavior' (p.135). Identifying that in many of the paintings 'girls and women are clearly associated with subservience, ignorance, and domesticity' (p.125) and associating 'home and security, [...] domestic interiors and females' (p.140), Casteras leaves little room at the tea table for the interplay of domesticity and masculinity. Carol Christ proposed as long ago as 1977 that 'the ideal of the angel in the house should tell us at least as much about the Victorian man as about the Victorian woman'.²⁶ More recent work by John Tosh has opened new areas of interpretation by positing domesticity as central to Victorian masculinity.²⁷ In *A Man's Place*, Tosh plots the ideological importance of domesticity for the early and mid Victorians, and charts the increasing tensions endemic to that ideology as the end of the nineteenth century brought challenges to the domestic ideal. Changes in the laws governing and in the public perception of marriage and home life,

²⁵ 'Life and Work', p.24.

²⁶ Carol T. Christ, 'Victorian Masculinity and the Angel in the House', in *The Widening Sphere*, ed. by Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), pp.147-162.

combined with increasing imperial tensions, were to bring under strain the power of domesticity to influence the perception of manliness. Tosh proposes that while the establishment of a home has been, throughout history, central to men's social standing, with the nineteenth century came a profound attachment to, and investment in, the concept of domesticity. Because 'never before or since has domesticity been held to be so central to masculinity', Tosh centres his analysis on the principle that 'episodes of home life' can and should be 'treated as a manifestation of gender.' The Victorians, he argues, articulated an ideal of home against which men's conduct has been and continues to be measured (p.1-8).

How then can Furnivall's fantasies of episodes in Shakespeare's home life be treated as manifestations of gender? Tosh proposes that 'the progress of a middle-class boy from infancy to manhood was marked by a sequence of well-defined stages'. But while the process of attaining manhood could be seen as a series of *rites de passage*, it was less a natural progression than a 'period of conflict, challenge and exertion' between two fixed points of domesticity. Going away to school, starting work as an apprentice, and becoming sexually active took the young middle-class male from 'domestic dependence' in his parents' home through to marriage and 'domestic authority' as head of his own household. Furnivall's concern with illustrating the details of Shakespeare's life, and in particular with comparing those details to his own childhood, can be seen to track this first movement from domesticity into the public realm of the boarding school. The point at which the boy Furnivall enters his own narrative of Shakespeare's life is the point at which the public and social inculcation of masculinity begins. As we saw above, the events

²⁷ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

Furnivall is at pains to present as universal and transhistorical – peer pressure and corporal punishment – are his residual anxieties about entering the Victorian public school. These public schools, says Tosh, appealed to significant parts of the Victorian middle classes on two counts: as an academic preparation for university and the professions, and as ‘a crash course in manliness’ (p.117-19).

Going away to school, the first in Tosh’s series of stages towards attaining manhood, is thus legible not only as a structural feature of Furnivall’s narrative of Shakespeare’s life, but as a point of identification with him. That the school Furnivall imagines Shakespeare going to was the local ‘free Stratford Grammar School’ and not the boarding school of Furnivall’s childhood appears to make little difference to the commonality of their experiences (p.15). The same is true of the other stages that Tosh identifies: starting work and gaining sexual experience. Furnivall, admitting that lack of concrete evidence about Shakespeare’s early working life has allowed readers to imagine for him all manner of careers, ascribes to Shakespeare a familiar profession:

Another tradition says that he was an attorney’s clerk; and that he was so at one time of his life, I, as a lawyer, have no doubt. Of the details of no profession does he show such an intimate acquaintance as he does of law. (p.23)

And in Furnivall’s account, as the boy Shakespeare grows into a young man he enters active heterosexuality with similarly common experience:

Of course, every impulsive young fellow falls in love; and, of course, the girl he does it with is older than himself. Who is there of us that has not gone through the process, probably many times? Young stupids we were, no doubt; so was Shakspeare. (p.25)

'Unluckily,' continues Furnivall, 'he went further; and one day near Michaelmas, 1582, he of eighteen-and-a-half, and his Anne Hathaway of twenty-six – "read no more". Their marriage became necessary' (p.25). Furnivall himself goes no further than this uncharacteristically restrained allusion to Shakespeare's sexual activities, despite a later celebration of Shakespeare's 'full-blooded' carnality:

He liked his cakes and ale, and took enjoyingly the pleasures sensuous and sexual that the fates provided. [...] The unneeded double-entendres, the broad jokes, in his early plays, his *Venus, &c.*, show that he had the allowable enjoyment of his time in an amusing splash of dirt. (p.164-65)

Indeed it is not Shakespeare's sexual experience but his marriage that interests Furnivall. With this marriage, Shakespeare attains what Tosh calls the 'relatively fixed point in the transition to adult masculine status': the establishment of a home and a family to provide for (p.122). Furnivall expresses anxiety that Shakespeare has achieved neither financial independence nor emotional stability in his domestic life:

What Shakspeare had to keep himself, his wife, and baby on, is not recorded [...]. Here then, is our young poet, not yet twenty-one, yet with three children, and a wife eight years older than himself, pretty well weighted for his run thru life. Was his early married life a happy one? I doubt it. Look at the probabilities of the case, and at the way in which Shakspeare dwells on the evils of a woman wedding one younger than herself in *Twelfth Night* II.iv.p.62 [...] and of a wife's jealousy in [...] *The Comedy of Errors*, V.i.p.92. (p.28)

The route into manhood identified by Tosh is thus legible in Furnivall's tracing of Shakespeare's life: a route from boyhood through sexual experience and work into manhood, marriage and providing for a household.

Elsewhere, Tosh has proposed a wider view of the topology of masculinity. He also argues that the public display of masculinity resides in the tensions between

three arenas in which social masculinity is performed: home, work, and all-male association.²⁸ And Furnivall, too, can be seen to structure his life of Shakespeare according to these areas. With Shakespeare exhibiting the traits of hegemonic masculinity in the arenas of home and work, it is unsurprising that Furnivall should paint him an exemplar in the homosocial sphere as well:

But with this full-blooded, strong, intense nature, with an overflowing store of humour, geniality and wit, Shakspeare combined the utmost sensitiveness, the tenderest, humblest, devoted, womanlike love for his friend. What can be more beautiful – weak tho' it may seem to some – than his affection for his Will of the *Sonnets*? (p.165)

In the conclusion of 'Shakspeare: Life and Work', Furnivall sums up Shakespeare as an exemplar of literary masculinity. 'Altogether "a manly man" (as Chaucer says) this Shakspeare, strong, tender, humourful, sensitive, impressionable, the truest friend, the foe of none but narrower minds and base' (p.172). In Shakespeare's life and work, then, Furnivall has found the masculine hermeneutic – that is, the story of poethood achieved which is also the story of manhood achieved – writ large. It is an approach inspired by Furnivall's Chaucer studies. 'Unless a man's works are studied in the order in which he wrote them, you *cannot* get at a right understanding of his mind, you cannot follow the growth of it.'²⁹

Furnivall's admiration for Shakespeare, 'the biggest man I had ever come across', was so great that he was keen to encourage other Chaucer scholars to follow suit in diversifying their literary interests. 'I do hope that you will come on to

²⁸ Tosh, 'What should Historians do...?', p.184.

²⁹ 'Founder's Prospectus', p.7.

Shakspeare,' he wrote to Henry Bradshaw. 'He does "stain" Chaucer & everyone else that I've read.'³⁰

If Furnivall's attachment to Shakespeare was so great, why then do I aim to take Furnivall's homosocial relationship with Chaucer as the central focus of this chapter? The answer, I suggest, can also be found in the conclusion to 'Shakspeare: Life and Work':

True poet as Chaucer is, and much as I love him (my work for him shows it); true poet as Marlowe is, [...] it seems to me that Shakspeare can take them both up in his right hand, and all the other English poets in his left, and walk off with them without feeling their weight. (p.168)

In this image, part Harold Bloom, part Jack the Giant Killer, Furnivall sets out the parameters of his appreciation for both Chaucer and Shakespeare. Furnivall may have become convinced that Shakespeare was a greater poet, but despite the depth of his identification with – and admiration and appreciation for – Shakespeare, it is never expressed using the same vocabulary of love and desire with which he spoke and wrote about Chaucer. Accordingly, in the next section I explore the manifestation of homosocial desire in Furnivall's Chaucer Society.

³⁰ Furnivall to Bradshaw, 17 July, 1875, Cambridge University, Bradshaw papers.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

Furnivall opens his *Temporary Preface to the Six-Text Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* with a description that could well have been entitled *How the Chaucer Society Came into Being*. The section is listed in the table of contents as 'Cause of the Publication,' but Furnivall's additional comment in parentheses '(May be skipt as gossip)' admits that such information might be considered peripheral by the readers of such a preface.³¹ And indeed the preface goes on, for another 113 pages, to explore the choice of manuscripts used in the edition (noting their comparative readings and points of dialect), and to explain the order of the Tales employed (an arrangement that was intended to reflect the chronology and topography of the pilgrimage). As such, Furnivall's preface traverses ground that has been covered and re-covered by Chaucerian textual critics ever since.³² The editor's reasons for studying Chaucer's texts in the first place, however, are not as frequently rehearsed by contemporary scholars. Furnivall expresses the rationale behind the founding of the Chaucer Society in the discourse that Ellis and Matthews found 'unacademic' and 'emotive': that of relations between men.

Furnivall attributes the publication of his edition of the *Canterbury Tales*, and the formation of the Chaucer Society itself, to one man, 'the accomplished American scholar, Professor F. J. Child of Harvard'. Child, who had been instrumental in the

³¹ *Temporary Preface*, p.1.

³² See, for example, Ralph Hanna III, 'Problems of "Best Text" Editing and the Hengwrt Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*', in *Manuscripts and Texts: Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York*, ed. by Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1984), pp.37-94; Charles A. Owen Jr., *The Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1991).

publication of Furnivall's edition of the Percy manuscript in 1867, had been asking Furnivall to publish more Chaucer manuscripts for many years. Like the anecdotal beginnings of the Browning Society, the origins of the Chaucer Society can thus appear to be rooted in pedagogy. Furnivall goes on to describe how he had first 'conceived the hope that I might one day edit Chaucer' while teaching the text at the Working Men's College.³³ One of the founders of the college in 1854, Furnivall had begun by teaching classes on English grammar and was soon 'leading his class to appreciate the somewhat archaic beauties of Chaucer and of Piers Plowman'.³⁴ Teaching the *Canterbury Tales* with the texts that were available in 1856 meant using Thomas Wright's 1847-51 edition, or one of the cheaper editions that reused the text of Thomas Tyrwhitt's 1774-78 *Canterbury Tales*.³⁵ Furnivall, forthright as ever, found himself commissioned to edit a new text 'when – on my telling Mr George Bell in 1864 that his neck ought to be wrung if he merely reprinted Tyrwhitt's text in his new Aldine edition – he kindly asked me if I would edit Chaucer's works for him' (p.2). Furnivall passed the project on to Richard Morris, who produced a new text for the Aldine Edition of the British Poets in 1866, replacing William Pickering's 1845 six volume *Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*.³⁶ But, says Furnivall, 'Professor Child still pressed me for a print of two of the best MSS of the Canterbury Tales.' With the Early English Text Society already committed, through Skeat, to the similarly monumental task of editing Langland,

³³ F. J. Furnivall, *A Temporary Preface to the Six-Text Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (London: Chaucer Society, 1868), p.2.

³⁴ [Anon.], 'Annals of the College', *Working Men's College Journal* (March, 1894), p.43.

³⁵ Matthews, p.168.

³⁶ Matthews, p. 170. For the publication history of the *Canterbury Tales* see Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*.

'the hands of that Society were too full to undertake an edition of Chaucer [...] there was therefore nothing for it, but to have a Chaucer Society' (p.2). This presentation of the rise of the Chaucer Society as both necessary and inevitable gives credence to Matthews's claim that Furnivall always intended a separate society for publishing Chaucer, judging astutely that his minute market would sustain without question two such publishing societies.³⁷

So in 1868 Furnivall founded the Chaucer Society, a society that would 'do honour to Chaucer, and to let lovers and students of him see how far the best unprinted manuscripts of his works differ from the printed texts.'³⁸ Furnivall produced for the Chaucer Society a *Six-Text Edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* in 1868 and a *Parallel Text Edition of Chaucer's Minor Poems* in 1871. This manuscript work paved the way for Walter Skeat to produce the first composite text of Chaucer's works, the monumental Clarendon Chaucer in 1894.

Furnivall's textual ambitions for his Chaucer Society – to 'print Manuscripts, and get friends to write essays' about Chaucer's works – came second to his desire to promote appreciation of Chaucer the man.

Any one who reads the Canterbury Tales, and gets to know the man Chaucer, must delight in and love him, and must feel sorry that so little has been done for the works of the genial bright soul, whose humour and wit, whose grace and tenderness, whose power and beauty, are the chief glory of our Early Literature. (p.2)

Chaucer exhibits the same exemplary manliness that Furnivall finds in Shakespeare, and this is manifest in the legible progression into adult manhood found in his writing. As with the dating of Shakespeare's plays by the 'young mannishness' or

³⁷ Matthews, p.172.

³⁸ *Personal Record*, p. xlix.

'boyish romanticism' of their writing, Furnivall dates the Canterbury tales to Chaucer's middle life:

Why I insist on 1386, or some such year, as the central period of the [Canterbury] Tales, is the strong conviction I have that the thorough larkiness of many of them cannot be an old man's work, and that it is absurd to suppose these contemporary with the Envoy to Scogan or Bukton, &c. Just see how they bubble over with fun.³⁹

The masculine hermeneutic that Furnivall used to approach Shakespeare's work was learned in his appreciation of Chaucer. Knowledge of the whole of Chaucer's life allows the reader to place Chaucer's works in the order in which he wrote them. This, in turn, enables the reader to understand the poems as the development of artistic genius into full manhood:

He will then see Chaucer, not only outwardly as he was in the flesh – page, soldier, squire, diplomatist, Customhouse officer, Member of Parliament, then a supplicant for protection and favour, a beggar for money; but inwardly as he was in the spirit – clear of all nonsense of Courts of Love, &c. – gentle and loving, early timid and in despair, sharing others' sorrow, and by comforting them, losing part of his own; yet long dwelling on the sadness of forsaken love, seeking the 'consolation of philosophy,' watching the stars, praying to the 'mother of God;' studying books, and, more still, woman's nature; his eye open to all the beauties of the world around him, his ear to the 'heavenly harmony; of birds' song; at length becoming the most gracious and tender spirit, the sweetest singer, the best pourtrayer, the most pathetic, and withal the most genial and humourful healthy-souled man that England had ever seen.⁴⁰

The key to understanding Chaucer's particular story of manhood achieved hinges not on his success in the male sphere of work, but on his point of entry into active

³⁹ *Trial Forewords*, p.97.

⁴⁰ Frederick Furnivall, 'Recent Work at Chaucer', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 27 (March 1873), 383-93.

heterosexuality; on knowing that Chaucer 'himself had begun his life with bitterly disappointed love, and its pangs shot through him for many a year before he could write the merry lines which laugh with gladness still' (p.387). 'The lady of Chaucer's early love' was one of the unsolved 'bothers' Furnivall mentioned in his justification for starting the Browning Society. It was:

The key to Chaucer's early life; and the man who would understand him must start with him in his sorrow, walk with him through it into the fresh sunshine of his later life, and then down to the chill and poverty of his old age.

The Chaucer Society would thus create a whole constituency of readers who, equipped with a set of Chaucer's works in chronological order, would be able to follow this progression. They would be men who could 'understand' Chaucer.

Furnivall made no claims that women readers were excluded from this knowledge, but there was one woman whose ability to comprehend Chaucer was always in doubt. Furnivall was sure that Chaucer's wife didn't understand him. In fact, Furnivall found unhappiness in Chaucer's marriage similar to that which he detected in Shakespeare's. His suggestion that Shakespeare's marriage was marked by jealousy on Anne Hathaway's part is accompanied by a rather tart footnote to the effect that 'Mr and Mrs Chaucer were probably of like minds. Chaucer would hear more than once of Miss Cecelia Champaigne'.⁴¹ Many scholars have discounted the possibility that Chaucer's acquittal of 'raptus' against Cecelia de Champaigne in 1380 in any way sullies his reputation, invoking semantic, legal and etymological evidence in Chaucer's favour.⁴² Few have managed to relegate this problematic life

⁴¹ 'Life and Work', p.29.

⁴² See, for example, P.R. Watts, 'The Strange Case of Geoffrey Chaucer and Cecelia Champaigne', *Law Quarterly Review*, 63 (1967), 491-515. Carolyn Dinshaw analyses critical

record to the nagging complaint of a jealous wife – but that was how Furnivall imagined Chaucer's wife to be:

Poets are curious cattle about love and marriage. They can have a love or indeed many loves quite independent of their wives: as indeed can and do many other men. If Chaucer's wife was not a bit of a tartar, and most of his chaff of women meant for her, I have read him wrongly.⁴³

I recall here the disintegration of Furnivall's own marriage that I touched on in my introduction, but not so we can conjecture on how Furnivall could and did have 'a love or indeed many loves' independent of his wife. It is more pertinent to note how, in the same way that Derek Brewer's understanding of Furnivall was brought into sharp relief by Eleanor Furnivall's lack of it, Furnivall's reading of Chaucer is given added credence by Philippa Chaucer's want of sympathy for her husband.

The bond between Furnivall and Chaucer, and indeed other readers and Chaucer, was strengthened by a depth of understanding passing the love of women. By the time Furnivall applied (unsuccessfully) for the position of secretary of the Royal Academy in 1873, he could proudly describe how, through his 'work at Chaucer', 'men [have been] induced to honour and love him as they should.' And love him they would because they could not help it – 'Who can read the oft-conned lines, without his heart opening, his hand stretching out, to greet the sunny soul that penned them?'⁴⁴

deliberations on the subject in *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.10-11 and in 'Rivalry, Rape and Manhood: Gower and Chaucer', in *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange*, ed. by R. F. Yeager (Victoria: University of Victoria, 1991), p.148, n.30.

⁴³ *Trial Forewords*, p.31.

⁴⁴ *Personal Record*, p.1.

But if Furnivall wanted to use the Chaucer Society to win friends then he also used it to influence people. If the *actions* of the Chaucer Society, reading, teaching and editing Chaucer's texts, were ultimately about appreciating Chaucer as a man, one of the *functions* of the Chaucer Society was to stimulate and promote this appreciation in others:

Our work is not done in order to keep our work to ourselves; but in order that Chaucer's words may be more studied, his memory cleared from unjust blame, and he more loved and honoured by ever-widening circles of readers.⁴⁵

As we saw in the Chapter 2, such a desire for 'ever-widening circles of readers' was a primary premise of the Early English Text Society. In the case of the Chaucer Society, however, it was particularly important to Furnivall that those readers included the culturally and politically disenfranchised.

When David Matthews argues that in the second half of the nineteenth century 'Middle English literature was promoted among the working class and middle class as a moral technology', he credits Furnivall for much of the force of this movement.⁴⁶ That this structured Furnivall's Chaucer studies and his Chaucer Society is evident in Furnivall's proud claim that he 'can answer for Chaucer being read in some workmen's homes.'⁴⁷ Matthews finds the desire to 'understand' the poet (which he finds in both Furnivall and Skeat) central to the way Furnivall's societies operated with a sense of moral mission. "Knowing" the poet was an aspect of literary scholarship, and literary scholarship was essentially a project of moral

⁴⁵ *Temporary Preface*, p.112.

⁴⁶ Matthews, p.xxii.

⁴⁷ *Temporary Preface*, p.113.

renovation.' Following Ian Hunter's proposition that Matthew Arnold exemplified an important transition in the study of English in the nineteenth century, Matthews proposes that both Furnivall and Skeat place Chaucer in the role of moral exemplar:

In Hunter's paradigm, Arnold became an '*ethical exemplar*,' that 'embodiment of a special set of personal attributes' as which the man of letters entered 'the social sphere.' [...] Skeat and Furnivall, motivated not by an aristocratic patronage but by the paternalist philanthropy of the mass education movement, write not out of an evident desire to fashion the self, but to *substitute* Chaucer for themselves [...]. Both, as men of letters, were involved in a moral construction of literature that they brought into the social sphere through the Chaucer Society.⁴⁸

It is apt, then, that Furnivall attributes his resolve to edit Chaucer to his involvement in the Working Men's College. That this was a major influence on his concept of the uses of philology is undeniable. In J. Llewellyn Davies' *History of the Working Men's College*, Furnivall relates an anecdote ostensibly to illustrate 'the social life of the college' which nevertheless shows how even its tea parties took on the cast of moral improvement:

I urged every teacher to have his class to tea in his own rooms, if possible, and if not, in the College. As an instance of how this worked I may give the case of a student, as lithographer, who met me in Camden Town some thirty-five years after he had been a member of my grammar class. After telling me how well he had got on, what classes he was teaching drawing to, etc., he said: "And do you know how all this came about? [...] I was in your class at the College. And you asked me to tea with some of the others. I'd never been in a gentleman's room before, and when I came out, after seeing your pictures, books and chairs, I said to myself, 'I'll have as good a room as that.' And now I've got a better." Cheering, wasn't it, and so unexpected.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Matthews, p.182.

⁴⁹ J. Llewellyn Davies, ed., *A History of the Working Men's College, 1854-1904* (London: Macmillan, 1904), p.56-7.

Not even Furnivall would attribute this heartening tale of self-help to the hand of Chaucer. But the Chaucer and Langland classes Furnivall taught at the Working Men's College were an important part of the programme of moral renovation. 'We studied and took exercise together, we were comrades and friends, and helped one another to live higher, happier and healthier lives, free from all stupid and narrow class humbug' (p.60).

Remembering the story of the origins of the Chaucer Society that Furnivall outlined at the opening of his *Temporary Preface*, it should be unsurprising to find this connection between liberalism and philology. Furnivall had of course responded to Child's calls to produce 'a print of two or three of the best MSS of the Canterbury Tales' in part at least out of mutual interest and respect for Child's own work on Chaucer. 'When an American, who had done the best bit of work on Chaucer's words, asked, and kept on asking, for texts of our great English poet, could an Englishman keep on refusing to produce them?' (p.3). But he had responded more out of respect for Child's politics. Furnivall was only willing to take 'the time and trouble I can so ill afford' to work on the Chaucer texts because there was a higher goal than philology at stake:

When that American had laid aside his own work to help, heart and soul, in the great struggle for freeing his land from England's legacy to it, the curse of slavery, could one who honoured him for it, who felt strongly how mean had been the feeling of England's uppers and middle classes on the War, as contrasted with the nobleness of our suffering working-men, – could one such, I say, fail to desire to sacrifice something that he might help to weave again one bond between (at least) the Chaucer-lovers of the Old Country and the New? No. (p.3)

Furnivall's legible affection for Chaucer ('my love for Chaucer') was only compelling enough to stimulate such work when it was played upon by liberalism and nationalism: that is, his love for his country.

As recompense for the ‘curse of slavery’ Furnivall offered more than just Chaucer. Shakespeare, too, had come to be,

a delight, a lift and strength, to us and our children’s children to all time – a bond that shall last for ever between all English-speaking, English-reading men, the members of that great Teutonic brotherhood which shall yet long lead the world in the fight for freedom and for truth.⁵⁰

And a good thing too, as ‘the Chaucer-lovers of the Old Country’, even by 1873 numbered ‘just sixty men in England and Wales, five in Scotland and one in Ireland’.⁵¹ Furnivall railed against this lack of interest by his countrymen, calling it ‘a mean and unpatriotic thing of Englishmen to have done so little as they had for their great poet’s memory.’

Having invested Chaucer with the guardianship of the national’s linguistic and cultural heritage, Furnivall could be expected to react strongly to anything that questioned the poet’s Englishness. Étienne Gustave Sandras, in his 1859 publication *Étude sur G. Chaucer considéré comme imitateur des trouvères*, attributed the sources of much of Chaucer’s poetry to the dits of Machaut and other French poets.⁵² Furnivall devotes much of the *Trial Forewords* to variously amused and indignant disavowal of these suggestions. That Furnivall, in the face of accusations that ‘the most genial and humourful healthy-souled man that England had ever seen’ had been inspired by French literature, would seek strenuously to assert Chaucer’s originality is perhaps unsurprising. That Furnivall’s reactions to different comments made by

⁵⁰ ‘Life and Work’, p.123.

⁵¹ ‘Recent Work at Chaucer’, p.383.

⁵² Etienne Gustave Sandras, *Étude sur G. Chaucer: considéré comme imitateur des trouvères* (Paris: A. Durand, 1859).

Sandras vary in intensity, however, implies that Furnivall considered some areas of Chaucer's poetry more resonant of Englishness than others.

Sandras's implication that Chaucer copied descriptions of Blanche in *The Book of the Duchess* from the French is met with mild sarcasm:

No doubt. There is nothing new under the sun: if a man describes his mistress, says she's like the sun above the stars, speaks most sweetly, is his life and bliss, is rightly called Lily, Rose or what not; why, of course he copies it all from a Frenchman! What can one do but admire the delightful modesty of M. Sandras! (p.49)

But the idea that a description of English countryside and country sports has its origins in French verse elicits more fervent denial:

Another point which has amused me much, is M. Sandras's suggestions that Chaucer has gone to a Frenchman for his description of the hunt in his *Blaunche*. To a modern Englishman, the notion of going to a Frenchman to learn the way over a hurdle or hedge is, of course, supremely ludicrous; but admitting to the fullest extent the debt of our old sportsmen to France for all the show-off of our old way of hunting, the terms of art &c., – it surely was not necessary for Chaucer at the age of 29 or so, after his life in court and camp, to go anywhere except to his own eyes and ears to know what hunting was, and to his own pen to describe it. If he couldn't describe a lovely woman when he saw her, except in French phrases (as M. Sandras imagines), he surely could, in English words, a bit of our greenwood life. Hang it! Who that has ever been across a hunter, or followed a hound, couldn't? (p.49-50)

English femininity, it seems, is not as intrinsic to the history of English masculinity as English athleticism. As we saw above, Shakespeare's knowledge of field sports was given central importance as evidence of his exemplary boyhood. Here, as there, intimate knowledge of the experience of hunting is shorthand for a number of attributes of class and gender. Tosh, for example, includes hunting among the 'bodily associations' of manliness which, while less universally acclaimed than its moral qualities, were just as ideologically powerful, placing 'a premium on physical

prohess and readiness for combat. [...] Popular forms of sport, or 'manly exercises', kept men in a state of alertness and physical fitness, ranging from fox-hunting and cricket to archery and rowing.'⁵³ Furnivall, in his 1868 introduction to 'A Cauliere' (a poem about falconry in the Percy Manuscript) makes this same connection between sporting ability and national defence. Furnivall quotes at length *The Treatyse of Fysshynge wyth an Angle*, a disquisition on the relative merits of four sports – 'huntynge, hawkynge, fyshynge and foulynge' – from Wynkyn de Worde's 1496 *Book of St Albans*. As its title might suggest, the treatise comes down on the side of fishing. Furnivall disagrees. 'Now this is all very well for a quiet man with no devil in him; but Crecy and Agincourt were not fought and won by men of this type.'⁵⁴ Furnivall follows this with an enthusiastic commentary on the benefits of hunting, and, as ever, there is social comment to be made:

What matters the chance of a fall, when you feel your horse going under you, and hear the hoofs of the field about you? Sit close, and *take your chance*, whatever it be. Our ballad is by a man of the right breed. It has the true lilt in it; carries us back to bright old days, and makes us wish that all our workers could have something more of healthy outdoor life. (p.369)

After more than ten pages of comment on Sandras, and having proved that 'there is much more gammon than fact in what M. Sandras has written', Furnivall is magnanimous. 'Scratch a Russian and you find a Tartar, said Voltaire (?): Scratch Chaucer and you find a Frenchman, says M. Sandras. Well, it pleases him, and doesn't hurt us or our bright old English soul.'⁵⁵ In this last comment Furnivall

⁵³ Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p.111.

⁵⁴ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, I-III: *Ballads and Romances*, ed. by Frederick Furnivall and J. W. Hales (London: Trubner & Co, 1867-8), III, p.368.

⁵⁵ *Trial Forewords*, p.91.

exposes the confluence at the heart of his Chaucer studies. The 'bright old English soul' could of course be Chaucer himself. It could also be 'our soul': the personification of English culture as transhistorical masculine subjectivity. Furnivall not only substituted Chaucer for himself: he substituted him for all English men.

I would add another layer to Matthews's interpretation, however. The 'evident desire' from which Furnivall writes about Chaucer, I would argue, was – as was his 'desire' in the study of Browning and Shakespeare – a homosocial desire for Chaucer as a masculine exemplar. It was this desire, further, that Furnivall intended to inspire and promote in other readers of Chaucer.

If we map the relationships between critics and texts onto the Girardian erotic triangle, as Donaldson has done, then perhaps the bonds *between* critics or readers are legible as equal to or stronger than the critic's desire for the text. Returning, then, to the quotations from Furnivall above, and re-reading them with the idea of homosocial desire in mind, a desire for Chaucer is legible: Furnivall creates the Chaucer Society for 'lovers and students of Chaucer'; his Chaucer studies have meant 'men [have been] induced to honour and love him as they should'.

However I am not just suggesting that we place Furnivall's desire for his author on a continuum of homosexuality or even of homosociality. If we apply Sedgwick's theory of the homosocial bond, we can see Furnivall's desire for Chaucer more as a function which allows further homosocial interaction between himself and other critics or readers, a desire for others to desire Chaucer, rather than a singular feeling of Furnivall's for Chaucer alone. I suggest that a shared desire for the author or the text produces a homosocial bond between Furnivall and other readers, other lovers and students, of Chaucer.

If Furnivall hoped that a shared love of Chaucer would bring men closer to one another, this connection was not only synchronic but also diachronic: as well as joining contemporaries with each other, through the Chaucer Society Victorian men were to become acquainted with their forefathers. The philosophy behind Furnivall's philology was the social-historical rationale of safeguarding the future by connecting Englishmen of the Victorian present to their forebears in the past. Furnivall hoped that the publication of Chaucer's texts will bring men closer to their ancestors; he sent his books out 'to the public [...] to make their forefathers' speech and thoughts better known to this and future generations'.⁵⁶ In Chapter 4 I consider how this relationship, and all of Furnivall's editorial relationships, can be seen as triangular.

⁵⁶ *Stacions*, p. ix.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RHETORIC OF FURNIVALL'S TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Language is called the garment of thought: however, it should rather be, language is the flesh-garment, the body, of thought.

Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, 1834

‘There are two sides to Early English Literature,’ wrote Furnivall in 1868 in his introduction to the ballad ‘Conscience’; ‘one gay, the other grave; one light, the other earnest.’¹ Furnivall has been moved to speak of such earnestness by the ‘deep impression made on me by the noble and fervent spirits of our early men’ who denounced abuses against the English poor, and he expresses ‘surprise and delight’ that there should have been writers of literary works in the period ‘1303 to 1560’ as willing to protest against the oppression of the working classes as were the writers of letters to the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849-50. But delight turns to indignation that these writers are not better known by ‘men of our day’:

Our moderns will not take a few day’s trouble to master their language; they care little for their thoughts: but once the readers of the nineteenth – or is it to be the twentieth? – century awake to the recognition that there *is* an Early English Literature worth studying, they will be ashamed of their countrymen’s long neglect.
(p.175)

As dangerous and methodologically questionable as it is to give rein to flights of fancy about how Furnivall might view English literary study on the cusp of the twenty-first century, some speculation can perhaps be allowed. That the Early English Text Society is still in existence would no doubt please the society’s founder enormously. Whether such study has effected the ‘reform, social and political’ with

¹ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, 1, p.174.

which Furnivall was concerning himself in the late 1860s is somewhat harder to ascertain. But in the universities, at least, thousands of English Literature undergraduates – or certainly their tutors – recognise that ‘there is an Early English Literature worth studying’.

Furnivall would find that today the academic study of Early English literature also has two sides. Instead of interest in ‘the social condition of the English people of the past’, most university courses in Middle English focus on textual interpretation and practical criticism. Textual criticism is reserved for graduate study if it is taught at all. Like Furnivall, today’s students do not care a bit for philology, and the philological practices with which Furnivall expressed such disenchantment now form a minor sub-specialism of English studies.

Katie King has described this distinction as a ‘literary division of labour’ that ‘roughly separates workers in the construction of texts from workers in the interpretation of texts’.² Considering how feminism could draw lessons from bibliography about the apparatus of textual production, King proposes that:

The political histories of the technologies of print culture opened up by textual studies could be matched by parallel analyses of contemporary transnational cultural technologies, analyses of feminist apparatus of literary production, under the rubric of what I call ‘feminism and writing technologies’. (p.91)

Isolating, ‘the world in the text’ from ‘the text in the world’, King points out that ‘our locations within this division of labour may require us to maintain attitudes towards it – positions in relation to the apparatus of literary production as actual forms of knowing’. For poems, texts and books, she adds, are not only ‘occasions for

² Katie King, ‘Bibliography and a Feminist Apparatus of Literary Production’, *Text*, 5 (1991), 91-103.

reading'. They are 'artefacts with institutional statuses'. This realisation caused King to reconsider her initial methodology:

My private working title for this paper was 'Learning from bibliography about the apparatus of literary production, and why this matters to feminists.' I began to realise though, [...] that bibliography or textual studies wouldn't really be central in the story I was going to tell, but rather offered one window through which I had had a chance to glimpse relationships that in contemporary literary interpretation seemed so infrequently detailed, taken for granted without commentary, or sometimes just not collected together in the same discourse. (p.91, 93)

To paraphrase King, 'Learning from textual studies about the apparatus of literary production, and why masculinity matters in this', is the central concern of this chapter. Accordingly, in what follows I consider the way masculinity and textual studies can 'each act first as a location from which to speak and also as a window on concerns of the other.' In particular, I propose that recent appropriations by textual studies of critical theory can offer appropriate tools for further gendered analysis of Furnivall's work.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Debates in textual criticism in the latter half of the twentieth century have produced, broadly, two opposing schools. W. W. Greg, Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle have proposed, in varying forms and with various exceptions, what has become the dominant theory of editorial practice: the idea of a single 'copy-text'

edited eclectically – that is, reflecting authorial intention as far as is possible, using authorial MSS for accidentals in the text, and later textual states for substantives revised by the author.³ Jerome J. McGann, on the other hand, has called for a more socially based textual criticism which acknowledges that there are players other than the author in the history of a text. A text, he says, must be viewed as a social construct.⁴ How McGann gets to this point – and perhaps more importantly, why – is not only relevant to the aims of this thesis but integral to an understanding of the continuing influence of Furnivall's work.

In formulating his approach, McGann questions the extent to which editing should be – or should be perceived to be – the activity that comes to dictate the methods and practices of textual criticism. The 'underlying and fundamental assumption that the disciplines of textual criticism have as their aim, their *raison d'être* even, the editing of texts,' says McGann, '[...] appears transparent, and hence goes unexamined' (p.72). Simon Jarvis makes a related point in his discussion of the way in which eighteenth-century editing of Shakespeare reveals the self-fashioning of literary labour.⁵ Jarvis maintains that arguments which place editorial practice on a sliding scale between dilettantism and pedantry reveal that 'apparently purely epistemological and philological issues are perennially entangled in, although not reducible to, representations and self-representations of the disputant's labour, and of

³ See W. W. Greg, 'The Rationale of Copy-Text', *Studies in Bibliography*, 3 (1950-51), 19-36; Fredson Bowers, *Textual and Literary Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959); G. Thomas Tanselle, *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1990).

⁴ Jerome J. McGann, 'The Monks and the Giants: Textual and Bibliographical Studies and the Interpretation of Literary works' in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. By Jerome J. McGann (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 69-89.

⁵ Simon Jarvis, *Scholars and Gentlemen: Shakespearean Textual Criticism and Representations of Scholarly Labour, 1725-1765* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

the world of literary labour in which those disputes are presented.' From such a perspective,

we can begin to see how the terms in which 'theoretical' discussion of the relations between textual and literary criticism is sometimes framed – what is the editor's *task*? what is the *function* of criticism? – would already concede as a given just what any critical theory needs to reflect critically upon. (p.2-3)

The 'relations between textual and literary criticism' are McGann's focus, too. Indeed the socio-historical methodology he proposes in 'The Monks and the Giants' is formulated in contradistinction to conceptions by Bowers and Tanselle, whose insistence 'that textual criticism is an editorial instrument', he says, 'reifies the schism between textual studies and literary interpretation'. The interpretation of literary works, McGann argues, takes its ground in textual and bibliographic studies, but not (as Tanselle proposes) because 'emendations which result from textual studies affect literary criticism' (p.77). Textual and bibliographical criticism, McGann summarises, generates 'a great deal more critical information than a calculus of variants or a record of emendations':

[Textual] studies are the only disciplines which can elucidate that complex network of people, materials, and events which have produced and which continue to reproduce the literary works which history delivers into our hands. Current interpretations of literary works only acquire a critical edge of significance when they are grounded in an exegesis of texts and meanings generated in the past – in an exegesis of texts and meanings gained, and perhaps also lost, over time. (p.80-81)

Textual studies has always been preoccupied with the inevitable disintegration of the text in time. McGann is proposing a recognition (or re-recognition) of the historicity of the text, one that takes into account 'the entire developing process of a literary work's historical transmission, and this in turn

creates, or ought to create, a profound sense of how many factors enter into the production of the literary work' (p.81). Once the historicity of the text has been established it is a short step to viewing and practising textual scholarship less as a discipline of English Studies than as a branch of history:

Of historical method in general [R. G.] Collingwood once said that it should not begin by asking the question 'Is this right or is this wrong; but rather 'What does this mean?' Collingwood's view is as applicable to the work of textual scholarship as any other historically grounded discipline.⁶

Furnivall's disappointment at the 'willing and wilful ignorance' exhibited by his contemporaries towards 'our early literature' is tempered slightly by his delight at the work of one fellow scholar. Professor Henry Morley, lecturer in English at University College, London, has done 'justice' to the 'treasures' of medieval literature in his book *English Writers* (1867). Morley, 'a man of mind akin with that of our old men', says Furnivall,

has come to the old books and said to them, not only 'what were you translated or altered from, what manuscripts are there of you?' but first and mainly, '*what do you mean?* what has the spirit of your writer got to say to the spirits of me and men here and now?'⁷

The similarity of Furnivall's expression to McGann's quotation of Collingwood is remarkable. It is too much, however, to posit Furnivall as an unwitting and serendipitous precursor of twentieth-century textual theory. Indeed, Furnivall's textual criticism falls foul of McGann's proposals in its very first premise: while

⁶ 'Monks and the Giants', p.81. McGann quotes R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946).

⁷ *Bishop Percy's Folio MS*, 1, p.175.

McGann moves away from the idea that editing is the *raison d'être* of textual criticism, for Furnivall the purpose of textual study is to produce books. But while on the one hand Furnivall's editing is confined to the production of editions, on closer inspection his aims and intentions for his editing can be seen to exceed the rapid and multiple production of accessible texts. As I have explored, Furnivall's textual production had as its aim a patriotic development of English nationalism through English textual history. The metaphor of friendship between generations of English men through which Furnivall figured this aim is repeated here in his admiration of Morley's work: 'And the old bones (that were nothing more to so many) have taken flesh again and answered him, have stretched out their hands and gript his as a friend's' (pp.175-76).

A familiar coding of the bonds between men is present in this image. I have shown how an interpretation of Furnivall's work can be informed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's influential ideas about homosocial desire. Sedgwick's adaptation of the erotic triangle proves useful in assessing the assumptions underpinning Furnivall's literary societies and linguistic projects. Furnivall's desire for the author stimulates a homosocial bond between him and other readers of the text, a bond which is subject to manifestation as hostility as well as love and friendship.

Textual criticism, too, has its triangles. Gary Taylor has proposed that 'textual problems come in all kinds and sizes, but they have only one shape' – the triangle.⁸ Structuring 'all editorial situations' with this triangle, Taylor places the author at the apex of the triangle, locating editorial activity below it as 'an unstable binary option, which must be resolved by eliminating one of the two points at the

⁸ Gary Taylor, 'The Rhetoric of Textual Criticism', *Text*, 4 (1988), 39-57 (p.39).

base of the triangle' (p.40). This binary option can be the choice between copy reading and conjecture, or between one conjecture and another, or between two 'textual witnesses'. Later in this chapter I consider how Taylor's triangle might sit with Sedgwick's. First, though, I propose that Taylor's geometry of editing, which so far is gender unaware, has greater interpretative potential when combined with an explicit attempt to integrate feminist literary theory and textual criticism.

D. C. Greetham has called for a more active convergence of literary theory and textual criticism.⁹ This, he says, would 'reinvest' the issues and problems faced by textual scholars by converging the vocabularies and conceptual assumptions of other theories. It would also provide future space for 'a genuine feminist ethic [...] to be employed in the construction of the historical textual edition' (p.98, 78). Greetham's proposal – a psychoanalytic reading of eclectic textual criticism – shows one way in which a theory of masculinity could be implicated in textual criticism and editorial theory. Greetham's experimental reading of scholarly editing as psychoanalysis takes in appropriations of Freud (the text as dream, Freud's 'originary text' and the editor as analyst and the text as analysand), Lacan (the textual page as signifier, the apparatus as signified) and Kristeva (lexical variation as the division between the symbolic (text) and the semiotic (variants)) (pp.86-90). But it is his appropriation of Harold Bloom's own appropriation of psychoanalysis which perhaps offers the greatest potential for studying masculinity in editing. Bloom's idea of 'belatedness' in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) is here used to describe the relationships between editor and author. Greetham's theory finds three examples: editorial 'improvement' is read as the misprision of the editor as he seeks a swerve

⁹ D. C. Greetham, 'The Manifestation and Accommodation of Theory in Textual Editing', in *Devils and Angels* ed. by Philip Cohen (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1991), pp.78-99.

(or clinamen) from the authorial text. Fragmentalism is seen as editorial desire to reduce the work to pieces or tessera. The debate between old spelling and normalisation is also structured by Bloomian terms. Old spellers, in prohibiting a ‘sullyng of the “original”’ are in the first stage of the identification of an anxiety of influence, while normalisers are ‘working to emasculate the precursor, to render it harmless and reduce it to a document available in one’s own terms’ (p.90).

This last example holds particular resonance for Furnivall’s editing, as the debate between old spelling and normalisation is one that Furnivall enters at the end of his preface to the Six-Text edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. Furnivall’s diatribe on ‘the talkt-of uniform spelling of Chaucer’ is a rant against the normalisations of classical editing. Setting up ‘the irregularities of nature and facts, the waywardness of growth’ against ‘mechanical uniformity’, Furnivall denounces an attempt ‘to force a uniform spelling on Chaucer’ as an attempt ‘to force a lie on him and the history of the English language; an evil for which no fancied gain in convenience of teaching boys could compensate’.¹⁰ Chaucer’s works, says Furnivall, are historically situated between many centuries of varied spelling:

Why in the works of him – the free and playful – above all others, are letters to lose their power of wandering at their own sweet will; why are words to be debarred their rightful inheritance of varying their forms? This notion of a uniform spelling, as applied to Chaucer’s words, is to me a Monster, bred by Artificialness out of False Analogy. (p.114)

Linguistic consistency is given further ideological weight by being located in – and only in – present culture:

¹⁰ *Temporary Preface*, p.113.

Far more experienced readers and better judges than I, have condemned the attempt to impose on a language constantly changing in words, inflexions, and spelling, written often by only half-lettered men, a rigid rule applicable only to the well-settled speech and literature of a cultivated nation. (pp.114-15)

To take inspiration from Greetham and read this debate through Bloom, then, Furnivall could be located in the first stage of an anxiety of the influence of Chaucer, as he rails against the classicists' attempts to 'emasculate' Chaucer by the imposition of uniform spelling.

Greetham aligns his analysis of 'the ideology embedded in form and method' with Gary Taylor's premises, and while this Bloomian reading could be used to interpret, for example, the sibling rivalry between classicist and vernacular textual criticism, Greetham's proposals are even more resonant if mapped onto Taylor's ideas of triangularity.¹¹ If editorial decision between authorial texts and variants is always structured by the binary baseline of the editorial triangle, this will also be true of *edited* texts. As Taylor describes, the editorial 'eternal triangle shapes not only the work of any individual editor, but the relationships between editors, and the relationships between editors and other literary scholars' (p.43). While these relationships between editors could be explored, as I have done, using a Sedgwickian paradigm of homosocial desire, they could also be regarded as a manifestation of an anxiety of editorial influence.

As such, the baseline of this geometry of editing could provide an interesting gloss on Furnivall's editorial choices – although it would be confounded by Furnivall's parallel text editions, such as the Six-Text Print of the *Canterbury Tales*,

¹¹ See G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Classical, Biblical and Medieval Textual Criticism and Modern Editing', in *Textual Criticism and Scholarly Editing* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1990), pp.274-320.

which would have to be structured as polygonal rather than triangular. But the other end of Taylor's triangle is even more interesting. At the apex of the triangle is the author, 'a given, or axiom' in contrast to the 'theorem' of editorial decision. Or is it? Taylor disrupts this construction of the author almost as soon as he has made it. Authorial revision and collaboration – and, by the very nature of transcription and publication, 'all works are collaborative' – mean that 'each author is many authors', and the editor must choose which aspect of the author will sit atop the editorial triangle (p.43).

That the editor chooses or constructs the author of the text he or she edits is evident in Furnivall's editorial work. We have already seen how Furnivall uses biography and bibliography to create authors in the (exemplarily masculine) shape of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Browning, and at the end of this chapter I will contrast Furnivall's editorial constructs of another author, Thomas Hoccleve with that approach. Here I would like to concentrate on the ontological leap that Taylor makes from this proposition. The construction of the author at the apex of the triangle is the point of authority, but one that is always, Taylor says, 'inscrutable' and which 'can only speak through one of the points at the base'. The author is dead, or rather 'has passed away' (p.43). Taylor does not deny the author function, but instead gives it a specific temporal location: 'the phase of the author's existence which brought [the] work into being has already passed away'. The absence of the author makes any editorial decision 'necessarily debatable and provisional'. Because of the arbitrary nature of all editorial choices, then, the defining factor of textual criticism is rhetoric. In the absence of the possibility of final proof, the only power is 'persuasion, and rhetoric is the agent of persuasion' (p.44). Ultimately, Taylor is proposing the importance of rhetoric for the study of textual criticism: 'once we recognise the

ubiquity of rhetoric in the practice and theory of textual criticism, we need not regard rhetoric and substance as mutually exclusive. The substance of textual criticism cannot be disentangled from its rhetoric' (p.53).

Here, then, are two possible lines of enquiry into Furnivall's editorial practice: the need to recognise the influence, and attendant anxieties, of the relationship between the editor of a text and past editors of a text, and the project to interrogate editorial rhetoric. Both of these situations, I would argue, are amply illustrated in the text which so surprised and delighted Furnivall at the start of this chapter: *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*.

THE 'JUDICIOUS ANTIQUARY' AND THE 'CANTANKEROUS ATTORNEY'

Scholars tracing the genealogy of medieval studies have attributed great importance to Bishop Thomas Percy's edition *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Percy, having 'rescued from destruction' a manuscript of ballads and romances that he had found 'being used by the maids to light the fire' at a the house of a friend, published some of the contents of the folio using, as David Matthews puts it, 'considerable editorial license'.¹² Matthews traces 'the beginnings of the modern study of Middle English literature to the 1760s and, in particular, Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient*

¹² Matthews, p.10.

English Poetry'.¹³ He ascribes Percy's edition such importance for two reasons. Matthews sees the self-fashioning of Percy (1729-1811) from grocer's son and amateur antiquarian to bishop and Earl of Northumberland as linked to his possession of the Percy Folio, and this is central to Matthews' conception of Middle English study as a technology of the self (p.6). More relevant to my purposes, however, is Matthews's contention that 'the *Reliques* represented the beginning of modern scholarly discussion on Middle English' (p.7). Charlotte Brewer has similarly seen Percy's editing as embodying 'fundamental questions of authorial intention and editorial responsibility'.¹⁴

Percy's extensive emendation of the manuscript – to the point of reinventing and practically rewriting many of the ballads – would perhaps not be traced as the origin of textual criticism in England had it not been for the public and vociferous condemnation that Percy's edition elicited from fellow antiquarian Joseph Ritson (1752-1803). Ritson was an attorney of radical beliefs who produced consistently ferocious criticism of the practices of Thomas Wharton, George Steevens and Samuel Johnson in addition to his condemnation of Thomas Percy. Ritson's fiery temperament and alleged sexual excess descended into madness at the end of his life, and he died in an asylum in 1803. A year before his death, Ritson published *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës*, his answer to Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Percy, he wrote in the volume, had printed 'scarcely one single poem, song or ballad, fairly or honestly.'¹⁵ While Ritson's work, as Matthews notes, was far

¹³ David Matthews, "'Quaint Inglis": Walter Scott and the Rise of Middle English', *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (1995), 33-48 (p.34).

¹⁴ Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman*, p.24.

¹⁵ Matthews, p.47.

from being the prototype of modern textual editing that it has been painted, his rigorous fidelity to the manuscript text is more familiar to us than Percy's more interventionist approach.

In 1867-68 Furnivall and J. W. Hales re-edited the Percy Folio in four volumes. Furnivall could hardly have done this without commenting, at least, on the altercations between Percy and Ritson. In fact, he extensively rehashed, reinterpreted and opined on the debate. For all his lengthy forewords and the habit of speaking and writing his mind with scant regard for the consequences, Furnivall rarely describes exactly what his editorial policies are. The 'Forewords' to *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, however, give tantalising glimpses of the theoretical assumptions underlying his editorial practice.

Although Furnivall would brand Ritson a 'cantankerous attorney', he opens the 'Forewords' to Volume I of his own edition of Percy in somewhat grumpy mood. His estimate of the value of the edition has been adversely affected by the process of editing it, a process characterised by 'the long delays and trials of temper involved in it, the large money-risk still impending, the unsatisfactoriness of being able to give only half-hours of hardly earned pause from other work to points that needed a week's leisure to study'. All these factors have 'dulled one's pleasure in the book, have lowered one's estimation of the usefulness of it'. But there remains one saving grace; 'the getting done of a thing which ought not have been left undone, the ridding ourselves of a well-deserved reproach'. Of the ballads themselves, 'some are for all time; others witness only that the neglect they have met with is more or less deserved'. Despite conceding that 'real gains to our literature are among' the ballads and romances of the manuscript, Furnivall's

edition is not driven by concepts of the manuscript's aesthetic or literary value (p.xx-xi). Why then did he reclaim the ballads as worthy of publication? Why was it a thing which ought not to not have been left undone, and whose reproach was it designed to counter? In answer, we need look no further than Furnivall's dedication of the volume:

To Professor Francis James Child of Harvard University, Massachusetts, U.S. at whose instigation, and to relieve English antiquarians from whose reproaches (too well deserved) this work was first undertaken. (p.vi)

Child had, says Furnivall, insisted 'time after time [...] that it was the duty of English Antiquarian men of letters to print this foundation document of English balladry' (p.ix). We have already seen other results of Child's reproaches, and, as in the founding of the Chaucer Society later in 1868, Child gave more than moral support. It had been a century since Percy's *Reliques* was published 'but still the Percy Manuscript lay hid in Ecton Hall, and no one was allowed to know how the owner who had made his fame by it had dealt with it, whether his treatment was foul or fair.' The 'long delays and trials of temper' involved in the project were in no small part to do with gaining access to the manuscript. Furnivall had repeatedly tried to borrow the MS from Percy's descendants since the early 1860s, and repeatedly failed. Furnivall offered £100 to the owners of the MS for the privilege, but it was only when Child upped this by another £50 that access was finally allowed (p.ix-x).

As the primary aim of Furnivall's editing was the dissemination of texts in a relatively cheap and available form, the idea of access to manuscripts is central to his textual practice. 'Take the ordinary students of Early English' he wrote in a letter to the *Athenaeum* in 1865:

Whose spare minutes for Museum work (if he lives in town) are few, and his guineas to buy texts with fewer [...] you would not think it a 'waste of power' to put the text you wanted or cared for within the reach of 500 people, at the cost of ten or twenty shillings [...] we want to make 'household words' of the early men and books we delight in.¹⁶

This concern over the accessibility of manuscripts is legible in many of Furnivall's other editions. His six text print of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* took three texts from private hands, and three from public, and even Baker admits that this makes 'a kind of crazy sense' given Furnivall's opposition to individuals owning national literary treasures.¹⁷ Child's reproach was all the more humiliating to Furnivall because of his nationality. 'As an Englishman' said Furnivall, 'one could not but feel it a disgrace that an American should take more interest in an English MS than oneself' (p.x). The 'duty to England' which structured the work of the Early English Text Society and Furnivall's other work was not just the project to provide textual and linguistic evidence of a genealogy of Englishness – literary and philological studies themselves were integral to Englishness. If one country was to be a centre of excellence for the study of such texts, that country had to be England.

In the opening paragraphs of his 'Forewords', then, Furnivall sets up a range of issues which are important to his edition of this manuscript and, as we have seen, to his editing in general: the English-ness of early English literature and of the study of it; the idea of 'duty' in editing and publishing; issues of access to manuscripts, and the controversy over Percy's treatment of the Folio manuscript itself.

¹⁶ *Athenaeum*, January 1865, p.90.

¹⁷ *Temporary Preface*, pp.5-7; Baker, p.160.

In his preface to the *Reliques*, Percy had justified his emendations in terms of the aesthetics of his culture. Having questioned whether such ballads ‘of great simplicity’ which seemed ‘merely to have been written for the people’ were worthy of attention in the late eighteenth century, ‘a polished age’ of ‘improved literature’, Percy’s ‘few slight corrections or additions’ could turn a ‘wretched reading’ into a ‘beautiful or interesting sense’. Percy maintains that ‘his object was to please both the judicious antiquary and the reader of taste; and he hath endeavoured to gratify both without offending either.’¹⁸

Furnivall’s objection to this editorial policy structured his edition of the folio from the start. His ‘Proposal for the Publication of Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript’, a letter calling for subscribers to the edition printed in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of January 1867, described his outrage:

Now ‘in a polished age like the present’ as Percy described his own time, a judicious antiquary (unlike Ritson) might possibly be pleased with such treatment of manuscripts as the bishop’s was; but in an age which (like our Victorian) has thank Heaven, lost that kind of polish, a judicious antiquary would get judiciously furious at such tampering with a text, and demand imperatively the very words of the manuscript.¹⁹

Furnivall’s main editorial criterion, then, is to produce ‘the very words’ of the text, and he expands on this viewpoint in his ‘Forewords’. In the section entitled ‘Percy’s handling of the MS’, Furnivall muses that ‘On [this] perhaps enough has been said in these volumes’ (p.xvi). His discussion of Percy’s editing – and, more importantly, on Ritson’s reaction to it – then extends for a further six pages.

¹⁸ *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, ed. by Thomas Percy with a new introduction by Nick Groom (London: Routledge, 1996), p.11.

¹⁹ Frederick Furnivall, ‘Proposal for the Publication of Bishop Percy’s Manuscript’, *Gentlemen’s Magazine*, 222 (Jan 1867), p.87.

Furnivall introduces Percy's editorial improvements by paraphrasing Percy's own introduction, commenting that Percy had 'scribbled notes' in the manuscript 'before he had learnt to reverence it', and even 'after he revered it' had torn pages from the folio (p.xvi). But he explores Percy's editing by means of a rhetorical device of his own making: a long conceit that posits the text as a female body. 'As to the text, [Percy] looked on it as a young woman from the country with unkempt locks, whom he had to fit for fashionable society'. Furnivall has been reading F. W. Fairholt's *Costume in England* – references from it crop up in the other texts he was editing in 1867²⁰ – and he quotes period detail from Fairholt in his description of Percy's editing as hairdressing:

Percy gave her the correct appearance. She had no 'false locks to supply deficiency of native hair,' no 'pomatum in profusion,' no 'greasy wool to bolster up the adopted locks, and grey powder to conceal dust.' But all these fashionable requirements Percy supplied. He puffed out the 39 lines of the *Child of Ell* to 200; he pomatumed the *Heir of Lin* till it shone again: he stuffed bits of wool into *Sir Cawline*, *Sir Aldingar*; he powdered everything. The desired result was produced; his young woman was accepted by Polite Society, taken to the bosom of a Countess, and rewarded her chaperon with a mitre. (p.xvi-xvii)

'No-one', says Furnivall, 'objected to the change in the damsel's appearance save one cantankerous attorney'. Enter Joseph Ritson, who 'demanded loudly the restoration of the girl's head to its pristine state. Reviews abused him, friends of the Bishop denounced him. Percy actually pulled out a little of his favourite wool, scraped off a little of his loved pomatum, to please this Ritson, but all in vain; he grumbled on' (p.xvii-xx). As a summary of the feud between Percy and Ritson this is quite succinct. But it takes Furnivall four pages to print it because of the insertion

²⁰ See, for example, *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, p.x-xi.

of gargantuan footnotes – on pages xviii and xix there is only one line of body copy, perched on top of an entire page of footnotes – in which Furnivall gleefully quotes Ritson's accusations and Percy's and his peers' reactions.

Furnivall is intrigued by the disputations of Ritson and Percy for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, they reveal something about editorial policy. Ritson, he says, was right to come out against 'the falsifications of originals that Percy indulged in – that keeping back of the evidence you find, and as you find it, which a taste that calls itself polished, a puritanism that calls itself pure, so often demands of men who should care first for facts' (p.xx). It is at this point that Furnivall comes as close as he ever does to outlining his theory of editing. When Charlotte Brewer commented that it was impossible to find explicit statement by Furnivall of his views on editing 'that fully acknowledges his position relative to those of others', she was describing the marked absence in Furnivall's work of an awareness of editorial theories such as those of Gaston Paris and Karl Lachmann. How much more like Furnivall it is to acknowledge his editorial position relative to his English editorial forefathers than to his continental contemporaries. Furnivall sees Ritson and Percy as holding the boundary positions of editorial practice; 'as between Ritson and Percy, I hope we are all now on Ritson's side'. Situating himself, and his edition, 'between' Ritson and Percy, Furnivall locates himself on the baseline of the editorial triangle.

The second reason for this interest in the Percy-Ritson feud is that Furnivall loved a good slanging match. The enjoyment in recounting Ritson's animadversions legible here is merely the beginning of a lifelong interest in literary controversy that Furnivall would soon convert from theory to practice. As we saw in Chapter 2, one of the Early English Text Society's first publications was

Kingsley's 1865 edition of *Thynne's Animadversions on Speght's Chaucer*. Furnivall re-edited this a decade later, his enthusiasm for the characters involved in the debate adding hundreds of pages of 'Forewords'.²¹ Perhaps his interest in historical animadversions meant he was more readily drawn into contemporary editorial controversies. In the late 1870s Furnivall's New Shakspeare Society was characterised and eventually ruined by Furnivall's entanglement in editorial controversies. At one point in Furnivall's feud with A. C. Swinburne and J. O. Halliwell-Phillips – which was essentially an opposition between scientific and aesthetic editing – he echoes Ritson's characterisation of Percy's editing as so much horse-dung. Ritson's reference to Percy's work as being like that of Hercules cleansing the Augean stables is somewhat more elegant than Furnivall's description of Swinburne's opinions as being 'promulgated on the prongs of a dung fork'. Perhaps it was the descent into the scatological that led to Furnivall being accused of contravening the decencies of literary warfare.²²

Ritson's animadversions on Percy's *Reliques*, then, had questioned the integrity of the manuscript so deeply that his accusations prompted and structured Furnivall's edition a century later. This determination to see the Percy Folio Manuscript printed in its entirety was not, of course, an isolated incident. Furnivall's desire for textual completeness extended to the entire canon of early English literature. He ends his Forewords to the Percy manuscript with a rallying cry for the 'wages of going on',

²¹ *Francis Thynne: Animadversions upon the Annotations and Corrections of some Imperfections of Impressions of Chaucers Workes (Sett Downe before Tyme, and Nowe) Reprinted in the Yere of Oure Lorde 1598*, ed. by G. H. Kingsley, 1865, rev. by F. J. Furnivall, OS 9 (London: EETS, 1875).

²² Frederick Furnivall, *Mr. Swinburne's 'Flat Burglary' on Shakspeare* (London: Trübner & Co, 1879), and *The 'Co.' of Pigsbrook & Co* (London: [n. pub.], 1881). See Peterson, *Browning's Trumpeter*, for discussion of Browning's unwitting involvement in the controversy.

and describes how he has founded a Ballad Society, to 'work steadily through the whole of our Ballad collections. One *can not* be content with selections and scraps.' The only way for Furnivall to contemplate work on such a scale was to divide the cost and the labour of the projects by founding a society, and he retains a keen sense of the enormity of the project. Of 'the mass that lies before us' he says, 'who will be the first to get his share done?' (p.xxvi). It is from within this project that Furnivall is unwilling completely to censure Percy's editorial activities. While acknowledging that Percy was wrong to alter his MS, Furnivall maintains that 'we all' owe a great debt to Percy for his work in founding an explicitly Romantic philology:²³

No common man was the grocer's son, though no one could call him great. He led the van of the army that Wordsworth afterwards commanded, and which has won us back to nature and truth. He opened to us the road into the Early English home where we have spent so many pleasant hours; he helped us to a better knowledge of Northern literature; he preserved the MS which has given, and will give, to so many thousands delight. (p.xx)

The Percy MS, however, did not give unmitigated delight. Furnivall was faced with a problem of literary decorum that masked a problem of editorial integrity. If you are going to assure the integrity of not only each text but of the entire canon, how do you cope with texts that are offensive or simply dull?

The difficulty arose here in the shape of some of the more bawdy songs of the manuscript, some of which might have rendered the volumes unsuitable for all readers: 'Some of these songs the Editors would have been glad had it not fallen to

²³ On Romanticism in medieval studies see Brian Stock, 'The Middle Ages as Subject and Object: Romantic Attitudes and Academic Medievalism', *New Literary History*, 5:3 (1974), 527-47.

their lot to put forth. But, [as was said before,] they are part of the Manuscript which has to be printed entire, and must therefore be issued'. Furnivall's solution to this problem was pragmatic: those songs would 'be printed separately from the other poems, as an appendix that can be detached by anyone who objects to these songs, or wishes to make his volume a drawing room book.'²⁴ Furnivall's attitude towards these 'loose and humorous songs' is also revelatory of his approach to editing. If Early English Texts were published because they were evidence of the ways in which 'our forefathers' lived, this was editing for evidence as social history, and no portion of the textual evidence should be excluded for reasons of dullness, dirtiness, or rudeness (in both senses of the word). Furnivall takes exception to Percy's description of the English past as 'rude and ignorant times' with 'barbarous and unpolished language'. 'Poor times!' exclaims Furnivall sarcastically; 'Why hadn't you a bishop with a blacking-brush to make you shine?'²⁵ Even the looser songs,

are also part of our Elizabethan and Jacobite times, and when you are drawing a noble old oak, you must sketch its scars and disfigurements as well as the glory of its bark, its fruit and leaves. Students must work from the nude, or they'll never draw.²⁶

Like the lengthy description of Percy's emendations as the dressing of 'a young woman from the country', Furnivall here again positions the text as a female body. In the Introduction we saw how E. Talbot Donaldson, writing in 1970, figured the edited text as female. A century before, Furnivall, looking for an appropriate

²⁴ 'Proposal for the Publication of Bishop Percy's Manuscript', p.87.

²⁵ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, II, p.405.

²⁶ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript IV: Loose and Humorous Songs*, ed. by Frederick Furnivall and J. W. Hales (London: Trübner & Co, 1868)

metaphor with which to describe the activities of editors of medieval texts, chooses the same conceit. This of course does more than just give the edited text a human form. In giving it a gendered form Furnivall reveals the gender and power relations within the editorial process. Carolyn Dinshaw, in elucidating Chaucer's sexual poetics, has proposed that:

Literary activity has a gendered structure, a structure that associates acts of writing and related acts of signifying – allegorizing, interpreting, glossing, translating – with the masculine and that identifies the surfaces on which those acts are performed, or from which these acts depart, or which these acts reveal – the page, the text, the literal sense, or even the hidden meaning – with the feminine.²⁷

This paradigm enables Dinshaw to interpret 'various literary acts – reading, translating, glossing, creating a literary tradition – as masculine acts performed on [a] feminine body' in a range of works by Chaucer (p.15). As we can see in Furnivall's use of the image of the text as woman, this is a paradigm equally applicable to work *on* Chaucer, and indeed on other texts: to editing as a literary act.

The identification of the feminised text provides further nuances for the model of editing as homosocial discourse. Femininity is silently central to Sedgwick's formulation of the bonds between men because the woman is the apex of the Girardian erotic triangle she adapts. Similarly, when editing is modelled as an erotic triangle, the text-as-woman at the apex provides the point through which the editor(s) on the baseline can form a homosocial bond with other readers and other editors of the text.

²⁷ Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, p.9.

To present the text as feminised, however, is really to present it as not-masculine. As we saw in Taylor's model of the editorial triangle, the editor chooses the author that sits at the apex of the triangle. In the same way, I would argue, the editor chooses the configuration of the text upon which the masculine activities of reading, glossing and editing are performed. So rather than postulate an essentially feminised text, I posit that the text can take other gendered forms. As Dinshaw notes, the Middle Ages provide a number of gendered models through which to read the power relations between authors, narrators and readers. These include, she suggests, the use of the book as a romantic go-between, or images of sowing seed and ploughing fields which are both literary and sexual. But the image most resonant for the consideration of editorial activity as gendered, an image that can be found in Furnivall's rhetoric, is the image of the text as child (p.14).

As Dinshaw traces the image of the text as a veiled woman and its literary development through the Middle Ages, she isolates Richard of Bury, bishop of Durham in the mid-fourteenth century, as an early proponent of 'the masculine structure of literary tradition.' Richard's 1345 *Philobiblon* openly identifies:

The 'paternal care of books' (*paterna cultura librorum*) [...]. Paternal care is necessary to preserve the purity of the race of books against the loss of their ancient nobility [...]: paternal care is necessary lest 'the sons,' as he puts it, 'be robbed of the names of their true fathers.' (p.18)

Figuring the text as a child, then, is as effective as figuring the text as female in demonstrating the paternal authority of the owner, reader or editor of the text.

Furnivall's 1868 Early English Text Society edition *Early English Meals and Manners*, a collection of courtesy and educational literature, became generally known by the title of one of its texts, 'The Babees Book'. When Furnivall edited

another collection of such texts, *Queene Elizabethes Achademy*, in 1869, he described the edition as ‘a kind of a small brother to our fat Babees Book of 1868’, disclosing in the ‘Forewords’ that ‘as irreverent friends in the Society have christened the first Babees Book my babee, I [...] look on this present volume as my 2nd babee.’²⁸ The rhetorical construction of the text as child provides a space in the ‘Forewords’ for Furnivall to anticipate the uses readers will make of the text and their reactions to it:

Some may care to look at its eyes, some at its toes; some may perhaps penetrate to its navel, that continual marvel to the infantile mind; prigs, no doubt, will scorn it all as trash; but it may lead some back to knowledge of days nearer England’s childhood than our time is, and if it does, I shall be content. (p.xxiv)

If the idea of the study of medieval texts as navel-gazing were not irreverent enough, this anthropomorphic metaphor supersedes one in which Furnivall returns to the language of his schooldays. ‘This volume, then, the reader will see, may be looked on, from one point of view, as a kind of Resurrection Pie like we used to have once a week at school, in which we declared old left bits reappeared’ (p.xxiii).

Furnivall’s affection for his text/baby is in marked contrast to his other description of the birth of a text – the characterisation of a uniform–spelling Chaucer as ‘a Monster, bred by Artificialness out of False Analogy’. More importantly, with these tropes Furnivall acknowledges the creativity of editorial work. Susan Stanford Friedman has developed a theory that the metaphor of literary creativity as childbirth is used differently by male and female writers.²⁹ Paul Ruggiers’ description of

²⁸ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Queene Elizabethes Achademy*, ES 8(London: EETS, 1869), p.i.

²⁹ Susan Stanford Friedman, ‘Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse’, *Feminist Studies*, 13:1 (1989), 49-82.

Furnivall as a 'midwife of nineteenth-century Chaucer scholarship' obliquely reproduces the idea that editorial labour brings about the production of textual babies.³⁰ But Furnivall's use of the metaphor does not really apply the concept Friedman suggests as 'male motherhood' to editorship.³¹ Rather than extend the metaphor to cover the process of editorial labour as childbirth, Furnivall remains an economic and social father of the text, a father in the family unit.

John Tosh has shown how fatherhood was fundamental to middle-class masculinity because it testified to virility, provided a widened sphere for personal authority, and added substance to the male role as sustainer and provider for family dependants.³² So, having produced this (male) textual offspring, Furnivall must provide for him, and in keeping with the metaphor of editorial work as clothing, Furnivall provides for the child by finding him some clothes. This new edition to the family is divided into two parts. 'Queene Elizabethes Achademy' and other courtesy and educational tracts make up Part I. Essays on German and Italian courtesy books by W. M. Rossetti and E. Oswald, described as the main reason for the collection's publication, form Part II. Furnivall extends his metaphor of the text as child to cover this structural division: 'Part II. I look on as the body of this second Babe; Part I. as its frock or coat. Still, I hope the stuff and trimmings of the boy's garment will be found worthy of examination, as well as his eyes and legs' (p.i). Furnivall's first 'Babee', *Early English Meals and Manners*, had used a similar metaphor to describe editorial work, giving as his reason for providing a preface 'the Book of Curtasye

³⁰ Ruggiers, *Editing Chaucer*, p.7.

³¹ Friedman, p.60.

³² John Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England', *Gender and History*, 8:1 (1996), 48-64 (p.50).

binding on editors', which 'does not allow them to present their readers a text with no coat and trowsers [sic] on.'³³ If the substance of textual criticism is its rhetoric, as Gary Taylor proposes, the substance of Furnivall's textual criticism is a gendered rhetoric. Through it, despite all Furnivall's admissions of slapdash method and pragmatic methodology, editorial authority is figured and reinforced as paternal authority.

WE OTHER VICTORIANS

As the separate publication of *Loose and Humorous Songs* shows, Furnivall's edition of *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript* struggled to rectify Percy's 'improvements' from within the boundaries of Victorian propriety. Furnivall could excuse (or 'make no excuse for') the bawdier tales as evidence of how 'some of the wonderful intellectual energy of Elizabeth's and James I's time ran riot somewhat', but ultimately both his and Percy's editions were structured around the expectations of the 'reader of taste'.³⁴

Furnivall's introduction to the romance 'Libius Disconius' in volume II of *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript* describes the story as:

³³ *Early English Meals and Manners*, p. i.

³⁴ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, IV, p.iii.

One that, told in the language and clothed with the feelings of each successive age, can never fail to interest that age at least, – the adventures of a young unknown man on his dangerous road from poverty to success in life, from nameless obscurity to rank and fame, from the consciousness of power existing only in the youth's own brain, to the full manifestation of that power, in the sight and with the applause of all beholders, who rejoice to see it receive its fitting reward.³⁵

This is a fairly effective summary of the masculine hermeneutic – the interpretation of texts in the terms the story of manhood achieved – which I have shown pervades Furnivall's work. Furnivall's tacit admission here that this story can differ with the language and feelings 'of each successive age' is perhaps a warning that readers should find the tale uplifting in spite of Lybius's illegitimacy. The sticky problem of Lybius 'not knowing his father (he is Gawain's bastard)' is explained in a footnote, attributed (without source) to Thomas Wright. In medieval times,

Bastardy was considered no real stain; [...] if a knight, for instance, met with a woman in a wood, and got her with child, however ignoble the woman, or however low the circumstances under which the child received its first nurture, the blood it had received from the father would inevitably urge it onward till it reached its natural station. (p.405)

From the vantage point of the twenty-first century it would be possible, not to say easy, gently to mock the seriousness with which the delicate but important issue of paternity is treated. Here in the vocabulary of 'ignoble women' of 'low circumstances' and 'noble blood' finding its 'natural station', we could say, is Victorian patriarchy in textual interpretation writ large. But while it is important to recognise that these are undeniably figures that demarcated class and gender status to

³⁵ *Bishop Percy's Folio Manuscript*, II, p.405.

a nineteenth-century readership, it would be foolish to imagine our own 'successive age' free from such constructions. As Andrew Tolson has suggested:

Masculinity is a culturally specific and socially functional 'gender identity', with peculiar (often negative) consequences for men themselves. [...] If gender is cultural and social, then it is also *historical*. There is no 'universal' masculinity, but rather a varying masculine experience of each succeeding social epoch.³⁶

To explore this, I conclude by taking as a case study Furnivall's editions of the works of Thomas Hoccleve. In these Furnivall, as well as scrutinising Hoccleve's poems, metre and language, measures Hoccleve for masculinity, and finds him wanting. I consider why this should be so, suggesting that the prefaces reflect the historical contingency of masculine experience, and further proposing that it may have been harder for Furnivall to create a homosocial bond between reader and author if the author's problematic masculinity disables the masculine hermeneutic. That writers on Hoccleve throughout the twentieth century have followed Furnivall's lead suggests that the effect of (Furnivall's) editing on (our) interpretation may be stronger than we might have believed. I propose that Furnivall's textual and editorial work continues to influence the gendered interpretation of Hoccleve's writings.

³⁶Andrew Tolson, *The Limits of Masculinity*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1977), p.13.

'A MANLIER FELLOW'

When Furnivall proposed a 'Lydgate and Hoccleve Society' in 1872 (he was still undecided as to the spelling of Hoccleve's name at this point), there were few takers. 'Not half of the 150 men I wanted for a start, agreed to join', Furnivall admitted when the EETS finally printed a Hoccleve text twenty years later.³⁷ The failure of the Lydgate and Hoccleve society has been adduced as symptomatic of Furnivall's blind optimism (Gross), and as a momentary lapse of market awareness (Matthews).³⁸ Furnivall made no secret of his disregard for the work of Lydgate, revelling in Ritson's description of him as a 'drivelling monk'.³⁹ That he admired Joseph Schick's edition of Lydgate's *Temple of Glas* while at the same time calling it 'worthless' reveals that Furnivall saw himself duty-bound to produce texts of the poets, whatever his opinion of their work.⁴⁰ 'I feel bound to try and see Hoccleve cleared, and Lydgate well started, before I die', his preface to Hoccleve's *Minor Poems* reads morosely (p.xlviii). Here I suggest that the gender issues which may played a part in the non-appearance of the Lydgate and Hoccleve society might continue to influence the demeanour of Hoccleve studies today.

Thomas Hoccleve was born in or around 1367. Records show that he worked as a civil servant – a clerk in the Privy Seal – until his death in 1426. He also wrote

³⁷ *Hoccleve's Minor Poems*, p.xlviii.

³⁸ Gross, p. 169-70; Matthews, *Making of Middle English*, p.172.

³⁹ *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, p.ix.

⁴⁰ *Lydgate's Temple of Glas*, ed. by J. Schick, ES 60 (London: EETS, 1891). See Furnivall's comment in *Capgrave's Life of St. Katherine*, p.xxxi.

poetry; some 13,000 lines of it. In this poetry he refers to himself, both as an author and as a clerk, and he describes himself as having suffered a period of mental illness, when his friends avoided him and his memory 'went to pley'.⁴¹ Today, Hoccleve is read, if he is read at all, in three main contexts: as Chaucerian disciple, as a contentious example of early autobiography, and for one of the first literary descriptions of a nervous breakdown.⁴²

In the 1890s, when Frederick Furnivall printed the works of Thomas Hoccleve for the Early English Text Society, they became available to a reading public in a relatively accessible text for the first time since their composition. Consequently for more than a hundred years readers of Hoccleve have reached the text through the idiosyncratic editorship of Frederick Furnivall. This idiosyncrasy is significant because Furnivall's own ideas of exemplary masculinity are legible in his readings of Hoccleve's life and work, and because these in turn have influenced subsequent scholarship on Hoccleve. At the same as time as Hoccleve was reclaimed as worthy of publication, Furnivall initiates a practice of questioning the poet's masculinity. Specifically, this can be seen in his 1892 introduction to the *Minor Poems*, where he characterises the poet as a 'weak, sensitive, look-on-the-worst side sort of a man':

But he has the merit of recognising his weakness, his folly, and his cowardice. He makes up for these by his sentimental love of the Virgin Mary, his genuine admiration for Chaucer, his denunciation

⁴¹ Hoccleve, 'Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint', l.51.

⁴² See, for example, Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993; J. A. Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve', in J. A. Burrow, ed., *Middle English Literature: British Academy Gollancz Lectures*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 223-246; James Simpson, 'Madness and Texts: Hoccleve's *Series*' in J. Boffey and J. Cowen, eds., *Chaucer and Fifteenth Century Poetry*, (London: KCLMS, 1991), pp. 15-29.

of the extravagant fashions in dress, the neglect of old soldiers, &c. We wish he had been a better poet and a manlier fellow; but all of those who've made fools of themselves, more or less, in their youth, will feel for the poor old versifier. (p.xxxviii)

'There's a good deal of human nature in man,' concludes Furnivall. 'So we'll not throw stones at old Hoccleve.'

Hoccleve, it is true, describes his bodily ailments in great detail, in a way perhaps unlikely to find favour with the permanently robust Furnivall. 'He was so keen on all bodily exercise', said a friend after Furnivall's death, 'I have seen him interested in ping-pong even!'⁴³ And exercise was Furnivall's answer when confronted with James Murray's complaints about the hard labour of work on the *NED*:

'Chuck it all up' has come to me a fair number of times. But I think this depends very much on bodily health. If you could get a good gallop or other refreshing rest or change, the old strong will 'ud revive.'⁴⁴

So while Hoccleve's combination of dyspepsia, backache and eyestrain would perhaps have been a familiar list of complaints to Furnivall, these laments about the physical demands of writing did little to impress him:

'Wrytyng also doth grete annoyes thre,
Of which ful fewe folkes taken heede
Sauf we oure self; and thise, lo, thei be:
Stomak is on, whom stowpyng out of dreede
Annoyeth soore; and to our bakkes, neede
Mot it be greuouse; and the thrid, our yen,
Vp-on the whyte mochel sorwe dryen.

'What man that thre & twenti yeere and more

⁴³ *Volume of Personal Record*, p.1.

⁴⁴ Furnivall to Murray, 30 March 1882, Murray papers.

In wryting hath continued, as haue I
I dar wel seyn it smerteth hym ful sore
In euere veyne and place of his body;
and yen moost it greeueth trewely
Of any crafte that man can ymagyne:
ffadir, in feth, it spilt hath wel ny myne.’⁴⁵

We have already seen Furnivall’s concern that Chaucer and Shakespeare exhibit exemplary athleticism alongside their aesthetic genius. But perhaps there are wider cultural issues than Furnivall’s personal fantasies at stake here. Writing in the 1890s, Furnivall was judging Hoccleve from a paradigmatic moment in the history of masculine identities, when New Women and the Wilde trials jostled with wider fears about empire and racial and national degeneration. Worries about nationality and sexuality by the end of the century became focused as worries about the strength and stamina of the male body.⁴⁶

An explicit connection of athleticism and manliness can be seen in Furnivall’s comments about Hoccleve’s bravery, or lack of it, in the all-male pursuits of sport: ‘I see no evidence that he had ever crost a horse: and he was too much of a coward to play football or any rough game.’⁴⁷ Football was becoming an increasingly popular sport by the 1890s, and was described by one Manchester headmaster as ‘a means of testing the manly prowess of representative teams of schools, colleges, clubs, villages, or other communities’.⁴⁸ What is significant here,

⁴⁵ Hoccleve, ‘The Regement of Princes’, l.1016-29.

⁴⁶ See Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Towards a Genealogy of a Discourse on Male Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993); Linda Dowling, *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Bruce Haley, *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977).

⁴⁷ Hoccleve’s *Minor Poems*, p. xxxv.

⁴⁸ H. H. Almond, ‘Football as a Moral Agent’, *The Nineteenth Century*, December 1893, pp.899-911 (p.901).

however, is that Furnivall is not actually isolating an incidence in the text of Hoccleve describing an unwillingness to play football, or in fact any sport. The lines that Furnivall cites to back up his description, stanza 22 of the 'Male Regle', are in fact about physical violence towards other men: Hoccleve says 'I was so ferd with any man to fight'.⁴⁹ Furnivall is reading what Hoccleve calls his 'manly cowardyse' as something which makes him 'the sort of man who doesn't like football', a judgement of masculine non-conformity that would perhaps be even more damning in some social circles today.

Hoccleve's job as a clerk in the Privy Seal was another factor that might have influenced Furnivall's characterisation. As John Tosh has identified, the social status of the clerk at the end of the nineteenth century was far from certain. 'The hapless office clerk fell between two stools; in middle class terms his occupation was servile, while the labourer despised his soft hands and poor physique.'⁵⁰ Peter Stearns in his review of masculinity, *Be A Man!*, identifies that for white-collar workers at the end of the nineteenth century 'technology, while not nearly so ominous as for the working male, threatened possible displacement from the 1880s onward; a combination of typewriters and female secretaries, for example, virtually did away with the male clerk in many offices'.⁵¹ In this context Hoccleve, being such a 'hapless office clerk' and having such a 'poor physique', is far from an exemplary specimen of manhood.

⁴⁹ Hoccleve, 'La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve', l.170.

⁵⁰ Tosh, 'What Should Historians do ...?', p.186.

⁵¹ Peter N. Stearns, *Be A Man!: Males in Modern Society*, (New York and London: Holmes and Meier, 1990), p.150.

Hoccleve also emerges in his poetry as preoccupied with – and frank about – his lack of money, at a time when, as Stearns notes, ‘many white collar workers fell back on their own version of instrumentalism, wrapping their manhood in their earning level’.⁵² As we saw in Chapter 3, an important step on the road to manhood achieved for the Victorian middle class male was setting up home away from his parents. And to do that he needed

an income from work. [...] But not just *any* work. It wasn’t enough that the work be dependable or even lucrative – it had to be dignified. For middle-class work to be dignified, it had to be absolutely free from any suggestion of servility or dependence on patronage.⁵³

With his texts embodying the machinations of patronage from the viewpoint of the patronised, Hoccleve’s work violates this intrinsic part of Victorian masculine reputation.

Possible respite in Furnivall’s lack of regard for Hoccleve could have come from Furnivall’s conviction the Hoccleve, too, had an unhappy marriage. But the potential bond between editor and author is strained by Hoccleve’s failure to be master in his own house.

As to the relations between Hoccleve and his wife, they were, I suspect – tho she was kind to him during his illness [...] – like those between Chaucer and his wife, only much more so. [...] Hoccleve was surely meant by nature to be under his wife’s thumb, but couldn’t take it out of her in chaff, as Chaucer did out of his. Mrs. Chaucer, however, wouldn’t dare take such liberties with her husband as Mrs Hoccleve would with hers.⁵⁴

⁵² Stearns, *Be A Man!*, p.150.

⁵³ Tosh, ‘What Should Historians do...?’, p.185-86.

⁵⁴ *Hoccleve’s Minor Poems*, p.xxxvii.

Furnivall, then, found Hoccleve's masculinity problematic because his physical weaknesses and occupational status were at odds with the dominant masculinities of the 1890s. It is not only Hoccleve's masculinity that is at issue here, but also Furnivall's. When the Victorian scholar pledges that he'll 'not throw stones at old Hoccleve', he draws attention to his position in a glasshouse where his own masculinity can be seen.

But if, by the end of the nineteenth century, attitudes to work were beginning to promote 'the idea that what a man did in his working life was an authentic expression of his individuality', this was to be an even more important influence on twentieth-century masculinities.⁵⁵ This correlation of occupation and identity can be seen in much twentieth-century criticism of Hoccleve, which reflects contingent discourses of masculinity just as explicitly, and just as unwittingly, as its Victorian predecessors. It seems to be a short step from Furnivall's late nineteenth-century appreciation – or lack of appreciation – of Hoccleve to late twentieth-century views of Hoccleve as similarly unmanly. When in 1989 John Burrow found 'the directness of Furnivall's response' to Hoccleve 'delightful' but 'very old-fashioned indeed', he was distancing himself from a methodology superseded by 'historical [...] New, and formalist or structuralist criticism', rather than from Furnivall's gendered response.⁵⁶

That Hoccleve's career was no meteoric rise to the higher levels of the civil service, and that he was never granted the ecclesiastical benefice 'without cure of souls'

⁵⁵ Tosh, 'What Should Historians do...?', p.186.

⁵⁶ Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry', p. 224.

which he hoped for, can be verified by documentary evidence.⁵⁷ Malcolm Richardson discusses this in his 1986 article 'Hoccleve in his Social Context'.⁵⁸ It could well be re-titled 'Hoccleve and his Professional Failure'. Richardson introduces 'the unfortunate poet Thomas Hoccleve', and lists Hoccleve's failures to achieve promotion in the Privy Seal, describing him as 'a conspicuous under-achiever' (p.313). He even adds Hoccleve's marriage to his bad career moves: 'there was little Hoccleve could do to worsen his position. He found something, however: he got married' (p.319). Presenting this as another in a line of habitual self-destructive acts, Richardson waxes vitriolic in his contemporary comparisons: 'Hoccleve had done nothing to prepare himself for marriage. Consequently, his laments resemble those of modern students who complain bitterly that they cannot have at the same time a university education, two children, and a new automobile.' When Richardson sums up his theory that 'the poet was not the victim of a malignant fate, but of himself', he reflects the late twentieth-century meritocratic principle that a man is master of his own fate (p.320).

Richardson's account of 'Hoccleve in his Social Context' in fact shows Hoccleve's masculinity in Malcolm Richardson's social context. By emphasising Hoccleve's failure to achieve a degree of occupational success sufficient to satisfy his twentieth-century career-minded critic, Richardson predicates his assessment of Hoccleve on 'economic manhood' as it was legible in 1986. In the same way that Furnivall's criticism reflects variables of masculinity in the 1890s, Richardson's article reflects the 1980s, and Hoccleve was no yuppie.

⁵⁷ J. A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve: Authors of the Middle Ages: English Writers of the Late Middle Ages; No. 4* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), p.11, 34.

⁵⁸ Malcolm Richardson, 'Hoccleve in his Social Context', *The Chaucer Review*, 20 (1986), 313-322.

The correlation between the work a man does and the man a man is has led to the direct identification of Hoccleve the author as Thomas the protagonist. Consequently, it is in part Hoccleve's 'unsuccessful' career that makes his literary critics read him as unsuccessful as a man, and critics who are convinced by the autobiographical persona in Hoccleve's poems consistently read Hoccleve as a real man but not as a 'real man'. How similar to Furnivall's characterisation 'a weak, sensitive, look-on-the-worst-side' sort of a man' is Jerome Mitchell's statement that 'the personality that emerges from the Prologue to the *Regement of Princes* is that of a weak, timorous, self-centred, but very human individual.'⁵⁹

Why, then, do some critics find Hoccleve's personality problematic? Perhaps there is a clue in Mitchell's phrase 'self-centred'. I suggest that it is the very fact that Hoccleve writes about himself that is seen as so disturbing. An unease can be detected in Albrecht Classen's reading of the 'Male Regle', which he talks about as revealing 'too much of Hoccleve's inner self in autobiographical terms [...] Hoccleve repeatedly provides us with unmediated information about his private life, his intimate feelings, his idiosyncrasies and other aspects of his personality.'⁶⁰ This is perhaps why A. C. Spearing, comparing Hoccleve with Chaucer, describes Hoccleve's use of the first person as 'vulnerable', or why Derek Brewer describes Hoccleve as 'amusing but undignified'.⁶¹

⁵⁹ J. Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth Century English Poetic* (Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1968), p.15.

⁶⁰ Albrecht Classen, 'The Autobiographical Voice of Thomas Hoccleve', *Archiv fur das Studium der Neuen Sprachen und Literaturen*, 228 (1991), 299-310 (p.303).

⁶¹ A. C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.114; D. S. Brewer, ed., *Chaucer and Chaucerians: Critical Studies in Middle English Literature* (London: Nelson, 1966), p.28.

Hoccleve not only talks about himself – he is guilty of the traditionally feminine trait of talking too much. H. S. Bennett in 1947 described ‘Hoccleve’s constant gossiping about himself’, while A. L. Brown says of Hoccleve ‘He was garrulous. [...] He wrote, and presumably talked too much’.⁶² A. C. Spearing gives an explicit reading of Hoccleve’s speech as female. ‘At times, in his self-absorbed chattiness, Hoccleve sounds like the Wife of Bath, forgetting where she has got to in her exhaustive account of her marital history.’⁶³ Jerome Mitchell also correlates autobiography with emasculation: ‘Hoccleve has painted a miniature self-portrait by means of specific, descriptive details and through intimate, unabashed remarks about his own rather effeminate personality.’⁶⁴ John Burrow openly acknowledges that Hoccleve’s self-referential details might not be socially acceptable. In fact, Burrow applies attitudes of masculine social identity to contemporary critical reaction to Hoccleve. Discussing the discrepancy in the poems between Hoccleve’s moral counsel and his confessions of inadequacy, Burrow states that:

Readers who credit Hoccleve with no awareness of this contradiction commonly react to his orthodoxies with something of that mixture of embarrassment and derision which society reserves for those of its members who try too hard to be one of the boys.⁶⁵

In questioning Hoccleve’s masculinity – whatever masculinity might mean at any particular historical moment – the Hoccleve critics discussed above reinforce the

⁶² H. S. Bennett, *Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947) p.147; A. L. Brown, ‘The Privy Seal Clerks in the Early Fifteenth Century’, in D. A. Bullough and R. L. Storey, eds., *The Study of Medieval Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp.260-281 (p.271).

⁶³ Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance*, p.115.

⁶⁴ Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve*, p.11.

⁶⁵ Burrow, ‘Autobiographical Poetry’, p.238.

masculinity of their own immediate society of other readers, scholars and students. By pointing to Hoccleve's failure of masculinity, Furnivall, Brewer *et al* assume that their readers can view Hoccleve from the same position of untroubled masculinity as they can themselves. In order to know what constitutes trying too hard, one has to know already what it takes to be 'one of the boys'.

Thus the study of masculinities in and through criticism on Hoccleve has ramifications for the academic study of masculinity – and for the study of academic masculinity. When Malcolm Richardson makes his character assassination of Hoccleve, 'Hoccleve, as we know, was the type of man who sees his own glass half empty and his companion's glass half full,' perhaps we should concentrate not on the pop-psychology of his reference, but on the inferences of nescience and intimacy between critics and readers which are implicit in the phrase 'as we know' – especially in the light of what John Burrow indulgently calls the 'frank man-to-man response of Furnivall to his author'.⁶⁶

What, then, can we learn from this masculinist rhetoric of the apparatus of textual production? What relevance does this have for have for the study of medieval texts today? To understand this, we have to return to McGann, for we leave Furnivall in what McGann has called the secondary moment of textual production.

The model of textual criticism which McGann proposes to supersede the purely editorial construction of the discipline is tripartite. The first section, 'the originary textual moment', includes the author and other persons involved in the initial production of the text, and the stages, materials, means and modes of the

⁶⁶ Richardson, p.315; Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry', p.225.

initial productive process. Next comes the 'secondary moment of textual production and reproduction': this has two subsets. McGann proposes that consideration should be given both to the period of reproduction carried out during the author's life, and to that which occurs after the author's death. (Although if we follow Taylor's formulation that the author is always already dead, these stages will be coincident).

McGann's last category, 'the immediate moment of textual criticism', asks the textual critic to examine their own goals and purposes. 'This moment appears as a specific act of criticism – as a particular bibliography, edition, set of glosses, or critical commentary of one form or another.' Such an approach – a form of textual criticism that includes 'elucidation of the textual history of a work and [...] explication of the reception history' – can acknowledge the non-authorial variants that contribute to a text and thus go some way to healing 'the schism between hermeneutics and textual criticism' (pp.81-84). As this brief analysis of criticism of the works of Thomas Hoccleve shows, non-authorial variants continue to shape the gendered reception and interpretation of the text. The future of the study of the history of both medieval studies and Victorian scholarship lies, I would argue, in assessing the continuing influence that activities (such as Furnivall's) in the secondary moment of textual production have on our own immediate moments of textual criticism and literary interpretation.

CONCLUSION

STUDYING SCHOLARSHIP

To write about Furnivall is to write about myself.

William Poel, *Volume of Personal Record* (p.143)

David Matthews uses the date of Furnivall's death, 1910, as the 'symbolic' moment during which Middle English entered the old universities as a subject of study.¹ Reflecting (almost certainly unwittingly) the concerns of this thesis, Matthews figures the relationship between medieval studies and English studies as a familial one. 'Medieval studies was one of the parents of English studies,' he says, 'but the ungrateful child was quick to run away from home.'²

Studying English studies – as Furnivall saw the subject, as his contemporaries saw it, and as we imagine its future – has been the fundamental concern of this thesis. Brian Doyle, in exposing that English studies may have a 'hidden history', has posited that without reference to its roots, the discipline of English as an academic subject lacks a central self-awareness. Doyle aims,

to show that apparently 'personal' responses to 'self-evidently' literary works are much more than the innocent responses to pleasure that they are normally made out to be; and that a more rewarding pleasure is to be found in discovering and understanding the social forces at work in and around 'the English Language and Literature'.³

¹ Matthews, p.xvii.

² Matthews, p.190.

³ Brian Doyle, 'The hidden history of English studies' in *Re-Reading English*, ed. by Peter Widdowson (London: Methuen, 1982), 17-31 (p.28).

Furnivall's responses are so evidently personal that it would be easy to think them transparent. Critical understanding of the circumstances and politics surrounding Furnivall's work, however, shows that these prefaces have wider resonances for the history of scholarship. This is part of what Allen Frantzen has called 'the unmasking of critical identity', a move necessary as 'part of the rhetorical process of defamiliarizing academic and social institutions'. To find out how masculinity operates in those institutions, I would add, is one way to answer 'the demands made by critics who seek to explain how the preferences of a few have come to constitute the possibilities of the many'.⁴

Furnivall's preference, as shown by his prefaces, was for the study of texts to be grounded in society. In attempting to understand his legacy it is necessary to remember that all academies and disciplines – and all eccentrics – are defined by their society and their time. Hans Aarsleff called for an understanding of Furnivall's work 'as the product of his milieu'; we must scrutinise the history and current practices of medieval studies similarly.⁵ This is especially important when looking to the future of medieval studies. Leslie Workman, for example, in his opening address to the Twelfth International Conference on Medievalism (1998) described medievalism's relationship to medieval studies as 'a son ready to take over the family business'. We must question the traditions that created the academy and those which continue to maintain it, and recognise the family romances and accompanying gender politics in pedagogy, publishing and research by interrogating the rhetoric surrounding our texts.

⁴ Allen Frantzen, *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), p.7.

⁵ Aarsleff, p.175.

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