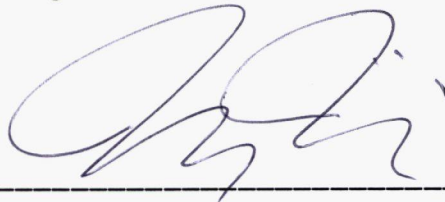



THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

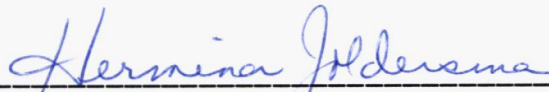
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "‘Mysmetre for Defaute of Tonge’: Generative Metrics and the Editing of Chaucer." submitted by Heidi W. Kurtz in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



Supervisor, Dr. Murray McGillivray, Dept. of English



Prof. Josephine Evetts-Secker, Dept. of English



External Examiner, Dr. Hermina Joldersma,  
Dept. of German, Slavic and East Asian Studies

1 Dec. 1995

Date

## Abstract

This thesis proposes to examine the problems that Chaucerian versification has caused the editors of Chaucer's texts throughout history. Also examined will be a contemporary linguistic metrical theory which, if applied to Chaucer's text, will hopefully provide editors with a tool to deal with some of the uncertainty of Chaucer's metrical system.

Through a historical examination of the editions of Chaucer's works, it will be shown how from the earliest editions, editors have relied on an understanding of English prosody in general and Chaucerian prosody specifically which inadequately describes the characteristics of Chaucerian versification. This traditional approach to metrical analysis, based on the model of Greek and Latin versification, has not fundamentally changed in over four hundred years and is still being employed by editors today.

In constructing an edition of Chaucer's works, an editor relies on her or his understanding or sense of Chaucer's metre in emending base manuscripts for spelling, punctuation and syntax. Therefore, a flawed perception of Chaucer's specific prosodic style can weaken the authority of an edition. Since the understanding of a text's metrical structure can strongly influence the shape of an edition, I propose that the introduction of a linguistic metrical theory, generative metrics, which accurately describes the specific characteristics of English prosodic systems, will help an editor in producing a viable edition.

The principles of a generative metrical system are outlined and applied to Chaucer's short poem *The Parliament of Foules*, and tentative conclusions about Chaucer's specific prosodic system are made. In turn, the effectiveness of a generative metrical system are tested by bringing it to bear on Chaucer's text where it must contend with Middle English phonology and syntax, for which it was not designed.

By combining the two areas of linguistic and editorial textual inquiry, I hope to prove that the editors of Chaucer's text would benefit by adopting a system of generative metrical theory in the construction of their editions. I also hope to show how a generative metrical theory may be improved to deal better with the problems of Middle English syntax and grammar.

## Table of Contents

Approval Page.....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One .....	8
Chapter Two .....	32
Chapter Three .....	57
Conclusion .....	79
Bibliography .....	85

## Introduction

This thesis, which examines in part the interaction of contemporary metrical linguistics with Chaucer's Middle English verse, had its genesis in textual analysis and manuscript variation. Originally, why words were spelled a specific way or arranged in a specific fashion was not as important to me as the fact that there were variations and similarities between the manuscripts which could be counted and collated. Yet, the evolution from textual to metrical analysis was a natural one which centered ultimately on the textual evidence of how the verse would have been pronounced in Chaucer's day.

Reading Chaucer, even from the most reputable editions or manuscript sources, generally results in a degree of distrust as to how the text is meant to be pronounced. No manuscript or edition of Chaucer is written phonetically (or perhaps could be written phonetically). There are guides to Chaucerian pronunciation in general, but the contemporary reader must deduce from secondhand knowledge, and/or textual clues how the text in front of her was read aloud in Chaucer's day. The sound, rhythm, and shape of the lines are therefore determined, for any reader, to a great degree by a combination of variables as unique as the reader herself.

Guided in part by a common desire to produce a reputable text which can help resolve problems of pronunciation, editors have attempted to standardize Chaucer's text, an effort which has resulted in more than 130 separate editions of Chaucer's various works over a period exceeding four hundred years.<sup>1</sup> In the quest to find or fashion the definitive Chaucerian text,

---

<sup>1</sup> This figure was derived from the bibliographies listed in "Bibliography and Works Cited".

editors have been guided in large measure by their understanding of Middle English prosody. This understanding has dictated a large part of the editorial work for each edition including spelling emendation, word choice, and manuscript preferences. An editor's perception of Chaucer's metre is key, since decisions about textual emendation are often dictated by the text's conformity, or lack thereof, to an assumed metrical pattern. Such decisions manifest themselves principally in emendation of the syntax and spelling of the base manuscript(s). As a result, a reader's sense of Chaucer's metre may alter when looking at the same passage in different editions.

Despite the abundance of "authoritative" editions, Chaucer's language and the regularity or irregularity of his versification have historically proved problematic for both his readers and his editors. Writing in 1575, one hundred and seventy five years after Chaucer's death, George Gascoigne testifies to the problems which Chaucer's verse and metre still present to the contemporary reader:

...our father Chaucer hath vsed the same libertie in feete and measures that the Latinists do vse; and who so euer do peruse and well consider his workes, he shall finde that although his lines are not alwayes of one self same number of Syllables, yet beyng redde by one that hath vnderstanding, the longest verse and that which hath most Syllables in it, will fall (to the eare) correspondent vnto that whiche hath fewest sillables in it; and likewise that whiche hath in it fewest syllables, shalbe founde yet to consist of woordes that

haue suche naturall sounde, as may seeme equall in length to a verse which  
hath many moe sillables of lighter accents. (qtd. in Spurgeon 110)

The debates and the arguments used to defend or discredit Chaucer as a competent metrist have not, in some respects, fundamentally changed since Gascoigne's first observations. The first objective of this thesis, then, will be to trace the development of historical opinion on Chaucer's metre through the editions of his works from Caxton in 1478 to Benson in 1987. I hope, by tracing the development of a historical understanding of metrical analysis generally and Chaucerian versification specifically, to show what pre-texts influenced the production of past and present editions. That is to say, I will examine not only how the critical metrical understanding of Chaucer has changed and/or remained the same, but also how opinions and methodologies have been borrowed from edition to edition.

The periods of Chaucerian editorial scholarship have been organized chronologically. My discussion of each period will focus primarily on the metrical understanding of Chaucer's text at that time and the editors' responses to the problems presented. Outlining the history of Chaucerian editorial scholarship, with an eye to the problems presented by Chaucer's prosodic style, will illustrate how Chaucer's editors, when they employed a system of metrical analysis at all, have come to rely on the same traditional system of metrical analysis based on Latin and Greek prosodic models. Developed neither for the English language nor for English verse forms, the traditional approach to metrical analysis provides an incomplete description of Chaucerian versification. A traditional system of metrical analysis does provide a way to identify the strong

and weak stresses within a line, but it cannot give an explanation of how the stressed and unstressed syllables are interrelated or interdependent.

Although our perception and understanding of Chaucer's text continues to evolve since Caxton's first edition in 1478, the techniques of traditional metrical analysis which have accelerated this evolution have themselves not changed significantly. New and more exact approaches to the analysis of English prosody have been recently developed by linguists, but editors and critics of Chaucerian versification largely continue to rely on a traditional approach to metrical analysis, descriptive in nature rather than analytical. This reliance on an inadequate system of metrical analysis underlies the need for a more accurate account of Chaucerian prosody which may be met by the application of a generative metrical analysis. It is the inadequacy of a traditional approach to metrical analysis which has prompted my attempt in this thesis at applying contemporary linguistic metrical theory to Chaucer's verse. The possible advantages of a system of linguistic metrical analysis, I argue, will provide an editor with a more accurate tool for understanding Chaucer's prosody and emending base manuscripts in keeping with that prosodic system.

The linguistic metrical theory referred to here as generative metrical analysis was developed from the generative grammatical linguistic theory proposed in 1957 by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky believed that for a native speaker, the grammatical rules of her language were not memorized and then applied in the construction of sentences. He believed rather that a native speaker could intuitively generate grammatical sentences without referring to a system of rules and would simply recognize when a sentence was grammatical or ungrammatical.

The basic principal that a language's grammatical structure is internalized rather than formally learned was then applied to the case of metrical language, or verse. A generative metrical theory of verse assumes that a poet writing metrically regular verse will allow for some deviations from a basic prosodic pattern (iambic pentameter, for example) while not allowing for others. A reader with a broad and thorough acquaintance with that poet's work will be able, therefore, to "sense" whether or not a line is metrical within that poet's prosodic system. If the line is metrical, it will simply sound right to her. A generative metrical theory, therefore, attempts to understand and recreate the process behind the recognition of metricality, based on the work of a specific poet.

In chapter two I will introduce the new developments in generative metrical analysis proposed by the linguists Morris Halle and Samuel J. Keyser, and Paul Kiparsky, focusing on the work of Halle and Keyser. Working in tandem, Halle and Keyser were the first to directly address the problems presented in traditional metrical analysis and then apply possible solutions, using Chaucer's text, in the form of a generative metrical linguistic theory. They devised a series of rules based on their understanding of Middle English phonology by which metrical lines could be generated in keeping with Chaucer's system of versification. Theoretically, these rules could also be used to identify lines of verse as unmetrical within Chaucer's prosodic system. I will outline how their work succeeded and where it failed to resolve the prosodic concerns surrounding Chaucer's works in order to provide a context for discussion of Kiparsky's response.

Kiparsky's response to the work of Halle and Keyser and success with the application of generative metrical theory provides the basis for my analysis presented in the third chapter.



Kiparsky's response takes two significant new directions from Halle and Keyser's theory. First, Kiparsky uses both syntactic and phonological criteria in developing his system of generative rules where Halle and Keyser rely primarily on phonological criteria. Second, Kiparsky uses the works of Shakespeare to test his theory. I will argue that while the first new development provides a potentially useful approach to understanding Chaucerian versification, the second ultimately restricts the applicability of Kiparsky's system to Chaucer's verse.

My argument in the third chapter will be based on an analysis, using Kiparsky's system, of Chaucer's poem *The Parlement of Foules*. The choice of this poem was made because it was one of the first of Chaucer's early works to have been written in a regular iambic pentameter form. Assuming this to be true, Chaucer's *The Parlement of Foules* will provide a consistent verse form to which a theory of generative metrical analysis can be applied. Other reasons for choosing *The Parlement of Foules* include the fact that the poem has fifteen manuscript sources extant providing a wide range of base manuscripts for the purposes of collation and comparison<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The manuscript sources are:

Fairfax MS. 16, Bodleian Library

MS. LVII, St. John's Coll. Oxford

Harley MS. 7333

Lord Bath's Longleat MS. 258

MS. Gg. 4. 27, Cambridge Univ. Libr.

Tanner MS. 346, Bodl. Libr.

Bodley MS. 638, Bodl. Libr.

Caxton's text, 1477-8

MS. Ff. 1. 6, Cambr. Univ. Libr.

MS. R. 3. 19, Trin. Coll. Cambr.

Pepys MS. 2006

, and the fact that its length is such that it can be dealt with within the scope of this thesis, while being long enough to provide reliable evidence for the application of Kiparsky's theory.

I hope by the end of the third chapter to have demonstrated the necessity for a new and more accurate approach to understanding English prosody instead of the traditional system of metrical analysis. I will also demonstrate the potential usefulness of a generative theory of metre for the editors of Chaucer's text when faced with decisions regarding the emendation of base manuscripts. Therefore, it is through the introduction of a new generative metrical approach to the old problem of Chaucerian prosodic analysis, that I hope to show how

...out of olde bokes, in good feyth,

Cometh al this newe science that men lere.

*(Parliament of Foules, 24-25)*

Laud MS 416, Bodl. Libr.

MS. Hh. 4. 12, Bodl. Libr.

Digby MS 181, Bodl. Libr.

MS. Arch. Seldon. B. 24, Bodl. Libr.

## Chapter One

The link between a history of editing Chaucer and the study of metrical analysis is a natural one, since from the earliest editions of Chaucer the editors of his works have provided both the material and the theory for understanding Chaucerian metrics. Editorial decisions about spelling, preferred readings, and emendation have often been motivated by the editor's understanding of Chaucer's versification and of general metrical theory.

The history of editing Chaucer can be divided into two distinct phases; editors and editions which laid the groundwork for the edition in 1778 by Thomas Tyrwhitt, and subsequent editorial work which used the methodology established by Tyrwhitt. The choice of Tyrwhitt's work as a kind of fulcrum in this chronology is not an arbitrary one. Tyrwhitt has been called "the founder of modern Chaucer editing" and is also credited with having authenticated and edited texts which were previously regarded as spurious, and rejecting texts which were appropriated by previous editors to be printed as Chaucer's (Brusendorff p.44)<sup>1</sup>. More importantly for the purposes of this study, Tyrwhitt is also credited with having

---

<sup>1</sup> It was not unusual to reprint sections of a previous edition with a few minor additions under a new title and editor's name. These editions would frequently make use of non-Chaucerian material which was described as "new unpublished poems...." as in the Thynne edition of 1532, titled, "The Workes of Geffray Chaucer newly printed with dyuers workes whiche were neuer in print before..." (Hammond 116).

definitely and clearly disposed for ever of the persistently erroneous view which was held of Chaucer's versification.... [t]hat... [Chaucer] had no ear for metre, and wrote rough and irregular lines. (Spurgeon 1: liv-v)

Before Tyrwhitt's edition the matter of Chaucer's metrical regularity or irregularity was still debated by editors and scholars. After Tyrwhitt's edition Chaucer's metre was universally accepted as regular, but the characteristics of Chaucer's prosody or how his metre was regular continued to be disputed.

The first phase of Chaucerian editorial scholarship spans the period from the manuscripts and first edition of the *Canterbury Tales* by William Caxton in 1478 to the incomplete edition by Thomas Morell in 1737. In *Chaucer and the Augustan Scholars*, William L. Alderson and Arnold C. Henderson divide this period into: the manuscript editions and incunabula dating to 1500; works by the “antique” or “classical” scholars from Thynne's edition in 1532 to Speght's editions of 1602 including the reprint of 1687; and those by the “Augustan” scholars from Urry in 1721 to Morell in 1737.

The first period of the incunabula and manuscript copies of Chaucer's texts is a particularly significant one since the manuscripts and Caxton's editions represent the first editorial attempts at treating Chaucer's text after his death. This period is also unique in that the language of Chaucer's text was not so archaic to the editors as to be alien. In other words, these editors (I include scribes) did not need to gloss words in the text either for meaning or pronunciation. Their understanding of Middle English metrics was most likely intuited rather

than formally theorized and the text which they either copied or printed was shaped by that intuition.

Although the incunabula include editions of Chaucer's works other than Caxton's, none of the other principal editions (Pynson in 1492 and 1526, and de Worde in 1495 and 1498) during the period is of historical significance for the purposes of this thesis. The editions are copied directly from Caxton's text and add no significantly new material. The first essential period of Chaucerian printed editorial history, therefore, really began with Caxton's first edition and ended with his second.

The period of the classical scholars differs primarily from that of the incunabula and manuscripts in the editorial methodology which the editors of Chaucer's works brought to the text. These editors used the techniques learned in editing classical texts in Greek and Latin, applying them for the first time to a vernacular text. The use of Greek and Latin editions as a suitable paradigm for editorial work was necessary since by this time Chaucer's language had become to some degree alien to the editors and therefore needed (according to the editors of the period) to be treated to some degree as a foreign language. It was during this period that the first glossaries of Chaucer's language appeared, and the first commentary concerned with the unique characteristics of his language and style. These initial examinations of Chaucerian stylistics, although general by twentieth century standards, would prove to be the first important step in the development of critical work which would focus exclusively on the metrical analysis of Chaucer's work.

The Augustan scholars, beginning with Urry, are distinguished from their predecessors by the way in which they began to develop a more exact critical understanding of Chaucer's style. It was during this period that the first significant analyses of Chaucer's metre and prosodic style were made, and that criticism of Chaucerian prosody began to be published separately, besides being included in the editions of his works. The question of metrical style and versification in Chaucer now became the subject of serious scholarly investigation in its own right, and was no longer the exclusive domain of the textual editors.

The above subdivision of Chaucerian editorial history from the first manuscripts to 1737 by Alderson and Henderson is material since it points to significant shifts in the editorial treatment of Chaucer in the evolution of Chaucerian textual scholarship, and therefore in the perception and understanding of Chaucerian prosody.

The careful notation of editorial methodology by the editors of Chaucer's text which would come to characterize later editions were not found in the earlier editions of his works. Although the editors of the incunabula and manuscript period did not feel the need to explain the reasoning behind their emendations to the base manuscripts, one possible exception to this rule is found in the preface to Caxton's second edition of 1484. Caxton's second edition was more highly regarded than his first edition, both by Caxton himself and by subsequent editors. The reason for this preference was that the first edition, printed in 1478, was apparently transcribed from a faulty manuscript. The error was pointed out to Caxton by a reader of the first edition, and

in response Caxton includes an account of the circumstances surrounding the reprinting of the *Canterbury Tales* in the prologue to the second edition of 1484:

...one gentylman cam to me / and said that this book was not according in many places vnto the book that Gefferey chaucer had made / To whom I answerd that I had made it accordyng to my cotype / and by me was nothyng added ne mynusshyd / Thenne he sayd he knewe a book whyche hys fader had and moche louyd / that was very trewe / and accordyng vnto hys owen first book by hym made / and sayd more yf I wold enprynte it agayn he wold gete me the same book for a cotype / ... To whom I said / in caas that he coude gete me suche a book trewe and correcte / yet I wold ones endeuoyre me to enprynte it agayn / for to satysfye thauctour (Caxton 90-91)

The concern which Caxton shows for being faithful to the original intentions of the author and for finding the best possible manuscript which might serve that purpose illustrates a selective approach to the choice of a base manuscript. It would be foolish, therefore, to assume that the earlier editors of Chaucer's works did not emend the texts with a systematic and critical approach, relying solely on an intuitive ear for his metre. Yet it is true that these same editors did not feel compelled to explain in detail the reasoning which dictated the editorial process. Therefore, Caxton's apology and contrition for having

...erryd in hurtyng and dyffamyng his book in dyuerce places in setting in somme thynges that he neuer sayd ne made / and leuyng out many thynges that he made whyche ben requysite to be sette in it" (91)

makes his edition stand out among those of the earliest period of editorial scholarship.

Except for the 1526 edition by Pynson and the 1532 edition by Thynne which chronologically bridge the gap, there is a distinct break between the period of the incunabula and manuscript editions and the "antique" or "classical" editors. This latter group is distinguished by the scholarly approach which the editors took towards Chaucer's work, based on their understanding of classical Greek and Latin literary texts. The editors of this period (roughly 1526 to 1687), who were trained in the techniques and principles of classical scholarship and editing, attempted to use their knowledge to produce vernacular texts with an accuracy previously only accorded to classical texts.

The efforts of the classical scholars, however, were not always successful, nor their application of techniques which were developed for non-English languages and verse forms complete: "[editors] had ... discovered useful techniques, yet had difficulty applying them to English works" (Henderson xii). Nevertheless, the editions of Chaucer produced between 1526 (Pynson) and 1687 (Speght) stand out from what came before. Like classical texts produced at the same time, these editions of Chaucer contained a glossary of unfamiliar or archaic language, and textual notes outlining the editor's critical opinions regarding characteristics including versification. Before this development, the editor's role was primarily that of a compiler who did not (or could not) distinguish rigorously between authentic and spurious texts, and who did not approach the practice of editing with the scholarly training characteristic of subsequent editors.

One area of classical scholarship which strongly influenced the editing of Chaucer during this period was in the understanding of the basic principles of metrical analysis.



Techniques used in scanning Latin and Greek poetry were applied to English verse by the editors in order to try to establish the qualities of a given poet's prosodic style. Judgments could thus be made, according to the editors, concerning a poet's metrical regularity (or lack thereof) based on a legitimated system of analysis. Textual emendation would then follow based partly on the apparent regularity or irregularity of the verse. However, a useful description of Chaucer's verse depends both on correct pronunciation, used to determine stress placement and syllable count, and on a knowledge of what deviations were allowed by Chaucer outside of the iambic pentameter model. Neither of these conditions could be satisfied by the classical editors in their application of techniques of scansion designed for Greek and Latin.

Traditional metrical analysis based on Latin and Greek verse is characterized by the recognition of basic units of metre (feet) composed of strong and/or weak syllables which form identifiable patterns when in combination or repeated sequence (iambic pentameter, for example). Why this approach to English metre is deficient will be discussed below; however, it should be understood at this point that until the twentieth century the traditional Latin model of metrical analysis dominated and shaped the debate on Chaucerian versification. How well Chaucer's lines fit or marred a regular and recognizable pattern provided the justification for regarding him as a successful or flawed metrist. The period of the classical scholars distinguished itself, therefore, in its marked application of one academically accepted approach specifically designed for the analysis of metre and the influence which that approach exerted on all subsequent editions.

Although the basic question of whether or not Chaucer's metre was regular proved to be one of the central issues which plagued theorists and editors during the period of the classical scholars, the question of Chaucer's regularity became especially meaningful due to the new focus on textual accuracy and analysis, and the growing interest in Middle English as a worthy subject of study in its own right. Speght's edition of the works of Chaucer in 1602 illustrates this focus by referring to the problems of textual transmission in defense of Chaucer's metricality, rather than placing the blame on Chaucer's archaic language, which up until that time was the accepted explanation for why Chaucer's verse seemed irregular:

And for his [Chaucer's] verses, although in diuers places they may seem to vs to stand of vnequall measures: yet a skilfull Reader, that can scan them in their nature, shall find it otherwise. And if a verse here and there fal out a sillable shorter or longer than another, I rather aret it to the negligence and rape of *Adam Scriuener*... than to any vnconning or ouersight in the Author: For how fearfull he was to haue his works miswritten, or his verse mismeasured... (qtd. in Spurgeon 1:169)

Despite Speght's defense of Chaucer, the position which held Chaucer's metre to be regular and his language to be accessible by a "skilfull Reader" was not universally shared. Writing in 1598, John Marston in *The Scourge of Villanie, Three Bookes of Satyres* writes:

*Chaucer* is harde euen to our vnderstandings; who knows not the reason? Howe much more those old Satyres which expresse themselues in termes, that breathed not long euen in their daies.

(qtd. in Spurgeon 1: 158)

Twelve years earlier in 1586 William Webbe expresses a similar opinion in *A Discourse of English Poetrie*, although he softens his criticism of Chaucer's language by blaming its apparent lack of refinement on the period in which Chaucer lived:

Though the manner of his stile may seem blunt and course to many fine English eares at these days, yet in trueth, if it be equally pondered... and confirmed with the time wherein he wrote, a man shall perceiue... a right Poet.

(qtd. in Spurgeon 1: 129).

A contemporary of Webbe's, Puttenham distinguishes himself from other critics during this period by explicitly focusing on the use of caesura in Chaucer's verse:

*Chaucer... vsed these Cesures* either very seldome, or not at all, or else very licentiously; and many times made their meetres... of such vnshapely wordes as would allow no conuenient *Cesure*; and therefore did let their rymes runne out at length, and neuer stayd til they came to the end.

(Puttenham 62)

Although the conclusions reached by Speght and Puttenham are opposed, their arguments are similarly based on a concern for textual and linguistic scholarship which reflected an understanding of classical editorial practices and understanding of metre, as well as a difficulty with Middle English pronunciation.

The opinions and reasoning expressed by Puttenham continued throughout the sixteenth century and still proved influential well into the eighteenth century. In his 1760 work

*Observations on English Metre*, Thomas Grey still refers to Puttenham, this time in defense of Chaucer's metre:

These reflections may serve to shew us, that Puttenham, though he lived within one hundred and fifty years of Chaucer's time, must have been mistaken... for the Canterbury Tales... are as exact in their measure and in their pause as in Troilus and Cresseide, where he says, "*the metre is very grave and stately*" (qtd. in Spurgeon 1: 420)

Despite the efforts of scholars such as Speght, that Chaucer's metre was irregular and unreadable was the general opinion of the sixteenth and early seventeenth century scholars. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon describes the reception of Chaucer during this period in the first volume to her three volume work *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion: 1357-1900*. In her discussion of the sixteenth century, Spurgeon says that

We can see from all the references by critics and others at this time that it was already a matter of common opinion that Chaucer's style was rough and unpolished, his language obsolete, and his metre halting. As far as we can judge, his versification was not wholly understood by any one, the secret of it was lost when inflections were lost, no one seems to have been aware of the pronunciation of the final 'e'; with the result that there was a general agreement that the poet's verse was 'harsh' and 'irregular'. (Spurgeon xxv)

Nevertheless, Chaucer's verse could not be easily dismissed, despite popular opinion. Critics tried to reconcile their intuition of Chaucer's readability and rhythmic quality with his apparent

lack of a definite metre. Spurgeon points out that among the sixteenth-century critics was a "new classical school,... who actually praised Chaucer for the supposed irregularity of his metre, which they regarded as an approach to the classical method of quantitative verse" (Spurgeon xxvii)<sup>1</sup>. Although Chaucer's "irregularity" had become with these critics an asset rather than a flaw, it is still the traditional classical model of verse analysis which served as the template for determining metricality and which was ultimately unable to provide an adequate account of Chaucerian prosody.

While the antique scholars reflected their classical backgrounds in the analysis of the Chaucerian text, the emerging humanism of the Renaissance coloured their approach to Chaucerian language. Renaissance English was also at this point moving away from Middle English principally through the standardization of orthography and loss of inflectional endings (Millward 220-237). As a result, Middle English and Middle English pronunciation were taking on the status of an alien language. When Middle English became the "other", necessity dictated the characteristic which became initially associated with the editions of the antique scholars and then even more strongly with the Augustan scholars; the inclusion of an extensive glossary for the sake of scholarly and lay readers alike (Alderson 37).

The first glossary to appear in an edition of Chaucer's works is found in the Speght edition of 1598. His glossary, and the basic idea of including such supplementary information as a necessary part of the edition, was influential in theory and copied in practice. Over one hundred

---

<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon is here referring to a verse form found in classical texts where "[m]eter [is] created by alternating 'long' and 'short' syllables" (Williams 192).

years later, Urry's edition (1721) of Chaucer's complete works used Speght's glossary, among other elements, as the basis for his own text (Alderson 114). The basic material of Speght's glossary and notes then passed on to Tyrwhitt's edition, which used Urry's glossary again as the basis for its own, despite Tyrwhitt's condemnation of Urry's edition in the appendix to the 1778 preface as "the worst that was ever published" (Tyrwhitt 1798, l:xiii).

The development of the glossary fueled a new interest in independent metrical studies of Chaucer's works. The question of pronunciation, which before the addition of the glossaries had been determined on intuitive grounds as much as historical, was now standardized to a greater degree. This is not to say that the glossaries are entirely accurate by today's standards. They did, however, provide a starting point for the analysis of Chaucerian verse, since the pronunciation of Middle English determines the stress assignment of words in a line of verse and therefore largely dictates the interrelationship between those stresses.

The beginning of the Augustan period is marked by John Urry's edition of 1721. The edition contained the now requisite glossary and textual notes on the methodology used to emend the text. In the *Preface and Glossary to The works of Chaucer...* by John Urry, Timothy Thomas outlines Urry's methodology and emendatory practices:

His chief business was to make the Text more correct and complete than before. He found it was the opinion of some learned Men that *Chaucer's* Verses originally consisted of an equal number of Feet; and he himself was perswaded that *Chaucer* made them exact Metre, and therefore he proposed in this Edition to restore him (to use his own Expression) *to his feet again,*

which he thought might be performed by a careful Collation of the best printed Editions and good MSS.

He had observed that several Initial and Final Syllables in use in *Chaucer's* time, and since, had been omitted or added at pleasure in the MSS. by unskilful Transcribers, from whence the same Errors crept into the Printed Editions, whereby many Verses were rendered unjust in their Measure; so that the lameness of many of them might be easily be remedied by the discreet Addition or Omission of such Syllables. (qtd. in Spurgeon 356)

The quotation illustrates how during the Augustan period the prosodic concerns which would become a central issue for future editions of Chaucer's work first came to be clearly articulated by scholars such as Timothy Thomas. There is for the first time a clear statement of purpose ("...to make the Text more correct and complete") and methodology ("performed by a careful Collation of the best printed Editions and good MSS."). Also significant is the assumption of a regular metre in Chaucer's verse, and the need to manipulate the text in accordance with that assumption: "...the lameness of many... [verses] might easily be remedied by the discreet Addition or Omission of... Syllables".

Urry's "discreet Addition or Omission of... Syllables" in fact served to condemn his edition, rather than recommend it. Fifteen years after its publication in 1721, Thomas Morell considered the edition as "the worst that is extant" while at the same time borrowing heavily from Urry's glossary to use in his own edition (Alderson, 94). Urry's edition did not gain much

respectability over time. Nevertheless, the influence that Urry's methodology and effort exerted over following editions and Chaucerian scholarship in general was considerable.

Metrical analysis continued to be an important addition to the editions following Urry and Morell's work. The scholarship of these editions, however, was now furthered by works such as Dryden's *Fables, Ancient and Modern. Translated into Verse from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer. With Original Poems.* (1700), and Gray's *Observations on English Metre* (1760). This last work in particular is significant for its exclusive focus on metrical concerns which, up until the period of Augustan scholarship, had generally been treated as a part of a more generalized study of Chaucer's language.

Like Urry, Tyrwhitt would dictate the editorial methodology and understanding of Chaucerian metrics which would shape the editions following his. The essay he included in his edition and titled "An Essay on the Language and Versification of Chaucer" confirmed the importance of the analysis of Chaucerian metrics and set the methodology for examining Chaucer's versification. From the beginning, Tyrwhitt argued that an understanding of Middle English and Chaucerian metrics was an essential skill for an reader of a Middle English text.:

...we should always have in mind, that the correctness and harmony of an English verse depends entirely upon its being composed of a certain number of syllables, and its having the accents of those syllables properly placed. In order therefore to form any judgment of the Versification of Chaucer, it is necessary that we should know the syllabical value... of his words, and the



accentual value of his syllables, as they were commonly pronounced in his time..." (Tyrwhitt 4: 88)

Tyrwhitt was the first editor to explicitly address in his edition the effect which the pronunciation or lack of pronunciation of final -e had on the perceived metricality of the verse:

But nothing will be found of such extensive use for supplying the deficiencies of Chaucer's metre as the pronunciation of the *e* feminine (Tyrwhitt 4: 96)

Tyrwhitt approached the emendation of Chaucer's text based on the assumption that the text as it stood in the manuscripts was more metrically regular than might appear initially, and he tried to find the reasons for a given spelling rather than to emend the "deficiencies of Chaucer's metre" by adding or deleting syllables in the manner of previous editors.

After Tyrwhitt's edition of 1778, Chaucerian scholarship slipped for the most part into a rut of repetitious imitation of Tyrwhitt's work until the turn of the nineteenth century. A.S.G. Edwards describes several editions of this period as "conflations or adaptations of the work of Tyrwhitt and/or Urry. Although regularly reprinted, they had no claims to authority, completeness, or reliability. None included Chaucer's prose works, possessed satisfactory notes or glossary, or afforded a reliable representation of the canon." (Ruggiers 171).<sup>2</sup>

Skeat's edition of 1894 breaks the cycle in which the Chaucerian editorial tradition had become caught up by virtue of its being "[an edition] for the first time in the history of Chaucer's text, of a complete works":

---

<sup>2</sup> The specific editions referred to by Edwards are "Bell (1782), Anderson (1793), and Chalmers (1810)" (Ruggiers 171).

His achievement was to provide a series of authoritative texts and supporting apparatus that have become the foundations for most of the subsequent editorial work on Chaucer. (Pearsall 90)

Nevertheless, the work produced by Skeat is not without some fundamental flaws, according to Hammond:

It is evident to any close student of the Canterbury Tales that Skeat has not devoted to the MSS such examination as Morell or Tyrwhitt made, and that his editorial procedure, a century and more after Tyrwhitt, is guided by the erroneous supposition that the true Chaucerian readings may be picked intuitively, instead of by the laborious and impartial comparison of all the authorities. (Hammond 146)

One characteristic which does set Skeat apart from previous editors is his reliance on "phonetic considerations" when trying to determine a "treatment of manuscript spelling". (Ruggiers 185). What is unusual about this treatment is that most previous editors had relied solely a traditional approach to versification in general or else on their intuited metrical understanding of Chaucer as the principle criteria for determining spelling emendation. That is to say, a word's spelling may be emended depending solely on whether or not it conformed to an assumed metrical pattern. By contrast, Skeat considered both the metrical position of a word and the interrelationship of the phonetic elements within that word and the words which surrounded it before making any decisions about spelling emendation.

In relying only on his own understanding of Middle English phonetics, however, Skeat places himself

...in a dangerously hubristic position ... the question of spelling obviously appealed to Skeat's sense that the problems of Chaucer were susceptible to resolution by the application of reason by a superior intellect. In this conviction, he was further sustained by the comforting knowledge that if fifteenth-century scribes did not know how to spell Chaucer's works, he did.

(Ruggiers 186)

While Skeat's emendation of Chaucer's text according to his understanding of Middle English phonology may have been "dangerously hubristic", it was an important step in the development of an understanding of Chaucerian metrics. More so than any previous editor, Skeat recognized how an accurate understanding of pronunciation would have significant metrical consequences. Skeat's use of phonological criteria may have been too dependent on his own intuition; however, his instincts as to its importance were correct.

In the same way that editions subsequent to Tyrwhitt's work were principally imitations of his edition, so were the editions which followed Skeat's work. Edwards suggests that this is the case because of, rather than despite, Skeat's confidence in his own abilities:

Looking at later editions of the *Canterbury Tales*, one gets the impression that subsequent editors have let themselves be led by the nose somewhat by Skeat and in certain cases... to endorse his conjectures as if they were the received text. (Ruggiers 184)

What Edwards also suggests, however, is that this admiration was not entirely justified, no matter what the innovations brought about by the 1894 text. For example, Derek Pearsall criticizes Robinson's edition of *The Canterbury Tales* of 1957 for having suffered under Skeat's influence. Robinson's text, following Skeat's, uses the Ellesmere manuscript as the most authoritative manuscript source. The influence of Skeat's work is understandable, but not entirely positive, according to Pearsall:

Skeat's edition was a great advance on previous editions, but it was clear, when it was compared with the Hengwrt manuscript, that Ellesmere itself was also quite extensively edited. This editing was carried out in a highly intelligent and responsible manner and was designed to systematize grammar and inflections, to clear up apparent irregularities and inconsistencies, to eliminate what were thought to be infelicities, and to regularize Chaucer's meter according to a ten-syllable pattern... Yet clearly the Ellesmere presents a text, not of what Chaucer wrote, but of what his editorial executors thought he should have written if he had known as well as they did what he wished to write. (Pearsall 93-4)

Skeat's use of the Ellesmere manuscript and the conviction with which he emended the text based on that manuscript proved to be a pernicious influence for subsequent editions until a re-examination of manuscript sources and variations could be carried out.

The next significant step in the editorial history of Chaucer's texts came with the production in 1940 of a new edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* by John M. Manly and Edith

Rickert. One of the principle goals for this edition was that it be as accurate and methodical as possible in noting every significant variation among the manuscripts. Based on this collation and comparison of all available manuscripts, it would then be possible to:

discover whether the more carefully written MSS of the first two decades of the fifteenth century showed any regularity or approximation toward a common standard... (Manly and Rickert 1: x)

Assessing the regularity of manuscript spelling would be the first step of many including the "list[ing] of variants justifying [the] formation of genetic groups" (1: xii) and the construction of the edition based on the recreation of a theoretical first text by the process of recension (1: xii). The edition, therefore, could finally provide an accurate assessment of manuscript authority and accuracy, and a text of the *Canterbury Tales* which might approximate what Chaucer wrote.<sup>3</sup>

For the purposes of this study, Manly and Rickert's chapter entitled "Dialect and Spelling" is one of their most relevant contributions to the canon of analysis and information on Chaucerian versification. The collation of the manuscripts provided evidence towards a possible standardization of textual spelling:

From the evidence there [in the MSS.] presented, it appears that there was much more consistency in adhering to a spelling system than has generally

---

<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to continue the type of work started by Manley and Rickert, Norman Blake and Peter Robinson began "the *Canterbury Tales* Project" whose goal it was "to make available over a ten-year period full transcripts of the text of every manuscript and pre-1500 printed edition of the *Canterbury Tales*." (Robinson 1). The project was started in 1993.

been ascribed to writers of the vernacular in the period represented by our MSS.

(Manly and Rickert 1: 559)

Nevertheless, Manly and Rickert were very cautious in making any conclusive statement about spelling consistencies within the manuscripts and the implications of their findings:

...close correspondence... is the exception rather than the rule; and further evidence to the same effect appears in the fact that in close groups of MSS there is nothing to show that the spelling system of the lost original was preserved. More may be present than meets the eye; but so far as it is possible to tell, it is only conspicuous words, such as dialect forms, unusual words, proper names, and rhyme-spellings, that are likely to be retained, and then only irregularly... (Manly and Rickert 1: 560)

A close and careful examination of manuscript spelling helps to determine the pronunciation of the text as it was read in Chaucer's day and consequently the metrical shape of the lines; however, Manly and Rickert did not include in their text any extensive commentary on Chaucerian prosody. For their edition, the need to draw conclusions about Chaucerian versification was not as important as the need to collate and record all of the variants between the manuscripts. The goal of the Manly and Rickert edition was to provide an exhaustive record of a specific aspect of the editorial process, namely that of manuscript collation and the methodology of recension and textual documentation.

At around the same time that Manly and Rickert's work was proceeding, an edition of Chaucer's works was published in 1933 by F. N. Robinson. This edition, which took almost thirty years to complete, became the basis for most modern editions, including the current edition by Benson (1987).

Robinson's edition, although extremely influential, did not solve all of the problems which had plagued previous editions of Chaucer. Criticism of the edition focused on Robinson's treatment of the manuscript sources and text, which was apparently not as systematic and/or rigorous as some scholars would have liked (Reinecke 234-5). Although he was criticized for his use of manuscript sources, the general opinion regarding Robinson's textual notes was that "[t]o say anything against the notes would be to come out against God, home, and mother" (Reinecke 248).

What is striking about Robinson's edition from the point of view of the present study is that he has followed Manly and Rickert's example in focusing only briefly on the analysis of metrical concerns. Robinson also relied on an unspecified or assumed methodology in order to shape the metrical structure of the text.

Asked to review the edition by Robinson, Tatlock made a series of personal notes on Robinson's apparent lack of methodology:

Some eclecticism inevitable; editor has not hesitated to abandon critical reading rather than put unreasonable or unmetrical lines into text. ( qtd. in Reinecke 239)

In the reduction or omission of critical commentary on Chaucerian prosody, the Manly-Rickert and Robinson texts are examples of how the study of Chaucer's versification has ceased to be the prerogative of the editor to explain, and now is the subject of specialized study. Although there have been several attempts by scholars to examine the characteristics of Chaucerian prosody and develop or apply new techniques to Chaucer's verse, these attempts have not been integrated by editors of Chaucer into the production of the editions.<sup>4</sup> For the most part, editions produced since Skeat have provided and applied conventional explanations of Chaucerian versification based on the traditional model of metrical analysis. In the case of Robinson's edition, it is even unclear to what degree the traditional understanding of metre has influenced emendatory decisions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Some examples of recent critical works devoted entirely to the study of Chaucerian prosody are:

Burnley, David. A Guide to Chaucer's Language

Glowka, Arthur Wayne. A Guide to Chaucer's Meter

Hooker, Edward Niles. "Johnson's Understanding of Chaucer's Metrics." MLN

Kerkhoff, J. Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer

Pearsall, D. "Chaucer's Metre; The Evidence of the Manuscripts" in Tim William Machan ed., Medieval Literature and Interpretation.

Robinson, Ian. Chaucer's Prosody: A Study of Middle English Verse Tradition

Stevens, John. "Chaucerian Metre and Early Tudor Songs." in Ruth Morse and Barry Windeat eds., Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer

All of the critics mentioned above accept that the majority of Chaucer's verse is written in a regular five stress line. The approaches taken by the critics to explain the five stress line, however, range from traditional metrical analysis to analysis using musical notation to document prosodic variation. For a full citation of the above sources, see the 'Bibliography and Works Cited'.



From an examination of Robinson's personal notes made while working on the edition, Tatlock noted that Robinson applied a series of his own rules in emending the base manuscripts, the second of which states only "Necessary changes for meter or sense" (qtd. in Reinecke 241). The commentary on versification provided by the notes, however, does not clearly explain in what cases changes for metre were considered "necessary". Nevertheless, Robinson's edition (and now Benson's 1987 revision) is regarded as a standard, mostly by virtue of the fact that "it is the edition from which other scholars take their citations" (Reinecke 236).

The influence of Robinson's text on Benson's edition is clearly stated by Benson himself who originally intended the 1987 work to simply be "...a revision of F. N. Robinson's Second Edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*" (Benson ix). Although this proved not to be the case, Benson still acknowledges that "...the consistent aim has been to preserve as much as possible the character and quality of Robinson's work" (ibid). Many of Benson's improvements to the edition consist of an expansion of the explanatory notes accompanying the text. Despite the addition of material, however, the section entitled "Language and Versification" written by Norman Davis and consisting in total of over fourteen pages, contains only slightly more than two pages of commentary on versification. Within these two pages Davis examines the effect which certain rhyme sequences and grammatical structures have on the pronunciation and stress patterns of the lines. Davis does, therefore, point to the necessity of considering phonetics, syntax, and stress distribution in conjunction when analyzing metre. What he does not do, however, is elaborate significantly on the effect that these factors have on Chaucerian prosody except to say that they work in conjunction to produce what (for the majority of the poetical

works) is a five stress line (Benson xliii). Regarding the presence of apparently extrametrical syllables, Davis simply acknowledges that they do exist; "...there are sometimes more light syllables (mostly only one) than regular rhythm requires" (Benson xliv).

What Davis' notes illustrate and what seems to have been the trend in Chaucerian editorial scholarship since Tyrwhitt, is a tendency for editors to become more and more reluctant to deal in detail with the problems of Chaucer's prosodic style, except to acknowledge that it is regular and generally contains five stressed syllables per line. Yet it is the editors who stand to benefit the most from a detailed and accurate understanding of Chaucerian versification. If the text's conformity to a metrical pattern often dictates spelling and syntactic emendations to the base manuscripts, then an editor using a more accurate system of metrical analysis should produce a more accurate edition. What is now needed, therefore, is the development of a theory which can explain not just how Chaucer's verse is regular, but why it is regular and what makes it specifically Chaucerian.

In short, despite the numerous editions of Chaucer which have come down to us since Caxton's first edition, there remains enough uncertainty regarding Chaucerian prosody and the state of Middle English at the time on which such versification is based, to warrant the production of new editions guided by a sound theory of Chaucerian prosody. It is my belief that a generative metrical system of analysis might prove to be that theory. A generative theory would allow for an editor to recognize a line as being metrical or unmetrical and, based on that information, keep or emend the line in keeping with Chaucer's prosodic system.

## Chapter Two

I have outlined in the previous chapter how the history and development of the editing of Chaucer's works is linked to traditional approaches to Chaucerian metrics. I have also briefly discussed why such an approach to metrical analysis might be deficient. With the development of contemporary linguistic analysis and, consequently, generative linguistic theory, it has become clear that these earlier attempts at understanding Chaucer's metre were based on an incomplete understanding of the English language and the rhythms which underscore natural speech. If the basic structures of the language were not re-examined, a metrical theory based on this flawed understanding would be limited in its ability to accurately describe a poet's metrical system. With the development of the field of linguistic analysis (specifically generative linguistic theory) the evolution of a metrical theory based on an accurate understanding of the metrical patterns inherent in the language itself became possible.

The limitation of a traditional theory of metre lies in its inability to explain why a certain series of stress patterns exist in metrical verse where another series of stress patterns does not. A traditional theory of metrical analysis is also limited in how accurately it can describe the stress patterns within a given line and is to some degree arbitrary. For example, a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable is called a trochee, but when that trochee is preceded by another stressed syllable it could be considered a spondee followed by a weak syllable, or else a trochee preceded by a stressed syllable. The stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of verse can be identified when applying traditional metrical analysis, but they must be classified by the

reader in whatever groupings seem most logical. Even when a consensus is reached as to how a line of verse should be classified (as iambic pentameter, for example), it is possible that one grouping might dissect a word. In the phrase "the hamper", the elements "the" and "ham" could be grouped into an iamb implying a stronger metrical link between "the" and "ham" than "ham" and "per". A traditional system of metrical analysis is, therefore, descriptive rather than analytical and limited in its application.

Contemporary generative theories about metrical phonology are based on the assumption that in writing a "metrical" line, a poet is manipulating (whether consciously or not) metrical patterns which occur naturally in speech. The patterns which result are not arbitrary. They are poet-specific within a range of the language's inherent metre. If we assume that the underlying metrical structure of English is iambic pentameter, then any particular poet will allow for certain deviations from an iambic pentameter pattern while not allowing for others. Theoretically, a generative metrical system can formulate rules based on a poet's range of prosodic deviation. These rules can then in turn be used to explain how a poet is manipulating metrical tension for effect and predict whether or not a given line would be acceptable within the poet's metrical system. The theory is thus said to "generate" metrical lines in keeping with one prosodic system. The last point is particularly important in the context of the present study given the number of manuscript sources for Chaucer's works and the various readings provided by his editors. An understanding of what Chaucer found to be acceptable prosody could potentially support one reading of a line over another, affecting editorial decisions ranging from spelling to syntactic emendation.

A generative linguistic theory, unlike other theories used to represent metrical, syntactic, or phonological rules, sets out to establish a system from which grammatical (or in the present case, metrical) language can be fabricated or “generated”. Generative theory was first developed by Noam Chomsky in 1957. In a system of generative grammar,

the rules are... said to generate the sentences of the language. The aim is a completely explicit account of the native speaker's knowledge of his language, which could be understood and applied by someone with no familiarity with the language at all...what is important is the way in which linguistic theories based on these principles attempt to go beyond description to some kind of explanation, and that they do this by focusing on the capacities of the native speaker, rather than on the utterances he makes. (Attridge 35-36).

Chomsky's generative grammar was a syntactic theory and not a metrical one; however, the basic principles which shaped Chomsky's exploration would be later developed in generative metrical theory. When applied to metrical analysis, the principle of generative linguistics attempts to imitate the sensitive and intuitive ear of any given poet, so that metricality within that poet's system may be determined against a series of inferred metrically acceptable syntactic constructions.

One of the first modern attempts to reconstruct Chaucer's system of versification was published in 1966 in an article by Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser entitled "Chaucer and the Study of Prosody". Their paper provided the starting point for a series of debates and developments in the field of generative metrics as applied to the study of verse which continues

today. In general, there are three branches of generative metrical theory which Halle and Keyser's paper generated: the first based on their work; the second after a response entitled "The Study of English Prosody: An Alternative Proposal" published by Karl Magnuson and Frank G. Ryder in 1970; and the third as put forth by Paul Kiparsky in "Stress, Syntax, and Meter" and "The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse" in 1975 and 1977 respectively. Kiparsky had attempted in his two articles to emend both Halle and Keyser's and Magnuson and Ryder's positions. His work, along with some of the basic principles set out by Halle and Keyser, will become the basis for this and the following chapters.

The three branches which have sprung up from Halle and Keyser's original discussion are not the only attempts to produce a generative metrics applicable to English verse. They do, however, represent a series of important discussions which have produced a potentially viable approach for the metrical analysis of Chaucerian text.<sup>1</sup> Although Kiparsky's theory responded to

---

<sup>1</sup> Among other articles which have contributed to the debate are the following which represent some of the major contributions to the generative metrical analysis of verse:

Wimsatt, W. K. "The Rule and the Norm: Halle and Keyser on Chaucer's Meter", *CE* 31 (1969)

Halle and Keyser, *English Stress: Its Form, Its Growth, and Its Role in Verse* (New York, 1971)

Magnuson and Ryder, "Second Thoughts on English Prosody", *CE* 33 (1971)

Halle, M. "Stress Rules in English: A New Version", *Linguistic Inquiry* 4 (1973)

Chisolm, David. "Generative Prosody and English Verse", *Poetics* 6 (1977)

Hayes, Bruce. "A Grid-Based Theory of English Meter", *Linguistic Inquiry* 14 (1983)

Guthrie, Steven R. "Prosody and the Study of Chaucer: A Generative Reply to Halle-Keyser",

*ChR* 23 (1988)

both Halle and Keyser's and Magnusen's and Ryder's positions, I will focus on the differences between the work of Halle and Keyser and Kiparsky due to the fact that Kiparsky modeled his theory more closely on Halle and Keyser's work.

It should be noted that as the debate progressed, the study of English metre has moved away from Middle English, which was the starting point for Halle and Keyser's work. Kiparsky, for example, has adopted Renaissance English as the point of departure. In some cases the development of generative metrical theory has focused on Modern English, as in the recent work of Bruce Hayes.

The shift to the use of more recent verse forms as test cases for generative metrical theory carries with it the possible implication that a verse form based on English was not established until after the fact of Middle or Renaissance English (Kiparsky 575).

Steven Guthrie in his reply to Halle and Keyser speculates on the apparent change of heart among the metricists:

The responses to Halle-Keyser have been based on studies of Renaissance and post-Renaissance texts, and Halle and Keyser themselves, being primarily concerned with the general theory (and also perhaps able to sympathize with the general scramble for higher ground), have shown no interest in redirecting the discussion toward Middle English. (Guthrie 30)

Guthrie is correct in calling English after the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries “higher ground”. The lowlands of Chaucer’s English pose unique threats to an application of generative metrical analysis, since it is not always clear how words in Middle English were pronounced, how much variation was allowed in their pronunciation, or how they behaved syntactically, all of which need to be understood if a theory of generative metrics is to be fully successful. The inherent uncertainty of Middle English forces the metrist into a hermeneutic circle, where the pronunciation and syntax are used to determine the metre and the metre is used in turn to determine the pronunciation and even occasionally the syntax.

Halle and Keyser’s first attempts at dealing with the crisis of circularity force them to draw some potentially tenuous conclusions about Chaucer’s pronunciation and consequently about his metre. The approach they adopted attempted to combine an abstracted metrical pattern, which was used as a model for the basic structure of Chaucer’s verse, and a series of rules which would allow for deviations from the abstracted pattern. The rules allowing for metrical deviation incorporated phonological principles and principles governing the distribution of stress<sup>2</sup>.

In the development of their theory, Halle and Keyser established a definition of iambic pentameter which would accommodate a generative theory. The definition has been rewritten

---

<sup>2</sup> It should be pointed out here that while a generative metrical theory taken in its simplest form is solely stress based, the metrical patterns inherent in any given language are not isolated from the effects of syntax and/or phonology. That is to say, the stress pattern of a given line is affected not only by the accepted stress patterns of the words which compose it, but also by how the stress patterns of adjacent words affect each other, and how they are arranged.



with slight variations from metrist to metrist; however, it has remained essentially intact in all of the theories which have built upon Halle and Keyser's work. In their book *English Stress: Its Form, Its Growth, and Its Role in Verse*, Halle and Keyser formulate a basic definition of the iambic pentameter as follows:

(a) ABSTRACT METRICAL PATTERN

(W)S WS WS WS WS (X)(X)

where elements enclosed in parentheses may be omitted and where each X position may be occupied only by an unstressed syllable (196)

W represents a weak position and S represents a strong position. Unlike traditional theory of metre which define an iambic pentameter line in terms of iambic "feet", Halle and Keyser's definition allow for syntactic units to remain intact between S and W boundaries; there is not an imposed division of the line which may force the end of one word and the beginning of a following word to occupy the same foot. (For example, in the line

Saw I / settyng / many / an hun / dred peyre

(PF 237)<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this study, I have made use of the manuscript transcriptions for Chaucer's text of the *Parliament of Foules* as a test piece for the application of generative metrical theory. In preparation for the analysis, manuscript transcriptions of the poem were taken from J.J. Furnivall's editions, encoded electronically, and then collated. For the manuscripts which were not available from Furnivall's editions, manuscript facsimiles were used. Unless otherwise specified, quotations examined will be taken from the manuscript used as the principle text used in collation; Cambridge Gg.4.27. Where there was a discrepancy of consequence in another manuscript or

the traditional division of the line into feet would imply that there is a stronger link between the elements “an” and “hun” than there is between “hun” and “dred”). In other words, in Halle and Keyser’s system the symbols W and S represent positions within a line, rather than individual units imposed upon a line in order to subdivide it.

This same definition of a generative iambic pentameter is reformulated in a simplified manner by Kiparsky as

W S W S W S W S W S (Kiparsky, 1975, 194)

where W also represents a weak position, and S a strong position.

The adaptation of the basic iambic pentameter pattern reflects the progression which generative metrical analysis has taken towards using Renaissance English as a basis for understanding verse. The absence in Kiparsky’s formulation of the two final (X) positions in Halle and Keyser’s definition points to the fact that in Renaissance English it is not necessary to account for extrametrical syllables which are much more common to Chaucer’s iambic pentameter due to inflectional endings obsolete by the time of Shakespeare.

Halle and Keyser’s definition of a basic iambic pentameter line does not, however, yet allow for the second significant characteristic of subsequent generative metrical systems, which is the recognition of degrees of stress within a line. As early as 1933, Otto Jespersen, in an article entitled “Notes on Meter,” put forth the suggestion that stress is not simply a matter of a “strong”

manuscripts, the variation was cited.

or "weak" syllable, but that it is rather relational, being dependent on the other stresses which surround it. Regarding the natural placement of stress in spoken English, Jespersen writes that

we observe a natural tendency towards making a weak syllable follow after a strong one and inversely... Thus syllables which ought seemingly to be strong are weakened if occurring between strong syllables, and naturally weak syllables gain in strength if placed between weak syllables (Jespersen 110)

Jespersen continues to explain that relational stress is only significant regarding stresses which are heard next to one another:

Our ear does not really perceive stress relations with any degree of certainty except when the syllables concerned are contiguous... What is decisive when words have to be used in verse is everywhere the surroundings: the metrical value of a syllable depends on what comes before and what follows after it. (Jespersen 110)

Halle and Keyser recognized the relational nature of stress (Halle and Keyser, 1966, 197); and their theory attempts to incorporate Jespersen's observations. According to Jespersen, a given line will have multiple degrees of stress which are determined by the contingency of syllables. However, if we only regard a set of syllables next to one another in order to determine stress, there can only be *two* degrees of stress: greater and lesser. For example, in the phrase

the man spoke in strident tones

we can hear that the first syllable of “strident” receives the strongest stress in the line, while “tones” receives slightly less stress, followed by “man” etc. It is possible, however, that we are mainly able to scan the line in this fashion because it is written down and we can repeat it out loud to ourselves. If, as a generative theory of metre assumes, we are principally concerned with understanding the mechanics of how a line is *heard* (even in silent reading), then a precise scansion of relative stress may not be possible, even though Jespersen’s principle holds true. A line of poetry may also be remembered well enough for a listener to identify multiple degrees of stress, however, the memory of the degrees of stress in a line becomes less reliable the longer the line of verse: “Our ear does not really perceive stress relations with any degree of certainty except when the syllables concerned are contiguous” . As Jespersen pointed out, it may also be the case that the first syllable of “strident” takes the strongest stress in the line because the syllables to the left and right are some of the weakest. In either case, the listener perceives a system of “stronger than” or “weaker than” stress. As a result, the distribution of stress in a given line may be a matter of degrees, but a listener can only perceive it accurately in binary terms, due to the reliance on adjacent syllables.

While Halle and Keyser appreciate the difficulties in reducing complex relational stress into a system of two degrees, they also realize that this reduction is a necessary evil in order to determine metrical stress placement within a line; hence, the second significant development by Halle and Keyser: stress maximum. Stress maximum is defined by Halle and Keyser as follows:

A stress maximum is constituted by a syllable bearing linguistically determined stress that is greater than that of the two syllables adjacent to it in the same verse. (Halle and Keyser 1966, 197)

Stress maximum allows Halle and Keyser to identify the strong syllables in a line which are metrically relevant. All syllables, whether they are stressed or unstressed, are considered when determining a line's metrical structure. However, stress maximum is restricted to strong positions. With stress maximum, it is possible to account for seemingly unmetrical occurrences, such as polysyllabic words which occupy what traditional metrics would consider to be an inverted position. Given the restriction "A stress maximum may only occupy even positions within a verse, but not every even position need be so occupied" (Halle & Keyser, 1966, 197), the third syllable in the following line is not unmetrical since it does not constitute a stress maximum:

/ / / / / /

In this world heer, and cause of armonye.

w s **w** s w s w s w s

(PF, 63)

Halle and Keyser refer to this phenomenon as a form of stress "neutralization," where the stress on "world" is neutralized by the adjacent stress in the word "heer".

The problem of adjective and noun combinations where both receive stress is also resolved by stress "neutralization". Neutralization occurs in two cases, the first "when two main stresses are separated by a major syntactic boundary" (Halle & Keyser, 1966, 204). The second

case (with which we were concerned in the previous example) is a consequence of spoken British English:

...unlike American English which exhibits subordination in noun phrases composed of an adjective + noun, contemporary British English shows level stress in these constructions. Assuming, then, the absence of stress subordination in adjective + noun phrases in Chaucer, one ought to expect to find lines in which either member of such constructions may occupy an even or an odd position in the line (204).

Halle and Keyser go on to demonstrate through example that this is, in fact, the case.

While stress maximum does account for the seeming misplacement of certain stresses, it would seem to allow too great a range of lines as metrical. For example, Attridge points out that Halle and Keyser's principle of stress maximum would allow for the following line which "a reader with any sensitivity to metre would immediately reject" (Attridge 38):

/            /    /            /    /

[3a] Ode to the West Wind by James Elroy

w s w    s       w    s    w    s w

/

Flecker

s   w

Every stress in weak position is now neutralized by an adjacent line-boundary or stress. (Attridge 38)

Because of stress maximum's inability to recognize similar lines as unmetrical, metrists following Halle and Keyser's work retain the basic principle behind stress maximum but rewrite the rule in order to account for only the mismatched stresses which actually occur.

What has been criticized about Halle and Keyser's application of the stress maximum principle can, in fact, be applied to their entire theory in general; that it is ultimately too generous to be useful. The system developed by Halle and Keyser is the most complete attempt to apply a generative metrical approach to Chaucerian prosody. It is not, however, the most accurate formulation of a generative metrical theory which could be applied to the works of Chaucer. For one, Halle and Keyser's system is highly dependent on phonemic analysis which, in fact, forms the basis and determining criterion for most of their rules (Halle and Keyser, 1966, 204). The problem caused by an exclusive reliance on the phonemic analysis of a line in order to determine its metricality is that it does not take into account the effect which syntax has on metricality. While their assumptions about phonetic stress correspondence are deduced from the texts themselves, they nevertheless only allow for a very limited range of possible spellings. Another criticism of the system is that while their approach does make a case for Chaucer's metrical regularity, it fails the first test of a generative theory:

One of the strengths of the generative approach to metre is that it offers a clear means of assessing the adequacy of any set of rules: if counter-examples can be produced, whether taken from the verse tradition or invented for the purpose, to show that the rules fail to generate certain clearly acceptable types of line, or that they generate certain types of clearly unacceptable line, they

cannot be said to capture the metrical organization which readers intuitively recognize... (Attridge, 41)

The second and principle system of analysis which will be outlined here is the system put forth by Paul Kiparsky in his article "The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse". Kiparsky's generative metrical system differs significantly from Halle and Keyser's in two ways: it is based on a study of Shakespearean English, and it relies on syntactic analysis to supplement the metrical theory. For the most part, the first difference is incidental, since what Kiparsky has developed from Shakespeare's works is a system of analysis which could theoretically be applied to any body of verse by any poet. The second characteristic of Kiparsky's system, however, is of more significance. Halle and Keyser attempted through the use of phonological analysis to homogenize the performance of Middle English while still trying to allow for the varieties inherent in the language regarding spelling and alternate pronunciation(s). The basic formulation of an iambic pentameter line as

(W) S W S W S W S W S (X)(X)

was not violated after the application of rules governing stress assignment and placement. Kiparsky's theory, however, attempts to say more precisely which mismatches are permissible and which are not, based on syntactic criteria, and is not restricted to phonological concerns. Most importantly, Kiparsky incorporates a syntactic system of notation, as developed by M. Lieberman in 1975, into the theory. Liberman's notational system makes use of syntactic "trees"



to reveal the development and distribution of stress, not only at the level of the word, but also at the level of the phrase in order to reveal the distribution of stress at multiple syntactic levels.

Kiparsky criticizes the limitations of a strictly phonologically based metrical theory in *Stress, Syntax, and Meter*:

The traditional approach, as well as the new departures of Jespersen and of Halle-Keyser, are based on the assumption that meter regulates just the phonological shape of verse. This mistake, in my judgment, is the main reason for the unsatisfactory state of the field. The most important, virtually unbreakable constraints on meter in English involve the grammatical structure of the verse, notably the phrase and word units of which it is made up.  
(Kiparsky, 1975, 579)

Kiparsky divides his system of analysis into two principle sets of rules: prosodic and metrical. Prosodic rules serve to represent "what the metrically relevant representations of the language are", while metrical rules "specif[y] how the basic metrical patterns may be manifested in the metrically relevant linguistic representation of metrical lines of verse" (Kiparsky, 1977, 190). Thus, the prosodic rule

Disregard all but the strongest stress in each domain ##X## where X does not contain ## (Kiparsky, 1977, 193)

operates on the level of stress assignment in individual words and syllables, while metrical rules serve to illustrate how the words occupy a metrical line of verse.

For Kiparsky, the notation ##X## refers to what he considers to be a "lexical category" word. Although what is considered to be a lexical category word is not always specifically defined by Kiparsky, he is in general referring to major category words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. Examples of non-lexical category words would be articles, pronouns, and some prepositions. Kiparsky's prosodic rule allows him to account for the placement of possibly extrametrical stressed syllables without having to "neutralize" stress. This is an important advance over Halle and Keyser's theory since the concept of stress neutralization leads to the mistaken conclusion that a neutralized stress can occur in any position. For example, according to Halle and Keyser, a compound composed of two stressed monosyllabic words such as "stormclouds" should be able to occur in either SW or WS position (Halle and Keyser, 1966, 204). Yet Kiparsky notes that this is not the case and that the position SW is rather favoured. Through the application of the prosodic rule, only the stress on the first syllable of "stormclouds" would be considered for metrical placement. Consequently the entire word should occupy, as Kiparsky correctly predicts, a SW position.

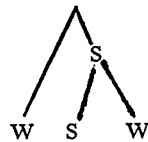
It is in the application of prosodic rules that Kiparsky makes use of Liberman's trees system of notation:

On the basis of a study of English stress and intonation, Lieberman (1975) has proposed to do away with numbers and to adopt instead a notation where stress patterns are represented as trees, where each non terminal node immediately dominates an S (for Strong) and W (for Weak) and no other form of branching occurs. Each syllable corresponds to a terminal node and each

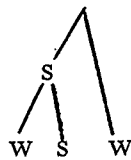
linguistic constituent corresponds to a node. Primary stress is then located on the syllable with an S that is dominated only by Ss all the way up the tree.

(193)

In his earlier article entitled "Stress, Syntax, and Meter", Kiparsky attempted to illustrate syntactic levels of complexity through the notational system which used ## as a syntactic boundary. This nomenclature is replaced by Lieberman's notational system in "The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse". Kiparsky cites the following examples to illustrate Lieberman's notation:



the fore hand



before hand

These examples illustrate how the notational system works on the level of the word and phrase and is determined only by syntactic boundaries.

How each word, whose stress is determined by one level of the notational system, is distributed in a line of iambic pentameter is the domain of the metrical rules:

MR1 [Metrical rule 1]... a primary stress can be freely replaced by any other stress. That is, strong positions are not constrained categorically...

MR2 ... in place of no stress, we can have stress under two conditions; in a monosyllabic word (condition a), and after an intonation break (condition b).

(Kiparsky, 1975, 583)

It must be remembered that while prosodic rules dictate the assignment of stress, metrical rules dictate the placement of stress within a line. This distinction is to some degree an oversimplification of Kiparsky's approach, however, it is a necessary one to keep in mind when Kiparsky introduces a series of observations regarding the behaviour of the syntactic constituents within a line and their metrical relationship to one another. The three principles governing the placement of compounds, phrases, and polysyllabic words are developed from apparent violations of MR1 and MR2 within Shakespearean verse:

(i) Compounds of two monosyllabic words, e.g. *stormclouds*, *tonguetied*, occur in both WS and SW position; of these, SW is favored.

(ii) Phrases of two monosyllabic words, e.g. *time's fool*, *dark days*, occur in both WS and SW position; of these, WS is favored.

(iii) Polysyllabic (including disyllabic) words must have their strongest stress in S position. E.g. *dark morning*, *divine eye* can only occur in WSW position.

This holds also for each constituent of a compound word. Hence *beforehand*, *love lacking* can only occur in WSW position. (Kiparsky 1977, 191-2)

The consistency of these patterns generated by Shakespeare's verse are detected by the application of MR1 and MR2, and provides the criteria for a generative theory which aims to reconstruct acceptable Shakespearean prosody. If these conditions are not met, the result may be strictly metrical, but it theoretically would not be Shakespearean.

Unmetricality for Kiparsky is not simply a function of whether or not a strong syllable occurs in a weak position. Exceptions to the metrical rules, determined by the "mismatches" which consistently appear in a specific syntactic environment, lead Kiparsky to infer that the syllable or group of syllables being examined is not unmetrical within Shakespeare's system. It is rather, Kiparsky concludes, an example of a more complex degree of metrical development.

Kiparsky's reliance on syntactic context to justify a metrical reading parallels Halle and Keyser's use of phonological context to determine metricality. While he continues to elaborate on the application of the metrical rules in different poetic systems, he relies on MR1 and MR2 in conjunction with the prosodic rules to determine the metricality of any line within a Shakespearean system.

Given his reliance on metrical and syntactic structure, is Kiparsky more successful than Halle and Keyser in incorporating Jespersen's principle of relational stress? The answer would seem to be that Kiparsky at least comes *closer* in using relational stress to determine metricality. Where Halle and Keyser use stress maximum to define a stressed syllable which is metrically significant, Kiparsky uses both the prosodic rule *and* syntactic conditions to determine the metrical placement of a stressed syllable. Therefore, a weak syllable in a weak syntactic relation to a following syllable (such as with an unstressed article before a noun) is distinguished from a

weak syllable in a strong syntactic position (such as an unstressed syllable in a polysyllabic noun).

The inclusion of syntactic analysis compensates for an inherent shortcoming in a strictly phonologically based generative metrical theory, which does not distinguish between words of different syntactic categories. In Halle and Keyser's theory, the words "before" and "complain" are predicted as being metrically equivalent. Both words can receive stress maximum on the second syllable if another stressed syllable follows. Consequently, both words should behave in the same fashion when occurring metrically within a line. They do not. Kiparsky is able to anticipate the difference in their metrical use based on the recognition of the difference in their syntactic value (lexical vs. non-lexical category words). It would seem, then, preferable for a generative metrical theory to rely on syntactic and phonological criteria rather than on phonological criteria alone for determining metricality.

The syntactic approach, however, masks Kiparsky's own reliance on phonological criteria. In using Renaissance English, Kiparsky is allowed the luxury of a pronunciation system which approaches modern English and which, unlike Middle English, can be assumed as understood before a metrical theory is applied. Many of the problems and observations assembled by Halle and Keyser no longer exist in Kiparsky's system since the reader can rely on an internalized understanding of the phonological relationships between words in order to assign stress. Kiparsky, then, is not necessarily providing a model which can replace Halle and Keyser's system. He is rather providing a working model for a simplified version of the prosody puzzle.

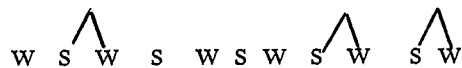
A second possible problem with Kiparsky's strategy is a criticism which he himself has made against Halle and Keyser's theory. Kiparsky notes that:

Their [Halle and Keyser's] first formulation (1966) was based on a generally recognized phonetic representation of English stress as a system with multiple levels. But this resulted in so many exceptions to the Stress Maximum Principle that they were forced to revise their theory (1971a,b) - so that, in effect, it treats stress as a binary feature. (Kiparsky 1975, 578)

The treatment of stress as binary is seen by Kiparsky as a consequence of the Halle-Keyser position and not as a possible consequence of Jespersen's formulation, which I pointed out earlier may be the case. Kiparsky comes close himself to defining stress as a binary feature in his restatement of MR1 and MR2 in *The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse*. The two definitions incorporate the assigned stress values of 1 and 4, which represent the extreme stress values of "primary" stress and an unstressed syllable respectively. The revised metrical rules necessitate the development of the prosodic rule in order to deal with words containing "subsidiary" stress which are not covered by MR1 or MR2 (for example, "maintain" which Kiparsky considers to have a stress value of 3 - 1). The prosodic rule, however, discounts the subsidiary stress within a lexical-category word in order to isolate the stronger stress as primary. While Kiparsky's approach is more accurate in its predictions than Halle and Keyser's (stress maximum for Halle and Keyser can occur between two words which in Kiparsky's system is not possible), the application of the prosodic rule reduces stress assignment to a fundamentally binary system. One possible solution to the problem of representing relational stress is through the use of an

additional notational system which incorporates hierarchical levels of stress that are syntactically determined.

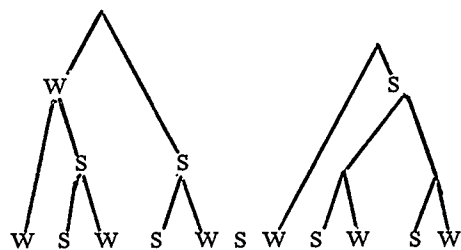
With Lieberman's system of tree notation, it becomes clear why Kiparsky's prosodic rule is still necessary. Through the application of the prosodic rule, stress is assigned first and foremost to lexical category words. Afterwards, stress then can be assigned between a words and their syntactic constituents. To illustrate, the following is an example of how Lieberman's tree system would be put into practice:



A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes (PF, 183)



A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes



A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes





the incorporation of Lieberman's notational system. While Kiparsky's developments have provided new tools for analysis, the practicality of his theory for this study can only ultimately be determined by how well it can account for the metrical structure of an earlier English, namely Chaucer's. As has been pointed out, however, the development of generative metrical theory has systematically avoided Chaucerian English since the first generative metrical developments by Halle and Keyser. Halle and Keyser's decision to begin their analysis with Chaucer's Middle English, however, is a sound one in its recognition that it is in Chaucer's poetry where we see the first development of the iambic pentameter line. If Chaucer's first attempts at iambic pentameter were inconsistent or irregular then it might be more fruitful to begin a generative metrical analysis with a later period of English on the basis that it was not until well after Chaucer's time that a distinct English metre had been established. This, however, is not the case. Chaucer's metrical style had been set as early as *The Parliament of Foules* and persisted throughout his works. Nor is Chaucer's use of a type of iambic pentameter irregular. Rather it is consistent enough to influence the development of the iambic pentameter form in English, a fact which Halle and Keyser recognized and tried to account for with their generative metrical theory.

While no generative metrical theory to date has given a complete account of Chaucer's metrical structure and consequently of the influence of that structure, Kiparsky's system may begin to make such an analysis possible. I hope to examine Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* in light of Kiparsky's metrical theory in order to see what light it may shed on Chaucer's prosodic system and to what degree Kiparsky's theory can deal with the problems of Middle English syntax. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to advance an entirely new generative metrical

grammar which could account for Chaucer's metre, it should be possible to suggest what direction such a development could take.

Subsequent to any hints for further development, there are two other questions which the following chapter will address. Firstly, whether a generative metrical approach to the text will result in any significant editorial emendations or manuscript preferences for the sake of metre; and secondly, whether previous editors of Chaucer, using other metrical approaches, arrived at conclusions which resemble the results of a generative metrical analysis.

## Chapter Three

One of the most significant difficulties encountered in trying to analyze and understand the principles of Chaucer's verse is the inability to account for extra syllables which cannot always be elided or compensated for by an alternate pronunciation. The great variation in possible pronunciation and spelling in Middle English means that in a given manuscript, one word may have several spellings in a single passage, and these spelling variations must, nevertheless, represent a single pronunciation.<sup>1</sup> It may also be the case that one spelling of a word represents more than one pronunciation.<sup>2</sup> What makes the pronunciation of Middle English so difficult for modern readers is the number of variables which must be taken into account when determining how a phrase or word was meant to be read out loud. Spelling must be considered in conjunction with adjacent letters and sounds, rhyme, rhythm, and syntax in order to determine the overall shape and sound of a phrase. While a similar situation exists at least to a degree in Modern English, a reader of Middle English must also contend with the pronunciation of inflectional endings now obsolete :

---

<sup>1</sup> Tha(n) *shewede* he hym / the lytel erthe that here is

And aftir *shewed* he hym / the nyne speris (Fairfax 16, l.57-59, emphasis added)

<sup>2</sup> Toke rest that made me to *slepe* fast

And in my *slepe* I mette as I lay (Longleat 258, 94-95, emphasis added)

The most significant difference between Chaucer's verse and that of later centuries lies in the greater number of light syllables required or permitted by the inflectional system of his language... (Benson xliii)

Inflectional "light syllables" in Chaucer are the clearest and most common examples of the problem of extrametrical syllables in the verse, both mid-line and line-terminal. These inflectional endings present one of the most difficult challenges for the application of Kiparsky's theory to Middle English verse. Of particular importance is the inflectional or otiose ending -e, which may or may not be pronounced depending on syntactic, grammatical, phonological, and possibly metrical conditions. The variability in pronunciation of the final -e makes it useful as a test case for the applicability of a generative metrical theory to a Middle English text. If a generative metrical theory can take into account the syntactic, grammatical, and phonological conditions which effect the metrical placement of syllables, conclusions based on a generative metrical analysis of final syllable pronunciation are based on a broader analytical base than a metrical theory which considers only the possible stress patterns in a given line. While a generative theory may not give a certain answer regarding how a given word is pronounced, it might suggest a strongly probable pronunciation given a particular syntactic environment.

Kiparsky focuses his investigation of the interrelationship between metricality and syntax by first assuming that Shakespeare's verse is regular, and then asking what syntactic constructions are allowed within that verse. Similarly, I will assume that Chaucer's verse is regular and then apply Kiparsky's methodology to Chaucer's text *The Parlement of Foules* in order to see if Kiparsky's theory can be used to predict which syntactic constructions are metrical

in Chaucer's prosodic system and which are not. In order to simplify the application of Kiparsky's theory, I have chosen to examine specific cases where the pronunciation of a single final -e in the line may determine the line's metricality.

For the purposes of this study, mid-line final -e will be briefly examined. Line-terminal final -e also poses an interesting problem but may often have been written by a scribe for graphical reasons (to match the final -e in a following or preceding line), or for the purposes of strict rhyme. Since the focus of the generative theory used here is on the syntactic structure of each line, I have chosen to restrict the examination of extrametrical -e to the cases where the influence of syntax on spelling, pronunciation, and/or metre can be more clearly seen.

The uncertainty of line-terminal -e pronunciation was recognized by Halle and Keyser who tried to compensate for its indeterminacy in part by incorporating two optional extrametrical positions represented by "(X)" in their formulation of an iambic pentameter line:

(W)S WS WS WS WS (X) (X)

In his reliance on Renaissance English which does not possess the inflectional endings found in Middle English, Kiparsky is able to eliminate the need for the optional extrametrical positions at the end of the line in his formulation of an iambic pentameter line. However, Kiparsky's iambic pentameter pattern is not the simple rewriting of Halle and Keyser's formula without the optional extrametrical syllables. The simplicity of the formula WS WS WS WS WS masks certain fundamental differences between the two theories regarding the role of syntactic constituents in extrametrical positions. The reformulation of the basic structure takes note of certain metrical principles overlooked by Halle and Keyser.

Kiparsky critiques Halle and Keyser's account of extrametricality in *The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse* on the basis that their allotment of extrametrical syllables is not categorically constrained. Given Halle and Keyser's model

(W)S WS WS WS WS (X) (X)

it is unclear if there are any limitations to what can occupy the extrametrical positions (X) (X). For Kiparsky, however, extrametrical positions are constrained both by relational stress and syntactic value. He asserts that "extrametrical syllables occur only at strong positions" (Kiparsky, 1977, 231) which leads him to formulate the rule

Terminal nodes correspond one-to-one, except that the presence or absence of a W [extrametrical syllable] in L [a line of verse] is optional between #s[# [a syntactic boundary] and metrical S. (Kiparsky, 1977, 231)

As a consequence of this new metrical rule Kiparsky notes that there is a syntactic check on extrametrical syllables:

Since W has only a *relational* meaning, that the syllable with which the corresponding S is associated, we are saying not that the extrametrical syllable must be unstressed, but that it must have weaker stress than the preceding syllable. (Kiparsky, 1977, 231)

The syntactic constraint occurs when Kiparsky goes on to specify that the extrametrical syllable W "must be a *lexical* W. It must, in effect, be part of the same word as the preceding syllable" (1977, 232). Thus, according to Kiparsky, lines are not metrical which end in an extrametrical syllable which is an enclitic element. Likewise, lines may also not end in an extrametrical

adjective or adverb which qualifies the following word since the condition requiring a syntactic break is not met.

Because Kiparsky's restriction on extrametrical syllables is categorical rather than positional, his reasoning takes into account both extrametrical line-end syllables and syllables which are located at other positions. Kiparsky's theory therefore demonstrates a flexibility which can possibly account for mid-line final -e in Chaucer's verse.

The predictions inferred from Kiparsky's theory agree with the evidence of Chaucer's verse, although the differences between Middle English and Renaissance English complicate this application. In order to conform to Kiparsky's criteria for metricality, a mid-line extrametrical syllable will have to precede a major syntactic break. It must be remembered that Kiparsky defines a "major" syntactic break as a break "which an orthographic comma could stand" (Kiparsky 1977, 232). This definition limits the application of the theory to a system where a reader can (intuitively or otherwise) correctly and consistently identify such breaks. A reader of Middle English is at the very least going to find this requirement challenging unless the syntactic construction of a line is familiar to her. Lines where a modern reader can easily identify a major syntactic break in the Middle English provide the easiest examples to which Kiparsky's theory may be applied. For example, the following lines all contain subordinate clauses after the caesura point:

Sawgh I delyte / that stooode with gentilesse

(Fairfax 16, 224)

That I of spake / that was so swoote and gene



(Fairfax 16, 296)

For me to stonde / so ful was al the place

( Fairfax 16, 315)

The majority of manuscripts include an extrametrical -e at the caesural point of the line for each of these examples. The exceptions are:

delyt Gg.4.27

spak Gg.4.27, St. John's LVII

stond R.3.19

ston(d) St. John's LVII

These exceptions may stand as counter-examples to the predictions inferred from Kiparsky's theory, however, it is significant to note that for the majority of the manuscript editions, the predictions are supported by the textual evidence. The exception from MSS St. John's LVII is also inconclusive as to whether or not it supports the prediction of a pronounced -e at the caesura point since the notation (d) may indicate that a final -e was abbreviated after the 'd'. It can be argued, therefore, that Kiparsky's theory proves useful for lines which exhibit a subordinate clause after the caesura point.

In addition to lines which have a subordinate clause after the caesura, there are lines which have other syntactic constructions and which contain extrametrical final -e at the caesura point. For these lines the extrametrical syllable also precedes a significant syntactic break, which makes them compatible with Kiparsky's theory.

And by hire syde / wondyr discretly (241)

With face pale / vp on an hil of sond (243)

To ben here helpe / but thus I let hem lye (279)

A number of the manuscripts alter the word order in line 241 to

And hir beside wondere discretly

Longleat 258, Bodley 638, Digby 181, Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346

yet all of the manuscripts maintain the -e before the caesura point for line 241.

The manuscripts which eliminate final -e in line 279 before the caesura point are:

line 279:

help Pepys 2006, St. John's LVII

hel(p) Tanner

Collation again shows a consistency among the manuscripts regarding the presence of an acceptable extrametrical -e before the syntactic break. Editors for their part have followed suit and kept the extrametrical -e, even when manuscript evidence could possibly be used to support the elimination of the -e. It is also interesting to note that all of the editors cited below maintain an orthographic comma or some other punctuation mark at the caesura point and after the final -e in question:

And hir besyde, wonder discretly, (241)

With face pale, upon an hille of sond; (243)

To ben hir help; but thus I leet hir lye, (279)

(Skeat, 1899)

And by hire syde, wondyr discretly, (241)

With face pale, vpon an hil of sond; (243)

To ben here helpe; but thus I let hyre lye, (279)

(Brewer, 1960)

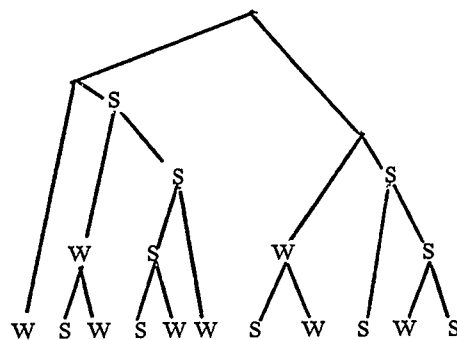
And by hire syde, wonder discretly, (241)

With face pale, upon an hil of sond; (243)

To ben here helpe. But thus I let hire lye, (279)

(Benson, 1987)

Other examples of lines where a major syntactic break can be identified are:



The wery hunttere slepyng In his bed (99)



If we assume that Kiparsky's theory predicts the pronunciation of the final inflectional -e in line 99 and line 242, it is again interesting to note how these lines are treated in the other manuscript sources and by editors of the *Parliament of Foules*.

Concerning line 99, it is surprising that the majority of the manuscripts eliminate the -e in question at the end of the word "huntere":

Hunte(r) Ff.1.6

hunter Harl 7333, Hh 4.12,

Laud 416, Pepys 2006, Longleat 258,

Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, LVII St. John

hunte(r) R 3.19,

The consistency among the manuscripts would seem to run counter to the predictions inferred from Kiparsky's theory, even if we consider the possibility that (r) may indicate an abbreviated form of "re".

In the case of line 242 most of the manuscripts follow Gg.4.27 with the only variation found in the following manuscripts:

pacyence Ff.1.6

Patience R.3.19

The only manuscript to eliminate the final -e in question is MSS Harley 7333:

paciens Harl. 7333

Again, the manuscript evidence for line 242 supports the predictions inferred from Kiparsky's criteria for metricality.

There remains, however, the counter-example of a line which should maintain an extrametrical -e at the mid-point and does not (line 99). Thus, the evidence of the manuscripts seems to run counter to the predictions inferred from Kiparsky's theory for line 99, while supporting the prediction inferred for line 242.<sup>3</sup>

A sampling of two lines cannot justify any general conclusions about Middle English syntax or metrics. Yet, the consistency among the manuscripts regarding the elimination or maintenance of final -e in the above examples does justify an examination of lines with a similar syntactic construction.

---

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the editorial treatment of such lines, it is interesting to note that it is the later two editions of the *Parliament of Foules* here cited which maintain the extrametrical -e for line 99, even though (as Pearsall noted) Skeat supposedly favoured the inclusion of final -e at the caesura.

The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,  
 Dame Pacience syttyng there I fond  
 (Benson, 1987)

The wery hunttere, slepyng in his bed,  
 Dame Pacienc(e) syttyng there I fond,  
 (Brewer, 1960)

The wery hunter, sleping in his bed,  
 Dame Pacience sitting ther I fond (Skeat, 1899)

In the cases examined, extrametrical -e at the caesura point is found in both the manuscripts and the editions of the *Parliament of Foules*, but only when the syntactic structure of the Middle English line possesses a syntactic break which according to Kiparsky's criteria can accommodate "an orthographic comma". Lines which do not possess a syntactic break recognized by Kiparsky's theory do not consistently show the mid-line extrametrical -e across manuscripts.

The following lines illustrate the problems caused by the application of Kiparsky's principle to Middle English lines which do not possess the syntactic break required. All contain possible extrametrical syllables at the caesura point:

And syn that hire / louyth non so wel as I (435)

The wery hunttere slepynge In his bed (99)

To ben here helpe / but thus I let hem lye (279)

In the first example, if we accept that a word-final *e* is pronounced in front of a consonant<sup>4</sup>, then the line could only be considered metrical if there were a syntactic break after "hire". The following schema depicts the syntactic structure variations of the line as it occurs in the manuscript sources:

---

<sup>4</sup> See Burrow and Turville-Petre's chapter on pronunciation, pp. 9-14.





In this example, the word order in MS Gg.4.27 is unique among the manuscripts. Although all other manuscripts prefer the construction “non louyth hire” to “hire loueth non”, both arrangements form the principal subject, predicate, and object of the line.

And sythen that noone louet(h) hyr so well as I

(R.3.19)

And syn that none lovithe hir so wel as I.

(Harl. 7333)

And sy(n) that noo(n) loueth hir / so wel as I

(Fairfax 16)

The syntactic break specified by Kiparsky's theory does not exist in the manuscript versions cited. If, however, we assume that the lines are metrical within Chaucer's prosodic system, then Kiparsky's theory fails to predict acceptable extrametrical syllables before syntactic boundary found in Middle English and obsolete by the time of Shakespeare.<sup>6</sup>

Even when it fails to predict the pronunciation of caesural point final -e, the application of Kiparsky's theory helps to clarify which syntactic constructions are problematic. Where

---

<sup>6</sup> Examples of similar constructions are as follows:

Chapiteris seuene It hadde / of heuene & helle (32)

A gardyn saw I ful of blosphemy bowys (183)

Dame pacience / syttynge there I fond (242)

The erthe of that place so attempre was (204)

Men myghtyn in that place assemblede fynde (367)

Kiparsky's theory relies on syntax as an explanatory force, some editors and scholars of Chaucer's work have relied on grammatical criteria to predict whether or not a final -e would have been pronounced.

Motivated by the production of an edition of Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*, J. M. Cowen tries to find a grammatical justification for the maintenance or elimination of final -e when emending the base manuscripts. In her article "Metrical Problems in Editing *The Legend of Good Women*" Cowen registers an understandable anxiety regarding the difficulty of establishing the characteristics of Chaucer's metre:

.. a major problem in attempts to establish Chaucer's metre is the determination of criteria for the pronunciation of unstressed syllables, in particular of final *e* where it derives from a syllabic ending. (Cowen 26)

She assumes that where there is a pronounced final extrametrical -e in the manuscripts, its presence can be explained by the grammatical classification of the word in question. In order to find evidence supporting her assumption, Cowen examines occurrences of final -e in *The Legend of Good Women* which are most likely to have been pronounced:

I excluded all lines where the metrical value of final *e* might theoretically be in question, that is, where there are word endings derived... from an original vocalic ending or syllabic ending reducible to *e* in Middle English. (Cowen, 27)

Cowen then further reduces the sample by eliminating lines where the final -e in question precedes a vowel, -h, or -y, and

where a final e is justifiable in terms of historical grammar, but where the sounding of only one is necessary to produce a metrical line

For Cowen this makes the line inadmissible because it "...contain[s] words of indeterminate syllabic value..." (28).

The resulting sample of lines which satisfies Cowen's criteria is small, consisting only of nine lines. Cowen notes the problem that such a small sample inevitably causes:

Such a corpus is of limited value as a normative model, not only because it is axiomatic that a line on which all textual witnesses agree may yet not be original, but because a sample so small still leaves open the question of how far variants on any pattern it may demonstrate may be admissible. (28)

Given this proviso, Cowen nevertheless does find consistencies among her lines which lead her to generalize about the metrical placement of an extra syllabic light -e based on grammatical conditions. The conclusion she reaches is that final -e should be always pronounced in two cases: "in monosyllabic adjectives in weak position", and "in monosyllabic strong adjectives in the plural" (29). She goes on to list eight other grammatical situations where the pronunciation of an extrametrical final -e is optional (29-32)<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> The eight other cases where "final -e is sometimes metrically necessary" follow (Cowen, 29):

- in the singular of those adjectives and nouns which historically ended, in the nominative, in *e* or in a syllable reducible to *e* in Middle English
- in the singular of French adjectives other than in weak position ending in *e*, and of French nouns ending in *e*

Cowen notes that when there is manuscript variation in a particular line in her group, the variation seems to support her reasoning for the pronunciation of the final -e based on grammatical conditions. Quoting line 2628 from *The Legend of Good Women*, Cowen points out that

[The analysis] had provided support for decisions in some of the situations where the reader or editor has to take account of the variables which I excluded from my exploratory survey: the operation of elision, syncope and manuscript variation. There was encouragement to regard as original a reading which values a weak adjective ending where textual variants provide an extra syllable instead...

‘My ryghte doghter tresour of myn herte,’

where one manuscript reads ‘My right dere doghter’. (32)

As Cowen herself admits, the weakness of her argument lies in the fact that the support for her argument was drawn from a very small sampling of lines. Nevertheless, she does

- in the comparative adjective ‘more’
- in the first person singular present indicative
- in the third person singular present subjunctive
- in the first person preterite of weak verbs
- in adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions which historically ended in *e* or in a syllable reducible to *e* in Middle English

recognize that there are grammatical and syntactic restrictions which dictate the placement and pronunciation of apparent extrametrical final -e .

Cowen attempts to formulate a precise grammatical methodology which would justify emendations made to the base manuscript for the sake of metre. Although Skeat's approach to the same problem of textual emendation was much more intuitive and less systematic than either of the methodologies outlined above, his approach was not necessarily any less successful.

For both Skeat and Cowen, the motivation behind the development of their metrical analyses was provided by the texts which they were trying to edit. Both also demonstrated that in the formulation of an edition, decisions concerning the emendation of spelling, the arrangement of syntax, and/or the placement of punctuation could not be made without considering the role which metre played in each of these. Spelling, syntax, punctuation, and metre are interdependently related even when a theorist or editor focuses specifically on one of these elements. Skeat linked the practice of introducing an extra syllabic -e after a caesura to forms in Old French verse, which he thought had influenced Chaucer's prosody:

I quote the following from P. Toynbee's *Specimens of Old French*, p. liiii :-

'In ten-syllabled lines... the pause or caesura is after the fourth syllable:- ...

At the caesura, and also at the end of the line, a feminine syllable is admissible, which does not count, even if it is not elided'

All of the above varieties are found in Chaucer; and we thus see... (1) that he sometimes introduces an additional syllable at the end of the line; and (2) that

he does the same after the caesura, or at what may be (roughly) called the end of the half-line. (Skeat, lxxxvii)

Skeat follows Toynbee in treating a light or feminine extra syllable as if it "does not count". Referring to lines which contain one or more extrametrical light syllables, Skeat argues that:

the number of accents is the same in all [the lines examined]... It is therefore better to speak of these lines as containing *five-accents* than to call them *ten-syllabled* lines. (ibid)

Skeat's reasoning causes an interesting problem for the scansion of Chaucer's verse. If, as Skeat asserts, a line should be scanned in terms of "accents" rather than "syllables", this implies that there is less of a restriction in the placement of weak syllables than there is strong syllables since it is the placement of accents which determine a line's metricality, despite the number of weak syllables between those accents. A line may considered to be iambic pentameter so long as it contains five stresses, regardless of the number of weak syllables occupying the spaces in between. Yet Skeat's practice is to allow some extrametrical weak syllables to remain (for example at the caesura) while emending others, which implies that there is at least some sort of restriction on the placement of extrametrical weak syllables being carried out.

If Chaucer's extrametrical -e was exclusively found at the caesuras of his verse, Skeat's reasoning regarding the possible function of the extrametrical inflectional ending might prove to be correct. In fact, however, there are too many occurrences in the manuscripts of final -e in positions other than the caesura for Skeat's explanation to be complete. The following lines, for

example, all contain at least one potentially extrametrical final -e which is not located at a caesura:

That euery sterre shulde come in to his place (68)

Hyre gilte heris with a goldene thred (267)<sup>8</sup>

The moste benygne & the godliest (375)

And I wele seye myn verdit fayre & swythe (503)<sup>9</sup>

Al here centence as hem leste to termyne (530)

(emphasis added)

Skeat does not claim that a final -e is only pronounced at the caesura point. He does, however, imply that a final -e located at the caesura point is more likely to be maintained and pronounced for the sake of the line's metricality. While some of the above lines do contain extrametrical -e at

---

<sup>8</sup> While there is significant spelling variation in the manuscripts for the word "goldene", there is no other example of a trisyllabic spelling.

<sup>9</sup> Several other manuscripts which eliminate the extrametrical -e in "wele" spell "verdit" with a final extrametrical -e:

...woll sey my verdyte Ff.1.6

...wyl sey my verdyte Harl. 7333

...woll sey my verdite St. John's LVII

...woll sey my veredite Bodley 638

...wil saye my verdyte Caxton's text

the caesura and line end, there are also places where metricality is determined by a pronounced inflectional -e in another position:

nay god forbede a louere shulde chaunge

The tersel seyde / & wex for shame red. (582-3)

And colde welle stremys no thyng ded (187)

(emphasis added)

It would be impossible to ignore Skeat's reasoning completely because of the consistent accuracy with which it can be used to predict the metrical role of an extrametrical -e at the caesura point. What is deficient in Skeat's approach, however, is that it ultimately relies too heavily on his own intuitive ear. The development and application of Kiparsky's theory may ultimately prove to be more useful than Skeat's reasoning for editors and readers of Chaucer's text in that it can be applied without the worry that the editor or reader is not hearing exactly what Skeat heard when he read Chaucer's lines. Nevertheless, many of Skeat's emendations seem to be in keeping with what an application of Kiparsky's theory reveals regarding mid-line extrametrical final -e.

What is needed at this point is an exhaustive collation of all of Chaucer's works and a comparison of lines based on similar syntactic and metrical constructions in order to provide a broad range of material to which a generative metrical approach could be applied. At that point Kiparsky's theory, or any generative metrical theory for that matter, could be tested against a large enough body of work written by one author in Middle English. After the manuscript sources of Chaucer's works were collated and compared for this purpose it would



also become more clear how a generative metrical theory would need to be developed in order to account for the consistent iambic pentameter often found in Middle English verse.

The abundance of manuscript versions of Chaucer's text make his work of particular use, providing a broader Middle English linguistic base than most other works written at the same time. What also makes Chaucer an ideal test case is the fact that the London dialect which he used would eventually dominate other Middle English dialect forms and evolve to become the basis for Modern English. This would be necessary in order for a generative metrical theory, designed to accommodate multiple English verse forms, to be able to analyze prosodic forms from all periods of English language development.

Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to suggest such a development based on the collation of all of Chaucer's works, the analysis of *The Parlement of Foules* does give possible suggestions as to where to look in the manuscript sources for meaningful metrical and syntactic examples. For example, after the works were collated, it would be important to look for examples of an extrametrical inflectional final -e at the caesura point. It would also be meaningful to examine the earlier works in comparison with the later works to see whether or not the later works were more or less conservative in the placement of an extrametrical syllable in certain syntactic constructions. Thus, if a clear picture could be drawn as to the metrical constructions which were permissible in Middle English in general, and in Chaucer's verse in particular, an editor would have a powerful tool which she or he could use to determine the best emendation of a manuscript text.

## Conclusion

For over four hundred years the editors of Chaucer's works have largely dictated our understanding of Chaucer's metre. The editors' explicit observations and conclusions about Chaucer's prosody have been less important in this than the editions themselves which have been implicitly shaped by the editors' understanding of metre, however unsystematic or intuitive that understanding might be.

An examination of the history of Chaucerian editorial scholarship in light of Chaucer's metrical style reveals a common concern with the understanding of Chaucerian prosody. During the period of the incunabula and manuscript editions, this concern is less obvious due to the fact that a manuscript or print editor during this period would likely have been able to deal with Chaucer's language and metre by relying solely on his or her ear. The language of Chaucer was not at this period so alien as to need a systematic and scholarly analysis before the editor could proceed competently with the production of an edition.

During the period of the "classical" scholars, editors examined the question of Chaucerian prosody in general terms, referring to his "style" in comparison with classical texts in Greek and Latin edited during that time. The influence of the Greek and Latin texts and textual scholarship on the production of editions of Chaucer was profound. For the first time, Chaucer's language, and consequently his metre, had become somewhat alien to the editors. In order to deal with this problem, the editors of this period turned to the technique of metrical analysis, which had been employed in scanning Greek and Latin verse, applying it to Chaucer's text. The Greek

and Latin based approach to metrical analysis, which attempts to divide a line of verse systematically into groupings of weak and strong syllables, would dominate subsequent editions of Chaucer as well as the understanding of English prosody in general. Yet because this approach to metrical analysis is descriptive rather than analytical, it is ultimately limited in its exploration of verse forms in English.

The approach to understanding Chaucer through the paradigm of classical textual inquiry was also reflected during this period in the production of the first glossaries for Middle English based on the glossaries found in classical texts. The appearance of glossaries confirms the alien status which Chaucer's language had at this time. However, despite the detailed analysis which the production of a glossary implies and the importance which a glossary holds for the analysis of metre, Chaucer's metre was not yet treated as a subject of specific inquiry. Instead, his versification was more commonly examined as a part of other more general aspects of his language and style.

Attempting to understand Chaucer on his own terms, the Augustan scholars were the first to expressly examine his "style" for characteristics of metre, spelling, and word choice. The central concern of the editors and scholars during this period was whether or not Chaucer's metre was recognizably regular. The classical scholars had provided them with a system of analysis which could scan Chaucer's verse for strong and weak syllables; however, if their understanding of Middle English pronunciation was flawed, their scansion of Chaucer's texts would be flawed as well. The concern which the Augustan scholars had for trying to establish the regularity or irregularity of Chaucer's metre was further evidenced by the publication for the first time of

scholastic opinion on Chaucerian prosody outside of the editions. Editors like Urry and Morell had to contend more than any previous editor with the growing distance between their English and the English used in Chaucer's day, therefore, the need for scholarly work which could focus exclusively on the analysis of Middle English metre was evident. While the examination of Chaucerian prosody by both editors and scholars during this period was more precise than anything which had preceded it, there was also a greater need for such precision.

Tyrwhitt's edition attempted to meet that need and succeeded to a large degree. The edition was characterized by the precision with which Tyrwhitt collated the manuscript sources and emended the base manuscripts relying on a more complete understanding of all aspects of Middle English grammar and versification. The careful collation and analysis of the manuscript sources, and identification of the metrical importance of pronounced final -e would also lead Tyrwhitt to establish the certainty of Chaucer's metrical regularity.

Tyrwhitt stood apart from his predecessors in that he assumed that Chaucer's text was metrically regular, and that the scribal spelling of the manuscripts probably reflected this. Before Tyrwhitt, editors generally emended manuscript spelling and metre in order to make it conform to what they believed Middle English should sound like. Tyrwhitt by contrast considered the possibility that the scribes copying the manuscript sources had a better ear for Chaucer's prosodic style than he himself might have, and emend the text accordingly.

Skeat's edition employed the same careful collation and textual methodologies which characterized Tyrwhitt's edition. Unlike Tyrwhitt, however, Skeat emended the base manuscripts, relying more on his intuition regarding Chaucer's metre than on any systematic analysis of

Chaucerian prosody. Although, as it has been pointed out, this puts Skeat in a dangerous position, he was nevertheless able to intuit certain aspects of Chaucerian metricality accurately, specifically the acceptable placement of an extrametrical -e before a caesura. Skeat's edition dominated the subsequent editions of Chaucer.

Improvements were made following Skeat's edition in the editorial methodology surrounding the production of editions of Chaucer. Most notably the editions by Manly and Rickert, and Robinson have furthered the development of collation techniques and critical textual notation. All of these editions, however, have continued to be shaped by the traditional metrical analysis, which has shed no new light on the qualities of Chaucerian prosody.

What progress was made during this period in the understanding of English verse forms in general has been made outside the realm of editorial scholarship. Now the prerogative of linguistic analysis, the development of generative metrical theory can be applied to Chaucer's Middle English texts by Morris Halle and Samuel Jay Keyser. Halle and Keyser tried to integrate the basic principles of generative analysis with a phonological approach to explaining Chaucer's metre. While they succeeded to some degree, their theory would ultimately need revision in order to be effectively applicable to Chaucer's text.

Paul Kiparsky attempted to improve upon the theory of Halle and Keyser by conducting an examination of the metre of Shakespeare's verse. The most significant of Kiparsky's changes to Halle and Keyser's basic approach was to incorporate syntactic criteria in analyzing a line's metrical structure. By including syntactic along with phonological criteria in the development of his theory, Kiparsky was able to account for metrical lines which Halle and Keyser's theory

would have rejected, and accept lines which Halle and Keyser would have considered unmetrical. Kiparsky's system of analysis could more accurately reflect the prosody of any given English poet. The improvements in Kiparsky's generative metrical theory prompted the application of that theory in this thesis to Chaucer's text *The Parliament of Foules*.

The effective application of Kiparsky's generative metrical grammar to Chaucer's text is in part prevented by Kiparsky's dependence on a syntactic system from a later period of English. The assumption of this syntactic system brings into question Kiparsky's claims for a theory which can take into account all forms of English iambic pentameter verse. An examination of the metrical system which, theoretically, underlies the structure of the English language must be rooted in the inception of that metrical system. In this case, the iambic pentameter form which Kiparsky describes is found in Chaucer's verse and did not, as Kiparsky implies, begin with Shakespeare.

The application of Kiparsky's theory to Chaucer's text did, however, reveal a metrical consistency among the manuscripts in regard to a possible extrametrical final -e before a caesura point. The application of Kiparsky's theory implies that an extrametrical final -e before a caesura point is permissible within Chaucer's system if there is a significant syntactic break after the -e in question. There are examples in Chaucer, however, where the application of Kiparsky's theory fails to predict the manuscript evidence. For these cases, the syntactic break before the final -e exists in Middle English yet had become obsolete by Renaissance English. Syntactic constructions with clearly identifiable syntactic breaks (such as the syntactic break before a subordinate clause) common in Renaissance English or Modern English posed no problem for

the application of Kiparsky's theory. Constructions where a syntactic break could not be easily identified due to the uncertain nature of Middle English syntactic relationships could not be dealt with by Kiparsky's theory. The dependence of Kiparsky's theory on the syntax of Renaissance English may explain why it could not be effectively applied to the cases mentioned.

That the traditional approach to metrical analysis is ineffective when applied to English verse forms is probably due to the fact that it is based on Greek and Latin prosodic systems. That a generative approach to metrical analysis will eventually help to establish a clearer understanding of Chaucer's unique prosody is likely; however, any developments of a generative metrical theory designed to analyze Chaucer's verse must first take into account the characteristics of Middle English phonology, grammar, and syntax. The development of a new generative metrical theory of Chaucer's prosodic style also necessitates a complete collation of all of Chaucer's works in order to provide a large enough body of evidence from which any conclusions about Chaucerian prosody can be drawn. When a clear and accurate understanding of Chaucer's grammar and syntax is available, a generative metrical theory based on that understanding and supported by the collated evidence from all of the manuscript sources will serve editors of Chaucer's text as an accurate tool for emending the spelling and syntax of base manuscripts and perhaps bring us closer to the definitive edition of Chaucer's works.

## Bibliography

- Alderson, William L., and Arnold C. Henderson. Chaucer and Augustan Scholarship. Berkeley: U of California P, 1970.
- Attridge, Derek. The Rhythms of English Poetry. London: Longman, 1982.
- Baird-Lange, L. Y. A Bibliography of Chaucer: 1964-1973. Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1977.
- Baird-Lange, L. Y., and Hildegard Schnuttgen. A Bibliography of Chaucer: 1974-1985. Hamden, CT: Archon, 1988.
- Bennett, J. A. W. The Parlement of Foules: An Interpretation. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1957.
- Benson, Larry. "Chaucer's Spelling Reconsidered." English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700. Vol. 3. Eds. Peter Beal & Jeremy Griffiths. 3 vols. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1992: 1-28.
- Blake, Norman. "Chaucer's Text and the Web of Words". New Perspectives in Chaucer Criticism. Ed. Donald M. Rose. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books Inc., 1981. 223-240.
- Blake, N. F. "The Editorial Assumptions in the Manley-Rickert edition of the *Canterbury Tales*." English Studies 64.5 (1983): 385-400.
- ... "On Editing the *Canterbury Tales*." Medieval Studies for J.A.W. Bennett. Ed. P.L. Heyworth. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981. 101-119.
- Bowden, Betsy. Chaucer Aloud: The Varieties of Textual Interpretation. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1987.



- Brewer, Derek. "The Grain of the Text." Acts of Interpretation: The Text in its Contexts 700-1600. Eds. Mary J. Carruthers & Elizabeth D. Kirk. Norman Oklahoma: Pilgrim, 1982. 119-127.
- Brusendorff, Aage. The Chaucer Tradition. 1925. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.
- Burnley, David. A Guide to Chaucer's Language. Hong Kong: The MacMillan Press, 1962.
- Burrow, J.A., and Thorlac Turville-Petre. A Book of Middle English. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
- Caxton, William. The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton. Ed. W. J. B. Crotch, Early English Text Society 176. London: Oxford UP, 1928.
- Chisholm, David. "Generative Prosody and English Verse." Poetics 6 (1977): 111-54.
- Chomsky, Noam, and Morris Halle. The Sound Pattern of English. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.
- Cowen, Janet M. "Metrical Problems in Editing *The Legend of Good Women*." Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial problems in Later Middle English; Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York. Ed. D. Pearsall. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987. 26-33.
- Crawford, W. R. Bibliography of Chaucer: 1954-63. Seattle: U of Washington P., 1967.
- Dane, Joseph A. "The Reception of Chaucer's 18th Century Editions." Text: Transaction of the Society for Textual Scholarship. 4 (1988): 217-236.
- Donaldson, E. Talbot. "Gallic Flies in Chaucer's Word Web." New Perspectives In Chaucer Criticism. Ed. Donald M. Rose. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books Inc., 1981. 193-202.

- Edwards, A. S. G. "Pynson and Thynne's editions of Chaucer's *House of Fame*." Studies in Bibliography 42 (1989): 185-186.
- Everett, Dorothy. Essays on Middle English Literature. Ed. Patricia Kean. Oxford: Clarendon P., 1959.
- Faulkner, Peter. "The Paths of Virtue and Early English; F. J. Furnivall and Victorian Medievalism." From Medieval to Medievalism. Ed. John Simon. New York: St. Martin's P, 1992. 144-158.
- Fisher, John H. The Importance of Chaucer. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1992.
- Fudge, Erik. English Word Stress. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1984.
- Geirgerich, Heinz J. English Phonology; An Introduction. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992.
- Glowka, Arthur Wayne. A Guide to Chaucer's Meter. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America Inc., 1991.
- Greetham, D. C. "The Place of Fredson Bowers in Medieval Editing." Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America. 82.1 (1988): 53-69.
- Greg, W. W. "The Rationale of Copy-Text." Studies in Bibliography 3 (1950-51): 19-36.
- Grey, Douglas & E. G. Stanley eds. Middle English Studies; Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- Griffith, D. D. Bibliography of Chaucer: 1908-1953. Seattle: U of Washington P., 1955.
- Gross, Harvey ed. The Structure of Verse; Modern Essays on Prosody. New York: The Echo Press, 1979.

Guthrie, Steven R. "Prosody and the Study of Chaucer: A Generative Reply to Halle-Keyser."

ChR 23 (1988): 30-49.

Halle, Morris. "Stress Rules in English: A New Version." Linguistic Inquiry 4.4 (1973): 451-64.

Halle, Morris & Samuel J. Keyser. "Chaucer and the Study of Prosody." CE 28 (1966): 187-219.

... English Stress, Its Form, its Growth, and Its Role in Verse. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

... "The Iambic Pentameter." The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody. Ed. Harvey Gross. New York: Ecco Press, 1979. 112-23.

Hammond, E. P. English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey: Being Examples of Conventional Secular Poetry, exclusive of Romance, Ballad, Lyric, and Drama, in the Period from Henry the Fourth to Henry the Eighth. New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1965.

... Chaucer: A Bibliographic Manual. New York: Peter Smith, 1933.

Hayes, Bruce. "A Grid-Based Theory of English Meter." Linguistic Inquiry 14 (1983): 357-93.

Hogg, Richard, and C. B. McCully. Metrical Phonology: A Coursebook. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.

Hooker, Edward Niles. "Johnson's Understanding of Chaucer's Metrics." MLN 68 (1933): 150-1.

Jespersen, Otto. "Notes on Metre." The Structure of Verse: Modern Essays on Prosody. Ed. Harvey Gross. New York: Ecco Press, 1979. 3-12.

Kane, George, and E Talbot Donaldson eds. Piers Plowman: The B Version. London: Athlone Press, 1975.

Kerkhof, J. Studies in the Language of Geoffrey Chaucer. 2nd ed. Leiden: Leiden UP., 1982.

Kiparsky, Paul. "Stress Syntax and Meter." Language 51 (1975): 576-616.

... "The Rhythmic Structure of English Verse." Linguistic Inquiry 8 (1977): 189-247.

Magnuson K., and F. Ryder. "The Study of English Prosody: Alternative Proposal." CE 31 (1970): 789-820.

... "Second Thoughts on English Prosody." CE 33 (1971): 198-216.

Marshall, Isabel & Lela Porter Rhyme-Index to the Manuscript Texts of Chaucer's Minor Poems.  
Chaucer Society Publication, no. 78, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner &  
Co., 1887.

Milliward, C. M. A Biography of the English Language. Toronto: Harcourt, Brace, &  
Jovanovich, 1988.

Monaghan, Thomas J. "Thomas Tyrwhitt (1730-86) and his Contribution to English  
Scholarship." Diss. Oxford, 1947.

Morrman, Charles. "One Hundred Years of Editing the *Canterbury Tales*." The Chaucer Review.  
24 (1989): 99-114.

Muscatine, Charles. The Book of Geoffrey Chaucer; An Account of the Publication of Geoffrey  
Chaucer's Works from the 15 century to Modern Times. San Fransisco: , 1963.

Mossé, Ferdinand. A Handbook of Middle English. Trans. James A. Walker. Baltimore: John  
Hopkins P., 1987.

Owen, Charles A. The Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer Studies 17. Cambridge: D.  
S. Brewer, 1991.

- ... "Speght's Chaucer and Ms. Gg. 4. 27." Studies in Bibliography 21 (1968): 220-35.
- Pearsall, D. ed. Manuscripts and Texts; Editorial Problems in Later Middle English; Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987.
- ... "Chaucer's Metre; The Evidence of the Manuscripts." Medieval Literature and Interpretation. Ed. Tim William Machan. Binghamton, New York, 1991. 23-35.
- ... "Editing Medieval Texts; Some Developments and Some Problems." Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation. Ed. Jerome Mc Gann. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985. 68-81.
- ... "Chaucer's Poetry and its Modern Commentators; The Necessity of History." Medieval Literature; Criticism, Ideology, & History. Ed. David Aers. Brighton: Harvester P.Ltd., 1986. 47-58.
- Poldauf, Ivan. English Word Stress: A Theory of Word Stress Patterns in English. Ed. W.R. Lee. Oxford, Pergamon P, 1984.
- Raffel, Burton. From Stress to Stress; An Autobiography of English Prosody. Hamden: Archon Books, 1992.
- Ramsey, Roy Vance. "F. N. Robinson's Editing of the *Canterbury Tales*." Studies in Bibliography 42 (1989): 134-152.
- Robinson, Ian. Chaucer's Prosody; A Study of Middle English Verse Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge UP., 1971.
- Rose, Donald M. ed. New Perspectives in Chaucer Criticism. Norman, Oklahoma: Pilgrim Books Inc., 1981.

- Rowland, Beryl ed. Companion to Chaucer Studies; Revised Edition. Oxford: Oxford UP., 1979.
- Ruggiers, Paul ed. Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition. Norman, OK: Pilgrim, 1984. \_
- Samuels, M. L. "Chaucer's Spelling" Middle English Studies; Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday. Eds. Douglas Grey & E. G. Stanley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983, 17-38.
- ... "Chaucerian Final -e" Notes and Queries 217 (1972): 445-8.
- Sandved, Arthur O. Introduction to Chaucerian English. Chaucer Studies 11. Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 1985.
- Sebeok, Thomas A. Style in Language. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1960.
- Smithers, G. V. "The Scansion of *Havelok* and the Use of Middle English '-en' and '-e' in *Havelok* and Chaucer." Middle English Studies; Presented to Norman Davis in Honour of his Seventieth Birthday. Eds. Douglas Grey & E. G. Stanley. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983. 195-234.
- Southworth, James G. The Prosody of Chaucer and his Followers; Supplementary Chapter to *Verses of Cadence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962.
- Spurgeon, Caroline F. Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion 1357-1900. 3 vols. New York: Russel and Russel, 1960.
- Stanley, E. G. "Chaucer's Metre after Chaucer, I: Chaucer to Hoccleve; II: Lydgate and Barclay." Notes and Queries March 36.234 (1989): 11-23, and June 36.234 (1989): 151-162.

- Stevens, John. "Chaucerian Metre and Early Tudor Songs." in Chaucer Traditions; Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer. Eds. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeat. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990.139-154.
- Quirk, Randolph et al. A Grammar of Contemporary English. Harlow: Longman Group Ltd., 1972.
- Tarlinskaja, Marina. Strict Stress-Meter in English Poetry; Compared with German & Russian. Calgary: U of C Press, 1993.
- ... Shakespeare's Verse: Iambic Pentameter and the Poet's Idiosyncrasies. New York: Peter Lang, 1987.
- Thynne, Francis. Animaduersions vppon the Annotacions and Corrections of some imperfections of impressiones of Chaucer's workes. 1598. Early English Text Society . London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1865.
- Tupper, Frederick Jr. "Dryden and Speght's Chaucer." MLIV 12 (1987): 347-53.
- Williams, Miller. Patterns of English Poetry; An Encyclopedia of Forms. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP., 1986.
- Wimsatt, W. K. "The Rule and the Norm: Halle and Keyser on Chaucer's Meter." CE 31 (1969): 774-88.
- Wright, H. G. "Thomas Speght as a Lexicographer and Annotator of Chaucer's Works." English Studies 60 (1959): 194-208.
- Woods, Suzanne. Natural Emphasis; English Versification from Chaucer to Dryden. San Morino: The Huntington Library, 1984.



## Primary Sources

- Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Works of our Ancient, Learned, & Excellent English Poet Jeffrey Chaucer.... 1687. Ed. Thomas Speght. microform. English Books, 1641-1700 Reel 59:1. Ann Arbor: University Microforms International, 1962.
- ... The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer; to Which are Added an Essay Upon his Language and Versification; An Introductory Discourse; and Notes. 5 vols. Ed. Thomas Tyrwhitt, London: T. Payne and Son, 1778. rpt. from the 1778 ed. by New York: A. M. S. Press Inc., 1972.
- ... The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Ed. Alfred A. Pollard et al., New York: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1898.
- ... The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer; Edited from Numerous Manuscripts. 7 vols. Ed. W. W. Skeat, 2nd ed., Oxford: Clarendon P., 1900.
- ... The Text of the *Canterbury Tales*: Studied on the Basis of all Known Manuscripts. Eds. John M. Manly and Edith Rickert. 10 vols. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1940.
- ... The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Ed. F. N. Robinson. 1933. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957.
- ... The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton. Early English Text Society, Original Series 176. Ed. W. J. B. Crotch. London: Oxford UP., 1928. Rpt. 1956.
- ... The Parlement of Foules. Ed. D. S. Brewer, London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1960.



... Geoffrey Chaucer; The Minor Poems. Eds. George B. Pace and Alfred David. Variorum

Edition V, Norman Oklahoma: U of Oklahoma P., 1982.

... The Riverside Chaucer. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Furnivall, F. S. ed. A One-Text Print of Chaucer's Minor Poems, being the best text of each

poem in the Parallel-Text Edition. Chaucer Society, no. 24, , London: N. Trübner

& Co., 1871.

Skeat, W. W. Chaucerian and Other Pieces; Edited from Numerous Manuscripts. 1897. Oxford:

Oxford UP, 1959.