CHAUCER MODERNIZATION

IN THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY

(1801-1841)

* * *

A Thesis Presented for the
Degree of Master of Arts

by

Bruce K. Herbruck, B.A.

* * *

The Ohio State University

1948

Approved by:

Richard D. Altshul
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I: Chaucer Modernization Before 1800................. 1
Part II: Modernizations by Wordsworth......................19
Part III: Modernizations by Clarke and Hunt...............38
Part IV: The Horne Edition of Modernizations..............58
Part I

Chaucer Modernization Before 1800

Since Elizabethan times, the poetry of Chaucer has been to a large extent neglected by those who read and enjoy poetry but are unable to understand the English language of the fourteenth century. In every century there have been a few scholars and artists who have mastered the obsolete vocabulary and syntax and have been able to appreciate the genius of the first great English poet. Many of these men, including Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, drew on the work of their predecessor for subject-matter or poetic expressions. Such reference, however, was not sufficient to make the work of Chaucer universally popular, and his fame decreased until, in the seven teenth century, it reached an ebb lower than it had ever reached before or was ever to reach again. There was not sufficient interest in the Chaucerian poems to warrant an edition of them during the eighty years between 1602 and 1682.

The language of Chaucer was believed to be as dead as that of Ancient Rome is today; it was, in fact, more difficult than Latin to master because of the lack of adequate dictionaries and grammars and the comparatively small number of Middle English volumes which were available. Those few who attempted to study the ancient English tongue were pretty unanimous in the view that, however stately they may have been the
literary structures that had been erected in former ages, they had become little more than heaps of ruins.¹


In the closing years of the seventeenth century, however, there appeared a man who, like many who were to follow him, recognized that even ruins could have beauty as well as historic and sentimental values, and were, for these reasons, worth bringing to the attention of a wide public. As a result, he was the first to attempt to remove the moss from the finely chiseled stones and to polish them into a form which could be understood and appreciated by the men of his generation. The modernization of Chaucer was thus begun in 1698 by John Dryden.

Dryden's Chaucer modernizations were published, together with translations of Ovid, Boccaccio, Homer, and Vergil, as Fables, Ancient and Modern² in 1700. In the Preface to the


Fables Dryden summarized the opinions of Chaucer which were prevalent in the world of scholars at the close of the seventeenth century, and set forth his reasons for modernizing the early verses. Since the work of Dryden and his theories of
translation served as a guide for similar undertakings during the century following his death, it is necessary to examine the Preface and the Fables in order to have a basic understanding of the rationale of modernization before 1800.

Though Dryden probably understood Middle English far better than the majority of his contemporaries, it is evident that his knowledge, by modern standards, was slight. Chaucer's metrics were completely misunderstood because the concept of the sounded final e had been lost in his day. As a result, the early poet was viewed as a crude versifier who had no regular system of metrical beat within his verses. Dryden excused this defect by writing that though "the verse of Chaucer is not harmonious with us,"\(^2\) it had the "rude sweet-

\(^2\)Page 744.

ness of a Scotch tune ... which is natural and pleasing, tho' not perfect.\(^4\) For this reason, he believed that Chaucer

\(^4\)Loc. cit.

"was a rough diamond, and must first be polished, ere he shines."\(^5\) "We can only say that he lived in the infancy of

\(^5\)Page 746."
our poetry, and that nothing is brought to perfection at the first."\(^6\)

Among those who had passed judgment on Chaucer's poetry, Dryden found two schools of thought. The poet Cowley was representative of that group of men who "had no taste for him" and believed that Chaucer was a "dry, old-fashioned wit, not worth reviving."\(^7\) At the opposite pole of opinion was that group of which Dryden's patron, the Earl of Leicester, was representative. To him Chaucer's poetry was of such strength and beauty that he condemned any attempts at modernization because "it is little less than profanation and sacrilege to alter\(^8\) his old language.

To the first of these two groups Dryden insisted that the decision as to the worth of Chaucer should be made by a large audience -- an audience which could be reached only through the medium of modernization. The late seventeenth century poet agreed with those who condemned modernization
because much of the "good sense" and "beauty of his thoughts" might be lost in modern dress; however, Dryden believed that it was better to pass on that portion of Chaucer which could survive modernization than to allow all of his work to be lost to those who could not read the fourteenth century English.

I grant that something will be lost ... in all translation; but the sense will remain, which would otherwise be lost, or at least be maim'd, when it is scarce intelligible; and that to but a few. How few are there who can read Chaucer so as to understand him perfectly! And if imperfectly, then with less profit and no pleasure. 'Tis not for the use of some old Saxon friends that I have taken these pains with him; let them neglect my version, because they have no need of it. I made it for their sakes who understand sense and poetry as well as they, when that poetry and sense is put into words which they understand.

9Loc. cit.

From this statement of the purpose of Dryden's modernizations -- a statement which was to be echoed by all modernizers who succeeded him -- we can turn to an examination of Dryden's conception of the freedom or accuracy with which the work was to be done. The seventeenth century poet believed that Chaucer lacked sufficient critical sense and therefore frequently included material which a refined taste would have prompted him to omit. On the other hand, expansion of certain ideas was necessary when the inadequacy of Chaucer's language had prevented their full development.
I have not tied myself to a literal translation; but have often omitted what I judged necessary, or not of dignity enough to appear in the company of better thoughts, I have presumed farther, in some places, and added somewhat of my own where I thought my author was deficient, and had not given his thoughts their true lustre, for want of words in the beginning of our language.

It is fortunate that Dryden thus exactly stated that he had not attempted to make the translations literal, for they are far from that in any sense of the word. However, even a cursory study of the Fables reveals that the omission of irrelevant passages, the expansion of incomplete ideas, or even the polishing of the rough language cannot wholly account for the translation's lack of exactness. The original plot or theme of each of the fables can be recognized and the meanings of individual lines are similar in some cases, but that is the extent of the literalness of the new version. The essence of Chaucer has been wholly transformed in the Fables by the regulations of the poetic tradition which Dryden and his contemporaries had developed as the epitome of correctness. The easy flow of Chaucer's verse is completely regimented in the traditional end-stopped verses and couplets, the carefully placed and seldom varying medial caesura, and the artificial poetic diction of stock words and phrases. As examples of seventeenth-century poetry, certain passages of the Fables can be cited as superior; few passages can be
found which accurately portray the true spirit of Chaucer. It may be true, as Lounsbury has written, that "the gold of Chaucer has been transmuted into silver; but silver is a precious metal, even if not so precious as gold."\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Lounsbury, III, 179.}

However, it should be remembered that silver tarnishes and loses its luster much more rapidly than gold, and that it is only natural to feel cheated if an article that has formerly been wrought of the yellow metal is later counterfeited of a baser substance and presented as the genuine to an unsuspecting public.

An example of the classical flourish with which Dryden modernized Chaucer and the liberties he took with the original verses, is the passage in "The Knight's Tale" (Dryden's "Palamon and Arcite") in which Arcite goes into the fields "for to doon his observance to May." Addressing the favorite month of the year, Arcite says - in Chaucer's words:

\begin{quote}
"May, with alle thy floures and thy grene, 
Welcome be thou, fairest fresshe May, 
In hope that I some grene gete may."\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}\textit{Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer," The Works of the British Poets, ed. Robert Anderson, 14 vols., London, Arch, 1795, I, 14. I have used this text for all quotations from the work of Chaucer, since it is probably the one used by nineteenth century modernizers.}
Dryden expanded this three verse passage into ten lines:

"For thee, sweet month, the groves green liverys wear,  
If not the first, the fairest of the year;  
For thee the Graces lead the dancing hours,  
And Nature's ready pencil paints the flowers:  
When thy short reign is past, the fev'rish sun,  
The sultry tropic fears, and moves more slowly on.  
So may thy tender blossoms feel no blight,  
Nor goats with venom'd teeth thy tendril bite,  
As thou shalt guide my wandering feet to find  
The fragrant greens to seek, my brow to bind."  

---

^13Dryden, 760.

The natural flow of Chaucer's three lines has been restricted by the artificiality of Dryden's diction; "Nature's ready pencil," "dancing hours," "fev'rish sun," and the near-bathos of "goats with venom'd teeth" have no counterparts in the poetry of Chaucer where simplicity of diction is the essence of its beauty. The third line of the Dryden version is typical of the figures which Dryden frequently constructed, with no authority from his original, to give the "thoughts their true lustre."

It is also notable that of the five couplets in the Dryden passage, three close with a full-stop, one is partially stopped and one is open. A similar use of stock epithets, closed couplets, and regular caesuras, is seen in a passage from Dryden's "The Cock and the Fox" ("The Nun's Priest's Tale"). On the morning following his dream, the joyous Chanticleer crows:—
"The sonne," he seyde, "is clomben up on hevene
Fourty degrees and oon, and more ywis.
Madame Partelote, my worldes blis,
Herkeneth thisse blissful briddes how they synge,
And se the fresche figures how they springe,
Ful is myn herte or revel and solas!" 14

14 Chaucer, I, 155.

Dryden's Chanticleer, however, is somewhat more loquacious and knows the proper eighteenth century diction:—

"Then turning said to Partlet: "See, my dear,
How lavish nature has adorned the year;
How the pale primrose and blue violet spring,
And birds essay their throats disused to sing;
All these are ours; and I with pleasure see
Man strutting on two legs and aping me:
An unflledg'd creature, of a lumpish frame,
Indue with fewer particles of flame.
Our dame sits cowring o'er a kitchen fire;
I draw fresh air, and nature's works admire;
And ev'n this day in more delight abound
Than since I was an egg, I ever found." 15

15 Dryden, 828.

"lavish nature," "pale primrose," and "birds essay their throats disused to sing" might be selected as typical classical diction. As in the preceding illustration, the full-stopped couplets predominate, and the causuras are pronounced and regular.

The added lines are notable not only for their classic artificiality, but also for the change which they effect in the portrayal of Chanticleer. With Dryden's help Chanticleer
is raised from the foolish cock of Chaucer's story to the type of person so despised by the men of the Age of Reason - the ambitious individual who through his false pride attempts to raise himself above his natural position in the Chain of Being. Thus the original character has been magnified into one of greater complexity specifically identified with seventeenth and eighteenth century concepts. That Dryden has accomplished this transformation with considerable wit of his own, together with a bit of irony in the comparison of the free, nature-loving Chanticleer with the "cow'ring", kitchen-bound dame," should be noted as an example of the frequent commendable contributions which Dryden made to the modernizations.

Just as the structure of Chaucer's verse was restyled in the modernizations to conform with the accepted poetic conventions of the classic poetry, so was the substance of the tales changed to reflect the philosophy of the Age of Reason. The strong preoccupation with Fate and Fortune, which is so characteristic of Chaucer, is frequently subordinated by Dryden so that the concepts of a world governed by reason may be advanced. Wholly compatible with the eighteenth century philosophy is Chanticleer's sententious:

"Some truths are not by reason to be tried
But we have true experience for our guide." 16

16 Dryden, 855.
Reason again is brought in, with no authority from Chaucer, in Chanticleer's second proof of the truth of dreams. The companion of the traveler who has had the dream warning him against going to sea, mocks the dreamer with:—

"No dreme," quod he, "may so myn herte agaste That I wol lette for to do my thynges.  
I set nat a straw by thy dremynges,  
For swevenes been but vanytees and japes.  
Men Dreme alday of owles and of ayes,  
And eek of many a maze therwithal;  
Men dreme of thyng that newere was ne shal."  

17 Chaucer, I, 154.

Dryden's traveler, however, is an eighteenth century philosopher:

"Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes; When monarch Reason sleeps, this mimic wakes;  
Compounds a medley of disjointed things,  
A mob of cobbler's, and a court of kings.  
Light fumes are merry, grosser fumes are sad;  
Both are reasonable soul run mad."  

18 Dryden, Ode.

Similar eighteenth century poetic and philosophic conventions might be found in the passages of Dryden's "The Wife of Bath, Her Tale," "The Flower and the Leaf," and the "Character of the Good Parson." In these three selections Dryden took even greater liberties with the original poems. In "Palamon
and Arcite" and "The Cock and the Fox" Dryden at least remained true to the general substance of the originals and, although the characters may change slightly in the retelling, the main events of the tale remain the same. On the other hand, in "The Flower and the Leaf" the debate takes place between two groups of fairies rather than between the human beings of the original; again, in the "Wife of Bath, Her Tale," the incidents of the tale are changed to the extent that the heroine is transformed from Chaucer's innocent girl under a mystical spell to a girl who is herself a witch. "The Character of a Good Parson" is admittedly only an imitation of Chaucer's characterization of the Parson in the Prologue and is accepted as actually Dryden's portrayal of a contemporary clergyman.

In the extracts from Dryden's Fables which have been quoted it is apparent that Dryden felt that the modernization of Chaucer's verses necessarily meant shaping them to fit the pattern of poetry which had become standard during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is my purpose to judge the result not on the basis of any fixed poetic standards, but only as to the accuracy with which Chaucer has been presented to the audience for whom the modernizations were written. On this basis, it seems obvious that Chaucer was misrepresented by Dryden and that readers of the modernizations would have no accurate idea of the true character of Chaucer's poetry or of his philosophy. It is unfortunate that
Dryden's prestige as a poet and critic was so great that his modernizations were accepted as the pattern to be followed for the next eighty years.

The best known of the poets who followed his lead in this work was Alexander Pope. The three Pope modernizations, or "paraphrases" as their author called them, were "January and May: or, The Merchant's Tale," "The Wife of Bath: Her Prologue," and "The Temple of Fame." The history of their composition and publication was reviewed by Pope in an advertisement prefixed to a juvenile volume in which they were collected:

The following translations were selected from many others done by the Author in his youth; for the most part indeed but a sort of Exercise, while he was improving himself in the Languages, and carried by his early bent to Poetry to perform them rather in Verse than in Prose. Mr. Dryden's Fables came out about that time, which occasioned the translations from Chaucer. They were first separately printed in Miscellaneies by J. Tonson and B. Lintot, and afterwards collected in the Quarto Edition of 1717. 19


That Pope had read Dryden's modernizations and had similar views of the method which should be employed in the work can be seen in a comparison of any arbitrarily selected passage from Pope's paraphrases with the original in Chaucer. The wedding feast of January and May can be used for this comparison.
(Chaucer)

Thus been they wedded with solemnitee,  
And at the feeste sitteth he and she  
With other worthy folk upon the deys,  
All ful of joye and blisse in the paleys,  
And full of instrument of swich soun  
That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphigoune,  
Ne maden nevere swich a melodye.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20}Chaucer, I, 87.

(Pope)

And now the palace gates are open'd wide,  
The guests appear in order, side by side,  
And, placed in state, the bridegroom and the bride.  
The breathing flutes soft notes are heard around,  
And the shrill trumpets mix their silver sound;  
The vaulted roofs with echoing music ring,  
These touch the vocal stops, and those the trembling string.  
Not thus Amphion tuned the warbling lyre,  
Nor Joab the sounding clarion could inspire,  
Nor Fierce Theodamus, whose sprightly strain  
Could swell the soul to rage, and fire the martial train.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{21}Pope, 29.

The poetic conventions which were pointed out in the examination of Dryden's modernizations can also be found in this passage from Pope. Though the above excerpt would seem to indicate that Pope also followed Dryden in his expansion of the original lines, such a conclusion would be false when applied to Pope's modernization as a whole; for, in this one respect Pope generally differs from his predecessor. Rather than add to the original lines, Pope felt that deletion was
often necessary. Consequently, "The Merchant's Tale" is reduced from 1172 lines to 321; the 856 lines of the original Prologue to "The Wife of Bath's Tale" is decreased to 439; and "The Temple of Fame" presents what was originally 2158 lines in 524. The reduction was performed by condensing descriptive passages and omitting other passages for no apparent reason. The omission of the Wife of Bath's discussion of the functions of the male and female anatomy \(^{22}\) may be

\[\text{Chaucer, I, 52-53.}\]

excused on the grounds of indelicacy, although this excuse seems feeble when one realizes that the general licentiousness of the Prologue is still present in the remainder of the translation. However, the good Wife's description of her nagging to conceal her own guilt was deleted for no apparent reason. \(^{23}\)

\[\text{Page 54.}\]

In the deletions which he made in his modernizations, then, Pope differed from the more verbose Dryden. Two schools of modernization were thus established - one (Dryden's) which believed that Chaucer needed to be expanded, and another (Pope's) which believed that contraction was necessary.

None of the authors of the eighteenth century who published
modernizations after Pope and Dryden added anything new to the technique. The modernizations of these lesser men were apparently not very widely read at the time of their appearance, nor have they received much attention in the eras which have followed. Since they add nothing significant to the history of modernization, it seems unnecessary to do more than review briefly the items which were written.

In such a review we need not pause over the individual modernizations which were issued between Pope and the Ogle edition of the "Canterbury Tales" in 1741. In the Ogle edition were gathered the principal translations of Chaucer which had been made during the first forty years of the eighteenth century. This volume contained the modernizations by Pope and Dryden together with those of Betterton, Samuel Boyse, Henry Brooke, Jeremiah Markland, Grosvenor, and Ogle, the editor. Eleven modernizations were included in what were to have been the first three volumes of a complete modernized version of the Tales. The modernizations were noteworthy only for their close relation to the practices of Dryden and Pope. They fall into two groups, depending upon the master who was being followed; they are either abbreviated, in the manner of Pope, or expanded, in the manner of Dryden.

Whether or not we agree with Lounsbury's dislike for Chaucer modernization in any manner or form, it seems that his criticism of the Ogle versions can be accepted as valid.

One general criticism can be passed on these versions. They undertook, in the first place, to do something that it was not in itself desirable to do. Having
undertaken it, they proceeded to do what they undertook in the most undesirable way. Wit and humor were crushed by the mass of irrelevant verbiage under which the sense was loaded down. Pathos naturally vanished from sight. Its very life consists in simplicity of language; and in place of simple language we had here a succession of orotund phrases. For pathos consequently, was substituted a weak emotion which spent itself in rambling and loquacious speech.  

24 Lounsbury, III, 196.

With the publication in 1775 of Tyrwhitt's edition of "The Canterbury Tales," it might be supposed that Chaucer modernization would have been affected by the increase of scholarly understanding of Chaucer. Such was not the case, even though the Tyrwhitt edition clarified many of the misunderstandings which had clouded the work of Chaucer during the years prior to its publication: for example the true significance of the final ० in the versification was explained, and many of the words which had been translated incorrectly or misunderstood were more accurately defined.

The only significant modernization which was issued during those last years was the Lipscomb edition of the complete "Canterbury Tales" in 1795. The three volumes of this publication contained the versions of the Tales which had first appeared in Ogle's books - with the exception of the Miller's and the Reeve's Tales, which were omitted because of their indelicacy - together with Lipscomb's translations of the remaining tales. Lounsbury has summarized the merits of this
One is not surprised to find his versions dull; he is surprised to find them so very dull. Yet about his modernizations as a whole there is a mechanical uniformity; a decency of mediocrity, which makes it almost as difficult to say anything harsh about it as to say anything in its favor.\footnote{Page 199.}

The eighteenth century closed, then, as it had opened, with the truly great qualities of Chaucer's verses still hidden from the mass of readers either because of the difficulty of his archaic language or because of the false interpretations of the modernizers. The work of presenting a truer and more accurate picture of Chaucer to those who could not read Middle English remained for a generation of poets whose poetic techniques were less restricted by unnatural conventions and traditional devices.
Part II

Modernizations by Wordsworth

After Tyrwhitt's edition of the Canterbury Tales clarified many of the problems which had made Chaucer study difficult and unpopular, Chaucer scholarship became a respectable and rapidly growing field of literature, and a more universal understanding of the early poet's true greatness began to develop. Those poets who were a part of the blossoming Romantic movement in the early nineteenth century were among the first to recognize and appreciate the essential qualities which make Chaucer's poetry great. To them, the verses of Chaucer exemplified the simplicity and naturalness of subject matter and technical form which were so important to their own poetic philosophy. In their opposition to the ornate and decorative formalism of the neoclassicists, the romantics turned naturally to the unstudied freshness of the fourteenth century poet. The correspondence and prose writings of some of the romantic poets reveal their admiration for Chaucer. Coleridge wrote;--

I take unceasing delight in Chaucer. His manly cheerfulness is especially delicious to me. ""How exquisitely tender he is, and yet how perfectly free from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping."

1Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. H. N. Coleridge, London, Murray, 1876, p. 130.
Wordsworth called Chaucer one of the "greatest poets the world has ever seen." When he decided to become a poet, he chose Chaucer as one of the English poets whose work he must have constantly before him as an example to be followed.

In his *Select Works of the British Poets* Southey wrote:

Chaucer is not merely the acknowledged father of English poetry, he is also one of our greatest poets. His proper station is in the first class, with Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton; and Shakespeare alone has equalled him in variety and versatility of genius. ...In some of his smaller pieces, he has condescended to use the ornate style which began to be affected in his age; but he has only used it as if to show off better that he had deliberately rejected it in all his greater and better works. ...Whoever aspires to a lasting name among the English poets must get the writings of Chaucer and drink
at the well-head.\(^5\)

---

\(^5\)Quoted by Caroline F. E. Spurgeon in *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Illusion*, 2 vols., Cambridge, University Press, 1925, II, 183.

---

Hazlitt also pointed out the clarity of Chaucer's crystal style in the second of his *Lectures on the English Poets*:

His sentiments are not voluntary effusions of the poet's fancy, but founded on the natural impulses and habitual prejudices of the characters he has to represent. There is an inveteracy of purpose, a sincerity of feeling which never relaxes or grows vapid, in whatever they do or say. There is no artificial, pompous display, but a strict parsimony of the poet's materials, like the rude simplicity of the age in which he lived. ...His muse is no "babbling gossip of the air," fluent and redundant; ...Chaucer had an equal eye for truth of nature and discrimination of character; and his interest in what he saw gave new distinctness and force to his power of observation.\(^6\)

---

\(^6\)Spurgeon, II, 101.

---

It would be wrong to assume that all of the great writers of the Romantic period found inspiration in Chaucer for Byron could not see the basis for admiration of the early poet. "Chaucer," he wrote "notwithstanding the praises bestowed upon him, I think obscene and contemptible:--He owes his celebrity merely to his antiquity."\(^7\)

---

\(^7\)Vol. II, 39.
In general, however, the majority of the early nineteenth century poets found in Chaucer a subject for admiration and imitation. Since this was their feeling, they desired that Chaucer's works be made available for general reading.

Among the Romantic poets, Wordsworth was the first and the leader of the modernizers. It has been shown by quotations from his correspondence that Wordsworth admired and respected Chaucer; the many poetic allusions to his early master further indicates this admiration. The locale of "The Miller's Tale" was the scene of Wordsworth's early enjoyment of Chaucer while he was a student at Cambridge:

Beside the pleasant mill of Trompington
I laughed with Chaucer in the Hawthorne shade;
Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
Of amorous passion.  

---


In the thirty-first of the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" Wordsworth again referred to Chaucer with the highest poetic tribute which he ever gave to him:

"Sweet is the holiness of youth"—so felt
Time-honoured Chaucer speaking through that lay
By which the Prioress beguiled the way,
And many a Pilgrim's rugged heart did melt.
Hadst thou, loved Bard! whose spirit often dwelt
In the clear land of vision, but foreseen
King, child, and seraph, blended in the mien
Of pious Edward kneeling as he knelt
In meek and simple infancy, what joy
For universal Christendom had thrilled
Thy heart! what hopes inspired thy genius, skilled
(O great Precursor, genuine morning star)
The lucid shafts of reason to employ,

Piercing the papal darkness from afar.

In addition to writing of his own enjoyment of Chaucer and to praising the "morning star" of English Poetry, Wordsworth borrowed an idea from the "Squire's Tale" and incorporated it in his poem on Liberty ("Those breathing tokens of your kind regard"):

Is there a cherished bird (I venture now
To snatch a sprig from Chaucer's reverend brow)--
Is there a brilliant fondling of the cage,
Though sure of plaudits on his costly stage,
Though fed with dainties from the snowwhite hand
Of a kind mistress, fairest of the land,
But gladly would escape; and, if need were,
Scatter the colours from the plumes that bear
The emancipated captive through the air
Into strange woods, where he at large may live
On best or worst which they and Nature give?

Chaucer expressed a similar idea in this way:

Men loven of propre kind newefangelnesse,
And brides don that men in cages sede;
For though thou night and day take of hem hede,
And strew hir cage faire and soft as silke,
And give hem sugre, hony, bred, and milke,
Yet right mon as that his core is up
He with his feet will spurned doun his cup,
And to the wood he wol and wormes eat.\footnote{Chaucer, I, 98.}

But Wordsworth was not content with the use of allusions to Chaucer and the occasional borrowing from his work. Just as Dryden had written modernizations of Chaucer a little more than a hundred years before, Wordsworth, in 1801, rewrote "The Prioress's Tale," "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale," "The Manciple's Tale," and a portion of "Troilus and Criseyde."

Though Wordsworth and Dryden differed widely in their poetic theories, they occupied similar positions in the literary milieu of their respective generations. Not only were both men leading poets, but both introduced new concepts of Chaucer modernization to their contemporaries, and established principles for translation which were followed for years after their work had been completed. Since he disapproved of the style which Dryden used in the greater part of his poetic composition including the Fables, it was to be expected that Wordsworth would find fault with his predecessor's modernizations. Of "Palamon and Arcite" he wrote:

Though Dryden has executed it, in his own way observe, with great spirit and Harmony, he has suffered so much of the simplicity, and with that of the beauty, and occasional pathos of the original to escape, that I should be pleased to see a new attempt at it.\footnote{de Selin court, Letters ... Later Years, II, 993.}
Of Dryden's *Fables* as a whole, Wordsworth wrote, "Chaucer, I think, he has entirely spoiled, even wantonly deviating from his great original, and always for the worse."\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) de Selincourt, *Letters ... Middle Years*, I, 458c.

Though he disagreed with Dryden's method, Wordsworth seems to have had similar motives in encouraging Chaucer modernizations. In 1840, when the Horne volume of modernizations, which will be discussed later in this paper, was being prepared for publication, Wordsworth wrote to Thomas Powell, one of the originators of the edition:

> My approbation of the Endeavor to tempt people to read Chaucer by making a part of him intelligible to the unlettered, and tunable to modern ears, will be sufficiently apparent by my own little Contributions to the intended.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\) de Selincourt, *Letters ... Later Years*, II, 999.

Later during the same year, Wordsworth wrote to the publisher Moxon that he had given Powell those modernizations which he had made forty years before

> ...out of my love and reverence for Chaucer, in hopes that whatever may be the merits of Mr. Powell's attempt, the attention of other Writers may be drawn to the subject; and a work hereafter be produced by different pens which will place the treasures of one of the greatest Poets within the reach of the multitudes, which now they are not.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Vol. II, 1005.
To the two purposes set forth in these quotations -- to provide the "multitudes" with intelligible copies of Chaucer, and to draw other writers to the subject--may be added a third motive for the modernizations--"to tempt the mere modern reader to recur to the original." Encouraging the reading of the original tales, was a primary objective of Chaucer lovers in the early nineteenth century.

To accomplish these objectives, Wordsworth felt that it was necessary to remain as close as possible to the original vocabulary and structure of the poems which were being modernized. He realized that in the use of modern language and orthography some of the antique flavor and charm was necessarily lost. He believed however, that through highly literal translation in which no greater changes were made than necessary for ready understanding, the essential spirit of Chaucer would be preserved. His exact views of how modernization should be accomplished were set forth in a note which preceded "The Prioresses Tale" and in a letter which he wrote to Thomas Powell.

In the following poem no further deviation from the original has been made than was necessary for the fluent and instant understanding of the Author: so much, however, is the language altered since Chaucer's time, that much was to be removed and its place supplied with as little incongruity as possible. The ancient accent has been retained.
in a few conjuncti ons, as also and alw ay, from a conviction that such sprinklings of antiquity would be admitted, by persons of taste, to have a graceful accordance with the subject. 17

17 Wordsworth, Works, p. 263.

Neither in the "Pri oress's Tale" nor in the "Cuckoo and the Nightingale" have I kept to the precise for m rule of the original as to the form and number and position of the rhymes thinking it enough if I kept the same number of lines in each stanza, and this is I think all that is necessary and all that can be done without sacrificing the substance of the sense, too often, to the mere form of sound. 18

18 de Selincourt, Letters ... Later Years, II, 993.

The most outstanding characteristic of the new interpretations is the closeness with which the original lines have been translated into modern English. In many cases, where clarity did not require that the structure and the vocabulary of the lines be changed, whole lines and couplets have been repeated without alteration except for the ortho graphy. As a result, the original tone of mood—the over-all atmosphere—has been retained to a great extent—the tender ness of "The Prioress's Tale," the lightness of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale," and the pathos of "Troilus and Criseyda."

An excerpt from "The Prioress's Tale" indicates the fidelity to the original with which the version was written:
(Chaucer)

My conning is so weke, o blisful Quene!
For to declare thy grete worthinesse,
That I ne may the weighte not sustene;
But as a child of twelven mooneth old or lesse,
That can unnethes any word expresse,
Right so fare I, and therefore I you pray,
Guideth my song that I shall of you say. 19

19 Chaucer, I, 121.

(Wordsworth)

"My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen!
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness,
That I the weight of it may not sustain;
But as a child of twelvemonth old or less,
That laboureth his language to express,
Even so fare I; and therefore, I thee pray,
Guide thou my song which I of thee shall say." 20

20 Wordsworth, Works, p. 263.

This passage is remarkable for the closeness of its translation, but it is not exceptional and can be considered as typical of the whole poem. The "Canticus Troili" in the excerpt from "Troilus and Criseyde" further demonstrates Wordsworth's faithfulness to the original:—

(Wordsworth)

O star, of which I lost have all the light,
With a sore heart well ought I to bewail,
That ever dark in torment, night by night,
Toward my death with wind I steer and sail;
For which upon the tenth night if thou fail
With thy bright beams to guide me but one hour,
My ship and me Charybdis will devour. 21

21 Page 273.
(Chaucer)

O sterre of which I lost have all the light,
With herte sore wel ought I to bewail
That evir derke in turment, night by night,
Towarde my deth with winde I stere and saile,
For which the tennith night if that I faile
The giding of thy bemiis bright an houre
My ship and me Carybdis woll devoure.22

As I have suggested earlier, it was natural that there should be a great similarity between the Wordsworth modernizations and the originals, since the two poets had similar fundamental concepts underlying their artistic productions. In the work of Chaucer the later poet found many of the qualities of style and subject matter which he admired and had adopted as a part of his own poetic philosophy. The two poets had in common a simple, non-decorative style, a love of nature, and a great depth of feeling and observation. Wordsworth said that he liked Chaucer's method of "softening and diversifying his views of life ... by metaphors and images from rural nature or by shifting the scene of action into the quiet of groves and forests."23 Hazlitt unconsciously showed the similarity between Wordsworth and Chaucer when he wrote:--

Page 398.

22 de Selincourt, Letters ... Later Years, II, 600.
Chaucer's descriptions of natural scenery ... have a local truth and freshness which gives the very feeling of the air, the coolness or moisture of the ground. Inanimate objects are thus made to have a fellow-feeling in the interest of the story; and render back the sentiment of the speaker's mind. 24


Hazlitt was writing of Chaucer, but his words could, with justice, be applied to Wordsworth.

Miss Barstow, in her study of the diction of Wordsworth, has pointed out the similar artistic vocabularies which the two poets used. She has also suggested that Wordsworth in his rejection of the elaborate and artificial Neo-classic diction and adoption of the "language really used by men," resembled Chaucer, who also preferred the then simpler and vernacular English language to the fashionable courtly French and Latin—the languages which had been used by his predecessors. As Chaucer had found a suitable medium for poetic expression in the language of his countrymen, so Wordsworth created superior poetry with a simpler vocabulary than had customarily been used in metric expression. In showing that Wordsworth and Chaucer had a similar poetic vocabulary, Miss Barstow found that stanza after stanza of the most typical Wordsworthian verse ... contain only words that may be found in Skeat's glossary to Chaucer. Of course there are many cases where this is not so.
...The remarkable thing is that he should have come so near the vocabulary of the "first finder of our fair language." 25


By actual computation Miss Barstow found that sixty percent of the words used by Wordsworth appear in the work of Chaucer. Since Wordsworth and Chaucer had such similar vocabularies, it is not surprising that Wordsworth's modernizations are closer to the originals than were those of Dryden and his followers. In some instances, however, the substitution of new, more readily understandable, words has resulted in slight changes of color in individual passages. For example, in line 231 of "The Prioress's Tale" Chaucer wrote of the burial of the murdered child:

And in a tombe of marbul stones cleere
Enclosed they his little body sweete. 26

26 Chaucer, I, 123.

Wordsworth modernized these lines to:

And in a tomb of precious marble clear
Enclosed his uncorrupted body sweet. 27

27 Wordsworth, 266.
The change of "litel" to "uncorrupted" seems unwarranted and undesirable, since the result is a less tender, as well as less euphonious, description of the boy's body. Dowden has suggested that the line could have been changed to "Enclosed they his little body sweet" with no interruption of the meter or the rhyme, and the exact meaning of the original would have been preserved. 28


A similar change in characterization resulted when Wordsworth translated the word "sely" as "simple" rather than "wretched" as modern scholars would. Troilus thus becomes less pathetic in the eleventh line of the "Troilus and Cressida":

But Lord, this simple Troilus was woe, 29

29 Wordsworth, 271.

Wordsworth cannot be criticized for this change in connotation since the glossary of the Anderson edition, the edition which Wordsworth probably used, defines "sely" as "silly, simple, harmless."

The substitution of "continuance" for "countenance" as the translation of "continuance" in the "Troilus and Cressida"
must have been caused either by Wordsworth's misreading of the Chaucer original or by the typesetter's misreading of the manuscript.

(Chaucer)
And as God would he gan so fast to ride
That no wight of his countinaunce espied. 30

30 Chaucer, 397.

(Wordsworth)
And on his purpose bent so fast to ride, 31
That no wight of his continuance espied.

31 Wordsworth, 271.

Other discrepancies of this sort could be pointed out in the modernizations. However, it seems that such a close scrutiny of the work is useless, since none of the errors which can be found are of such significance that they destroy the original tone of the poems. The vocabulary of the translations is remarkably close to that of the originals; as close as the demands of meter and rhyme would allow.

Although Wordsworth stated that he had not attempted to duplicate the "form and number and position" of the rhymes of the original poems, a study of the modernizations reveals that he did remarkably well in preserving these qualities. It is true that wrenched rhymes are sometimes introduced and the rhyme scheme is occasionally changed, but the rhyming on the
whole is far closer to the original than Wordsworth would have us believe he intended it to be. Stanza XLII of "The Cuckoo and the Nightingale"\(^{32}\) in which "note", "brought," and "out" are rhymed, and stanza XXXIII\(^{33}\) of the same poem in which "bliss" and "advice" are rhymed, may be cited as indicative of the odd rhymes which Wordsworth was sometime forced to use. In that poem, also, a change of scheme was introduced in stanza XXI; the original was aabba while the modernized form is ababb.\(^{34}\)

\(^{32}\)Page 270.

\(^{33}\)Page 268.

\(^{34}\)Loc. cit.

Except for instances similar to those which have been cited, Wordsworth modernizations, unlike Dryden's, are remarkable for the accuracy with which they present Chaucer's poetry. No attempt was made to change the meter or the versification of the original work, nor was it felt necessary to expand or contract any portions of it. Chaucer's own descriptive words and phrases were used whenever possible and the original was not embellished with stock epithets as it had been in the
eighteenth century.

Though Wordsworth had provided a commendable pattern for the refashioning of Chaucer into a form which could be read with understanding by those who could read and enjoy simple poetry—a pattern which was to be closely followed in future work of this kind—it must be remembered that Wordsworth could never approve any project to modernize Chaucer's complete works. Wordsworth's refusal to allow the publication of his version of "The Manciple's Tale" because he felt that it was too indelicate for the refined taste of the age in which he lived indicates the reason why a complete edition could not be written. Wordsworth did not condemn Chaucer, as other men did, for having written the tale and those others which are similar to it; he merely felt that taste and standards of morality had changed to such an extent since Chaucer's time that what had once been accepted without question could no longer be read in polite circles of society. This belief that those passages and tales which were immoral—according to nineteenth century standards—should be hidden from public view, was another concept that was generally accepted by those who prepared Chaucer for modern readers. The extent to which nineteenth standards of morality affected Chaucer modernization will be shown in the discussions of the versions which followed those of Wordsworth.
Part III
Modernizations by Clarke and Hunt

The movement to popularize Chaucer along the path which had been charted by Wordsworth was advanced during the second and third decades of the nineteenth century largely through the efforts of Leigh Hunt and Charles Cowden Clarke. Their contributions to the growing body of Chaucer modernizations followed the basic plan which had been established by Wordsworth in that they rejected any attempt to remake Chaucer's verses according to an established classic poetic tradition. Like Wordsworth, they wished to present to the reading public a version of Chaucer which could be understood and yet which would have lost none of the original flavor and spirit of the fourteenth century. Their methods of doing this differed somewhat from those of Wordsworth—Hunt was relatively close to Wordsworth's pattern, but Clarke used a technique so different that his versions might be considered as beyond the realm of modernization as I have been considering it in this paper.

Of all the Romantic poets, Hunt was probably the most sincere admirer of Chaucer. In the introduction to her collection of Chaucer criticism and allusions, Miss Spurgeon wrote:--

The most constant and enthusiastic lover of Chaucer in the early nineteenth century was Leigh Hunt. ...For nearly half a century Hunt shows increasing knowledge and admiration for Chaucer. So
numerous are his references to him both in prose and verse that a large bundle of them has been put aside, and only a small selection (43) are here printed.¹

¹Spurgeon, p. lxxv.

Through all these years, Hunt shows his admiration in the most practical way, by making every effort to get Chaucer better known, to bring his work to the notice of the ordinary reader and to induce him to go to the original for himself.²

²Page lxvi.

Hunt's growing admiration of Chaucer was shown in his poem "Feast of the Poets," which was revised after its original 1812 publication, and republished in 1819. The original lines ranked Chaucer below Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser;³

³Page 59.

however, in the revised edition, Hunt moved "the glorious old boy" to second place, below Shakespeare, but above Milton and Spenser.⁴

⁴Page 71
Hunt's opinion of Chaucer was typical of that of a poet of the Romantic temperament. Like Wordsworth, he admired the simplicity and naturalness of Chaucer's verses, and the sharpness with which he described his characters and the setting of his poems.

His poetry rises in the land like a clear morning in which you see everything with a rare and crystal distinctness from the mountain to the minutest flower; towns, solitudes, human beings. ...His nature is the greatest poet's nature, omitting nothing in its sympathy ...and he combines an epic power of the grand, comprehensive and primitive imagery, with that of being contented with the smallest fact near him, and of luxuriating in pure vague animal spirits, like a dozer in the field. His gayety is equal to his gravity, and his sincerity to both. ...Chaucer excels in pathos, in humour, in satire, character, and description.  


In a series of magazine articles, first published in The Tatler and later collected in The Seer (1864) Hunt illustrated the most admirable qualities of Chaucer's genius with extracts from the Cowden Clarke modern orthography volume of Chaucer. Chaucer's "Portrait Painting and Humor"  


were illustrated with the prologue descriptions of the Knight, the Squire, the Yeoman ("A nut-head had he with a brown visage"), the Prioress, the Monk, the Scholar, the Sergeant of
Law, the Sailor, and the Parish Priest. "The Knight's Tale" was the source of examples of Chaucer's "Physical Life and Movement." Hunt liked the passage which describes Arcite going into the woods on a May morning... on his courser, starting as the fire," Of the italicised phrase he wrote:--

An admirable image! He means those sudden catches and impulses of a fiery horse, analogous to the shifting starts of a flame in action.

7Vol. I, 221.

The third of the series of articles dealt with Chaucer's pathos which is "true nature's: it goes directly to its object."8 "The Knight's Tale" was again the source of the example—the scene in which Arcite is dying:--

Farewell, my sweet! farewell, mine Emily! And soft, -- take me in your arms tway For love of God, and hearken what I say.9


9Vol. I, 228.

Hunt pointed out that "the mixture of natural kindliness, bewildered feeling, and indelible good-breeding" shown in
the departure of Constance of "The Man of Law's Tale" was 
"excessively affecting."\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{10}Vol. I, 231.

Therewith she looketh backward to the land 
And saieth, "Farewell, husband ruthless!" 
And up she rose and walked down the strand 
Toward the ship, her followeth all the press: 
And ever she prayeth her child to hold his peace 
And taketh her leave.

In the fourth article Hunt digressed from the original 
plan which had been to point out Chaucer's outstanding 
characteristics, and retold to story of Griselda which Hunt 
defied even the "manliest man" to read in the original "without 
feeling his eyes moisten."\textsuperscript{11} The prose relation of the

\textsuperscript{11}Vol. I, 233.

story is illustrated with "irresistable" passages, of which 
the following is an example:--

\begin{quote}
And in her swoon so sadly holdeth she  
Her children two when she 'gan them embrace,  
That with great slight and with great difficulty  
The children from her arm they 'gan arrace.  
Oh! many a tear on many a piteous face  
Down ran of them that stooden her beside;  
Unnethe abouten her might they abide.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}Vol. I, 242.
The fifth article contained specimens of Chaucer's satire.

Chaucer was one of the reformers of his time; and, like the celebrated poets and wits of most countries, took pleasure in exposing the abuses of the church; not because he was an ill-natured man, and disliked the Church itself, but because his very good nature, and love of truth, made him the more dislike the abuses of the best things in the most reverend places.\(^{13}\)

\[^{13}\text{Vol. I, 243.}\]

The Pardoner was the character used by Hunt to illustrate Chaucer's satirical treatment of church practises.

Specimens as diverse as "Birds in the Spring" and "Portrait of a Female" made up the potpourri which is the sixth and final article. Hunt praised Chaucer's "ease, life, and gesticulation;\(^{14}\) his "pure, unflagging style,\(^{15}\) and his "charming couplets.\(^{16}\) With this concluded Hunt's longest and

\[^{14}\text{Vol. I, 248.}\]

\[^{15}\text{Vol. I, 251.}\]

most minute examination of Chaucer's genius.

Hunt's studies of specimens from Chaucer are important to us because they indicate the elements which he admired in Chaucer—his humor, his satire, his descriptive powers, his pathos--, and they also show the keen sense of appreciation and understanding which Hunt possessed for the early poet. It is obvious that Hunt sincerely wanted to show the beauties of Chaucer to those who read his articles, and to encourage them to read more of Chaucer's work. As with Wordsworth, Hunt turned to modernization as another instrument for the spreading of Chaucer's fame.

In 1823 Hunt modernized for publication in The Liberal, the first canto of "The Squire's Tale." This was the first of his two versions of Cambuscan's story, and was far less accurate than the later version which was published in the 1841 collection of Chaucer modernizations. Since the two illustrate the development of Hunt's method, they shall be examined together.

The 1823 version is an incomplete modernization of the tale which itself had been left in an unfinished state by Chaucer. The basic description of Cambuscan's birthday feast was freely modernized and polished where Hunt felt that it was necessary to make a rounded and almost complete picture of the fragment. In the 1841 version, however, Hunt was more faithful to the original; the tale was retold in its entirety, and left incomplete as Chaucer had left it. The following extracts
from the two poems, together with the parallel passage from Chaucer, shows the differences between the modernizations themselves, and between them and the original:--

(Hunt--1823)

"May the great Cambus to his slave be kind!
My lord, the king of Araby and Ind,
In honour of your feast, this solemn day,
Salutes you in the manner he best may,
And sends you, by a page whom he holds dear,
(His happy but his humble messenger)
This steed of brass; which, in a day and night,
Through the dark half as safely as the light,
O'er sea and land, and with your perfect ease,
Can bear your body wheresoe'er you please...."16


(Hunt--1841)

"My Lord, the king of Araby and Ind,
My sovereign master, on this solemn day,
Saluteth you, as he best can and may,
And sendeth you in honour of your feast,
By me, your ready servant, though your least,
This steed of brass; which well, as in this hall
Can in the space of a day natural,
That is to say, in four and twenty hours,
Where'er you list, in sunshine or in showers
Carry your body into every place,
In which it please you shew your sovereign face."17


(Chaucer)

He sayd, The King of Arabie and Inde,
My liege Lord, on this solemne day,
Salueth you as he best can and may,
And sendeth you, in honour of your feste,
By me, that am already at your heste,
This stede of bras, that esily and wel
Can in the space of a day naturel
(This is to sayn, in four-and-twenty houres)
Where so you list, in droghte or elles in shoures,
Beren your body into every place
To which your herte willeth for to pace.18

18 Chaucer, p. 94.

The early modernization, while it does not stray too far from the original story, cannot be compared, on the basis of literalness, with the similar work of Wordsworth. The later modernization, however, contains many lines and words transferred directly from the original in the Wordsworth manner. The flavor of antiquity which Wordsworth sought to preserve, is more apparent in the second version and it is thus removed from the ordinariness which is characteristic of the 1823 interpretation.

Hunt, however, was not always concerned with literalness in his modernizations. His "Pardoner's Tale," though it does not take the liberties with the original that the first version of "The Squire's Tale" did, shows that Hunt had developed his own method of modernization. The substance is always very similar to Chaucer, but the phrases and verses are paraphrased much more freely than Wordsworth would have allowed.

(Hunt)
In Flanders there was once a desperate set
Of three young spendthrifts, fierce with drink and debt,
Who, haunting every sink of foul repute,
And giddy with the din of harp and lute,
Went dancing and sat gambling day and night,
And swilled and gorged beyond their nature's might,
And thus upon the devil's own altar laid
The bodies and the soul that God had made.
So horribly they swore with every word,
They seemed to think the Jews had spared our Lord,
That rent his body; and the worse they swore,
And scoffed and sinned, they did but laugh the more. 19

19 Hunt, Works, p. 112.

(Chaucer)

In Flanders whilome was a compagnie
Of younge folk that haughted folie,
As hazard, riot, stewes, and tavernes,
Whereas with harpes, lutes, and gitermes,
They dance and play at dis both day and night,
And ete also and drink over hir might,
Thurgh which they don the devil sacrifice,
Within the devil's temple, in cursed wise,
By superfluitee abominable.
Hir othes bin so gret and so damnable
That it is grisly for to here hem swere.
Our blisful Lordes body they to-tere;
Hem thought the Jewes rent him not ymough;
And ech of hem at othere sinne lounghe. 20

20 Chaucer, p. lll.

Though Hunt's versions did not depart from the originals
to the extent that the modernizations of Pope and Dryden did,
there is the feeling in his poems of a new work, a work typi-
cal of Hunt and not of Chaucer. Hunt often found it necessary,
in tales such as that of the Friar, to depart from the original
to an even greater extent in the rephrasing of passages which
would have been too indelicate for the refined taste of the
nineteenth century. Frequently the result was nothing but
ridiculous, as the following two examples will testify:--

(Hunt)
There liv'd, sirs, in my country formerly
A wondrous great Archdeacon,—who but he?
Who boldly did work of his high station
In punishing improper conversation,
And all the slidings thereunto belonging. 21

21 Horne, p. 195.

(Chaucer)
Whilom there was dwelling in my countree
An archdeken, a man of high degree,
That boldly did execution
In punishing of fornication,
Of witchcraft and of bauderie, .... 22

22 Chaucer, p. 63.

(Hunt)
When thou didst make thy husband an old stag 23

23 Horne, p. 208.

(Chaucer)
When that thou madest thyn housbande cokewold 24

24 Chaucer, p. 65.

One of Hunt's most gratuitous violations of the original text, and one which cannot be wholly excused on the grounds of delicacy, is the following extract from his version of "The Manciple's Tale":--
(Chaucer)

There nys no difference, trewely
Btwixe a wife that is of high degree,
If of her body dishonest she be,
And a povre wench, oother than thyss--
If it so be they werke both amiss--
But that the gentile, in estat above,
She shall be cleped his lady, as in love;
And for that other is a povre woman,
She shall be clepped his wench or his lemman. 25

25 Chaucer, p. 173.

(Hunt)

Wife high, wife low, if bad, both do amiss:
But because one man's wench sitteth above,
She shall be called his Lady and his Love;
And because tother's sitteth low and poor,
She shall be call'd,--Well, well, I say no more; 26

26 Horne, p. 100.

The structure of nineteenth century morality undoubtedly rocked indignantly because of Hunt's unwisely chosen rhyme scheme. The blatant suggestion of the word "Whore" was certainly not acceptable, and would definitely have been frowned on.

It is apparent in Hunt's modernizations of the tales of the Friar and the Manciple, however, that he believed, like Wordsworth, that certain portions of the tales which would have been acceptable to fourteenth century society could not be tolerated by the more cultivated moral taste of the nineteenth century. This attitude was to be reflected in the work of all men who attempted to spread the fame of
Chaucer throughout the nineteenth century. In this somewhat superior attitude toward the morality of Chaucer's society—the feeling that nineteenth century taste had been refined to such a degree of purity that fourteenth century coarseness was no longer admissible—is shown the typical early Victorian prudishness which was to color the literature of the greater part of the nineteenth century. It apparently never occurred to Hunt or any of the other modernizers that in expurgating the "vulgarity" they destroyed a great part of Chaucer's basic character—the essential spirit which they wished to preserve as accurately as possible. Adjusting Chaucer's moral tone to the nineteenth century moral standard was perhaps as great a violation of his essential spirit as was the eighteenth century's regimentation of his free-flowing verse within the limits of strict heroic couplets. The paradoxical situation could not be resolved, however, in a society too narrow to accept vulgarity and blasphemy openly and without blushing. Since the nineteenth century modernizers were writing for a larger and less educated audience than had Dryden and his followers, the public taste had to be catered to more carefully than formerly. Dryden could laugh at those few men who condemned his licentiousness, but such a judgment by the readers of Hunt's periodical contributions would have been disastrous to his reputation and his career.

Closely associated with Hunt, both personally and in his admiration for Chaucer, was Charles Cowden Clarke. Though he
was not a Chaucer essayist as Hunt had been, Clarke did a far greater amount of Chaucer modernization. Clarke, like Hunt and Wordsworth, believed that Chaucer should be presented to the common reader in a form which he could understand and appreciate. He attempted this task, as had his contemporaries, through modernization; however, Clarke's modernizations were of two extreme types, each of a different nature from those of Wordsworth and Hunt. In his first publication of Chaucer, *Tales from Chaucer in Prose*, 27 which


was "designed chiefly for the use of young persons," Clarke presented the tales to his audience in simplified, prose form. In the freedom of the retelling, the tales lost the individuality of Chaucer and became merely bed-time stories with a certain medieval flavor. It is doubtful that they encouraged any of their readers to seek Chaucer in his original form, and it is certain that they did not give their audience any true portrait of Chaucer. Since they are not poetic translations they are not true modernizations of the type which have been examined in this paper.

The second of Clarke's volumes of Chaucer, *The Riches of Chaucer*, 28 also differed widely from previous modernizations.

In this publication, however, the technique was at the opposite extreme of modernization. The verses of Chaucer were not rephrased nor were modern words substituted for those of obscure meaning. "Chaucer's Poetical Works here appear with the orthography modernized, the obsolete terms, idioms, and technicalities explained at the foot of each page, and the rhythmical accentuations denoted where requisite."\(^{29}\)

\(^{29}\)Page iv.

Since the orthography of the English language had not been fixed for some centuries, Clarke felt that he was justified in replacing Chaucer's spelling with standard forms "to make the language of my author as facile and attractive to the eye, as to the understanding."\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\)Page v.

Representative of the contents of the volume is the following description of Emily in "The Knight's Tale" (the annotations are Clarke's):

(Clarke)

The season pricketh\(^{1}\) every gentle heart,
And maketh him out of his sleep to start,
And sayth, "Arise and do thine observance."\(^{2}\)

This maketh Emily have remembrance
To do honour to May, and for to rise:
Inclothéd was she fresh for to devise.
Her yellow hair was broided in a tress
Behind her back, a yardé long I guess;
And in her garden at the sun upríst
She walketh up and down where as her list:  
She gathered flouré, party white and red,
To make a sotel garland for her head;
And as an angel heavenly she sung.

1Pricketh—urgeth, exciteth  
2Observance—respect  
3Uprist—uprising  
4list—chose  
5sotel—subtle, well-controlled, fancied

Page 96.

(Chaucer)
The seson priketh every gentil herte
And maketh him out of his slepe to sterte
And sayth, Arise, and do thine observance.
This maketh Emelie hath remembrance
To don honour to May, and for to rise;
Yclothed was she freshe for to devise,
Hire ye lowe here was broided in a tresse
Behind hire back, a yerde long I gesse;
And in the garden at the sonne upríst
She walketh up and down wher as hire list:
She gathereth flourés, partie white and red,
To make a sotel garland for hire hed;
And as an angel hevenlich she song.

32Chaucer, I, 10.

In a modernization of this kind there is no question
of the accuracy with which Chaucer's exact words have been
rewritten. The words are the same though the spelling has
been modernized to conform with modern orthography; consequently,
the exact substance of Chaucer, as far as modern connotation will permit, is transmitted to the reader, though something of the spirit of antiquity is lost.

Clarke's notes and accentuations require examination inasmuch as they show an inconsistent view of the words which needed explaining, and that Clarke probably confused rather than clarified the problem of accentuation. None of the words in the above excerpt seem to require definition with the possible exception of "observance" and "sotel"--a word which should logically have been changed to "subtle" in a modernization of this kind. If the words were to be as elemental as those glossed in this passage, then it would seem that, to be consistent, the words "broided," "devisel," and "party" should also have been defined.

The inconsistency of the work appears also in the placing of the accent mark; in some cases--"observance" and "honour"--the mark indicates an accented syllable, while in other words--"yclothed" and "yardé"--the marked syllable is merely to be pronounced but not stressed. Such inconsistency would do little more than confuse the novice.

A more serious defect of the volume was anticipated by Clarke in the Preface:--

Some will condemn me ... for being a ruthless mutilator. The black-letter men and sticklers for not altering or removing the old landmarks, will sentence me without benefit of clergy.38

38Clarke, Riches, p.iii.
To the charge of mutilation Clarke pleaded not guilty unless such a charge included "the lopping away from the goodly tree unsightly branches of exuberant growth." He admitted, however, that he had "cast behind, with the rampant vegetation some few bright blossoms, and consummate fruits of 'vegetable gold;' the sacrifice of which, at the time, caused me many a sigh." Clarke explained that abridgements were necessary in those tales and passages of "ill flavored complexion" which might make the book unacceptable in the refined circles of society for which it was written. For the same reason, certain phrases and words in the text which "modern refinement would discountenance" were softened or paraphrased "taking care however to denote the circumstance by means of the inverted comma." His desire to remove the less delicate portions of Chaucer is shown in Clarke's omission of the Reeve's and the Miller's tales from the volume. Typical of
the shorter passages which also fell in this category and
were deleted, is the following portion of the Somnour's
characterization in the Prologue:—

He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
A good felleawe to have his concubyn
A twelf month, and excuse him atte fulle; 37

37 Chaucer, I, 26.

The "gentil Pardonner" remained beardless, but Clarke re-
fused to allow his readers to know that Chaucer thought him a
"gelding or a mare." Troilus and Pandarus meet at Pandarus' house in the third book of the poem, but the numerous dele-
tions change the night of passion and emotion into one of con-
versation—conversation about love, to be sure, but the affair
never went beyond the talking stage for the readers of Clarke's expurgated Chaucer. Deleted, among others, were the passages in which Pandarus urges Criseyde to take the swooning Troilus into her bed, 38 the lines in which Pandarus leaves the two

38 Lines 1092-1106.

lovers alone, 39 and the stanzas in which Criseyde "Made hym

39 Lines 1134-1141.
swich feste, it joye was to seen.

40 Lines 1205-1232.

Arcite in his prayer to Mars was not permitted by Clarke to mention the God of Arms' usurpation of Vulcan's bed, and the following lines were deleted:--

Whan that thou usedest the beautee
Of fair, yonge, fresshe Venus free,
And haddest hire in armes at thy wille--
Although thee ones on a tyme mysfille,
Whan Vulcanus hadde caught thee in his las,
And foond thee liggynge by his wife, allas!—41

41 Chaucer, I, 47.

In addition to excisions, such as those cited above, which may have been justifiable because of the change of taste between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries, Clarke made other omissions which were necessary to keep the volume within the six-hundred page limit set by the published. Whether Clarke used his cutting-shears wisely is a difficult question to decide. It must be admitted that any such "pruning" destroys the continuity and natural flow of the original, and often diminishes the sharpness of Chaucer's characterizations. Pandarus, in particular, suffers from the deletions; his sincerity is lessened by the omission of the passage in which he pleads with Troilus to be true to Criseyde and expresses his concern
over his own position in the matter. The passage is so

important in the construction of the full portrait of Pandarus, that is seems that there could be no sufficient excuse for its omission.

Of less consequence, but nevertheless undesirable, is the excision of the Ceyx and Alcyone story in "The Book of the Duchess," and of Chanticleer's proofs that dreams frequently do come true.

The greatest defect of Cowden Clarke's edition of Chaucer, then, is the omission of passages, either to purify the text or to reduce the number of pages. When such deletions are made, the reader cannot get a full appreciation of Chaucer's poetry and philosophy. In spite of the modern orthography and the helpful explanatory notes which presented Chaucer in a relatively understandable form, the true and merits of Chaucer were not presented. Too much of the early poet's wit and humor as well as his faculty for sharp characterization and photographic description "must necessarily fall with large pruning."

Clarke and Hunt, then, with their respective kinds of modernization, contributed to the effort to widen the circle of Chaucer readers and admirers. Though their methods differed from that of Wordsworth--Hunt's, only slightly, but
Clarke's, widely—though they were essentially products of the
nineteenth century attempt to modernize Chaucer in as
literal a form as they believed possible. The changes
which were necessary were largely dictated by the nineteenth
century concepts of literary and social taste, but at least
there was no attempt to recast Chaucer in a poetic mold
similar to that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
Part IV

The Horne Edition of Modernizations

The nineteenth century movement to popularize Chaucer according to the pattern set by Wordsworth in 1801, was climaxed by the publication, in 1841, of a collection of Chaucer's Tales modernized by six different authors. The volume, The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernized,¹ was


edited by Richard Henry (Hengist) Horne, who is remembered today because of his friendship with Elizabeth Barrett and for his Orion—"a poem which he called an epic but which is rather a symbolic romance, a work of overwrought and clouded imagination, not without passages of splendour."² The introduction


and the compositions of the Chaucer volume summarized and illustrated the aims and standards of modernization during the Romantic period.

Who originated the idea for the publication of a collection of Chaucer modernizations, is not clear. The Wordsworth letters of 1839-40 indicate that Thomas Powell, a member of the Wordsworth and Hunt Circles, had initiated the plan, and that it had been suggested to him by Wordsworth,
if not directly, at least through Wordsworth's modernizations. Wordsworth wrote that "the attempt originated, I believe, in the Specimen I gave some years since, of the 'Prioress's Tale'" 3
deancourt, Letters ... Later Years, III, 1061.

and that the modernizations would go "so far and no farther" than the changes made in "The Prioress's Tale"—"that will in fact be his model." 4 In the commentary of his Letters of

Vol. II, 993.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Horne reviewed the circumstances of the publication of Chaucer Modernized.

In 1841, a project was set on foot (by Wordsworth, I believe) for giving the world, for the first time, a true yet polished modernization of the Father of English Poetry. ...It was agreed that this project should be carried out by Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Miss Barrett, Robert Bell, Monckton Milnes, Dr. Leonard Schmitz, and myself. Some difficulty was experienced in the choice of an editor. Wordsworth being in years, and residing at a distance, would not accept the post. The next in seniority was Leigh Hunt, who was living near London, and in all respects suitable as a most accomplished reader and lover of Chaucer. But he was too wise; he "smelt the battle afar off:" and, as Wordsworth to whom several of us had sent poems we had modernized, had written to London to say that my rendering of "The Franklin's Tale" was "as well done as any lover of Chaucer's poetry need or can desire," the editorship was offered to me. To my subsequent regret, hard work, waste of time in verbal conflicts, countless vexations—yet pride,
withal—I accepted the office, "little dreaming."  

---


---

It will be noted that Horne does not mention Powell—not even as one of the contributors to the volume—though Wordsworth clearly believed that Powell was to edit the book.

As Horne wrote, Wordsworth refused to have anything to do with the volume; in fact, he objected vehemently when, in the advertisement for the publication, his name appeared in larger type than did those of the other contributors.  

---


---

Perhaps he had misgivings about the competence of the contributors and accurately foresaw the failure which the publication was to be.

To determine the purpose and method of the book, we must turn to Horne's Introduction. Inconsistent and disorganized though it is in many places, the Introduction is notable because it summarizes the nineteenth century philosophy of modernization and indicates the respects in which that philosophy was typical of nineteenth century literary—and social—taste.

In his criticism of earlier modernizations, Horne pointed out the features which had been lost—qualities which modern—
izers of the nineteenth century strove to retain since they were the most valuable aspects of Chaucer's poetry.

All previous so-called modernizations of Chaucer ... had been at best, paraphrases, ad libitum translations or gross parodies and desecrations of the homely power, beauty, graphic richness, and quaint humour of the original.7

7Horne, Letters, II, 95.

Horne's explanation of the purpose of the book amplifies the nineteenth century feeling about modernization:

The present publication does not result from an antiquarian feeling about Chaucer, as the Father of English Poetry, highly interesting as he must always be in that character alone; but from the extraordinary fact, to which there is no parallel in the history of the literature of nations,—that although he is one of the great poets for all time, his works are comparatively unknown to the world.8

8Horne, Chaucer, p. v.

...The translations are for those people who are unacquainted with Chaucer's obsolete dialect, but who have a genuine love of great poetry and therefore should be given the opportunity to read the work of the founder of the language of his country.9

9Page lx.
Thus Horne echoed the words of the poets from Dryden through Wordsworth and Hunt. He believed, as they did, that in spite of the difficulty of Chaucer's obsolete language, Chaucer is a poet who ranks with Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, and should therefore be made readily available to those who have read and enjoyed the other great poets. It is interesting to note that Horne believed that, except for making the Tales intelligible to the general reader, everything had been done for them that a nation could desire,

insofar as the most careful collation of texts, the most elaborate essays, the most ample and erudite notes and glossaries, the most elaborate and classical (as well as the most trite and vulgar) paraphrases, the most eloquent and sincere admiration and comments of genuine poets, fine prose writers, and scholars.10

10 Page vi.

A modern Chaucerian scholar would hardly agree that the poetry of the fourteenth century had been quite as fully studied as Horne believed.

Of interest, also, is Horne's opinion of earlier paraphrases—the "elaborate and classical" translations of Dryden and Pope and their followers. In his later discussion of Pope's work, Horne explained his reasons for calling the early paraphrases "trite and vulgar".

The licentious humour of the original "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" being divested of its quaintness
and obscurity becomes yet more licentious in proportion to the fine touches of skill with which it is brought into the light. Spontaneous coarseness is made revolting by meritricious artifice. Instead of keeping in the distance that which was objectionable by such shades in the modernizing as should have answered to the hazy appearance of the original, it receives a clear outline and is brought close to us.\footnote{Page xvi.}

As a result of this stressing of the indelicate passages, Pope had not modernized Chaucer, but had inexcusably vulgarized him. From a strictly objective view, such a judgment cannot be allowed, of course. Horne was speaking as a typical early Victorian, and as such could not overlook the vulgarity of some of Chaucer's tales. Actually, if he would have admitted it, the tales were indelicate before they were modernized--some of them to the utmost limits of indelicacy. Since the originals are of this nature, it is unfair to blame Pope for obscenities. Horne continued his censure of the earlier modernizations by writing that the Dryden and Pope versions of Chaucer

are elaborate and highly refined productions, reading exactly like their own poems, and not bearing the slightest resemblance to Chaucer. ...Everything was paraphrased, made fluent, sounding, and full of effects; though it is equally true that Chaucer occasionally received a very noble present from Dryden, for which nothing more than a suggestion is traceable to the original. ...It is impossible to praise these editions for any resemblance to the original.\footnote{Page xi.}
The statement is perhaps more sweeping and generalized than it should be. "Everything" was not paraphrased although a majority of the material was. Furthermore, the substance of the Dryden and Pope modernizations was essentially the same as that of Chaucer, so that they must be said to bear some resemblance to Chaucer.

To illustrate Dryden's method of interpretation, Horne selected the line in the "Knights Tale"—"The smiler with the knife under the Cloke"—, a line which contained no obsolete terms incapable of direct translation.

Next stood Hypocrisy, with holy fear;  
Soft smiling and demurely looking down,  
But hid the dagger underneath the gown:  
The assassinating wife, the holy fiend;  
And far the blackest there, the traitor-friend.\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{13}\text{Page xiv.}\)

In his expansion of the single line of the original into the above five lines, Dryden had lost one of the great attributes of Chaucer's genius—"the strength of a giant combined with the simplicity of a child. The latter is quite metamorphosed in Dryden's swelling verse. Whenever he attempts simplicity, which is rarely, he fails.\(^{14}\)

\(^{14}\text{Page xv.}\)
Since such recognized artists and poets as Dryden and Pope wrote highly imperfect translations, then what could be expected of their successors who were neither artists nor poets? Horne found that the primary purpose of their work seemed to be vulgarity and obscenity and that they made no attempt to retain the humor and the pathos which is so characteristic of Chaucer's finest passages. Unfortunately, Horne refused to taint the pages of his book with examples which would clarify his definition of vulgarity. However, he did give several examples of the ornamentation to which he objected. He pointed out that the graphic picture of the Pardoner related in Chaucer's lines—

Then paine I me to stretchen forth my necke
And east and west upon the people I beck
As doth a dove sitting upon a barn.'

had been clouded in Lipscombe's decorative diction:

The forth with painful toil my neck I stretch,
And east and west my arms extended reach.
So on a barn's long roof you might have seen
A pouting pigeon woo his feather'd queen.15

The attempt had always been to give Chaucer a lofty tone; the best example of this which Horne could find was Boyse's imposing opening line in "The Squire's Tale"—

Where peopled Scythia's verdant plains extend
East in that sea, in whose unfathom'd flood
Long winding Volga's rapid streams descend
On Oxus bank, an ancient city stood;

15 Page xviii.
Then Sarra, but to later ages known
By rising Samarcad's imperial name,
There, held a potent prince his honoured throne, etc.¹⁶

¹⁶ Page xxiv.

Chaucer had originally written—

At Sarra, in the land of Tartarie,
There dwelt a king, etc.

In a similar manner and on the same terms Horne condemned
the modernizations of Ogle, Markland, Grosvenor, and Brooke,
and concluded that all of these men "had the presumption to
'throw clean overboard' such a writer as Chaucer, in order
to place themselves at the helm of his vessel."¹⁷

¹⁷ Page xxvii.

Since previous modernizations had been so inadequate,
Horne drew attention to two methods of modernization which
would not injure Chaucer. The advocates of the first method
argued that

in order to render Chaucer truly, it must be done in
the spirit rather than the letter; simply because so
much of the letter, or words, of his period differ
both in sound and sense from those now in use; and
that while everything is retained from the original
which can be regarded as an exception, the lorge mass
of the obsolete remainder must be rewritten, i.e.
supplied by corresponding words and rhythm to the
best of the writer's ability. ... The method ... were
its highest degree of success attainable, would present little or none of the original material yet contain the essence of the whole.\textsuperscript{18}

\footnotetext{18}{Page xxxi.}

The second method which Horne believed to be acceptable differed from the first in that all the substantial material and various rhythm of Chaucer should be adopted as far as possible; his obsolete phrases, words, terminations, and grammatical construction, translated, modernized, and humoured, to the best of the writer's ability. To retain or preserve the existing substance is the rule; to rewrite and paraphrase is the exception.\textsuperscript{19}

\footnotetext{19}{Page xxxii.}

It is readily apparent that the works of Hunt and Wordsworth which have already been discussed represent these two methods of modernization—Hunt's, that of the paraphraser, and Wordsworth's, that of the literalist. Horne believed that a combination of these two methods would result in superior modernization; some of the original required little alteration while, at the same time, there were other portions which needed to be completely remodelled to make them understandable and acceptable.

The safest method, as the most becoming, is manifestly that of preserving as much of the original substance as can be rendered available, that which appears quaint as well as that which is more modern. ...By thus preserving his best parts we should keep the model of Nature, his
own model, before us, and make modern things bend
to her. ...It is possible that something of a vapour,
at least to common eyes, might be thus removed from
his glorious face; but to venture further, we are
afraid, would be to attempt to improve the sun itself.

Though Horne disapproved of excessive tampering with the
original, he believed that it was advisable to remove those
passages which were objectionable because of their indelicacy,
and to condense those passages in which Chaucer indulged in
one of his few faults, prolixity. To Horne, Chaucer's ver-
bosity was exemplified by the hundred lines in "Troilus and
Criseyde" in which Troilus discusses predestination—a passage
which is now recognized as one of outstanding importance in
understanding the philosophy of Chaucer and the Middle Ages.

Horne's view of Chaucer's grosser passages was similar
to those of Wordsworth, Hunt, and Clarke. The moral taste
of the fourteenth century accepted Chaucer's more licentious
stories as natural and regular, and no offense was meant nor
would have been taken by those episodes which in the nine-
teenth century were vulgar and obscene. Similarly, the blas-
phemous language of many of Chaucer's characters was another
defect of the society which could not be tolerated in the
more refined atmosphere of the nineteenth century. The
oaths which had formerly been uttered with indifference, had
to be removed in the modernizations; however, Horne admitted
that it was necessary to retain them occasionally for the sake of historical accuracy or as an aid in characterization.

After he had discussed the best methods of modernization and had established the principles on which the work in the volume had been done, Horne turned to a discussion of Chaucer's versification, perhaps the most confusing and disorganized portion of the whole Introduction. Horne realized his ignorance of the subject and asked for "many indulgences" from the reader since the topic had not been adequately studied before. Had Horne persisted in the argument with which he opened his discussion of versification, the belief that Chaucer used many lines of irregular length to vary the melody and rhythm of his verses, there could have been no criticism. However, after explaining that many great poets used nine- and eleven-syllable lines to relieve the monotony of their decasyllabics, Horne proceeded to show that many of Chaucer's lines which appear to contain either more or less than ten syllables, are actually decasyllabic if pronunciation unnatural to the nineteenth century is used.

In reducing the eleven syllable lines, Horne pointed out the possibility of elision of a pronounced final e with the first syllable of the following word—the now universally accepted rule of eliding the final e when it precedes an initial vowel.
That of her smiling was full simple and coy
(That of her smiling was full simpl' and coy)

This noble ensample to his flock he gave
(This nobl' ensample to his flock he gave)

Similarly, the nine-syllable lines were shown to contain actually ten syllables if the correct pronunciation was followed. The final e must be pronounced in some cases, and words such as nation and ocean required a three-syllable pronunciation.

All of this, of course, is accepted as valid interpretation of Chaucer's versification by the modern student, and Horne cannot be criticized for the points which he makes. However in showing that the apparently shortened and lengthened lines can be made into decasyllabics, Horne reached the conclusion that the apparent irregularities are all a fault of changed pronunciation. 21 Consequently, with the correct pronunciation,

21 Page lxxvi.

all of Chaucer's heroic couplets are composed of ten syllable verses—a conclusion which is false and which completely nullifies Horne's original contention that Chaucer used lines of irregular length to vary the rhythm of his poems. Therefore, from a valid original premise, Horne talked himself into an impossible and completely contradictory conclusion.

The Introduction closes with typical nineteenth century eulogizing of the "morning star" of English poetry.

Extraordinary as were the comic and humorous powers of Chaucer, his pathos is his greatest char-
acteristic. ...For the frequency of his recurrence to such emotions, and their long sustained and unmitigated anguish—the woes of years eating into the heart—several of Chaucer's stories are without parallel. 22

As an historian of characters, manners and habits of his countrymen during his age, he stands alone for comprehensiveness and fidelity. ...In Chaucer's descriptions—whether of men or things—he is so graphic, so sure of eye and hand, so rich in the power of conveying objects of sense to the imagination of others, that his words have almost the effects of substances and colors, so that you seem to feel and see the things rather than have the idea of them, which is all you get from most other writers. 23

It has already been shown how Wordsworth, Clarke, and Hunt performed the duties of the modernizer in the Romantic way, but with their own variations; the contents of the Horne edition which remain to be examined provide illustrations of similar work by—with the exception of Miss Barrett—lesser poets.

In general, all of the modernizations combine the literal and the paraphrastic methods of modernization which Horne outlined in the Introduction. Though passages translated by the two methods can be found in each of the tales, the poems, and therefore their creators, can generally be classified as either literal or paraphrased on the basis of the method which seems
to predominate. Thus Horne and Powell are closest to Wordsworth as literal translators, while Miss Barrett and Bell, with their predominantly paraphrased versions, may be placed near Hunt. The contributors may not have consciously adopted one method or the other, since the selections which they re-wrote can be shown to have dictated the method of modernization depending upon the extent to which the original was intelligible without changing the vocabulary. Immoral situations or blasphemous language also governed the extent to which paraphrase was necessary.

To show the abilities and methods of each of the modernizers, it is necessary to examine passages from their work. Since Wordsworth and Hunt have already been discussed, their verses will not be subjected to further study. As editor of the volume and author of the modernization of the "Prologue", Horne seems to be the logical man with whom to begin. Horne deserves further distinction as the author of what is undoubtedly the poorest modernization of the collection. The first eight lines of the "Prologue" illustrate this:-

(Chaucer)

Whanne that April with his shoures sote
The droughte of March hath perced to the rote,
And bathed every veine in swiche licour,
Of which vertue engendered is the flour;
When Zephirus eke with his sote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt and hethe
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halfe cours yronne,^{24}

^{24} Chaucer, I, 1.
(Horne)

When that sweet April showers with downward shoot
The drought of March have pierc'd unto the root,
And bathed every gin with liquid power,
Whose virtue rare engendereth the flower;
When Zephyrus also with his fragrant breath
Inspired hath in every grove and heath
The tender shoots of green, and the young sun
Hath in the Ram one half his journey run.

25 Horne, p. 3.

It is obvious that Horne struggled to preserve every letter and comma of the original when possible; it is equally obvious that the result is somewhat less intelligible than the original. Horne seems to have lacked the intangible poetic ability to create lines which would do justice to Chaucer and still be intelligible to the reader. Wordsworth had shown that literal modernizations could be accurate, poetic, and readily understandable if the modernizer had sufficient talent. Horne lacked the spark which was necessary. His version of the "Reeve's Tale" is also remarkable for its unpoetic quality and its dulness, but it is interesting because it shows the extent to which nineteenth century modernizers believed that Chaucer's morality should be purified. Such phrases as "by God,", "Goddes banes,", and "by Goddes heart" were either omitted or replaced by "Gudes life" or "by the mass." Furthermore, the Miller's daughter was not permitted to sleep in the same room with the clerks as she had in Chaucer's tale; instead, she was
decorously removed to an adjoining room where Allen visited
her for no other reason than to learn the location of the
flour that had been stolen from them. The damage to Chaucer
was great in such amendments of his text.

Powell had no such problem of expurgation and cleansing
in his literal modernization of "The Legend of Ariadne;" that
he also had a more expert touch than Horne, these lines will
testify:—

(Chaucer)

    But I wol turne againe to Ariadne,
    That is with slepe for werinesse ytoke,
    Ful sorrowfully her herte may awake.
    Alas for the myne herte hath grete pite.
    Right in the dawning awakith she,
    And growith in the bed, and fond right nought.
    Alas, (quod she) that evir I was wroght!
    I am betrayd, and her here to rente,
    And to the stronde all berefote fast she wente,
    And cryd, Theseus, myn herte sweete!
    Where be ye, that I may nat with ye mete,
    And might thus with the bestis ben yslaine? 26

26 Chaucer, I, 436.

(Powell)

    And now for Ariadne let us weep,
    Who for her very weariness doth sleep.
    Full woefully will she from slumbers wake;
    Alas! for her my heart with ruth doth ache.
    Right in th' dawning of the day she woke,
    And groping in the bed began to look,
    But Theseus saw not; then aloud she said,
    Alas! Alas! that ever I was made!
    I am forsaken;—and her hair she rent,
    And to the beach in barefoot haste she went,
    And cried aloud, 0, Theseus! my heart's dear,
    Where art thou, that I cannot find thee here?
    Full soon shall I by these wild beasts be slain! 27

27 Horne, p. 68.
The purist may quarrel with Powell for adding the seventh line, which does not appear in the original, and for speaking of Ariadne’s "barefoot haste" (perhaps no worse than Chaucer’s "all berefote"), but, in general, it must be admitted that Powell succeeded in retaining the pathos of the original in a relatively literal modernization.

Elizabeth Barrett was freer with the letter of Chaucer, but she cannot be accused of departing from the spirit because of her greater freedom. Her skillful interpretations have a beauty in their own right, and still portray Chaucer’s original substance with accuracy. The first stanza of the "Complaint of Annelida" is illustrative of this:—

(Chaucer)

So thirld with the point of remembraunce
The swerde of sorowe, whette with false plesaunce,
Myne herte bare of blisse and black of hewe,
That turnid is to quaking all my daunce,
My sewertye in wapid countinaunce,
Sens it availeth nothing to ben trewe,
For who so trewe is certes it shall her rewe
That servith Love, and doth her observaunce
Alway to one, and chaungith for no newe.28

28 Chaucer, I, 512.

(Barrett)

The sword of sorrow, whetted sharp for me
On false delight with, point of memory
Stabb’d so mine heart, bliss-bare and black of hue,
That all to dread is turn’d my dance’s glee,
My face’s beauty to despondency—
For nothing it availeth to be true—
And, whosoever is so, she shall rue
Obeying love, and cleaving faithfully
Alway to one, and changing for no new.29

29 Horne, p. 248.
In the eighth stanza of the same poem, Miss Barrett accentuated the internal rhyme of Chaucer, through the use of strong rhyme words and the typographic arrangement.

(Chaucer)
My swete foe! why do you so for shame?
And thinkin ye that furthered be your name
To lovin newe and ben untrue aye,
And putin you in slaunder n owe and blame,
And do to me adversyte and grame
That love you most, God thou wotist alwaye?
Yet turne ayen, and yet be plaine some daye,
And then shall this that now is miss ben game,
And all forgevin whilis I lyve maye.30

(Barrett)
Ah, my sweet foe, why do you so
For shame?
Think you that praise, in sooth, will raise
Your name?
Loving anew, and being untrue
For aye?
Thus casting down your manhood's crown
In blame,
And working me adversity,
The same
Who loves you most—(O God, thou know'st!)
Alway?
Yet turn again—he fair and plain
Some day;
And then shall this, that seems amiss,
Be game,
All being forgiv'n, while yet from heav'n
I stay.31

30 Chaucer, I, 512.

31 Horne, p. 252.
Miss Barrett seems to have accomplished the rhyme pattern more satisfactorily than did Chaucer, but because of this smoothness and polish the feeling of Chaucer is lost. Furthermore, the modernizer inserted two new ideas into the poem in the second and fourth lines—ideas which are not divorced from the essence of the complaint, but, nonetheless, are departures from strict modernization.

Robert Bell, a nineteenth century journalist and miscellaneous writer who is chiefly remembered for his uncompleted, annotated edition of the English poets, frequently departed even farther from the original in his modernization of "The Complaint of Mars and Venus":

(Chaucer)

For though so be that lovers be as trewe
As any metal that is forgid newe,
In many a case 'hem tidith oft sorowe;
Somtime ther ladies wol nat on 'hem rewe,
Somtimes if that Jelousy it knewe
They mightyn lightly lay ther hed to borowe;
Somtime envious folke with tongis horowe
Depravin hem: alas! who may they plesse?
But he be false no lovir hath his ese.\(^{32}\)

---

\(^{32}\)Chaucer, I, 520.

---

(Bell)

For notwithstanding lovers be as true
As any metal that is forged new,
Their tempers must submit to many trials:
Sometimes their ladies no compassion show,
Sometimes in jealousy they wrong them too,
Wounding their faith with crosses and denials;
And sometimes Envy pours its poisoned phials
On their fair names. If such be true lover's case,
He who is false may never hope for peace.33

33 Horne, p. 224.

Because of the image of Envy with her poisoned phials, Bell
might be accused of having reverted to neo-classic epithets,
and of violation of the principles of Romantic modernization. However, the modernization is close enough to the original
in the letter and spirit to remove him from either the Dryden
or the Pope schools.

Thus the pendulum swung within the Horne edition of
modernizations—from the extreme literalness of Horne to the
extreme paraphrasing of Bell. Differ as they might between
the two extremes, literalness and paraphrase, of acceptable
modernization, all had certain elements in common. The rhyme
scheme and meter of the originals were always adopted in the
modernizations—from the doggerel of Sir Thopus to the rime
royal of Troilus. Additions of new ideas far from the context
of the original were never made, and there was no attempt
to fit nineteenth century philosophy into the pattern of the
tales as had been done during the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries. Contemporary thought shows itself only in the
omissions or alterations which were made to bring the Story's
morality up to date. Blasphemous terms were always deleted as
were any references to sexual activity. These expurgations were perhaps the most damaging thing which the modernizers did to Chaucer; his great humour is lost when he is forced into the straight-jacket of nineteenth century morality. For example, the host's sly jab at the cook who cannot stay on his horse

Or hastow with some queen all night yswon ke,  
So that thow mayst nat holden up thyn heed? 34

34 Chaucer, I, 171.

loses all of its humor when it is changed to

Or didst thou sup with my good lord the monk  
And has a jolly surfeit in thine head? 35

35 Horne, p. 88.

Similarly, Chaucer wrote of Allen's going to the bed of the Miller's daughter, and then changed the subject with a twinkle in his eye;

And up he riste, and by the wenche he crept.  
This wenche lay upright, and faste slepte,  
Til he so ny was, er she might espy,  
That it had been to late for to cry,  
And shortly for to sayn, they were atom. 36  
Now pley, Aleyn, for I wil speke of John.

36 Chaucer, I, 37.
The loss was great when Horne felt that it was necessary to change the passage as follows:—

And up he rose, and crept along the floor
Into the passage humming with their snore:
As narrow was it as a drum or tub.
And like a beetle doth he grope and grub,
Feeling his way with darkness in his hands
Till at the passage end he stooping stands.37

37Horne, p. 155.

Occasional inaccuracy in translation is another element which the modernizations have in common; "sely" is always "silly" or "simple", "catel" is never "property" but always "cattle," and "stounde" is "stone" rather "moment". Errors of this kind may be blamed on the inadequacy of the glossaries which were available for the use of the modernizers, or on their failure of the modernizers to make the fullest use of the materials which were available.

Whatever inadequacies and inaccuracies there were in the nineteenth century modernizations, as they are exemplified in the Horne volume and in the earlier productions of Wordsworth, Hunt, and Clarke, it must be recognized that the work which was done was far superior to that which had been written in the eighteenth century. Chaucer's true character was damaged by the restrictions of nineteenth century morality, but those modernizations in which vulgarity was not present were truer to Chaucer than were those of the preceding century.
It is difficult to judge how popular the modernizations were at the time of their publication, though it can be safely said that for the modern student they are nothing more than literary curiosities. The early nineteenth century reviewers overlooked the Chaucerian productions of Wordsworth and Hunt, and the following quotation is taken from the only review of the Horne edition which I have been able to trace.

To extend a taste for this great poet has been the task of the several writers who have united to produce the work before us, which we venture to predict will do no more to make Chaucer read, than Ogle, or Lipscombe, Pope, Dryden, or Wordsworth, have done already.

Chaucer in the modern version is as much like old Geoffrey as Sprat and Flatman are like Pindar. The father of our poetry stands like a time-worn tower overgrown with ivy, which these Malone-like modernizers have stripped fearlessly off, that they may cover it with a coat of whitewash. If you cannot restore the tower to its pristine splendour, it is a sort of sacrilege to rob it of those beauties which nature, to atone for the injuries of time, has bestowed upon it.

---


Cowden Clarke's work, though it was criticized for its inconsistencies and liberties in accentuation, was sufficiently popular to warrant a second edition in 1864. A second volume similar to the first which he edited had been planned by Horn e, but the project was abandoned after the first volume was received with coolness.

Lounsbury believes that modernization was not popular during this period because of the increase in Chaucer scholarship
and understanding—it was "one of the healthiest signs of the
genuine interest that had begun to be taken in the poet, and
the genuine advance in appreciation of him that had been made."

39 Lounsbery, III, 228.

The extent to which Chaucer's reputation had increased through
reading his original work was perhaps sufficient so that the
majority of the modernization readers felt as Landon did when
he wrote to Horne:—

Pardon me if I say I would rather see Chaucer quite
alone in the dew of his sunny morning, than with twenty
clever gentle folks about him, arranging his shoestrings
and buttoning his doublet. I like even his language. I
will have no hand in breaking his dun but rich-painted
glass, to put in (if clearer) much thinner panes.


Modernization never was, nor will it ever be, popular with
those who have taken the trouble to master the reading of the
fourteenth century versions. In spite of this, the task of
modernization has been accomplished by many since the early
nineteenth century. Scholarship has clarified many of the
problems of vocabulary and versification which troubled modern-
izers of a hundred years ago, and, consequently, modern versions
are more accurate than were their predecessors. In the always
present aim at literalness and accuracy of presentation, how-
ever, they bear the shadow of Wordsworth and his contemporaries.
REFERENCES


Clarke, Charles Cowden, Tales from Chaucer in Prose, London, Effingham-Wilson, 1833.


