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## ELEANOR PRESCOTT HAMMOND

Eleanor Prescott Hammond is remembered now chiefly as the compiler of two scholarly volumes, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual* (1908) and *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (1927), both of them pioneering works in their day, and so thorough and accurate in their scholarship that they are still of use and to be valued.

Eleanor Prescott Hammond was born at Worcester, Mass., on April 26, 1866, the daughter of Andrew Hill Hammond and Rhoda Maria (Barber) Hammond. After her early education, she went to the University of Leipzig and thereafter to the University of Oxford (1892–94), where she graduated B.A. with First-Class Honors in 1894. Her mentor there, to whom she dedicated her second book (as "Scholar-Master-Friend"), was Arthur Sampson Napier (1853–1916), Merton Professor of English from 1885 (the second epigraph of the first book is, "And that sweet city with her dreaming spires"). Returning to the United States, Hammond went to the University of Chicago as a Graduate Fellow in English (1895–98) and took her Ph.D. in 1898, the year in which John Matthews Manly, an almost exact contemporary, arrived in Chicago to begin his long reign there. She was a docent at Chicago from 1898 to 1904, when she resigned her post. She continued to live in Chicago until the early 1920s, when she moved to Boston. She held no other academic post, and remained unmarried. She died on February 23, 1933.

Hammond's early career was extraordinarily ambitious and successful. Germany, with Oxford, was where the most rigorous philological and textual scholarship in the field of Middle English was being carried on, and Napier himself taught at the universities of Berlin and Göttingen before being appointed to the Merton chair. It was in the German journal *Anglia* that Hammond first began to publish the stream of articles on the Chaucer and Lydgate manuscripts and other aspects of Chaucer and Chaucerian writing that were to form the foundation of her two books. She

was the first woman scholar to publish in *Anglia* (and the next, six years later, in 1904, was writing on a strictly 'woman's' subject, "Die Frauenfrage bei George Eliot"), and one of only two women among the 43 scholars represented in the first number of the Chicago-based journal *Modern Philology* when it was launched in 1903 (though others soon began to appear, for instance Edith Rickert, also at Chicago, in 1904 and Laura Hibbard in 1910).

It was in an *Anglia* essay of 1905 that Hammond first identified the hand of a prolific London copyist of the third quarter of the fifteenth century in a series of manuscripts of Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate. He calls himself, playfully, "Richardown," but he is universally known now as the "Hammond scribe." In another series of articles at about the same time, she uncovered the networks of affiliation between a series of Oxford manuscripts which share many of the same contents (shorter poems by Chaucer and his followers). Her analysis, the first serious work done on these kinds of groupings, has provided one of the cornerstones of fifteenth-century manuscript and textual studies, and everyone has followed Aage Brusendorff (*The Chaucer Tradition* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925], p.191) in agreeing to call Hammond's "Oxford group" the "Hammond group."

Much of this pioneering manuscript and textual work is incorporated into the magnificent *Bibliographical Manual*. The ambition of the book is to record everything that was known in 1908, and worth remembering, about Chaucer's life and works, with particular attention being paid to the manuscripts of those works. It is a quite remarkable feat of organization, and the complex and carefully worked out system of laying out the material and varying the typography is a triumph. It is far more than just a list of other people's works, for Hammond also summarizes opinions, offers critiques of major works, gives succinct accounts of important issues, and prints inaccessible texts like the early lives of Chaucer. She maintains an admirable detachment from her materials, but there is often a sense of the personal striving for admittance, and Hammond is not backward in putting her own views forward. It was all too much for Robert K. Root, who, in a grudging review of the *Manual* in *Englisch Studien* 41 (1909–10), 136–7, complained that "Miss Hammond has not infrequently formed an opinion of her own, which is stated at times at considerable length," singling out the discussion of the order of the *Canterbury Tales* and of Chaucer's versification for special criticism. Yet the section on Chaucer's versification remains one of the best treatments of the subject still, and the discussion of the order of the *Canterbury Tales* is where we find for the first time a name given to the "Marriage Group" ("Yet a third class of narratives in the *Canterbury Tales* is what I may term the Marriage Group," p.256) four years before it was taken up in 1912, unacknowledged, in the famous essay by G. L. Kittredge in *Modern Philology*, 9 (1911–12), 435–67 (the existence of a sequence of tales dealing with marriage had long ago been identified by George Shipley, in *Modern Language Notes*, 10 [1895], 259–79 [273–6], as Kittredge points out, p.435). Though essentially a work of reference, the *Manual* is also somehow a pleasure to read. Something of the author's clarity of mind and sharpness of intelligence enlivens each page, and the catalogue of previous errors—which is what the *Manual*, given the state of

scholarship in its day, often largely consists of—is always done with a pleasingly cool irony.

*English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (first announced in a letter from Hammond in *Modern Language Notes*, 23 [1908], 157, as a college textbook called *Gower: Chaucer's Followers*, to be published in Messrs. Heath's Belles Lettres series) is another carefully planned and laid-out work: Hammond clearly took a keen interest in this aspect of publication, and makes a point of thanking the Press for their "interested craftsmanship" (p.x). The decision to exclude popular and dramatic verse and to concentrate on the "formal" poetic tradition means that much of what is most immediately attractive in the period is excluded, but the edition is also as a consequence more focussed. It has indeed the character at times of an extended essay on the Chaucerian tradition in English verse, with lengthy samplings. Hammond acknowledges that the rewards of such a study may seem small, given that the formal poetic tradition in the fifteenth century is so generally slighted. Yet no period of literature, she explains, is without its interest for the serious scholar, and furthermore all who regard literature "not as belles-lettres but as the expression of the national mind" will recognize the special value of studying works of literature where the imagination is "at ebb-tide." The movements of change, in theme and style, are more easily visible in a period such as this of the "Transition," and the relationship between poetic production and social environment more readily analyzed. Essentially, we can see how a "formal tradition" shrouds poetry in convention and produces an "excess of standardization," a worshipping of the stereotype. The progress is from the "cramping of the spirit by an environment which it cannot conquer" (p.ix) and which causes the characteristic "failure of sense-perception... stale formality of simile and of phrase... rhythmic poverty" towards "a free treatment of the individual" (p. vii). Hammond was not the first to represent fifteenth-century English poetry in this way, but she gave to these ideas their most powerful and influential expression.

Hammond elaborates on these ideas in an extraordinarily ambitious and extravagantly speculative General Introduction. The first half of the "Transition," she argues, is marked by deadening formalism, due to the conventional nature of chivalric standards of taste and the "repressive, inhibiting power of the Church on letters" (p.3)—its scorn of the senses and of direct human observation, its preference for symbols over facts, its didacticism. Money, banking and commerce acted as a solvent, encouraging the growth of a bourgeoisie and of independent nation-states, and the increase of "the anti-synthetic particularistic tendency" (p.3). This aggressive and individualistic bourgeoisie was tamed by Humanism, which acted as the stabilizing force in the new culture that was coming into existence, providing it with standards and ideals of taste. Out of this came Spenser and Shakespeare, who lived at one of those moments when literature thrives on the equipoise between conservatism and individualism. The Transition was in the thrall of convention—as opposed to our own day, when the threat is from an "outburst of individualism" and the excess and exaggeration that accompany it. The Transition was a time when the

“crowd-mind” was dominant (p.5) and the urge was always toward the stereotype. The explorations that began in the late fifteenth century created a greater openness of mind, like the increase in land-travel in the early twentieth century, though in the latter case the effect is disintegrative, producing “a hurried muddled age” in which the individual is divided against himself (p.6).

It seems doubtful that anyone before had attempted this kind of total socio-cultural explanation of the condition of English literature (not just the poetry represented in the anthology) during the late medieval period. We have got used now to cultural historians, Marxist and otherwise, who are prepared to offer us various kinds of *grand récit* for periods much longer than 200 years, but in her day Hammond was exceptional, as a medieval scholar—and a woman at that—in her readiness to engage in wide-ranging sociological explanations of cultural history. As a scholar writing from outside the academy, she takes her inspiration from the early pre-structuralist sociologists who wrote, often for non-academic readers, and often very excitingly, before sociology became an academic discipline. She gives a list of them on p.38. Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) is the most famous of them, and very like Hammond in his hostility to the church and militarism, in never having made his real home in the academy, and in his reliance on vaguely defined sociological and psychological mechanisms to explain major social changes. *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) gave her the idea of society as an institutionalization of habitual patterns within which human behavior is organized and controlled, while her view of the fifteenth century owes much to Veblen’s idea of “culture-lag”—that a society’s habits will long resist new technology and new ideas. Gabriel Tarde (1843–1904), a French lawyer and criminologist, wrote two books late in life, *The Laws of Imitation* (first published in French, 1890) and *L’opinion et la foule* (1901), in which he encouraged this view of the conservative nature of social institutions and their tendency to accept only what is in accord with their existing system, though like Hammond he asserts the power of the individual to introduce innovations. Walter Lippmann (1889–1974), the American journalist who moved steadily rightward to become a famous postwar political commentator, wrote a book called *Public Opinion* in 1922 in which he talked about the difficulty of creating or imagining an informed public opinion when so much of opinion is created by brief slogans, which create a “wall of stereotypes” and prevent individuals from understanding issues properly. This is surely the basis of Hammond’s fondness for the sociological as well as the literary notion of the stereotype. Two other writers who contributed to Hammond’s ideas about the culturally repressive nature of the group, though like her offering little in the way of evidence for their views, were the French writer Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931), and the English surgeon Wilfred Trotter (1872–1939).

These views were not the best that were available in the 1920s, but they made a heady mix, and evidently contributed much to Hammond’s speculative paragraphs and the diffuse entities they deal in—chivalry, feudalism, the Church, the bourgeoisie and Humanism. But her formulations were clear and confident, and startlingly original for an audience of medieval scholars who

were generally so little conversant with sociological theory that they were hardly aware of its existence. They marked a stage in the development of medieval cultural history. The idea, for instance, that Chaucer's greatness as a poet arose from the fact that he "lived in a ferment of social conditions" (p.31) anticipates the Marxist idea of "insertion" and has become a commonplace of Chaucer criticism. Elsewhere, the idea of the historical "moment of excellence" is argued for in a different way: "Chaucer, like Shakespeare, struck a balance between individual assertion and conservative acceptance . . . Always he is the composite, bourgeois enough to meet the bourgeoisie, courtly enough to meet the courtier" (p.12). Transposed into the idiom of the New Criticism, this is roughly the approach that Charles Muscatine put to such brilliantly creative use thirty years later, in *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (1957).

Hammond is also constantly making allusions to contemporary and near-contemporary life and history such as would have been frowned upon in more orthodox academic circles. Henry V, she says, "appealed as much to the baser passions of the nation as did Bismarck" (p.11). In the fifteenth century, she comments elsewhere, money and trade brought the bourgeoisie "nearer to the privileged classes, just as the Ford car and the highway system are pushing the change today." She refers frequently to modern writers, for instance Shaw, Barrie, and (most unexpectedly) Capek, and has a particular fondness in her disquisitions on form and style, which are frequent, for comparisons with Romantic and post-Romantic poets such as Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Browning, William Morris and George Meredith—perhaps Browning (from whose poem of *Paracelsus* she takes her epigraph) above all.

Elsewhere, in a more conventionally historical vein, the headnotes and endnotes of the volume are packed with learning, and unprecedentedly extensive in scope. There are brief concentrated accounts, valuable still, of the careers of Humphrey of Gloucester and John Shirley, and compressed pithy paragraphs on rhetoric, patronage, costume, medicine, metrics (no one writes better on fifteenth-century versification than Hammond), alchemy, English sea-trade, and the knowledge of Virgil and the classics in the fifteenth century. Much of the most significant and original material in the anthology is taken from earlier published essays in which Hammond had been building up, in an extraordinarily modern and professional manner, the foundations of her unrivalled knowledge of the period. From the experience of editing, further, she derived a whole series of lessons that have still to be fully taken account of by textual scholars: the need to study works as a whole, and not in extracts; the futility of analyzing meter syllable by syllable and line by line (as in nineteenth-century German scholarship) rather than in terms of the verse paragraph; the inappropriateness of critical editions for any but those texts which exist in a multiplicity of copies. Above all, Hammond emphasizes the necessity of paying exact attention to every detail of the manuscript copy-text and not, for instance, introducing punctuation, which will surreptitiously modernize the text. The reader must be given "his proper share in the editorial problem of following the medieval mind" (p.ix). Though few would agree with her strictly diplomatic method of editing, Hammond here anticipates

developments in editorial theory and practice which are often thought to be of more recent origin.

One of the most attractive features of the book is the ringing authority with which this independent female scholar will pronounce on the merits and demerits of the poems that are under consideration. There is no doubt that Hammond took a particular delight in finding the right phrases to describe Lydgate's various kinds of incompetence, perhaps compensating in some measure for the misfortune of having found him at the dead center of her study. "No writer," she says, "is at once so slow and so breathless as Lydgate; his discourse advances at a crawl, with constant returns upon itself, but marks time with such volubility that the reader is bewildered" (p.81). Or there is this unforgettable put-down: "He was by nature repetitive to excess, as his style shows, and the poverty of ideas which he joined to an unfortunate glibness resulted in an endless and ill-organized stream of words whenever he was commanded to speak" (p.19). Unfair as it is, this was worth saying.

Hammond had a freshness of approach and a springing energy of observation which never slacken even before the turgidness of much of the poetry that faces her. It is hard not to think that this freshness and energy were not associated in some way with her detachment from the academy. She is also, one must believe, after careful consideration, the best, most original and most reliable scholar of her generation in the field that she chose. She was a modern scholar in a way that Kittredge was not; she did not, like John Matthews Manly and Robert K. Root, feel a need to pin her scholarship to ill-conceived textual theories; she was devotedly accurate in a way that did not characterize the work of her emerging rival in Lydgate studies, Henry Noble MacCracken, who, with his impeccable Harvard pedigree, was the man chosen to edit the Lydgate Minor Poems for the Early English Text Society in 1911; and she was independent-minded in a way that comparably gifted contemporary women scholars like Edith Rickert and Laura Hibbard, with their powerful male mentors, were not. Of her it can be said—as can be said of few scholars—that everything that she wrote is worth paying attention to.

*Derek Pearsall*

Hammond has a brief entry in *Who Was Who in America*, Vol.1 1897–1942 (Chicago, 1943), p.513, where she is described as an "author." She is not mentioned in the *American National Biography*, nor in Cattell's *Dictionary of American Scholars*, nor in Edward T. James (ed.), *Notable American Women: A Biographical Dictionary* (Harvard University Press, 1971), nor in Helen Damico (ed.), *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, Volume 2: *Literature and Philology* (New York: Garland, 1998). Comparably distinguished scholars figure in these records, but they are the ones who made their careers in the academy and were as a consequence retrievable.

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## EMBARKING WITH CONSTANCE: MARGARET SCHLAUCH

To consider the life of the prolific scholar Margaret Schlauch (1898–1986) is to open up numerous paths of inquiry into her comparative literary studies, her extensive mastery of languages both medieval and modern, her work in linguistic theory, and her political commitments. Sheila Delany's recent essay in *Medieval Feminist Forum* titled "Medieval Marxists: A Tradition" comments upon the strategies and limitations of Schlauch's politically-charged writings and briefly elucidates a fascinating convergence of life events and scholarship; explaining Schlauch's departure from NYU for a professorship at the University of Warsaw in 1951, Delany observes that Schlauch

"re-enacted the scenario of her best-known book, *Chaucer's Constance and Accused Queens*, the doctoral thesis she submitted at Columbia in 1927. It is a study of the romance topos of the falsely accused noblewoman forced to flee her homeland. The difference, of course, is that the romance heroine returns; Margaret Schlauch did not."<sup>1</sup>

In so many ways, this first book centers our understanding of Schlauch, and I take it as my guiding focus here. A pioneering study attuned to the operations of