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The Making of Chaucer's English

The Making of Chaucer's English undertakes a substantial reappraisal of the place Chaucer's English occupies in the history of the English language and the language of English literature. It attacks the widespread presumption that Chaucer invented literary English and argues instead that Chaucer's English is generally traditional. It shows that Chaucer's linguistic innovation was as much performance as fact, but it also traces the linguistic strategies that made (and make) the performance of 'originality' so believable. It includes a valuable history of every word Chaucer uses. The book also interrogates the theory and methodology of historicizing languages so even as it explores how Chaucer's words matter, it also wonders why these particular words have acquired such importance for poets and scholars alike – for 600 years.

DR. CHRISTOPHER CANNON is a Fellow of St Edmund Hall, and Lecturer in English, Oxford University. He is a contributor to the *Cambridge History of Medieval Literature*, and has published numerous journal articles on Chaucer and his use of language. *The Making of Chaucer's English* is his first book.

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For
Joel, Adrienne, Alyssa, and Tae

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(for whose assistance I also owe thanks to the Academic Senate of UCLA for the funds which paid her). I know all too well how tiresome studious attention to the data disposed as Part 2 of this book can be, and it must have been still more tiresome to check it so carefully. Readers of this book who find this material at all useful have her to thank for its accuracy – and if it is at all user friendly that is because its first user has been such a good friend.

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Abbreviations

EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
EETS ES	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
MWME	*A Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, ed. J. B. Severs and Albert E. Hartung, 9 vols., New Haven, CT: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1967– (in progress).
MED	*The Middle English Dictionary*, Hans Kurath *et al.* (eds.), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1954– .
OED	*The Oxford English Dictionary*, James H. Murray, *et al.* (eds.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933.
OED2	*The Oxford English Dictionary*, J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (eds.), 2nd edn, 20 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Abbreviations for Chaucer's works in all tables in Part 1 of this book conform to the system used in "Chaucer's writings" in Part 2 (see pp. 223–6 below).

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All quotations from the works of Chaucer are taken from the *Riverside Chaucer*, Larry D. Benson (ed.), 3rd edn, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. Quotations from the *Canterbury Tales* are cited by fragment as well as line number.

When discussing particular words in Part 1 of this book, I am often relying heavily on information provided in the lexical index that comprises Part 2. Where such reference is straightforward I have simply referred to the word by the headword under which the relevant information is provided in Part 2. In such cases, this headword is the substantiating reference and no further reference is given in my text or notes.

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