THE FRENCH CONNECTION: GEOFFREY CHAUCER AND OTON DE GRANSON

by

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(Under the Direction of Andrew Cole)

ABSTRACT

Geoffrey Chaucer's relationship with Oton de Granson is one that collapses any real distinction between influence and reception. By focusing on Chaucer's early works, including his possible French poems, known as the "Ch" poems, this thesis uncovers the role that Granson played in introducing Chaucer to a French poetic tradition and in shaping how Chaucer responded to that tradition. Chaucer, in turn, by translating and satirizing some of Granson's work in *The Complaint of Venus*, influenced the way in which Granson and his contemporaries understood their own poetic projects. By focusing on manuscript transmission and personal interactions, I argue for a kind of reception history that emphasizes local and material conditions in order to understand literary influence, suggesting that kind of historical understanding discloses Chaucer's dual role in both being influenced by and influencing the French poetic tradition.

INDEX WORDS: Geoffrey Chaucer, Oton de Granson, "Ch" poems, *The Complaint of Venus,* Medieval English Literature, Medieval French Literature, Reception History, influences, translation, ballad form

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my family, who supported me even when they didn't understand what I was doing, and to my friends, who sometimes had an understanding forced upon them.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Oton de Granson, knight of Savoy, onetime prisoner of Spain, resident of the English court, negotiator of peace with France, and important French poet in his own right, was obviously much taken with Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry. Much of Granson's poetic output will seem familiar to Chaucerians. Two examples, both from the *Complainte de Saint Valentin*, exhibit various degrees of correspondence with Chaucer's early poetry. The *Complainte de Saint Valentin* partakes of the trope, popular in general in French lyric poetry, in which the lover suffers due to his loyalty to the beloved: "Je vueil bien grant paine souffrir/ Pour monstrer mon loyal devoir," going on to claim that "Je suis votre loyal servant."[1] In Chaucer's *Womanly Noblesse* the speaker likewise expresses his faithfulness, "That you to serve is set al my plesaunce" (4), before moving on to complain that "And sith I shal do [you] this observaunce/…. My woful herte suffreth grete duresse" (10, 14).[2] These two lyrics, then, resonate with one another in a general way, but this may have more to do with their shared literary inheritance than with any specific influence between the two.[3] The form of suffering discussed in the *Complaint*

[1] "I wish well to suffer great pain/ to show my loyal work…I am your loyal servant." All translations, unless otherwise stated, are mine. Oton de Granson, *Oton de Granson: Sa Vie et Ses Poesies*, ed. Arthur Piaget (Lausanne: Librairie Payot, 1941), 221-225.

[2] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1987). All references to Chaucer's poetry will be noted parenthetically by line number within the text of the thesis.

[3] For the impossible to overestimate influence of *Le Roman de la Rose* on French poetry see the most important recent work on the subject: David F. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Douglas Kelly, *Internal Differences and Meanings in the Roman de la Rose* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995); Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, eds., *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, and Reception* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For a discussion of Chaucer's practice as a translator of this work, see Caroline D. Eckhardt, "The Art of Translation in *The Romaunt of the Rose*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 6, 41-63.

de Saint Valentin, however, suggests another more specific reference, Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*. Thinking, so the idea goes, leads to the lover's suffering: "Humblement vous vueil requirir/ Que penser vuelliez et veoir/ En quel doubte cuer doit languir" and the beloved's cruelty is characterized as "Le cuer de vous ne peut penser,/ Croire, deviser ne sentir."[4] Thinking, of course, is a problem for both the narrator and the Black Knight in *The Book of the Duchess*. The Black Knight continuously mourns because he keeps thinking about his dead beloved, and the narrator does not help him forget her by making him dwell on his loss. The narrator himself, we are told, cannot get to sleep because he is thinking too much: "I may nat slepe wel nygh noght;/ I have so many an ydel thoght" (3-4). The same trope, thought-troubled sleep, leads to the narrator's dream vision in another of Granson's Valentine's Day lyrics, *Le Songe Saint Valentin*: "Car mon cuer m'avoit travaillé/ Pour plusieurs diverses pansees," which occurs "Si m'avint que je m'endormis/ Sur un lit ou je m'estoie mis."[5] Perhaps it is their troubled sleep that makes both narrators so extraordinarily unhelpful in giving love advice; Chaucer's narrator serves as cold comfort for the grieving knight and Granson's seems to be just as clueless: "Ja soit ce que je ne suy mye/ Nesun de ceulx qui ont amie,/ Et si ne suy n'ame n'amis."[6] These sleep-deprived and love-ignorant narrators must be cut from the same cloth.

So, Granson was engaged with Chaucer's poetry, and Chaucerians have noticed their mutual interest, ever since Arthur Piaget uncovered in 1890 a version of Granson's ballades that Chaucer translated in his *The Complaint of Venus*.[7] Yet then, as now, scholarship on the literary relations between these two poets has been slow to make it to print. Haldeen Braddy, in the first

[4] "Humbly I wish to require of you/ That you would wish to think and to see/ In which doubt [my] heart must languish… The heart of yours can not think/ Believe, plan, nor feel." Granson, *Oton de Granson*, 222.
[5] "Because my heart has tormented me/ For many diverse thoughts… If they have me when I lay myself down to sleep/ On a bed where I have placed myself." Ibid, 310.
[6] "I know this that I am not myself/ One of those who has a lover/ And if I am not neither do I love a lover." Ibid, 322.
[7] Piaget announced his discovery in a series of two articles. See Arthur Piaget, "Oton de Granson et ses poesies," *Romania*, XIX (1890), 237-59; 403-48.

English Language publication to address Granson's work, took up Piaget's discovery, and through the 1930s and 1940s both extended the range of works that exhibit ties to one another and tried to identify the court figures that would have brought these two poets together.[8] Most recently, James I. Wimsatt, whose career has been dedicated to exploring the exact nature of Chaucer's French associations, has published two books of great importance to the study of Chaucer and Granson. In *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch' in University of Pennsylvania MS French 15*, Wimsatt argues for Chaucer's possible authorship of the "Ch" poems and for Granson's possible role as the anthologist of University of Pennsylvania MS French 15, or the Penn MS, during Granson's time in London.[9] I will deal with the Penn MS at some length later, but I should mention here why it is important. It is a miscellaneous manuscript of the late fourteenth century, the largest miscellany of secular French lyrics of its time, and it contains several unique poems by major French poets, as well as possibly being the first attempt at anthologizing Chaucer, if he is indeed "Ch." Wimsatt also publishes, in that volume, a version of Granson's ballades that is closer textually to the ones Chaucer must have used, and so, given the manuscript's probable point of origin, the text Wimsatt publishes may be the *exact* one Chaucer used.[10] In addition, Wimsatt, in *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, extends once again the possible correspondences between Chaucer's works and Granson's works.[11] He argues that Granson quite probably had knowledge of every single major work of Chaucer's before *The Canterbury Tales* and that some of the influence runs from Chaucer to Granson, and

[8] See his two articles, "Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and Two of Granson's Complaints," *Modern Language Notes* v. 52 (1937), 487-491, and "Chaucer and Graunson: The Valentine Tradition," *PMLA* v. 54 (1939), 359-368. The arguments of these articles are later extended in his book: *Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1947). There is some indeterminacy about how to spell "Granson." I have decided to follow James I. Wimsatt's example and omit the "u."

[9] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch' in University of Pennsylvania MS French 15* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982).

[10] See the discussion and the ballades in Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 69-74.

[11] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 219-241.

not always the other way around as Braddy and Piaget had assumed. So, Wimsatt has left us with probable ties between Chaucer and Granson based on their work. In addition, he has left us with the tantalizing probability of Granson anthologizing Chaucer's lost French work. In some sense, this thesis will follow Wimsatt's work, without taking up any of its particular strains. Wimsatt bases his readings on literary allusions that flow from Machaut through Granson and Chaucer independently into each other's work.[12] Instead, I will argue for the importance of a non-Machaut tradition based on personal contact. I will argue that Chaucer and Granson were familiar with each other personally, and will base my evidence on manuscripts and the dating of texts, not only on literary allusions. As for Granson's role of anthologist, I feel that Wimsatt makes a sufficient enough case to rehearse it and move on; to my mind, that question is settled. As for Chaucer's authorship of the "Ch" poems, Wimsatt does not make a definitive case for Chaucer's authorship, nor will I do so here. Without the appearance of any new piece of evidence, in fact, it is not at all clear whether such a definitive case could be made. Simply put, determining authorship is difficult enough in a single language, between languages the difficulty is compounded; there is no basis on which to compare word usage in the second language and so, failing authorial admission or external designation, the usual tools of authorial ascription are rendered ineffective. Rather than arguing about the authorial status of the "Ch" poems, then, I would like to take up where Wimsatt left off, by examining how these poems interact with the rest of the Chaucer canon.

Notwithstanding the importance of Wimsatt's work, it is time to reassess the importance of French literature in general, and Granson in particular, to Chaucer. In the almost twenty years

[12] In this way we should think of Wimsatt as following in the footsteps of Daniel Poirion who pioneered a resurgence of scholarship that was interested in the French fourteenth century, especially as it centered around Machaut. See Daniel Poirion, *Le Poète et le prince: l'évolution du lyrisme courtois de Guillaume de Machaut à Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965).

since the publication of Wimsatt's work, medieval studies broadly speaking, and Chaucer studies more specifically, have begun to stress several fields that bear upon Chaucer's relationship to French poetry. Perhaps the most important of these sub-fields, for my purposes, is the work that has been done to place emphasis on the vernacular. Taking their cue from Wycliffite studies, and research into vernacular theology more broadly, medievalists have become more in tune with the way in which medieval authors theorize their use of the vernacular, and of the problems of authority and audience that come with that use.[13] Their work has had to grapple with questions such as: in what contexts is the vernacular appropriate, theological, political or literary? what authorizes the use of English in these fields if it is appropriate? who should be addressed by certain forms of writing? The use of the vernacular demands answers to all of these questions, and Chaucer, as one of the earliest poets working largely in the vernacular (albeit working closely with French, Italian, and Latin sources), must have answered them, if only for himself. As a kind of subsidiary of this field, there has also been a growing interest in the status of French as a vernacular in England, and this project can be seen as a contribution to such work.[14] Simply

[13] The most apparent manifestation of this concern is the anthology, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory 1280-1520* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998). The foundation of modern Wycliffite studies and the importance of the vernacular to the Wycliffites is Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). On how Wycliffite concerns with the vernacular intersect with Chaucer as a writer, see Andrew Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," *Speculum* 77 (2002), 1128-1167, which has been revised and expanded in Andrew Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 75-100. On vernacular theology, see much of Nicholas Watson's work, but especially Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995), 882-864.

[14] For a succinct account of the court's French influence on Chaucer, see Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 63-73. The following claims are all referenced within these pages. As Pearsall notes, Richard II's court was the first English speaking court since the Norman Conquest, but that does not mean that French had either fallen out of fashion or was ignored completely. There is, of course, a long history of the political and cultural importance of French in England and Jocelyn Wogan-Brown's work on the "French of England" is pertinent here. Until Delbert Russell, Nicholas Watson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, eds., *The French of England: Vernacular Literary Theory and Practice, c.1100- c.1500* (Pennsylvania State Press, forthcoming) is published, see the website she maintains at http://www.fordham.edu/frenchofengland/. See also Douglas A. Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely: The French Language in England 1000-1600: Its Status, Description, and Instruction* (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1991) for the broadest survey of this relation. Finally, for a record of the waning of French influence and its last important English writer, Sir John Chandos's Herald, as well

put, I will combine these concerns. While some scholars have examined Chaucer's self-conception as a writer of English, I will consider Chaucer's view of himself as a French writer, or at least as a practitioner of a French tradition in English.[15] And what others have done for our understanding of Chaucer's personal connection to and representation of Italian political systems, I will do for his experience and practice of French poetry.[16] And finally, what some have done for his English reception history, I will begin to do for his reception history in France.[17]

Chaucer's relationship to Granson occurs at an intersection among various fields of study; Granson is a kind of hub. Chaucer intended for Granson to be the, almost explicit, audience for some of Chaucer's earliest work. Whether or not we accept the "Ch" poems to be definitively by Chaucer, it is more than likely that his early work, like his contemporary John Gower, would have included some French poetry. The work to which Granson would have been privy, then, was in Chaucer's two vernaculars: French and English. Chaucer's earliest English works rely upon French models of poetic exchange found in the Penn MS alongside what might possibly be Chaucer's earliest work or at least work that he would have found interesting, models of poetic form with which he would have been in contact through the editorial energies of Granson. Chaucer's early English works, then, are vernacular productions that seek to innovate,

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as its specific influence on Chaucer's hometown in regards to biblical translations, see Ralph Hanna III, *London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 148-242.

[15] See Cole, *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*, 75-100, as well as the critical studies summarized there. Critics, by and large, have been much more interested in Chaucer's French influences than in his active participation in a French literary tradition. In addition to the Wimsatt works mentioned above, see Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957).

[16] For Chaucer's interest in Italy, see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[17] The growing interest into Chaucer's reception can be traced back to Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

and not just simply duplicate, French vernacular archetypes.[18] In this exchange between vernaculars, Granson, the French poet living in England, becomes not only one of Chaucer's first poetic descendants, but also, strange as it might seem, a mentor at the same time. The model of Granson's inheritance on which I will focus, however, has less to do with his poetic output than his role as an anthologist, so while we might think of him as an early kind of Hoccleve in the sense that he saw himself as a poetic heir of Chaucer's, we should also consider him to be a kind of John Shirley, or even the compiler of that "Chaucer anthology," Cambridge University MS Gg.4.27. Granson, being the likely anthologist of the Penn MS, would have been the first to collect and disseminate what may be Chaucer's work in French, and may also have personally disseminated *The Complaint of Venus*, making him an instrumental figure in both the English and French Chaucerian traditions. At least one of Chaucer's early English writings, and whatever he may have written in French, were composed with the understanding that Granson would be reading and championing these poems, not just in their distinct national traditions, but across traditions, showing French writings to English patrons and English writings to French poets. Granson, I will argue, early in Chaucer's career, gave him a connection to the French tradition; Granson both guided Chaucer's early work and served as a supportive and engaged audience, giving Chaucer the opportunity to test out several thematic experiments that we will, in their later English form, recognize as distinctly Chaucerian. And, conversely, Granson provides that French tradition with an introduction to Chaucer. So while the status of French as a vernacular in England might explain Chaucer's general interest in French poetry, the specific way in which that interest manifested was due to the presence of one man: Granson.

[18] For a wide-ranging discussion of the different kinds of medieval French literature, as well as a theoretical discussion a to the problems inherent in studying it, see Paul Zumthor, *Essai de poétique médiévale* (Paris: Seuil, 1972).

Chapter 2

Granson and Chaucer, the Early Years

Assigning Granson such a pivotal role requires that he met Chaucer early, and often. Textually, this early involvement would mean placing their interactions with one another in the early years of both their poetic careers, when Chaucer was writing *The Book of the Duchess* and, as I will argue, *The Complaint of Venus*, and when, I will also contend, Granson was writing *Les Cinq Balades Ensievans*. Apart from the poetry, though, we may want to consider the biographical evidence, or lack of it, that connects Chaucer and Granson. Searching for Oton de Granson in the *Chaucer Life-Records* is a fruitless endeavor.[19] But, Granson was residing in London, and he was closely connected to the court, two facts in favor of his knowing Chaucer. Granson had come to London as a member of the wedding party of Lionel of Clarence in 1368, and he resided in London in the service of Edward III and then Richard II until 1387, with only one notable absence.[20] He later returned to England for the period between 1392 and 1396.[21] So, Granson and Chaucer were in the same place, at the same time, but what is the evidence that they met?

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[19] Part of the issue with Granson's absence, though, may have more to do with the kinds of documents collected in the *Chaucer Life-Records*. These documents primarily record payments and legal imbroglios, and Granson would have had little reason to give Chaucer money for anything, and Chaucer, being Granson's social inferior, would most likely not have been asked to supply Granson with any. Granson would also likely escape being called upon to appear for Chaucer in any court cases, as Granson was what we would now call a "foreign national" residing in London, and therefore not ideally suited to becoming embroiled in legal proceedings. See *Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson from the material compiled by John M. Manly and Edith Rickert with the assistance of Lilian J. Redstone and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[20] Chaucer had been in service to Lionel in the late 1350s and early 1360s. There is a good chance that he would have been in attendance at Lionel's wedding celebrations. See Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 38-42. Lionel, of course, died on that trip to Italy, so any possible meeting must have taken place during the celebrations that led up to the wedding party's departure.

[21] See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 50-51.

The evidence is in the texts. We do not know when and how Granson became interested in Chaucer's poetry, but he clearly knew a good deal of it and made extensive use of it. Wimsatt has shown that echoes of Chaucer's poetry can be found in Granson's *La Complaint de l'An Nouvel*, *Le Songe Saint Valentin*, *Complainte de Saint Valentin*, and his most ambitious work, the *Livre Missire Ode*.[22] There are several things to note about Granson's use of Chaucer in these works. First, as is apparent from the titles, Granson too had a penchant for writing Valentine's Day poetry, a penchant shared with Chaucer but totally unique to them among fourteenth-century poets.[23] As one might imagine, given this shared interest, Granson was quite familiar with *The Parliament of Fowls*, and the *Livre Missire Ode* and *Le Songe Saint Valentin* also show that he was familiar as well with *The House of Fame* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. With his wide range of familiarity with Chaucer's work, though, it seems strange that the work Granson obviously cherished the most is *The Book of the Duchess*.[24] Granson alludes to *The Book of the Duchess* compulsively; every single poem that shows any influence by Chaucer refers to this work, despite the fact that one could have reasonably expected, given their mutual investment in Valentine's Day poetry, that *The Parliament of Fowles* would have been given pride of place. I will return to *The Book of the Duchess* as it relates to Granson momentarily, but

[22] For the specifics of which of Granson's works addresses specific Chaucer works, including Granson's obsession with *The Book of the Duchess* mentioned below, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, 219-241. In general, I find Wimsatt's arguments about which of Granson's works alludes to which of Chaucer's works to be convincing. It is not my intention to rehash those arguments here. Instead, my focus will be on what the personal relationship, and not solely the literary relationship, between Chaucer and Granson might tell us about Chaucer's work.

[23] On Chaucer as the inventor of this day, as well as a discussion of what folk traditions and hagiographies he relied upon in creating it, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucer and the Cult of St. Valentine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986). Kelly's book predates Wimsatt's work, and so Kelly was only aware of Granson influencing Chaucer. Wimsatt's argument about Chaucer influencing Granson, and my insistence on an early exchange of poetry between the two, only further give credence to Kelly's suspicion that is was Chaucer who introduced the idea of Valentine's Day to Granson. Chaucer's creation of Valentine's Day and its burgeoning popularity shortly thereafter, might also explain why *The Parliament of Fowls* exists in so many more manuscripts than the other early dream visions, for which see note 26 below.

[24] For many contemporary readers, preferring *The Book of the Duchess* to *Troilus and Criseyde* would be unthinkable. Consider, for instance, Pearsall's characterization of *Troilus* as "quite self-consciously and deliberately" Chaucer's "masterpiece," *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 170.

it is sufficient to note here that Granson's assimilation of such a large number of Chaucer's work belies a personal relationship. Granson had access to very early works of Chaucer, some of which now exist in very few manuscripts, suggestsing that manuscripts of these works were always limited in circulation. Access to these works would have been limited to Chaucer's closest circle of friends and perhaps a few others; they are coterie poems.[25] Granson's access to them, then, is quite unusual and would suggest some personal connection to the poet early in his career when he has producing these texts.[26]

Chaucer's own knowledge of Granson's works may likewise suggest an affiliation from early in Chaucer's career, from the same period, in fact, in which he was composing these early works to which Granson had access. If Chaucer was sharing his early poetry with Granson, it seems that Granson was doing the same, and Granson's *Les Cinq Balades Ensievans* would have been one of the works that he showed Chaucer, who then chose to utilize material from it to create *The Complaint of Venus*: in *The Complaint of Venus* Chaucer tells us that he tries "to folowe word by word the curiosite/ Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce" (81-82). While the exact date on which Chaucer was introduced to Granson's ballade sequence cannot be determined, some details from Granson's life can guide our speculations. Granson, while residing in England, accompanied the Earl of Pembroke on his failed naval battle with the Spanish. He was captured by the Spanish in 1372 and held by them until 1374; while captive, he compiled one of the three major manuscripts of his own work, which includes *Les Cinq Balades Ensievans*.[27] This manuscript, the Barcelona MS, Biblioteca Catalunya 8, presents a text of these

[25] For Chaucer as a coterie poet, see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
[26] There are only three surviving manuscripts for both *The Book of the Duchess* and the later *The House of Fame*, whereas *The Parliament of Fowls* exits in fourteen manuscripts. See the textual notes in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1136, 1139, and 1147, for these respective numbers.
[27] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 66. Heretofore, the scholarly consensus for dating these poems has only been that they were obviously written before Granson's release from Spain.

ballades substantially different than the one Chaucer evidently used. The Penn MS, in contrast, is very similar to the one Chaucer must have used. These manuscripts, then, are useful tools when it comes to dating these ballades, because any poem included in the Barcelona MS must have been composed before 1374.

The other salient piece of information, which will help us to date the ballade sequence, is that the vast majority of the ballades contained in it lack an envoy, with the exception of ones located in the back of this roughly chronological collection. The lack of an envoy suggests that the ballades contained throughout most of the manuscript were composed before the mid-1370s, when Eustache Deschamps popularized the ballade with envoy form.[28] I am suggesting, then, that the texts of Granson's ballades for the Penn MS were composed before he left for Spain and remained in England. While in Spain, Granson attempted to retrieve from memory a text of these ballades that he recorded in the Barcelona MS. This text, in its small variations, would be noticeably different from the one to which Chaucer's careful eye had access. This means that Granson's *Les Cinq Balade Ensievans*, which Chaucer translated into *The Complaint of Venus*, were composed prior to 1372, again, when Granson was captured, and given to Chaucer soon after his composition of *The Book of the Duchess* and around the time that these poet were exchanging work. *The Book of the Duchess*, then, functions in Granson's poetry as a short-hand reference to his and Chaucer's early and sustained involvement.[29] I should note here, though, that the timeline I have constructed is only probable. It may be that the interactions described

[28] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 65. Wimsatt and others place this innovation after Machaut's death in 1377, as I will argue below, I feel an earlier time is likewise possible, if not more probable.

[29] I might also point out that, if one were to completely assimilate Chaucer into the French tradition, than his *Book of the Duchess*, a dream-vision about the death of a beloved lady, would fit in quite well with Douglas Kelly's description of a French literary tradition that, by 1400, had shunned traditional models of courtly love to focus in on death. And indeed, if one dates the *Book of the Duchess* to the late 1360s or early 1370s, then it is a very early example of this trend. Granson's engagement with it might even suggest a French point of introduction for this trend. See Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love*, (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 178-179.

actually occurred a few years later, with Granson composing *Les Cinq Balades Ensievans* in Spain and trying to retrieve them from memory for the Penn MS after his release, with Chaucer translating them immediately after their inclusion in the Penn MS. The two chronological sections of the Penn MS and the ballades' position very early in the manuscript, however, suggest that the scenario in which the ballades are composed first in England is the more likely one.

Now that we have established a reasonable timeline for *Les Cinq Balades Ensievans* and linked their completion with dating Deschamps's achievement in inventing the envoy-ballade form, we may consider *The Complaint of Venus*. Scholars have not even come close to reaching a consensus about the dating of this work. Derek Pearsall claims that it is "probably from the 1380s."[30] Wimsatt believes that it was begun early but probably completed in the 1390s.[31] The editors of the *Riverside Chaucer* date it anywhere between 1385 and 1392, but recognize that it could have been composed as early as 1375.[32] This final option seems, I believe, the most likely. As I have suggested, Chaucer would have had in his possession Granson's ballades as early as 1372, and he and Granson were already at that date admirers of each other's poetic practice. A work like *The Complaint of Venus*, highly commendatory of Granson both in form and in content, might very well have commemorated Granson's release from Spain.[33] This scenario suggests that *The Complaint of Venus*, a translation of Granson's greatest poetic achievement to that date, and addressed to the "flour of hem that make in Fraunce," be read as a kind of occasional poem celebrating Granson's return from Spain (82). Certainly, with Deschamps

[30] Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 71.
[31] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, 233.
[32] *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1081.
[33] Reading this poem as an occasional one could still be the case, even if Granson's ballade sequence was composed in Spain first; such a slight variation in the dating of those poems would not alter the purpose of Chaucer's translation.

popularizing the ballade with envoy form at this same time, this new form would have been available to Chaucer, who most likely would have been keen to try adapting it to his own practice, as he had done with earlier ballade forms. No doubt, too, he found it an agreeable form, as many of his later ballades also contain an envoy.[34] In any case, the translation was at least finished by 1384, when we know Granson and Deschamps met while Granson was back in France negotiating for peace on behalf of the English, a meeting recorded in a ballade by Deschamps. So, we have a terminus post quem of 1375 for the date of composition of *The Complaint of Venus* and a terminus ante quem of 1384, with the earlier date more likely as Chaucer would probably have composed the work soon after his friend was released. This would

[34] Before turning to the Penn MS and the relation that it, and its probable compiler, has to Chaucer's work, I need to add one caveat considering the dating of *The Complaint of Venus*. Claiming that a ballade with envoy could have been written in 1375 might seem too early. Wimsatt, following Daniel Poiren's reading of Deschamps's *Art de Dictier*, claims that Deschamps does not popularize the ballade with envoy form until after Machaut's death in 1377, noting that the ballades on Machaut's death lack an envoy. It should not be surprising, however, that the ballades commemorating Machaut's death would lack an envoy, since it would be strange to violate Machaut's practice while praising it. Deschamps also does not necessarily include an envoy on double ballades. The double ballades to Fortune have no envoy, despite appearing in the manuscript between the ballade to Chaucer and another ballade that both have envoys, meaning that Deschamps switched between composing with and without envoys quite freely for some period of time. Assuming that Deschamps would have made no alteration to his mentor's craft before his mentor's death, moreover, makes the mentor/apprentice relationship needlessly confining; it is equally likely that Deschamps would have presented Machaut with innovation in form for his approval. In addition, given that Deschamps was not a musician, and therefore always free from the three-stanza form set to music that had been Machaut's practice, he could have made the innovation at any time. The manuscripts of Deschamps' work, likewise, are little help. The vast majority of his work exists in only one volume, Bibliothèque Nationale fonds francais 840, with many other poems scattered throughout four manuscripts and a few poems in two further manuscripts. This list excludes the Penn MS, although this manuscript might shine some light on the dating of Deschamps's practice, especially given that its compilation is the only one that reliably precedes his death. I will turn to this volume at greater length in a moment, but it is sufficient to point out here that this roughly chronological manuscript only contains ballades with envoys near its end. Since the manuscript appears to have been compiled over the decade of the 1370s, that decade seems the most likely one in which Deschamps popularized the ballade with envoy form. I am arguing, then, for only a slight modification to the usual date of the late 1370s. Deschamps, instead, could have popularized this form anytime in the 1370s after Granson's release from Spain, when he returned to England and resumed work on University of Pennsylvania MS French 15, including this new form in the later stages of manuscript compilation, so anytime after 1374, but before 1380. For the lack of envoys on the ballades commemorating Machaut's death, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, 259. For the dating of the envoy innovation and Machaut's influence on Deschamps, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of "Ch"*, 61, and Poirion, *Le Poete et le prince*. The four major collections of Deschamps work in order of number of pieces are Bibliothèque Nationale nouvelles acquisitions francaises 6221 (the major provider of any variants), Bibliothèque Clermont-Ferrand MS 249, Bibliothèque Nationale nouvelles acquisitions francaises 6235, Bibliothèque de Toulouse no. 822. The two minor ones are Bibliothèque Nationale fonds francais 850 and Bibliothèque Nationale nouvelle acquisitions francaises 20029. This information is drawn from Gaston Raynaud's discussion in Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps,* ed. le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud (Paris: Societe des Anciens Textes Francais, 1878), vol. 11, 101-111.

mean, also, that *The Complaint of Venus* predates *The Complaint of Mars*, rather than vice versa. The extrinsic importance of the Penn MS, and Chaucer's early work in conjunction with it, to students of the French Middle Ages should be clear; it is invaluable as a tool for dating poetic exchanges and innovations, and it represents a reliable portrait of the way in which the poets of the fourteenth century understood both the tradition they had inherited and their own contributions to that tradition. For Chaucer studies, too, the manuscript gives us valuable insight into when Chaucer became acquainted with some of the innovations in French poetics that he would later practice extensively and gives us some insight into the importance of Granson in introducing Chaucer to this tradition. Let us now turn to a consideration of the intrinsic value, the contents of the manuscript and the man who compiled them, to see just why Chaucer might have been interested in such a compilation.

Chapter 3

Oton de Granson, Chaucer's Compiler

The Penn MS contains 310 poems of various genres by various authors, the largest extant manuscript of miscellaneous French verse compiled in any country from the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century. It contains at least 107 Machaut lyrics, and at least twenty-seven poems by Granson; fifteen poems are by "Ch," eight poems are probably by Deschamps, one poem by Philippe de Vitry, one by Jean de le Mote, and, to complete the list of known poets but of less importance to this argument, three poems by the musician Grimace and one by Nicole de Margival.[35] The genres in the manuscript include ballades, roundels, virelays, complaints, pastourelles, chants royaux, serventois, and lays.[36] The organizing principle seems to have been diversity, with an emphasis on the achievements of Machaut. Wimsatt believes that Granson was the anthologist of the manuscript, which is very likely.[37] Wimsatt's argument runs as follows. It is the third largest manuscript of his works, the other two having been assembled under his direction, like Froissart did with his work.[38] It seems to present, in roughly chronological order, two different periods of poetic practice, with the first 278 poems largely compiled before Deschamps's ballade with envoy structure became popular, and the remaining 22 written after that form became common, meaning that the anthologist of the manuscript must have taken a break from compiling sometime in the early 1370s.[39] I would add to this argument

[35] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 47-49.
[36] Ibid, 64.
[37] Ibid, 66-68.
[38] Ibid, 50.
[39] Ibid, 83-129. These pages offer the only printed complete list of contents of the manuscript. The break in composition I find likely due to the fact that the ballades with envoys are so concentrated in the later part, rather

only to make explicit the point that the division of the manuscript into these two periods corresponds to the period of inactivity in their collation when Granson was held captive in Spain. In addition, while it strives for a diverse representation of all of the major French authors of the later part of the fourteenth century, the manuscript does not include any of the major authors whose works post-date the 1390s, including Christine de Pizan and Charles d'Orléans. The manuscript is also incomplete; it contains eight blank leaves at the end although these leaves are ruled, suggesting that the compiler would have completed them barring any unforeseen event.[40] The ruled leaves and the lack of any authors from the fifteenth century suggests that the manuscript may well have been left incomplete when Granson was killed in a duel in Savoy in 1397.[41] If Granson was the anthologist, this manuscript would tell us not only the specific poems by Granson with which Chaucer would have likely been familiar, but also the kinds of material to which Chaucer would have imagined Granson enjoying.[42]

In considering this manuscript, I need to address Chaucer as the possible author of the "Ch" poems. The evidence for this identification is largely negative; there is no other author of whom we are aware that would fit the bill, since the collection is too early to include any of the great French poets of the fifteenth century, including Christine de Pizan, Alain Chartier, and Charles d'Orléans. Chaucer simply has the right name and is in the right place at the right time. This kind of evidence is not sufficient to make a positive identification. For the purposes of literary history, though, it's unclear whether or not we need to make such a positive

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than a gradual increase in their frequency, which is what one would expect if the manuscript reflected a simple chronological order.

[40] I would like to thank Amey Hutchins of the Van Pelt Library at the University of Pennsylvania for making sure these folios were ruled.

[41] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 67.

[42] While Granson is not explicitly under discussion, the recent work by Jane Taylor is useful to my consideration here. See Jane H. M. Taylor, *The Making of Poetry: Later Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007). Taylor makes the very broad point that "the social and cultural environment in which these anthologies are produced governs the writer and the act of writing," something I have been assuming throughout the essay, 6.

identification. The "Ch" poems, even if they are not Chaucer's, are the kind of poems that were being created around Chaucer; they are the kind of poems Chaucer *could have written*. The difference between that possibility and any actuality is slight enough, in the absence of any other evidence, for us to undertake a thought experiment: what if Chaucer is "Ch"? What, in other words, do we learn about his poetic practice and that of his contemporaries if we simply assume that they are one and the same person? My assumption, let me be clear, is not that Chaucer is "Ch," but that his familiarity with the "Ch" poems would have been sufficient enough for us to assume that any reading that applies to them, would also easily apply to his poetry. So, while it is only "Ch" that we know for certain is included in Granson's manuscript, and it is only "Ch" that we can say with any certainty who wrote the poems included in it, some of the conclusions can still be extended to Chaucer. Even if Chaucer is not "Ch" and his poems are not included in the Penn MS, he would have wanted them to be. The reason for this has something to do with the audience of the Penn MS.

Returning to Granson's anthology, we should keep in mind that manuscripts, like books, resonate differently for different audiences. Chaucer was likely part of the audience for at least some of the works in this manuscript, if not the manuscript itself, but he was by no means the audience with whom Granson was most concerned. There is some evidence that this manuscript was intended for an Isabel; which Isabel and whether it is really this specific manuscript that Granson meant to give to her is up for debate. Wimsatt points out that this manuscript would make a poor presentation copy, since it has "no illuminations" nor space for them.[43] The lack of illuminations would be odd indeed for a text that Granson meant to give to a person of great importance, and this text might have been intended for a person of the highest importance, Queen Isabelle of Bavaria. There is an inscription, albeit by a later hand, on the first folio that

[43] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 66.

reads "Droit et ferme," the motto of the kingdom of Bavaria, and Charles VI of France married Isabelle of Bavaria in 1385.[44] Two of Granson's ballades contained in the manuscript each begin with an acrostic on "Isabel," which leads Charles Mudge to identify the manuscript with a collection of Granson's ballades that we know Isabelle owned in 1401, but that has since been lost.[45] So, while the Penn MS may not be the exact presentation copy given to Queen Isabelle, it is likely the exemplar of the manuscript that Granson compiled for her benefit.

But if this manuscript is a copy of the manuscript that Granson gave to Isabelle of Bavaria, its presentation to her was an idea that postdated the composition of the majority of poems, leading us back to a different, original audience with connections to Chaucer. Haldeen Braddy, for instance, thinks that the "Isabel" poems were originally composed for Isabel of York and, given that they are included in the Barcelona MS of Granson's poems and that he had been residing in England prior to the composition of that manuscript, she is a strong possibility.[46] If Isabel of York is the Isabel for whom the poems of this manuscript were originally composed, it would not rule out Granson rededicating them to Isabelle of Bavaria at a later date, and it would bring these poems to the attention of a powerful audience closer to Chaucer, perhaps giving him reason to pay attention as well. Isabel of York, being the daughter of John of Gaunt, was most likely a person of some interest for Chaucer, and she was also something of a friend of a friend. In her 1392 will, she left Lewis Clifford a book of vices and virtues, confirming not only her ties to Chaucer's circle, but also the interest in books that she shared with them.[47] In addition, a

[44] Ibid, 47 (facsimile on 48).
[45] Ibid, 47. See also Charles R. Mudge, *The Pennsylvania Chansonnier, A Critical Edition of Ninety-five Anonymous Ballades from the Fourteenth Century*, University of Indiana diss. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1972), 10-11.
[46] Haldeen Braddy, *Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson*, 73-80. Wimsatt points out, though, that there are other possibilities, including Isabel of Neuchatel, with whom he had traveled through Savoy in 1376. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, 333, n. 14. As I am about to discuss, though, the John Shirley connection, while distorted, provides corroboration in support of Isabel of York.
[47] See Ralph Hanna III, *London Literature*, 10.

distorted bit of gossip from a different manuscript ties her to the poets and poems I have been discussing.

That gossip concerns John Shirley who in the colophon to *The Complaint of Mars* in Cambridge University Library MS Trinity R.3.20 writes: "Thus eondeth this complaint which some men sayne was made by my lady York doghter to the kynge of Spayne [John of Gaunt] and my lord of huntyngdon some tyme duc of Exester." *The Complaint of Venus* follows this, after which Shirley goes on to write "Hyt is sayde that Graunson made this laste balade for venus resembled to my lady of York aunswering the complaynt of Mars."[48] There has been some healthy debate as to whether there was a real court scandal and as to what Isabel of York's role in the composition of these complaints might have been; but I am not concerned with the accuracy of Shirley's reporting here, although I will be in other respects later.[49] I am interested instead in how Shirley's story about the origins of *The Complaint of Mars* and *The Complaint of Venus* might indirectly explain Chaucer's association with Granson's compilation. Shirley, we know, was an early anthologist and promoter of the work of Geoffrey Chaucer.[50] He was keen also, perhaps following Chaucer's own desires or perhaps following John Lydgate's desires, to link Chaucer to the highest reaches of the nobility.[51] So Shirley is not totally reliable, but he should not be totally discounted either.[52] His recollection here, while there is little reason to accept it whole-heartedly, might reference Granson's compilation. Shirley knew that Granson intended that material be given to one Isabel, but was confused about which Isabel and exactly what material. Alternately, he might have known that Isabel of York was the original dedicatee

[48] These quotes of Shirley's are printed in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1079.
[49] See the notes in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1079, for the references to this debate.
[50] For the fullest account of Shirley's career, see Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 1998).
[51] See Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 117-146.
[52] For a similar position on Shirley's reliability, see Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, "'Chaucer's Chronicle,' John Shirley, and the Canon of Chaucer's Shorter Poems," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998), 201-218.

of some of Granson's material and have gotten confused as to the particulars of her involvement.[53] In any event, his linking Chaucer to Isabel of York and possibly Granson through this material does not seem that far-fetched. If Chaucer and Granson were exchanging material, and if Chaucer knew that Granson was, at least at this stage in its composition, intending to give a manuscript to Isabel of York, then it is likely that he would have wanted some of his work to be included in that manuscript, which has now come down to us as the Penn MS, or at the very least he would have been keenly aware about what poems were making up the manuscript. The manuscript might represent, then, the first attempt to anthologize Chaucer, and it would be no surprise that a later anthologizer would take note of this item.[54] At the very least, it is a rare example of a miscellaneous manuscript of secular vernacular poetry written during Chaucer's life, and a forerunner of the kind of miscellaneous manscript that would later serve to contain the majority of Chaucer's works; it is most likely the manuscript that would have come to Chaucer's mind when he thought of miscellaneous manuscripts.

Granson's role as compiler, though, exhibits some unfamiliar as well as some expected practices, making his possible anthologizing of Chaucer strikingly different from the compilations that John Shirley, as well as later printers such as Thynne, would create. Ralph Hanna's conclusion that "in the pre-1450 English situation…all books are probably 'bespoke,' the product of special orders" would apply here.[55] This Granson compilation would be a specialized instance of such bespoke production; he would have had this compilation made as a

[53] We should keep in mind too that, despite not having a reference to such a thing in her will, it would not have been impossible for Granson to have given Isabel of York an earlier version of the book owned by Isabelle of Bavaria. If he were able to switch Isabels in the case of some poems, why not a whole manuscript as well? I will touch on this possibility further below.

[54] This manuscript would then predate what we should think of as the "second attempt" at anthologizing Chaucer, Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27.

[55] Ralph Hanna III, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 37-51, quote on 37.

preliminary step toward having more elaborate display copies created. Granson would then be blending the manuscript producing methods of some French and English authors. That is, like Froissart overseeing the production of manuscripts containing primarily his own work, Granson would have control over the production of the manuscript, a kind of self-publishing.[56] Anticipating Chaucer's practice as discussed in *Adam Scriveyn*, Granson is not producing a display copy for himself, but is instead creating "a fair copy for his own use, or for circulation among his friends, or possibly for delivery to a patron."[57] Before delivering to a patron, the manuscript would need to be recopied and illuminated, but then it could be presented to a patron, or even be copied several times for several different patrons, since the fair copy method allowed for continued reproducibility. This method would also allow Granson, like Shirley many years later, the ability to allow friends or patrons to pick out the contents they desired to be included into more lavishly decorated models, or to do so himself.[58] The later scenario, where Granson's involvement is more active, is the more likely case, mainly due to the fact that Granson, unlike Shirley, had no real commercial interest in producing his volumes, and there was not really an audience for them even if he did. The commercial situation surrounding manuscript production was probably not robust enough to support a speculative enterprise in the late fourteenth century, like it might have been by the mid-fifteenth century. Granson was not a commercial book producer; he was, in short, no John Shirley. Shirley and others were interested in stressing Chaucer's achievements to meet the needs of their mid-fifteenth-century or sixteenth-century

[56] For an interesting and very innovative take on how this French model effected English authors, see Ardis Butterfield, "Articulating the Author: Gower and the French Vernacular Codex," *Yearbook of English Studies*, v.33 (2003), 80-96

[57] A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts," *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 257-278. The quote is taken from their discussion of Chaucer's practice on 259.

[58] For Shirley's methodology see Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson "Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts," *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 279-315, esp. 287.

patrons, friends, or customers.[59] Granson included Chaucer, if he did actually include him, to meet the needs of his specific situation, that of a French courtier, living on English soil, creating in England a context for the French poetry he was producing. He was, as opposed to Shirley, creating his own consumers, by teaching the nobility what French poetry was and what to expect from it.[60] Chaucer too stood to benefit from being included in Granson's anthology, and not only by having Granson teach the upper strata of society to become consumers of poetry. Granson's connection to the extended House of Lancaster would only bolster Chaucer's relationship to that family, translating perhaps to a further monetary reward. Whereas Chaucer's inclusion in later anthologies would be beyond his control and would benefit solely the producers of those manuscripts, his inclusion in Granson's compilation would be beneficial to both Granson and himself. Assuming that Chaucer had a poetic career prior to *The Book of the Duchess*, which is an incredibly accomplished and substantial poem for a poetic debut, it is likely that career would have been primarily in French, the more common language of courtly poetic exchange in the 1360s. Derek Pearsall dubs these years Chaucer's "blank years," but now we can see that they are not blanks at all; the 1360s and early 1370s are instead filled with Chaucer practicing his craft in French, and eagerly showing those exercises to the one French poet that he knew well.[61] Since Granson appreciated *The Book of the Duchess* as much as he did, it is not all together unlikely that he asked Chaucer for some earlier work to include in the manuscript Granson was creating. If Chaucer knew that Granson was writing material for Isabel of York and if he saw in

[59] See Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 117-146, and Boffey and Thompson, "Anthologies and Miscellanies," 284-287. For a recent discussion of this tendency, see also Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate and Their Books, 1473-1557* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[60] Of course there had long been French poets in the English Courts, for this, see Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). The problem is that each of thee French poets had to be sure that the Court audience was prepared for their specific poetry. Granson's anthology, then, would be one of what Hanna calls "highly individualistic canon-creating efforts by individuals variously inserted into discrete and fragmented social positions." Hanna, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity," 47.

[61] Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 47. I'd like to thank Andrew Cole for drawing my attention to this phrase.

the inclusion of his material in Granson's manuscript a chance to further his reputation with John of Gaunt's extended family, he would have likely supplied Granson with whatever material he wanted. The survival of the "Ch" poems, the only possible candidates for Chaucer's poetic output in French, would then be due to Granson's appreciation of a poem in English.[62]

[62] While, as I have said, I don't want to make an explicit argument about Chaucer's authorship of the "Ch" poems, his own pronouncements about his poetic achievements are suggestive. If the "Ch" indicates authorship, which it most likely does, in this manuscript composed of the works of several great medieval French authors, then there is a problem. Since the manuscript was compiled before 1400, and therefore before the careers of Christine de Pizan, Charles d'Orléans, or Alain Chartier, there is no likely candidate for authorship among the known French writers. Given that the manuscript was most likely produced while Granson was in London, Chaucer would be the only major poet active during this time whose name matches the designation. The attribution of authorship by default might seem like the fulfillment of a flimsy fantasy, but Chaucer does give some indication that he wrote poems in French. In *The Legend of Good Women*, Alceste credits him with "balades, roundeles, virelayes" (F 423), and in his *Retraction* he claims to regret the composition of "many a song and many a leccherous lay" (X, 1086). While the later categories are not terribly specific, the former are and give some sort of indication as to what is being retracted. We have some of Chaucer's ballades, and we know that a roundel should be attached to the end of the *Parliament of Fowles*, but we have no virelays composed by him. Of course only one manuscript of *The Parliament of Fowles* actually includes a roundel, and it is in a later hand and therefore not likely Chaucer's. See *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1002. This lack indicates the not particularly surprising fact that we have lost some of Chaucer's work, and that some of that work is at least based on French forms, if not in French itself. While one does not gain a virelay if one adds the 'Ch' poems to the Chaucerian oeuvre, these poems do supply an actual roundel by Chaucer as well as many other, so-named lecherous lays.

Chapter 4

"Ch," Chaucer's Inspiration

The "Ch" poems, though, are not *The Book of the Duchess*. What makes the poems of "Ch" the kind of poetry Granson would have wanted to place in his collection? The poems are short lyrics, and they are in French, both apparent requirements for inclusion in Granson's collection. But, if we want to answer more conclusively what Granson found appealing in these poems, we should turn to Chaucer. Whether or not Chaucer actually wrote the "Ch" poems, his involvement with Granson and the status of Granson's compilation means that these poems would have been of some interest to him. Since Chaucer and Granson seemed to like the same type of poetry, we can ask whether or not there is anything Chaucerian about the "Ch" poems, again not to evaluate their true authorship, but instead to reveal what kind of interest other authors might have in them. Granson's incorporation of them in his collection means that they are a likely influence on Chaucer, whether he wrote them or not, simply because they would be the kind of thing Chaucer would like to have written or read.

Before turning to the "Ch" poems, though, one would do well to consider two items, one poem by Jean de la Mote and one poem by Philipe de Vitry, in the Penn MS that give some clue as to how to read Chaucer's interaction with Granson's ballade sequence, as well as some of the poems of "Ch." The Penn MS is the better one of the two manuscripts, the other being Bibliothèque Nationale fonds latins 3343, that contains an aggressive poetic exchange between Philippe de Vitry, bishop and friend of Petrarch, and Jean de le Mote, French poet tied to the English court. The exchange took place between 1340 and 1361, while Jean was living in

England but before Philippe died. The English, fresh off victories at Crécy and Poitiers in 1346 and 1356, are the target of Philippe's vitriol, as he accuses Jean of being a traitor. In the exchange, Philippe claims that "En Albion de flun nommee,/ Roys Autheus devenus serfs," going on to specify the pains Jean will suffer in Hell due to his service in "Albion de Dieu maldicte."[63] All the while defending himself against accusations of treachery and denying that he owes allegiance to France, Jean responds not only with praise for Philippe, "O Victriens, mondains dieu d'armonie," but also with a plea, "Sy te supplie, ne banny mon bon nom/ De terre en Grec Gaulle de Dieu amee."[64] The exchange is puzzling; Philippe's critique seems unreasonably harsh and Jean's response weirdly nice. Trying to imagine Chaucer's reaction to such an exchange, though, sheds some light on it. The line "England cursed by God" would probably catch the attention of an English poet, and the critique of a French poet living in England as having become King Arthur's serf would have seemed applicable to his friend Granson as well. Chaucer, too, might have found the exchange amusing. Jean's reply is respectful to Philippe, perhaps to the point of absurdity, since it is unclear how the Bishop of Meaux would have responded to being called an "earthly God." The reply, moreover, uses Philippe's words against him. Jean transforms Philippe's assessment that God has cursed England into an implied critique of Philippe's judgmental verse, by calling him an "earthly God." In addition, Jean twists God's curse on England into God's love of France, disproving Philippe's attack on Jean's patriotism without devolving into a personal attack on Philippe. The praise of Jean's ballade hides a jocular, though pointed, response. Jean adapts a phrase to prove he can overmatch Philippe's creative capacity. The poetic exchange between Jean and Philippe,

[63] "In Albion named from the river/ You have become King Arthur's serf… Albion cursed by God" The translations here are mine, the poems can be found in Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of "Ch"*, 52.
[64] "Oh Vitrian, earthly god of harmony… If you please, do not harm my good name/ From the land in Greek called Gaul [and] loved by God." Ibid, 54.

then, sets a tone of friendly satire for poetic exchanges in the compilation, a tone that will be a familiar one in Chaucer and Granson's subsequent poetry.

Considering the poetic interaction between Jean and Phillippe, as well as the exchange between Chaucer and Granson, one of the "Ch" poems, named by Wimsatt *The Lady's Perfection*, also displays characteristics of a friendly competition. *The Lady's Perfection* is an oddity among the "Ch" poems, so much so that Wimsatt believes it to be misattributed.[65] The poem certainly stands out from the others; it has the longest envoy, the only one specifying a puy, and its main stylistic feature is the use, and over-use, of anaphora.[66] This is not to say that this poem refers to an actual puy, those informal poetic competitions in which amateur poets would compose works that played upon and attempted to outperform the works of their fellow participants, all of which was overseen by a "Prince," who was not necessarily nobility, but instead was an honored guest who would serve as the impartial arbiter of talent.[67] Instead, the poem may be imagining the implied puy as a loose confederation of poets, tied not by location, but by vocation. There is one other envoy addressed to a "Princes," but the envoy of *The Lady's Perfection* is the only one that specifies "Princes du puy."[68] The address gives the envoy a pointed quality, and I would suggest that, along with the anaphora, signals another playful exchange between "Ch" and Granson, paralleling that exchange just mentioned between

[65] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 7-8. His main objection, the poem's "excessiveness and banality" (8), is precisely the feature that makes it Chaucerian to my mind.

[66] Since it is a chançon royal, the use of an envoy is to be expected. In fact, there are no ballades with envoys attributed to "Ch" and almost none in the section of the manuscript that contains these poems. The lack of Deschamps's formal innovation suggests, as noted above, that the "Ch" poems were all composed in the late 1360s and early 1370s. We should note further that all the evidence suggests that puys, died out in London in the first decade of the fourteenth century. For specific dates, see Hanna, *London Literature*, 36.

[67] For puys in general, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, 274-281. By "amateur poets" I mean those who did not conceive of themselves as poets, as opposed to someone like Chaucer or Deschamps. Puys largely existed in the thirteenth century and the earlier part of the fourteenth-century, prior to the rise of the bureaucratic classes that would produce the earliest professional poets in England and France.

[68] I should note here that "Princes" in this envoy has a different meaning than the "Princes" in the envoy to the *The Complaint of Venus*. The "s" at the end of the word here does not indicate a plural, as it would in English, but instead is a hold over from the case system of Old French; it is a nominative singular designator. As opposed to the "s" in Chaucer's ballade, to which I will return, this ballade is addressed to a single individual.

Phillippe and Jean. Taking into consideration the Valentine's Day poetry that interested Granson and Chaucer, Granson's *Balade de Saint Valentin* signals Chaucer's influence by thematically foregrounding choice as the constitutive feature of the day's celebration, that it is a day "whan every foul cometh there to chese his make" (*Parliament of Fowls*, 310). But, perhaps the most notable aspect of the ballade is that it has the outstanding formal characteristic of anaphora. Twenty of the poems twenty-four lines begin with "Je vous choisy," and this kind of repetition is not unheard of in medieval French poetry.[69] "Ch", in *The Lady's Perfection*, makes use of this tendency towards repetition, and I will quote only the first stanza in full to make that tendency apparent:

> Venez veoir qu'a fait Pymalion;
> Venez veoir excellente figure,
> Venez veoir l'amie de Jason;
> Venez veoir bouche a poy d'ouverture;
> Venez veoir de Hester la bonte;
> Venez veoir de Judith la Beaute;
> Venez veoir les doulz yeulz Dame Helaine;
> Venez oïr doulce voix de Serainne;
> Venez veoir Polyxene la Blonde;
> Venez veoir de plaisance la plaine,
> Qui n'a de tout pareille ne seconde.[70]

[69] See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries*, 236.
[70] "Come see what Pygmalion has made;/ Come see the excellent form;/ Come see the loved one of Jason;/ Come see the little mouth;/ Come see the goodness of Esther;/ Come see the beauty of Judith;/ Come see the sweet eyes of Lady Helen;/ Come hear the sweet voice of the Siren;/ Come see Polyxena the Blonde;/ Come see the fullness of

The formal constraints on a poet from the chançon royale form alone are here extended, seriously impairing the production of meaning. The stanza serves the poem basically only as a list, imploring the addressee simply to look. The repetition is broken only once by asking the addressee to listen, which barely serves as a break at all, since "veoir" is so close to "oïr" both visually and aurally. The break only serves to reinforce the overall effect, a situation duplicated in the overall structure of the poem. Ten of the first stanza's eleven lines begin with "Venez veoir," eight lines in the second stanza begin with "Avisez bien," four lines in the third stanza begin with "Ymaginez," and five lines in the fourth stanza begin with "C'est."[71] There is no repetition in the final stanza. The emphasis and then abandonment of anaphora signals authorial intent, and makes the anaphora less of an aesthetic deficiency and more of a subtle jab at Granson's compulsive repetition. I would suggest that we read this poem as "Ch's" parody of Granson; what Wimsatt thinks of as its aesthetic faults are instead a joke at the expense of a literary tradition.

We might think of this poem, then, as a kind of French *Tale of Sir Thopas*. If that poem, with Sir Thopas's excessive "prikynge" and desire to love an "elf-queen," is written at the expense of the English tail-rhyme romance and its overtly sexual imagery and inability to address the love problems of actual men and women, then this poem is written at the expense of the French ballade with its ability to say very little of any substance over the course of very many lines of poetry (VII, 775, 790). *The Lady's Perfection* is a mockery of the repetitiveness of the French ballade tradition, and specifically Granson's practice. Since the manuscript contains both poems, we should read them as another witty poetic exchange, similar to the one represented by

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pleasure,/ Who among all no equal nor second" (Wimsatt's translation). Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 32-33.

[71] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 32-34.

Philippe de Vitry and Jean de le Mote elsewhere in the manuscript.[72] Rather than turning specific phrases against their originator, Chaucer turns Granson's style against him.

While the last stanza of *The Lady's Perfection* breaks with the anaphora of the rest of the poem, it keeps with certain motifs used elsewhere in the "Ch" poems, as well as in some of Chaucer's other works. After three more stanzas praising his lady, the poet writes:

> Dame que j'aim, flour de perfection,
> Rousee en May, soleil qui tousdis dure,
> Flun de doulçour, a cui comparoison
> D'autre dame belle ne s'amesure
> Quant a mon veuil ne a ma voulenté,
> Si vrayement que mi bien sont enté
> En vous du tout. Ne soit de vous lointainne
> Pitié pour moy, donner garrison sainne,
> Car trop seroit ma tristresce parfonde
> S'elle n'estoit de vostre cuer prochainne,
> Fuiant Dangier que Bonne Amour confonde.[73]

Much of this stanza is commonplace in French lyrics. The stature of the lady, her comparison to May, and her excellence above other ladies are all typical sentiments. The references to Dangier

[72] Granson's work is the 22nd item in the manuscript. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 86.
[73] "Lady that I love, flower of perfection,/ Dew in May, sun which lasts forever,/ Well of sweetness, to whom there is no measure/ Of comparison with other beautiful ladies,/ Either in my desire or my will/ So truly is my good rooted/ Completely in you. May Pity for me not be/ Far from you, to give me complete healing,/ For my sadness would be too deep/ If she were not close to your heart,/ Fleeing Danger which confounds Good Love" (Wimsatt's translation). Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the poems of 'Ch'*, 34-35.

and Pitié as personifications forming part of a tradition stemming from the *Roman de la Rose* are also not unusual. These *Roman de la Rose* characters, the abstract embodiments of different aspects of a love affair, are a particular obsession of the "Ch" poems. The personification of the lady's attributes, or the vicissitudes of courtship, appear in ten of the fifteen "Ch" poems, a full two thirds; Dangier alone appears in eight, over half.[74] While the French lyric tradition in general is greatly indebted to the *Roman de la Rose*, these poems display a persistent interest in its personifications, suggesting that the author was deeply immersed in the terminology of the *Roman de la Rose*, in thinking that love must be represented by the specific abstractions found in the *Roman de la Rose*. A quick comparison to Granson foregrounds the oddity of this obsessive interest. His *Balade de Saint Valentin* lacks any reference to the *Roman de la Rose*, choosing to focus on stylistic features to emphasize choice as its thematic interest. "Ch," in contrast, cannot avoid thinking of romance in the terms laid down in the *Roman de la Rose*; the poem does not make the reference thematically necessary, but "Ch" cannot seem to help himself.

Chaucer, then, surely would have been interested in *The Lady's Perfections*, and we can see that interest in his later work. The *Prologue to The Legend of Good Women* offers one point of reference. In that work, Chaucer the character, when confronted by the God of Love, is forced to dwell upon his early, largely French inspired, poetic output.[75] When Chaucer as the dreamer is approached by the God of Love and his train, he recites a ballade, which is then followed by a discussion between Chaucer and the God of Love, leading to the God of Love accusing Chaucer

[74] Wimsatt names these poems "The Sovereign Life of Love," "The Lover Who Melts Like Wax," "The Day of Grace," "A Prayer for Lovers," "The Bereft Lover," "The Parliament of Love," "The Lady's Perfection," "Requiem for a Lover," "A Lover's Thanksgiving," "The Image in the Lover's Heart," Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 10-19, 26-37, and 40-43. Dangier appears in all of these except "The Bereft Lover" and "The Image in the Lover's Heart."

[75] The two main works that Chaucer has written to displease the God of love are *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Romaunt of the Rose*. If Troilus was written just before *The Legend of Good Women* as many scholars think, then the poetic output being discussed must be by and large of the pre-Boccaccio, French-inspired variety. Of course, Troilus too has its own French inheritance; it is not as if Chaucer forgot what he had learned about French poetics.

of translating the *Roman de la Rose*, which is "an heresye ayeins my lawe," and of writing *Troilus and Crisyede*, which "maketh men to women lasse triste" (F, 330 and 333). The view of love espoused in *The Lady's Perfection* returns here as precisely the kind of attitude with which the God of Love takes issue. Compare the sentiments of the speaker for his lady in *The Lady's Perfection* to the ballade from the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*:

> Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;
> Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al adown;
> Hyd Jonathas, al thy friendly manere;
> Penalopee and Marcia Catoun
> Make of youre wifhod no comparysoun;
> Hyde ye youre beautes, Ysoude and Eleyne:
> My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.
>
> Thy faire body, lat yt nat appere,
> Lavyne; and thou, Lucresse of Rome toun,
> And Polixene, that boghten love so dere,
> And Cleopatre, with al thy passyoun,
> Hyde ye youre trouthe of love and your renoun;
> And thou, Tisbe, that hast for love swich peyne:
> My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.
>
> Herro, Dido, Laudomia, alle yfere,

And Phillis, hanging for thy Demophoun,

And Canace, espied by thy chere,

Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,

Maketh of your trouthe neythir boost ne soun;

Nor Ypermystre or Adriane, ye tweyne:

My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne. (F, 249-269)

Formally, the ballade resembles *The Lady's Perfection*. Both are structured, more or less, as lists of mythological figures to whom the Lady is compared and both make use of anaphora in order to construct the list. Earlier, "Ch" used different phrases for each stanza. Here, Chaucer alternates between "Hyd" and "And" to begin many of his lines. We have seen how that operates within *The Lady's Perfection*, but here Chaucer critiques the overwrought form by other means. Rather than inscribe the formal critique within a pattern of decreasing frequency, as "Ch" had done, Chaucer allows the critique to stand outside of the ballade, in the surrounding story of the prologue. Here again, then, we must look past the commonplace sentiments in order to see what thematically links this embedded English ballade to "Ch's" earlier French chançon royale. While the ballade itself does not warrant a condemnation from the God of Love (he does not reference it particularly in his critique of Chaucer), it clearly falls within a tradition of French inspired poetry that the God of Love explicitly condemns. It references numerous mythological and historical figures, only to denigrate them in comparison to the speaker's beloved, under the logic of the poem, she "disteynes" them. The Chaucerian joke here is that even poems that are nominally laudatory of women degrade them as a whole just as much as something like the passages spoken by La Vielle in the *Roman de la Rose*. In other words, this denigration of

historical and mythological women makes this poem of a kind to those works that Alceste has Chaucer rectify in telling the stories of "good women" that follow the prologue. In *The Lady's Perfection* these references to the famous "good" women are contained within the first stanza and the idea that "a cui comparoison/ D'autre dame belle ne s'amesure," that no other woman can compare to the beloved, does not appear until the last stanza, but the thrust is the same. These mythological and historical figures are only referenced in order to discuss the beloved's surpassing worth; they may have worth of their own, but this worth is obscured by the beloved's transcendent worth, leaving these women with essentially nothing, and it is that lacuna *The Legend of Good Women* is meant to address. In the ballade, Chaucer compresses and foregrounds the disparity between beloved and fictional character that is at the heart of the chançon royale, maintaining the logic of the earlier parody in order to issue a challenge to rectify that disparity in his first attempt at a frame narrative.

Chapter 5

The Complaint of Venus, Chaucer's Joke

The Complaint of Venus is an elaborate kind of joke that fits in perfectly with the genre of poetic exchanges with which I have been dealing. I will begin with the end. If one imagines Chaucer finding these poetic exchanges humorous, a polite enough but bitingly witty banter between fellow poets, the relation of *The Complaint of Venus* to Granson's ballades begins to make more sense. The envoy, the newest formal feature of the ballade that Chaucer would have come across, makes this relationship the most clear:

> Princes, recevyeth this compleynt in gre,
> Unto your excellent benignite
> Direct after my litel suffisaunce.
> For elde, that in my spirit dulleth me,
> Hath of endyting al the subtilte
> Wel nygh bereft out of my remembraunce,
> And eke to me it ys a gret penaunce,
> Syth rym in Englissh hath such skarsete,
> To folowe word by word the curiosite
> Of Graunson, flour of hem that make in Fraunce. (73-82)

The complaint mentioned in the first line of the envoy is perhaps a direct reference to the version of the Granson ballades in the Penn MS. There is evidence in the Penn MS that the first ballade originally bore the rubric "complainte;" Chaucer may have adopted the designation, and in doing so he also streamlined the presentation.[76] Granson wrote a "complaint" about a spurned lover that extends for five ballades, some of which digress from the love affair and some of which repeat complaints recorded in the other ballads. Chaucer, in contrast, translates Granson's "complaint" adopting the generic marker for his title, and excising the material that he finds tangential to the actual complaining lover. He even goes so far as to append a new formal innovation to his translation, the envoy. Though Chaucer bemoans his "litel suffisaunce" because his "spirit" is dulled by "elde," as well as the "penaunce" that translating this poem has been due to the "skarsete" of "rym in Englissh," the envoy is a tour de force of poetic capability, as is, for that matter, the entire complaint.[77] Chaucer's complaint as a whole maintains a rhyme scheme of ababbccb, switching off rhymes only when moving from one ballade to the next. This rhyme scheme might seem less impressive than what it is, since it simply duplicates the rhyme scheme found in the French source.

However, taking Chaucer's claims about the relative lack of rhyming words in English seriously, as we should, reveals Chaucer's construction to be the more difficult one. The fact of the matter is that English is a more analytic language than French and, as such, Chaucer is not able to depend on highly regular verb or noun endings to produce his rhyming pairs.

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[76] Ibid, 51.

[77] In regards to this state, however, we should not take the mention of "elde" too literally; it would take a modest assessment and turn it into a misleading complaint. The scarcity of rhymes in English found here becomes, at the end of *Troilus and Crisyede*, "ther is so grete diversite/ In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge," an acknowledgement of English's burgeoning that poets, not the least of whom is Chaucer himself, had in recent years made. Taking "elde" literally and pushing the writing of the poem, or even the envoy, into Chaucer's later years, after *Troilus and Criseyde* and many of *The Canterbury Tales*, would mean that the lament about English's scarcity becomes, simply, bad faith. If instead we assume that the envoy was written shortly after Granson's release from Spain and return to England, then there is a sense of solidarity in the envoy that would keep relations between these two poets warm.

Maintaining the rhyme scheme as he translates the French into English, then, is the more difficult achievement. Surveying the rhymed pairs in both languages makes the difficulty apparent: Granson's first ballade relies exclusively on the most common infinitive ending of verbs in French, "-er," for one of its rhymes and while Chaucer relies heavily on the ending "nesse," he breaks away from it in at least one instance, with "wit can gesse" (10).[78] The envoy, moreover, extends this impressive rhyme pattern by adding two additional lines, creating a rhyme scheme of abcabccbbc, and even returning to one of the rhymed endings from the first ballade. Chaucer, in adopting his friend's words, and bemoaning his own position, assumes a role like that of Jean de le Mote in this relationship, and as Jean's reply is meant to upstage Philippe, Chaucer is seeking to upstage Granson with a friendly, but pointed, performance.

A quick foray into Chaucer's other ballades with envoys makes his free play with French rhyme schemes here clearer. Taking the Granson ballades as a privileged example of the kind of French lyrics with which Chaucer would have been familiar, we see that, by and large they offer rhymed pairs that Chaucer would have found unhelpful. In the first stanza of the first ballade, Granson rhymes "face" and "espace," and "m'ame" and "blasme."[79] Despite there being ways to render these fairly easily into English, these are not the kind of French words that Chaucer favors in his rhymes. Instead, Granson's fourth ballade is more useful if we are searching for what Chaucer is gleaning from his French base text. In it "convenable" and "table" are imported directly into *The Complaint of Venus* and "raisonnable" as well as "ordonnance" and "plaisance" all become "resonable," "ordynaunce," and "pleasaunce" (25, 27, 35, 38, 39).[80] So, it is not that Chaucer avoids all French rhyming pairs; it is that he only uses ones that he finds effective. The

[78] The French infinitives that form the "a" rhymes in this ballade are as follows: parler, penser, recorder, loer, deviser, assambler, honnorer, jouer, blasmer, lasser. See Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 70-71.
[79] Ibid, 70
[80] Ibid, 73.

plaisance/pleasaunce rendering is especially important in Chaucer, since it contains one of the most important words in Chaucer's poetry. In the ballade *Womanly Noblesse*, "pleasaunce" appears again alongside a wide variety of French cognates: "remembraunce," "governaunce," "contenaunce," "preservaunce" (1-7). Compare that ballade's phonetic francophilia to *L'envoy de Chaucer a Bukton*, which avails itself of several rhyming pairs that would be problematic to render into French, such as "kyng" and "axing" as well as "wyf" and "lyf" (1, 3, 17, 19). The point here is that, later in his career when he has made the envoy with ballade form his own, he abandons all pretense to partaking of French models. In the early part of his career, that form is explicitly tied to the French tradition, but not slavishly so. The importation of French rhymed pairs into the early ballades with envoy follows a pattern whereby only those words that Chaucer finds thematically or philosophically important are imported. In both of these ways, he makes this French model his own.

Besides showing himself to be formally innovative, Chaucer also undercuts Granson's achievement with respect to content. Despite Chaucer's claim, *The Complaint of Venus* does not "folowe word by word the curiosite" of Granson's ballades (81). Chaucer drops two of Granson's five ballades all together, only translating three, and he only makes use of portions of the ballades. Compare, for instance, the first two lines of both ballade sequences. Chaucer writes, "Ther nys so high comfort to my pleasaunce,/ When that I am in any hevynesse" (1-2). These lines are supposed to translate Granson's "Il n'est confort qui tant de bien me face/ Quant je ne puis a ma dame parler."[81] These beginnings are obviously quite different: "pleasaunce," a word imported from French, does not appear in the original as one might expect and, more

[81]"There is no comfort which pleases me as well as/ When I am able to speak to my Lady." I have taken Granson's ballades from the text that approximates most closely the one Chaucer would have seen, University of Pennsylvania MS French 15. These are printed, along with the argument about their being the poems to which Chaucer had access, in Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 69-74, quote on 70.

drastically, Chaucer draws out the state of mind of the speaker, altering the second line completely; he dwells on the speaker's emotional situation, rather than moving quickly to the reason for distress as Granson does. So Chaucer is not translating according to the "word for word" side of the Hieronymian binary as he claims, but neither is he translating by the "sense for sense" portion of the binary either.[82]

As the second line of Granson's ballade makes clear, Granson's speaker is a man writing about his lady. In a move recalling the gender play of *A New Golden Age*, Chaucer reverses the gender, having the lady speak about the man whom she loves. In this gender play, we might think of a translation as also a reply; we can imagine that the two versions of the same sequence are the beloved's replies to the lover. Chaucer's alteration of the gender of the speaker leads to all sorts of changes, both major, as when he drops the second line altogether and replaces it, and minor, as when he replaces Granson's beloved virtues of "beauté, bonté, et grace" with the more traditionally masculine virtues of "bounte, wisdom, governaunce" (9).[83] To be clear, Chaucer writes an envoy to a ballade sequence especially laudatory of Granson and declares that sequence a "word for word" translation of Granson, all the while making drastic alterations both to the form and content of the original at least as drastic as the alterations he made in translating Boccaccio, without credit, in either *The Knight's Tale* or *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The portion of the ballades that Chaucer omits, and several of the changes, most likely depends on his status as a translator of *The Roman de la Rose*, once again using Granson to foreground his own achievements.[84] Chaucer omits Granson's second ballade, which deals

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[82] On this distinction and on Chaucer's translation practice in general, especially as he turns to Wycliffite practices in the 1390s, see Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," 1128-1167. My argument regarding dating suggests that by the 1370s Chaucer was already beginning to play with received models of translation, which would make him especially interested in new models like the Wycliffite one.

[83] For the beloved's virtues in Granson, see Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 70.

[84] I should note here that the recent discovery of a portion of a different manuscript containing the *Romaunt of the Rose* bespeaks a wider circulation than was thus far thought for Chaucer's translation. This wider circulation means

primarily with the beloved's beauty and worth. While certain elements might have seemed too forward for the female speaker of Chaucer's poem, the lines, "Car faite l'ont de tous les vices pure/ Et paree de toutes les vertues," would always be appropriate no matter what sex one is praising.[85] Given Chaucer's ease at switching the earlier praise from one sex to the other, he very well could have done the same here. True, the change in sex would necessitate a rather drastic departure for a translation, but not any more drastic than the change he makes to the third stanza of the first ballade. Granson's ballade, which leads up to the revelation that "Il samble bien qu'elle est tresnoble femme," would not be appropriate praise for a lady to a man.[86] In fact, the only correspondence in this stanza is that the lady's heart, "Son cuer esbat," becomes the much higher praise "His gentil herte is of so gret humblesse (18)."[87] Chaucer obviously, then, feels comfortable abandoning his model when it suits him. Here the reason may simply be economy of style; the praise that occupies the second half of the first ballade and all of the second in Granson, is constrained to the first stanza for Chaucer. The other missing ballade, in which Granson asks for "Pitie" with "Et me soustien sur ma loyal pensee/ Jusques Mercy m'ait sa grace monstree," is omitted in order for Chaucer to remind the audience of his own achievements.[88] Chaucer elides the calls for mercy or pity, focusing instead on the fourth ballade's introduction of "Jalousie, c'est la mere du deable."[89] Chaucer replaces this genealogy with the line "Jelosie be hanged by a cable!" and goes on to mention "subtil Jelosie, the deceyvable" (33, 43). As is paradigmatic of Chaucer's practice in this ballade, he retains the

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that he might have reasonably expected a larger group of people to be familiar with his work, and so understand the references I am arguing he makes. See Simon Horobin, "A New Fragment of the *Romaunt of the Rose*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 28 (2006), 205-215.

[85] "Because you have been made free of all the vices/ And partake of all the virtues." Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch'*, 71.

[86] "I think well that she is a thrice-noble woman."

[87] Ibid, 71.

[88] "And sustain me for my loyal thoughts/ Just as Mercy demonstrates his grace to me." Ibid, 72.

[89] "Jealousy, the mother of the devil." Ibid, 73.

precise rhyme from the French, but alters the meaning. The focus on jealousy makes for a much darker final ballade, where Granson's praise of love becomes Chaucer's stance against Jealosye's torture. The lover promises "No fors thogh Jelosye me turmente" and "And let the jelous putte it in assay/ That for no peyne wol I not sey nay;/ To love him best ne shall I never repente" (53, 62-64). Jealousy, which only serves as a small concern in Granson's originals, is a constitutive element of the love relationship in Chaucer, literally forming the central part of the love story, a correlation he learned well from the role Jealousy plays in *The Roman de la Rose*.[90] Chaucer's alterations to Granson's ballades, then, not only serve to upstage Granson's formal achievement, they also remind Granson that Chaucer is an exceptionally talented inheritor of the French poetic tradition, and that his version of the love affair is more in keeping with that tradition than Granson's. I do not want to give the impression, however, that Chaucer is being solely critical of Granson. Their long record of poetic borrowings shows no sign of enmity and, returning to the envoy, we can see that Chaucer's praise is more genuine than mocking. The acknowledgement that "rym in Englissh hath such skarsete" is true, especially in comparison to French. Chaucer tempers this fact, as we have seen, by constructing a very accomplished rhyme scheme. Lest we forget, too, Granson is called "flour of hem that make in Fraunce." While "maker" is not as high a praise as "poet," it is appropriate, and the designation "flour" emphasizes Chaucer's favorable assessment of Granson's person.[91] In fact, given that Chaucer alters Granson's poems so that the speaker is addressing a man, and given that Granson is the

[90] In considering Chaucer's use of *Le Roman de la Rose* in thematic terms, rather than looking at specific instances of textual correspondence, my methodology is similar to F. N. M. Diekstra, "Chaucer and The Romance of the Rose," *English Studies* 69 (1988), 12-26.

[91] The difference between the terms "maker" as opposed to "poet" is a complex one. See Glending Olson, "Making and Poetry in the Age of Chaucer," *Comparative Literature* 31 (1979) 272-290; and Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 49-61. Olson believes that Chaucer's tends to reserve the use of the word "poet" for classical authors. For this concept in the French tradition that is influencing these poets, see Kevin Brownlee, *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 7-21; and, tying the concept of "poet" as only a classical author to larger cultural formations, see Michel Zink, *Poesie et Conversion au Moyen Age* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003).

only person named in the poem, we might infer that Granson is, in a way, the man in question. If the work of translation is an act of love, Granson is the beloved of the complaint.

Speaking mythically, of course, this would make Granson Mars. Not surpisingly, then, the companion piece to *The Complaint of Venus*, *The Complaint of Mars*, was also written with Granson in mind. In keeping with their mutual interest, *The Complaint of Mars* is a Valentine's Day poem. The frame narrator informs the audience:

> Seynt Valentyne, a foul thus herde I synge
> Upon thy day er sonne gan up-sprynge.
>
> Yet sang this foul—I rede yow al awake,
> And ye that han not chosen in humble wyse,
> Without repentynge cheseth yow your make. (13-17)

The bird goes on to narrate the events of the story as well as sing Mars's complaint. This poem, like the others in the Chaucer/Granson Valentine's Day tradition, focuses on birds choosing their mates. The poem, then, like its companion piece, would have significant meaning for Granson, despite it not being a translation. But, if the poems really are meant to be a single unit, this poem was most likely composed after the translation and appended to it, a playful continuation of a poetic love affair.[92] *The Complaint of Mars*, then, signals that not only did Chaucer and Granson engage with one another early in their careers, but also that they continued to interact for some time, even as Chaucer began to produce more complex and innovative works. This continued

[92] Rodney Merrill makes the argument that they are originally designed to be one unit called "the Broche of Thebes." See, Rodney Merrill, "Chaucer's Broche of Thebes: The Unity of The Complaint of Mars and The Complaint of Venus," *Literary Monographs 5* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 3-61.

engagement allows for a different understanding of Chaucer's poetic achievement amongst his contemporaries in France than what *The Book of the Duchess* alone could provide; it suggests a that his French contemporaries would have understood Chaucer not as a poor soul who had the bad luck to be born in the backwater country of England, but as a rising star in the world of continental poetry.

There is some manuscript evidence in favor of this scenario; specifically, there is evidence for an independent version of *The Complaint of Venus*, which could be explained by assuming that it was written first and *The Complaint of Mars* was written afterward.[93] *The Complaint of Venus* and *The Complaint of Mars* each appear in eight manuscripts and the editions of Julian Notary and William Thynne, but not the same manuscripts. In addition, *The Complaint of Venus* seems to fall into three distinct textual families, while *The Complaint of Mars* falls only into two. There is some correspondence. One manuscript family of *The Complaint of Venus* contains Bodleian Library MSS Fairfax 16 and Tanner 346 along with Thynne's edition, as does one family of *The Complaint of Mars*. The other manuscript family of *The Complaint of Mars* includes Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden B.24, Cambridge University MSS Magdalene College Pepys 2006 Hand B and Hand E, and Julian Notary's edition, and these manuscripts also make up one family of *The Complaint of Venus*.[94] Apart from these, *The Complaint of Mars* is only contained in three other manuscripts, in two of which it is only a partial copy, one in each family, and these partial copies are the only ones that occur without *The Complaint of Venus*.[95] The final full copy exists in Cambridge University Library MS Trinity R.3.20, the John Shirley manuscript discussed above. The odd thing about this copy is that, while *The Complaint of Mars* corresponds to the second manuscript family (the one that includes

[93] For the information about the manuscripts in the following discussion, see *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1186-1187.
[94] For Cambridge University Library MS Pepys 2006 Hand E, both poems are partial.
[95] These are Longleat 258, for the first textual family, and British Library Harley 7333, for the second.

Julian Notary's edition), *The Complaint of Venus* contained in this manuscript is a member of a third, completely separate, textual family for that poem. The other member of this family is another Shirley manuscript, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 59. These two manuscripts, besides having a unique textual history for *The Complaint of Venus*, are further distinguished by having an incipit that more closely ties the poem to Chaucer and Granson's interaction. Rather than a simple title, these state "Here begynneth a balade made by that worthy Knight of Savoye in frensche calde sir Otes Graunson. translated by Chauciers."[96] Regardless of Shirley's penchant for telling stories, this distinct manuscript tradition, which also accurately records one aspect of Granson and Chaucer's relationship, is indicative of independent manuscript circulation that in some way preserved this poem's point of origin. The story behind this independent circulation might be explained by the explicit of Ashmole 59: "Lenvoy by Thomas Chaucer to alle prynces and princesses of this translacion of theis complaynte and laye." While I would not want to take this explanation at face value and credit Thomas Chaucer with the envoy, it may be an imagined scenario that attempts to explain a very real manuscript tradition, and one clearly invested in reporting on who wrote what.[97]

Indeed, the manuscript tradition that contains Trinity R.3.20 and Ashmole 59 seems remarkably concerned with accurate attestations of authorship. A quick comparison with one of the other manuscript families is instructive. Fairfax 16, from the first family of manuscripts that contain both complaints mentioned above, seems largely disinterested in authorial designation. In relation to other mid-fifteenth-century Chaucer manuscripts, its practice is quite typical; it begins with one of Chaucer's texts and includes some other works that have his name in their

[96] See *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1187.
[97] I cannot here go into an argument that would really be able to demonstrate a coherent manuscript family, but the stemma groupings in the notes to *The Riverside Chaucer* are suggestive, 1187. On Thomas Chaucer see John Bowers, *Chaucer and Langland: The Antagonistic Tradition* (South Bend: University of Notre Dme Press, 2007).

title, such as *Lenvoy de Chaucer a Bukton*, but does not really distinguish authorship for any of the other poems.[98] A later hand has gone through the table of contents and apparently tried to sort out which authors in fact wrote what piece in the manuscript, and has specified "lidgate" or "T. Hocleve" beside "The Temple of Glass" and "The Letter of Cupyde God of Love" respectively, but this concern with authorship is clearly a later obsession (fol. 2v). In contrast, John Shirley in Ashmole 59 is almost obsessively concerned with authorship as he compiles the manuscript. All of the pieces in the early portion of the manuscripts have incipits attached to them specifying authorship, and the scribe clearly distinguishes what works are by Chaucer and what works are by Lydgate, the most well represented author in the manuscript. The scribe announces this concern with the following incipit: "here begynnethe the boke cleped the abstracte brevyayre compiled of divers balades roundels virilayes tragedyes envos compleyntes moralites storyes practysed and eke devised and ymagyned as it showethe here folowyng" (fol. 13r). This manuscript too is invested in presenting Chaucer primarily as a translator. Chaucer is only represented by three poems, one of which is an apocryphal ballade that lists all of Chaucer's "good women" but it is not any part of *The Legend of Good Women*, and the other two are called translations, both *The Complaint of Venus* and *Fortune*, although it is not clear what the original French poem would be.[99] In any event, the third family of *The Complaint of Venus* manuscripts seems concerned with presenting both an accurate view of Chaucer's authorship, and one that depends heavily on his French inheritance.

[98] Of course, part of what makes this manuscript typical is its relation to other manuscripts in the Oxford group, so named because they all seemed to have originated from around Oxford and seem to have been made from the same material. The current thinking among scholars is that these manuscripts originated as groups of booklets that were independently copied and circulated before being compiled. If these manuscripts did originate as booklets, then the insistence on placing *The Complaint of Mars* next to *The Complaint of Venus* might has as much to do with their being bound together in a booklet rather than any kind of authorial intent. On the current critical status of the Oxford Group's origin, see Pamela Robinson, ed., *Manuscript Tanner 346: A Facsimile*, (Norman, OK: Boydell-Brewer, 1980), xxiv-xxv.

[99] See the discussion in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 1084.

That *The Complaint of Mars* does not record this distinct tradition, and even exists beside this tradition in one manuscript, suggests that *The Complaint of Venus* went through textual variations that were independent of *The Complaint of Mars*, which would make *The Complaint of Mars* a later addition. This later addition, also part of a recognizable affinity between Granson and Chaucer, suggests that the Chaucer and Granson relationship stayed affectionate, even after the teasing Granson receives in *The Complaint of Venus*. Taken together, then, these poems represent Chaucer's most sustained engagement with Granson, something the French poet would have noticed and, quite possibly, have made other poets notice as well, a sustained engagement that was apparent at least through Shirley's time in England and perhaps elsewhere. We must remember that Deschamps, in his ballade to Chaucer, gives the English poet credit for "Seme les fleurs et plante le rosier," which we can see now as a likely reference to Chaucer's status as a translator of both *Le Roman de la Rose* and "the flour of hem that make in France," Granson.[100] The envoy to *The Complaint of Venus* is to "Princes," plural; and it is not a stretch to imagine Chaucer would have expected Deschamps to see this work, as Deschamps was inducted into the loosely constructed re-imagined puy that Chaucer and Granson had created. As poets such as Hoccleve and Lydgate insured in England Chaucer's reputation, we can see now that Granson tried to do as much in France.

[100] Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ii. 130-131.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Chaucer, Un Père Français

I have been arguing, so far, for the central importance of Oton de Granson in understanding Chaucer's relationship to French poetry. I have argued that Chaucer and Granson met early and that this meeting was the means through which Chaucer became aware of the achievements of his French contemporaries. Along the way, I have had to reconsider Granson's works, given that they are often overshadowed by both Machaut and Deschamps. I have reconsidered the dating of Granson's ballade sequence, and I have reviewed his role as an anthologist. I argued that the anthology Granson produced, the Penn MS, whether or not we believe "Ch" is Chaucer, is important for Chaucerians because of the insight it gives us into the kinds of French poetry that Chaucer would have been absorbing, not just in general, but specific poems. I have used the kind of poetic competition found in that manuscript to understand Chaucer's reference to Granson in *The Complaint of Venus*, as well as in coming to make sense of the translation practice found therein. Finally, I have reassessed the role of *The Complaint of Venus* both within Chaucer's canon, especially as it relates to *The Complaint of Mars*, and within the international poetic community of which he was a part, arguing that it provides a pivotal turning point both for Chaucer's career and for his reputation both in England and in France.

The transnational interest in this poetic exchange should not be surprising; as the interactions between Granson, Deschamps, and Chaucer make clear, the national boundaries and national traditions were not seen to be terribly different, both politically and culturally. In

contemporary scholarship, however, this difference is more strongly felt, and this has led to some obscurity, I would argue, in the French reception of Chaucer. Deschamps wrote poems not only in praise of Machaut and Chaucer, but also Christine de Pizan, and Christine herself has a poem in praise of Granson.[101] And yet, a good deal of work remains to be done on Christine's relationship to Chaucer, apart from and including the tantalizing correspondence between *The Legend of Good Women* and *The Book of the City of Ladies*.[102] There would be, I argue, very little chance that Christine, at least, was not aware of Chaucer; surely she would have wanted to know more about the poets that were also praised in the Deschamps manuscripts that circulated contemporaneously with her. In *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion*, however, Caroline Spurgeon finds no mention of Chaucer in France between 1445 and 1674, and there is no mention of Christine.[103] I am suggesting that, as with Deschamps's reference to Chaucer, we should begin to look for covert references to Chaucer in French poetry. With so many important French poets referencing and alluding to Chaucer's poetry, it seems unlikely that their inheritors would have ignored him. What, for instance, are we to make of the fact that Charles d'Orléans, in residence as a prisoner at the house of Chaucer's granddaughter, writes poems in English and French; is this not evidence for him being a French Chaucerian? Contemporary Chaucerians, likewise, would do well to consider how Chaucer's early French interactions influence his later work; are there, for instance, moments in the poetry of "Ch" that appear in *Troilus and Criseyde*? Ignoring the early French practice of Chaucer, or for that matter

[101] For Deschamps's poem to Machaut see Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes*, i. 245, and for his ballade to Christine de Pizan see Deschamps *Oeuvres Complètes*, vi. 251-252.
[102] There has been some excellent recent work on a connection to Chaucer and Christine in their fifteenth-century receptions, which should be expanded upon. See, especially, Laurie A. Fink, "The Politics of the Canon: Christine de Pizan and the Fifteenth-Century Chaucerians," *Exemplaria* 19 (2007), 16-38, and Theresa Coletti, "Paths of Long Study: Reading Chaucer and Christine de Pizan in Tandem," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 28 (2006), 1-40.
[103] Caroline Spurgeon, *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion 1357-1900* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), vol. 3, Appendix B, 18. She also makes reference to another possible reference in 1584, Appendix B, 2.

Gower, only gives us an incomplete picture of their work, not to mention the work of their inheritors, Hoccleve and Lydgate.[104] For Chaucer, a personal affinity to these French poets influenced his work in important ways, as he influenced them. In contemporary scholarship, despite our being housed under different institutional departments, we should pay this interaction no less mind.

I'd like to make a couple of final points about the model of inheritance with which I have been working in this essay. My model has been unabashedly international in scope, and yet emphatically local in argumentation. I have not treated these works as floating pieces of discourse to which anyone can have access at any time. Instead, I have argued that the poetic output of Chaucer and Granson, and implicitly Deschamps too, must be understood as concrete productions that exist in a specific form to which a select group would have access, and that access must be figured as a movement from one locale to another of concrete productions, manuscripts produced explicitly for this purpose. That these men were some of the select few who saw each other's works, especially at this early stage in all of their development, suggests that their personal ties to each other are all the more important. The personal connection between these men suggests, moreover, that Chaucer's use of French poetry was not simply based on its inherent worth or his need to become what could be loosely conceived of as a "great" continental poet, but instead was a reaction to specific interactions among specific individuals. Chaucer attempted to become an international poet simply because he knew poets from other countries, not to become part of some vague notion of a "great tradition."

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[104] There have been a few recent forays into Gower's French ties. See especially the excellent essay by Ardis Butterfield, "Articulating the Author," mentioned above, note 48. R. F. Yeager's recent work on Gower's French audiences has also provided subsequent scholars with a good start. See R. F. Yeager, "John Gower's Audience: The Ballades," *The Chaucer Review* 40 (2005), 81-105, and "Gower's French Audience: The *Mirour de L'omme*," *The Chaucer Review* 41 (2006), 111-137. For a useful consideration of Hoccleve's relationship to his French contemporaries, as seen through a Chaucerian lens, see John Burrow, "Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets," *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 35-49. These are good beginnings, but much work remains to be done in these areas.

This model means, finally, that we must reassess the notion of the role Chaucer's inheritors played in the creation of the "Chaucer tradition." Not only were the poets who followed Chaucer active agents in creating the "Chaucer tradition," they were doing so ex nihilo in each instance.[105] Taking Granson as one of these men, the earliest in fact, we see that his process, the careful selection of poems, the coded meanings, the placement alongside other poems to guide reading, serves as a model for Chaucer's reception. Isabel of Bavaria, we are told, owned a manuscript of Granson's poetry, not a manuscript of Granson and Chaucer's poetry. Chaucer may have had certain intentions in creating the work he gave to Granson, but Granson's appropriation of that work is ultimately how it became known. Each manuscript production at each point in Chaucer's reception must be taken as an attempt to guide the understanding of a specific intended audience, a literary canon in miniature, created from the ground up with each reiteration.[106] The arbiter to meaning in these instances, then, is not Chaucer, but instead the specific individual that appropriates him as a useful tool in dealing with a new set of personal relations. As we see with Granson and Deschamps, the consideration that guides their appropriation is not the suggestions found in Chaucer's poetry, but their own personal needs. In this way, Chaucer becomes a kind of Badiouian event, a sort of back-formation in which the meaning of an historical occurrence is generated later in order to make sense of a contemporary situation. In Badiou's terms, he is a real occurrence or innovation that begins an entirely new tradition or mode of being-in-the-world, but that needs subjects following

[105] This claim is a modification of Seth Lerer's reading of this same tradition. Lerer also argues that Chaucer's inheritors were instrumental in creating the figure of Geoffrey Chaucer that is passed down to us today, but for Lerer these men do so following Chaucer's guiding instructions. See, Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, 3. I place this burden on these inheritors alone. For a similar point as to the inheritance of Chaucer's word use and how that contributed to the myth of his originality, see Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[106] With this notion of canon, we return to Hanna's point in "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity," 47.

in its wake to make "interpretive interventions" that guide the ultimate meaning of that event.[107] In other words, Chaucer writes his own poetry, but his followers, and contemporaries like Granson, tell us what that means for them.

[107] For Badiou's most succinct account of event and its relation to being, see the aptly named Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (New York: Continuum, 2007), 173-177. For a lucid exposition of Badiou's system of thought, see Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (New York: Verso, 2000), 127-170.

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