THE MEDIEVAL TRANSLATOR
TRADUIRE AU MOYEN ÂGE

The Medieval Translator

Traduire au Moyen Age

Volume 16

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THE MEDIEVAL TRANSLATOR

TRADUIRE AU MOYEN AGE

Volume 16
Translation and Authority – Authorities in Translation

Edited by
Pieter De Leemans
Michèle Goyens

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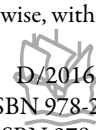

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CONTENTS

Pieter De Leemans – Michèle Goyens
Introduction 9

Paul Wackers
Authority in Middle Dutch 17

Joëlle Ducos
Que traduire en français?
Traductions uniques et traductions multiples 39

Charles Burnett
The Translator as an Authority 53

Michelle Bolduc
The Form of Authority in Medieval Translation:
Brunetto Latini's Translations of Cicero 69

Graziella Pastore
Langue de l''aucteur' et langue du 'translateur'?
Réflexions sur la langue de Nicolas de Gonesse 83

Ian Johnson
Authority and the Translation of Boethian Selves:
John Walton, James I, and Thomas Usk 97

Marcela K. Perett
The Un-Authoritative Translation:
Ælfric's Book of Genesis, and the Need for External Authority 115

Sharon Rhodes
Translating the Context in the Orrmulum 129

Juliette Dor
John of Trevisa légitimise la traduction en langue anglaise (vers 1387) 143

Ildiko Van Tricht
L'autorité et le développement d'une terminologie médicale aux
XIV^e^ et XV^e^ siècles 155

Moreno Campetella
*Les traductions de l'*Opus Agriculturae *de Rutilius Aemilianus Palladius aux XIV^e–XV^e siècles et la création de néologismes* 171

Christine Gadrat-Ouerfelli
Les traductions latines du livre de Marco Polo et l'autorité du texte 191

An Smets
The Middle English Translation of the De falconibus *by Albertus Magnus in The Kerdeston Cynegetical Manuscripts* 203

Anne Mouron
'Help thin Godric in Francrice': An Old French Life of St Godric 215

Stefania Vignali
À propos de la première traduction de l' Enfer *de Dante: un modèle poétique?* 229

Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa
Mechtild of Hackeborn as Spiritual Authority: The Middle English Translation of the Liber Specialis Gratiae 241

Tamás Karáth
The Re-Invention of Authority in the Fifteenth-Century Translations of Richard Rolle's Emendatio Vitae 255

Marthe Mensah et Claude Schwerzig
Walter Hilton translateur d'auctoritates 275

Courtney Rydel
Interpretive Etymologies in Translations of the Golden Legend 289

Stefka G. Eriksen
Translating Christian Symbolism into Old Norse Mythology in Thirteenth-Century Norway 303

Igor Filippov
Vulgate Versus Vetus Latina: *The Choices of Caesarius of Arles* 315

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Andrea Colli
Augustine's De Genesi ad litteram *as a Commentary on the* De anima. *A Significant Case of Comparison between Authority and Translations in the Thirteenth Century* 329

Stefania D'Agata D'Ottavi
Chauntecleer's Small Latin *and the Meaning of* Confusio *in the* Nun's Priest's Tale 345

Alastair Minnis
Aggressive Chaucer: Of Dolls, Drink and Dante 357

Notes about the Contributors 377

Index 383

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AGGRESSIVE CHAUCER: OF DOLLS, DRINK AND DANTE*

Alastair MINNIS

I was delighted to have been asked to 'knytte up [draw together] al this feeste [feast] and make an end', to borrow a phrase from Chaucer's Parson, who was given the job of bringing *The Canterbury Tales* to a close.[1] In the very same sentence, the Parson promises to tell 'a myrie (merry) tale in prose'. I plan to do that also, in the hope that my offering will be rather more merry than the Parson's.

This volume postulates many important connections between authority (whether textual, political, 'scientific', or religious) and translation. We can read about translations of considerable sophistication (and others of rather less heft) from Latin into various vernacular languages – French, Italian, English, German, Middle Dutch, Old Norse... Quite rightly, special attention is paid to major Latin authorities who were foundational to medieval intellectual culture, including Aristotle, Boethius, and (over and above all others) the inspired writers of sacred Scripture, along with others who were, and are still, less well-known (Palladius being a good example). Sometimes a particular text was relatively obscure, even though its author was well-known: the *De falconibus* of Albertus Magnus is a good case in point.

Did translation into a vernacular language impair the authority of texts whose originals were authoritative? That concern was raised in a debate on Bible translation conducted in the University of Oxford around 1400 (an event often cited in discussions of Middle English translation),[2] but the fact

* I am grateful to Richard Firth Green, Linda Ehrsam Voigts, Andrew Kraebel, and Arthur Russell for valuable comments on aspects of this essay.

[1] *The Parson's Prologue*; *Canterbury Tales*, X.46–47. All Chaucer references are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson *et al.*, 3rd edn with a new foreword by Christopher Cannon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[2] On which see especially Anne Hudson, 'The Debate on Bible Translation, Oxford 1401', in Anne Hudson, *Lollards and their Books* (London and Ronceverte, W.Va.: Hambledon Press, 1985), pp. 67–84, and Nicholas Watson, 'Censorship and Cultural Change in Late Medieval

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that roughly 250 copies of the so-called Lollard Bible are extant firmly puts it into perspective. The vernacular status of this rendering does not seem to have hindered its dissemination at all, and indeed may be regarded as one of its chief causes. A comparable answer may be inferred from the layout of a Middle Dutch Bible translation discussed by Paul Wackers, where the text of the Bible is carefully separated out from the text of the commentary, in deference to the higher status of the divine word. The superiority of Holy Scripture seems to survive its vernacular transmigrations.

On occasion Latin was the target language rather than the source language, as in the case of translations from Greek and Arabic into Latin. Gerard of Cremona is a fascinating case in point, as Charles Burnett's paper brought out very well. Can the translator himself come to be regarded as an authority? That certainly happened in the case of Gerard. An even stronger case may be made for the 'faithful interpreter' Jerome, *fons et origo* of the Vulgate Bible.

Some Latin texts were rendered *in vulgari* on more than one occasion, whereas others were translated just once. Quite puzzlingly, certain authoritative works which were of the first importance within the medieval educational system (and were used as sources by poets writing in several European vernaculars) were not translated at all, or translated only partially (to judge by the extant manuscripts), as weak vernacularizing traditions could not quite match the assured pedagogic status of the originals. The contribution by Joëlle Ducos addresses different aspects of this phenomenon. Paul Wackers makes a particularly telling point with his statement that it is not necessary to have a complete Bible translation in Middle Dutch to be able to proclaim the profound cultural impact of the Bible on Middle Dutch literature.

Within such efforts to understand *translatio* and the legacy of antiquity in a wider sense, it may be noted that some vernacular authors claimed to be passing on the heritage of ancient authors as a means of promoting works which were largely of their own composition, i.e. fresh creations which took some liberties with their ostentatiously-quoted sources. Several fine papers address that subject. Others show how some writers went even further, staking their own claims to a measure of prestige: in their self-fashionings as writers, they appropriated Latin discourses of authority, by which I mean the vocabulary traditionally used to present an *auctor* and which indelibly

England: Vernacular Theology, The Oxford Translation Debate and Arundel's *Constitutions* of 1409', *Speculum*, 70 (1996), pp. 822–64.

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was associated with an *auctor*.[3] Here, of course, the supreme example is Dante Alighieri. Among fourteenth-century vernacular authors, the Florentine's self-authorizing maneuvers were the most radical and systematic.[4] But Geoffrey Chaucer, who shares with Dante giddy heights of acclaim within contemporary academe and beyond, seems to inhabit a quite different textual universe. The image in *The House of Fame* of the poet sitting at home reading an abundance of books as 'domb as any stoon', and living like an unsociable hermit (656–60), leaves a lasting impression.[5]

And so, the notion that Chaucer fictionalizes himself as an incompetent, bumbling narrator has long been a staple (indeed a cliché) of literary criticism.[6] Consequently, it has proved difficult to argue that Chaucer just might make an unambiguous claim to textual authority elsewhere in his corpus, and/or in a different way. The prospect of Chaucerian difference is the subject of the following discussion, which works on the assumption that Dante's rules need not apply to Chaucer; indeed, I believe that, in some measure, Chaucer devised his I-persona by way of reaction against the *auctor*-ial image which Dante had made for himself.[7] Therefore, the search for Chaucer's

[3] On which see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn with a new preface (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 160–210. For the differences between '*auctor* discourse' and '*compilator* discourse' see Alastair Minnis, '*Nolens auctor sed compilator reputari*: The Late-Medieval Discourse of Compilation', in *La méthode critique au moyen âge*, ed. by Mireille Chazan and Gilbert Dahan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 47–63.

[4] As has been brought out well by Albert R. Ascoli's superb study, *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[5] Had the real-life Chaucer been as diffident, withdrawn and naïve as that portrait suggests, he would have been incapable of pursuing the high-profile administrative career documented in the life-records, which involved journeys to Italy and France on the king's service, the arduous position of comptroller in the port of London, and finally an appointment as Clerk of the King's works.

[6] There have been several exceptions to the general rule, particularly David Lawton's monograph *Chaucer's Narrators* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), wherein a far more nuanced reading is offered. More recently, the study of authorial self-inscription has been transformed by two monographs by A. C. Spearing, *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), and *Medieval Autographies: The 'I' of the Text* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

[7] The influence of Middle French poetry is also of considerable importance, of course, but beyond the scope of this essay. An excellent point of departure is provided by Kevin Brownlee's book, *Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

methods of self-assertion and self-authorization must look elsewhere, in places far away from the glare of Dantean *fulgore*.

Chaucer and Emotional Experience

On several occasions, Chaucer the love-poet professes a lack of emotional experience. 'I knowe nat Love in dede', declares the narrator of the *Parliament of Fowls* (8), and in *The House of Fame* it is claimed that, although Chaucer has written many poems in 'reverence' of Love and his 'servantes', and taken pains to 'preyse hys art' (i.e. the art of love), he himself 'haddest never part' in it (624–28), has never had a piece of the amatory action. Yet Chaucer had a wife, named Philippa, one of Queen Philippa's ladies in waiting; their married life seems to have lasted for approximately twenty years, and they had at least two children. She does not appear anywhere in Chaucer's *œuvre*, unless one counts the moment in *The House of Fame* when the garrulous Eagle tells 'Geffrey' (as he addresses the poet) to 'Awak', calling him by his name,

> Ryght in the same vois and stevene
> That useth oon I koude nevene ... (560–62)

Could that 'oon' be Mrs Chaucer? Pier Paolo Pasolini seems to have thought so, for his film version of *The Canterbury Tales* (1972) includes a scene in which Chaucer's wife shouts his name to wake him up, as he sits in a large magisterial chair, dozing over his books.

What Philippa herself thought about her husband's textual erasure of their relationship will never be known. But we can be sure of one thing: the stance of the Chaucer-persona as the non-participating servant of love's servants is not maintained consistently throughout Chaucer's writing. A large crack in the façade appears, I believe, in the following passage from *The Prologue to Sir Thopas*, which is one of the *themae* of this essay. 'What man artow?', asks Harry Bailly of Chaucer the pilgrim, and proceeds to address him as follows:

> 'Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
> For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.
>
> Approche neer, and looke up murily.
> Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place!
> He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
> This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
> For any womman, smal and fair of face.
> He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce,
> For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce'. (VII.695–704)

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Interpretation of those lines has, inevitably, been influenced by the story which this 'man' goes on to tell, the 'drasty' doggerel tale of *Sir Thopas*. The unmanliest of men, Thopas is described in terms traditionally applied to beautiful women, excels at the non-aristocratic sports of archery and wrestling, and postpones a fight with a giant, insisting that he will come back the next day, when he has put on the right armour (a process which takes up most of the second 'fit' or section). The giant contemptuously shoots stones at Thopas with a slingshot – a comic inversion of David's encounter with Goliath? (Indeed, Thopas has been read as a distinctively boyish figure, even as dwarf-like). He has entered 'the contree of Fairye' in search of 'an elf-queene' he saw in a dream, since no woman in the ordinary world is worthy to be his mate (VII.784–806). The implication, perhaps, is that no woman in the ordinary world is remotely interested in this quite unappealing 'swayn' (VII.724). In sexual terms Thopas is null and void, capable only of 'vaguely erotic daydreams'.[8]

A Problematic *popet*

But there is no reason, I believe, to regard *CT*, VII.695–704 in the same light, a point I will now attempt to substantiate. Inevitably, one must start with the term *popet*, since this is a very rare word in the surviving records of Middle English. It refers to a small person or a doll; in the fifteenth-century *Pylgremage of the Sowle* we find the remark that 'childre make popettis for to play with whil thei be yong'.[9] Harry Bailly is saying that the portly little poet (whose waist is as ample as his own) would make an excellent doll for any woman 'to play with', to embrace – here, then, is Chaucer as cuddly toy. There is nothing to suggest that the 'womman' of l. 702 is small, to match a *popet*-sized poet; their difference in size is rather the point. The word *smal* in this line is not to be read as the Modern English 'small' but rather as meaning 'slender' – a conventional epithet applied to a beautiful woman, as of course is the phrase 'fair of face'. Surely in l. 702 the entire phrase 'smal and fair of face' qualifies the 'womman', who presumably is a person of regular build, of mature female stature.

[8] To borrow a phrase from Lee Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances: Form and History in the Canterbury Tales* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 104.

[9] *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *popet* (b). I have used the online edition of the *MED*, at quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/.

Some, however, have read that phrase as referring to the poet-persona. And indeed, at one point in the tale which follows, the ridiculous Sir Thopas is said to have 'sydes smale' (836), this attribution of a slender waist to the mock-hero being part of Chaucer's strategy of effeminization. But something quite different is happening in the prefatory description of the tale's narrator. We have just heard Harry Bailly comment on the breadth of Chaucer's waistline; there is no way in which it could be called 'smal' (=slender). Therefore I would interpret ll. 701–02 as meaning: this doll-like man would be quite a handful for any slender-waisted and fair-faced woman to embrace.

The suggestion of sexual contact is, I believe, quite blatant.[10] There is nothing effeminate about the *popet*-poet. He is, after all, of 'elvyssh' appearance. Unsociable elves and fairies may have been, in the sense of not doing any 'daliaunce' (engaging in regular social interaction) with humans, but the males of this species were certainly not unmanly.[11] On the contrary, fairy knights are frequently portrayed as sexually potent creatures,

[10] Patterson speaks of an invocation of 'sexuality' in 'the description of Chaucer as a "popet in an arm t'enbrace / For any woman"', but does not explore the implications of this remark, being interested rather in discussing the 'authorial childishness' which he sees Chaucer as attributing to himself, thereby staging 'a problematic central to the act of writing' (*Temporal Circumstances*, pp. 104–05,122). The idea of a 'lecherous' speaker telling a tale with 'sexual overtones' was advanced by Chauncey Wood, 'Chaucer and *Sir Thopas*: Irony and Concupiscence', *Texas Studies in Language and Literature*, 14.3 (1972), pp. 389–403 (p. 389), a reading critiqued by recent 'queering' interpretations which see the *popet* as an image of 'diminishing masculinity', a 'presexual', 'developmentally arrested' creature whose 'doll-like' nature renders him 'a perfectly safe love-object'. See Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Diminishing Masculinity in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*', in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. by Peter G. Beidler (Cambridge and Rochester, N.Y.: D. S. Brewer, 1998), pp. 143–55 (pp. 149–51). See further Tison Pugh, 'Queering Harry Bailly: Gendered Carnival, Social Ideologies, and Masculinity under Duress in the *Canterbury Tales*', *The Chaucer Review*, 41.1 (2006), pp. 39–69, and, for a thoughtful overview of the challenges and consequences of such reading, Geoffrey W. Gust, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 186–98. As shall soon become clear in this essay, my own reading rests on the assumption of heteronormative (and misogynistic) humour being in play.

[11] See especially St Augustine's statement, which was generally understood as referring to the creatures elsewhere called elves and fairies: 'it is widely reported that the gods of the woodlands and fields who are commonly called *incubi* have often behaved disgracefully towards women, lusting after them and contriving to lie with them [...]'. *De civitate Dei*, xv.23, tr. by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 681.

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dangerous to humans who unwittingly stray within their territory.[12] Elves are 'persistently invested with a powerful sexual valence', as Lee Patterson has remarked; they can be 'women who devour their enchanted lovers' (so Sir Thopas should be careful what he wishes for), or 'men who impregnate unwary maids'.[13] When we meet fairies in forests, C. S. Lewis writes, 'the encounter is not accidental. They have come to find us, and their intentions are usually (not always) amorous';[14] he goes on to describe these creatures as 'vital, energetic, willful, passionate beings'.[15]

Sometimes those passionate beings are seducers, like the hawk-father in Marie de France's *Yonec* and Merlin's father in Geoffrey de Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*,[16] and sometimes rapists, like the fairy knight in *Sir Degaré* who impregnates a princess with the child who will grow up to become the hero of the piece. Her handmaids having fallen asleep under an enchanted chestnut tree, this hapless heroine has wandered into the woods, and got lost. A 'joly knyght' appears to her, declaring that she will be his 'lemman' before she leaves, 'Whethyr the lyke wel nor noe!' (98).[17]

> No more doe than cowd sche,
> Butt weptte and cryed and wold fle.
> Anon he bygan hur to hold,
> And dydd with hur whatso he wold,
> And rafte hur of hyr maydynhod. (99–103)

In *Sir Orfeo* Queen Heurodis falls asleep under an 'ympe-tre' (a grafted tree with supernatural significance) and is abducted by the Fairy King, who threatens her with bodily harm if she resists.[18] No sexual motive is evident

[12] Yet another type of (malign) power which elves were believed to exercise over humans is indicated by the word 'elf cake', used to designate an enlargement of the spleen, with which they were associated. See the *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *elf* (2) and *elven* (2b); also Juhani Norri, *Names of Sicknesses in English, 1400–1550: An Exploration of the Lexical Field* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1992), s.v. *elf cake*, *elve bleine*, and *elvekecche*.

[13] Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances*, p. 104.

[14] C. S. Lewis, *The Discarded Image. An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 130.

[15] Lewis, *Discarded Image*, p. 132.

[16] *Yonec*, 105–224, in *Marie de France: Lais*, ed. by Alfred Ewert and Glynn S. Burgess (Bristol: Bristol Classical Texts, 1995), pp. 84–87; *Historia regum Britanniae*, VI.107, ed. by Michael D. Reeve and Neil Wright (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 138–39.

[17] *The Breton Lays in Middle English*, ed. by Thomas C. Rumble (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), p. 48.

[18] *Sir Orfeo*, ed. by A. J. Bliss, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 7–16.

here, but the male aggression is obvious (and King Orfeo will go *mano a mano* with the abductor in a trial of wits, to win his wife back).[19]

These escapades enable us to understand the joke which the Wife of Bath makes in introducing a tale wherein a 'lusty bacheler' robs a woman of her maidenhood 'By verray force' (III.888). 'In th' olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour' all this land was 'fulfild of fayerye' and 'The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye, / Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede' (857–61). That was many hundred years ago; nowadays no-one can see 'elves' anymore, for holy friars go around blessing every possible location, driving out the elves and taking over their territory (862–71).

> This maketh that ther ben no fayeryes.
> For ther as wont to walken was an elf
> Ther walketh now the lymytour hymself ... (872–74)

'Wommen may go saufly up and doun', not fearing what they may encounter under some 'bussh or [...] tree' (878–79). Or, *can* they?

> Ther is noon oother incubus but he [i.e. the *lymytour*],
> And he ne wol doon hem but dishonour. (880–81)

It would seem that one type of rapist has been replaced with another. The elves may have gone, but elvish practices persist.

So, then, there is nothing innocent about the image of the Chaucer doll in ll. 701–02, a *popet* who would be pleasing to (and pleasure?) '*any* womman' (my emphasis).[20] The collective reference is significant; a misogynistic joke is being made about the secret lusts of women in general, which in this case can be serviced amply by a poet-persona who is a lot more potent than he may look. This is *not* to suggest that Harry Bailly has in mind some sort of sex toy, for that would be to construct the Chaucer figure as lacking in agency, whereas (I believe) a strong element of male sexual aggression is crucial to the humour intended here. We are, of course, far from any implication of rape at this point. Rather a masculinist joke is being made about (supposedly) *willing* female desire, about the acquiescence by 'any womman' in sexual intimacy with a lover who has gained access to her body through a fantastic feat of downsizing (so to speak).

[19] *Sir Orfeo*, ed. Bliss, pp. 36–40.

[20] It may be added that the doll image, as found in Middle English literature, is not invariably benign. The *Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. *popet* (c), records an instance (in the romance *Kyng Alisaunder*) of the term designating a wax figure used in necromancy.

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Perhaps the most gross of all medieval fantasies of this type is the pseudo-Ovidian *De pulice*, 'the Flea', which dates to the twelfth century, and which is best known nowadays through an allusion in Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*. Here the deadly sin of pride likens itself to 'Ovid's flea', which 'can creep into every corner of a wench'.[21] The following lines (from Jan Ziolkowski's translation) will suffice by way of a sample of the original.

> When you [i.e. the flea, here being addressed] plant your sharp proboscis in her side, the maid is forced to rise from her heavy sleep; and you wander throughout her folds, the other limbs are accessible to you, you go wherever you please: nothing is hidden from you, savage. Oh, it pains me to tell: when the girl lies stretched out, you pluck at her thigh and enter her open legs. Occasionally you dare to go through her sexual organs and to disturb the pleasures born in those places.[22]

Oh would that I could be transformed into a flea, and subsequently return to my original form, exclaims this artful voyeur. Then he would move 'over the thighs and under the clothing of my girl to the places I chose'. At which point he might turn back into a human being. If the woman then ordered her servants to shackle him, either he would persuade her to yield to him or he 'would soon turn from a human back into a flea'.

This poem is a remote ancestor of John Donne's 'The Flea', though the later poet has cleaned up the sexual humour quite radically. For a less extreme (though somewhat garbled) example in the same vein we may turn to the Harley Lyric, 'A wayle whyt as whales bon', which seems to have as its refrain,[23]

Ich wolde ich were a þrestelcok,	*song-thrush*
a bountyng oþer a lauercok,	*bunting, lark*
swete bryd!	
Bituene hire curtel ant hire smok	*outer garment*, *undergarment*
y wolde ben hyd. (51–55)[24]	

[21] *Dr Faustus*, act. ii, sc. 1, 116–20, in *Christopher Marlowe: The Complete Plays*, ed. by J. B. Stearne (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), p. 289.

[22] Jan M. Ziolkowski, *Talking Animals: Medieval Latin Beast Poetry, 750–1150* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), pp. 289–89. See further H. David Brumble, 'John Donne's *The Flea*: Some Implications of the Encyclopedic and Poetic Flea Traditions', *The Critical Quarterly*, 15 (1973), pp. 147–54.

[23] Alternatively, this may be another poem or a fragment of another poem.

[24] *The Harley Lyrics. The Middle English Lyrics of MS Harley 2253*, ed. by G. L. Brook, 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), p. 41.

Quite how the bird of choice could get between the gown and the undergarment of the ivory-white beauty is unclear, but the emphasis on intimate physical contact is perfectly obvious. As it is, I believe, in the prologue to *Sir Thopas*. Chaucer's self-shrinkage into a ladies' doll may be a wish-fulfilling fantasy of this kind. Here the male gaze is definitely not trained on the ground, as if in search of a 'hare' (though the hare, it may be recalled, was an ubiquitous symbol of sexual desire).

An Elvish Chaucer

What, then, of the significance of elvish discourse in *The Canon Yeoman's Tale*, which features the 'elvysshe [mysterious] craft' (VIII.751), the 'elvysshe nyce [foolish] loore' (842), of alchemy? The canon-alchemist and his servant are said to lurk in haunts and blind alleys in some unsafe suburb – a rather repulsive version of doing no 'wight' any 'daliaunce'. But the account of alchemy offered here is by no means simplistically negative. For Chaucer's satire seems to extend to alchemy only as currently practiced – in a debased, unsuccessful form, which has associated it ineradicably with deception. Shady charlatans rob their credulous patrons, and those genuinely in search of scientific truth are quite capable of deceiving themselves, thinking that success is within their reach. The reality is that this 'science' is so 'fer us biforn', so far ahead of us, that it is impossible to 'overtake', to realize its goal of obtaining true gold (672, 680–82). But what of 'futur temps' (875)? Near the end of the tale comes the extraordinary statement that Jesus Christ himself holds alchemical lore so dear that he wills it should not be explained, except when it pleases His deity: the implication being that, one day, Christ may well reveal its secrets to the right people (1467–71). We are not dealing with impossibilities of nature, pseudo-knowledge that can never be true, but rather with a body of genuine knowledge which shall be revealed in the fullness of time.

> A man may lightly lerne, if he have aught,
> To multiplie, and brynge his good to naught!
> Lo! swich a lucre is in this lusty game,
> A mannes myrthe it wol turne unto grame,
> And empten also grete and hevye purses ... (VIII.1400–04)

But that applies only to the present age. Although currently the practice of alchemy is incapable of multiplication (there is a pun here on alchemical 'multiplication' – the transmutation of base metals into gold – and the amassing of profit), this 'lusty game' may hold out the prospect of 'mannes myrthe'; if

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Christ so wills, current impotence can give way to fruition, abundance and prosperity. None of this reflects negatively on an elvish poet. Chaucer may conceal his powers, keep his head down, play the part of observer rather than doer, reporter rather than actor, compiler rather than *auctor*. He is playing the long 'game'. Tomorrow belongs to him and his kind.

All of this adds up to an image of elvish Chaucer as covert, subtle, cunning and crafty (in every sense of the term). The *popet* of the prologue to *Sir Thopas* can be read as an aggressive and virile (if somewhat sneaky) little thing.[25] With that thought in mind we may revisit other instances of Chaucerian self-presentation which do not support the concept of a man who 'haddest never part' in the 'art' of love (to re-quote the *House of Fame*, 624–28). *The Book of the Duchess* begins with the first-person speaker suffering from lover's melancholy (though in his dream he defers to the superior suffering of the Man in Black), and at one point in *The Legend of Good Women* Chaucer breaks away from the image of an 'innocent' translator who 'rekketh noght of what matere he take' (F Prol., 365) to adopt a tone reminiscent of the *magister amoris* himself, Ovid (whose *Heroides* or 'Episteles' is the single most important source for the legends, and the work which the Man of Law praises Chaucer for having surpassed). 'Be war, ye wemen, of your subtyl fo' (i.e. lying lovers), exclaims this confidently-voiced persona, 'And trusteth, as in love, no man but me' (*Legend of Phyllis*, 2559–61). Chaucer is the only reliable man around – and the implication is that he knows not only the theory but also the practice of the *ars amatoria*.

Then there is the *balade* 'To Rosemounde'.[26] Here it is the female figure who is not doing any 'daliaunce', while the male speaker is in hot pursuit, burning 'in an amorous plesaunce' (22). He identifies himself as a second

[25] To this figure one might relate popular-cultural expressions such as 'the best things come in small packages' and 'smaller ones are more juicy' (the implicit comparison being with oranges). Which is quite the opposite of what is meant by the pejorative slang term 'Napoleon complex', or 'short man syndrome' (in Scotland, 'wee man syndrome'), as used to describe a type of social behavior supposedly characteristic of people, usually men, of short stature, which involves overly-aggressive or domineering activity, the implication being that the person is compensating for his stature. For recent comment, see Nic Fleming, 'Short man syndrome is not just a tall story', *The Telegraph*, 13 March 2008, at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/3336044/Short-man-syndrome-is-not-just-a-tall-story.html.
My point is a different one. I believe that Chaucer is using the notion of (supposedly) small stature to emphasize the genuine (although hidden) potency of his persona.

[26] *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 649. On this poem see especially David Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), pp. 144–46.

'trewe Tristam', who weeps many a barrel of tears, and indeed is deeper in love than a pike is immersed in galantine sauce. All of this is, of course, ridiculous. But we are in the presence of a fool of love – a figure whom love has made foolish[27] – rather than of a foolish (or naïve, detached, uninvolved) figure who speaks 'of love unfelyngly', like 'A blynd man' who 'kan nat juggen wel in hewis' (*Troilus and Criseyde*, II.20, 22). The distinction is a crucial one. This persona is a player in the game of love, not a mere spectator. The same is true, and much more obviously true, of the first-person speakers of other short poems by Chaucer, who play the standard role of the long-suffering lover. The list is a substantial one: *The Complaint unto Pity*, *A Complaint to his Lady*, *Womanly Noblesse*, and (to include poems not attributed to Chaucer in the manuscripts but generally supposed to be his work), *Against Women Inconstant*, *Compleynt d'amours*, *Merciles beaute* (at least its first two parts), and *A Balade of Complaint.* Had we available to us more of the songs and 'leccherous lays' of which the poet repents in his *Retraction*,[28] no doubt the presence of Chaucer the lover-poet would be even more palpable.

All of this is a far cry from the childish, emasculating fantasies that characterize Sir Thopas. And that *textus interruptus* is followed by the introduction to *The Tale of Melibee*, wherein Chaucer claims to be producing narrative in a way which follows the *modus procedendi* of the Four Evangelists who spoke of 'the peyne of Jhesu Crist' (VII.943–12). While staying true to, and preserving the truth of, the overall 'sentence', each of those writers conducted his 'tellyng' in his own way. Just so Chaucer will give his own version of another story which has been 'told somtyme in sondry wyse / Of sondry folk', the 'moral tale vertuous' of Melibee (940–42). At the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* the narrator had imagined his little book kissing the steps where it saw pace Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan and Statius (V.1791–92). Now he rushes up those same steps and brushes past those paragons of pagan antiquity to claim a literary kinship with the most authoritative authors of all time, tellers of the greatest story ever told. That moment is brief, soon left behind, but no less significant for that. Having asserted himself as a man (albeit obliquely)

[27] This tradition has been discussed by June Hall Martin, *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover* (London: Tamesis, 1972).

[28] *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 328, with which should be compared the claim made in *The Legend of Good Women* that Chaucer made 'many an ympe [hymn] ... / That highten balades, roundels, virelayes' for the God of Love (F Prol., 422–23; cf. G Prol., 410–11). Even allowing for rhetorical exaggeration, it seems reasonable to assume that Chaucer wrote many more love lyrics than have survived.

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Chaucer has proceeded to assert himself as an author. Perhaps the differences between the narrators of *Sir Thopas* and the *Melibee* are not as great as usually supposed. In both cases discourses of self-empowerment are in play. And, paradoxically enough, the act of association with the Four Evangelists licenses the present writer to be different, to tell things differently from other writers.

Drinking One's Own Drink

Chaucer's most challenging assertion of difference comes in *The House of Fame*. Why have you come here? asks a mysterious 'oon' (apparently invented just to pose this question); 'Artow come hider to han fame?' Which elicits this robust response:

> 'Nay, for sothe, frend', quod y;
> 'I cam noght hyder, graunt mercy,
> For no such cause, by my hed!
> Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
> That no wight have my name in honde.
> I wot myself best how y stonde;
> For what I drye, or what I thynke, *experience/suffer*
> I wil myselven al hyt drynke,
> Certeyn, for the more part,
> As fer forth as I kan myn art'. (1873–82) *know, have knowledge of*

What is *not* happening here is a lot clearer than what *is*. The most common medieval image of literary consumption is that found in Ezekiel 3:3, where a heavenly messenger commands the prophet to eat a scroll, saying, 'thy belly shall eat, and thy bowels shall be filled with this book, which I give thee, and I did eat it: and it was sweet as honey in my mouth'. Metaphors of knowledge-acquisition in terms of tasting something sweet are, of course, quite common in the Bible, and throughout the Middle Ages imagery of food and eating served as means of talking 'about the soul's desire for God', as Caroline Walker Bynum has demonstrated in her *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*.[29] An intriguing variation on the Ezekiel passage is found in Apocalypse

[29] See especially *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 150; also Shannon Gayk, '"Ete this book": Literary Consumption and Poetic Invention in Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine*', in *Form and Reform: Reading across the Fifteenth Century, ed. by Shannon Gayk and Kathleen Tonry* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), pp. 88–109 (pp. 96–97).

10: 9–10, when an angel tells St John (this text's putative author) to take the book he is holding and eat it up. Once again, the book is to be 'sweet as honey' in the mouth, but the angel warns that it shall make the eater's 'belly bitter' (10:9), presumably because of the terrifying information which the prophecy contains. Whereupon St John does so. 'And I took the book from the hand of the angel and ate it up: and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey. And when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter' (10:10).

These authorities influenced a curious (and quite comical) passage in John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine*, which tells of how an English priest traveled to Cyprus in search of the saint's *vita*.[30] A richly-dressed figure appears to the visitor in a vision, in order to reveal the text's location (it is buried in a field). In his hand he holds a very old book, with rotten covers and leaves dusty and torn, which, he insists, the priest should eat, despite its repugnant appearance.

> '... thu mote nede ete this book -
> Thu schalt ellys repente. Ope thi mowth wyde,
> Receyve it boldly – it hath no clospe ne hook.
> Let it goo down and in thi wombe it hyde;
> It schal not greve thee neyther in bak ne syde;
> In thi mowth bytter, in thi wombe it wyll be swete,
> So was it sumetyme to Ezechyell the prophete'. (Prologue, 99–105)[31]

Ezekiel 3:3 is referenced here, but it is the sensory experiences promised by the angel of the Apocalypse which seem to have influenced the idiom of that penultimate line – though they have been inverted, with bitterness in the mouth to be followed by sweetness in the stomach. (Given the unsavory physical condition of the envisioned book, that change makes sense.) Having protested that his mouth is too small for such a large object, and that it will 'brek' his tongue and throat, the startled priest does as he is told, to find that this strange meal indeed slips down nicely, and 'semed swete, ryth as it hony were'. No bitterness at all is envisaged in the most striking secular appropriation of this discourse, in *Il Convivio*, where Dante invites his readers to a rich banquet at which his *canzoni* constitute solid food, with the glosses

[30] This bizarre excursus is well described by Gayk, 'Ete this book', and Jacqueline Jenkins, '"This Lyf en Englyssh Tunge": Translation Anxiety in Late Medieval Lives of St Katherine', in *The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, The Medieval Translator, 8, ed. by Rosalynn Voaden *et al.* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 137–47 (esp. pp. 145–46).

[31] John Capgrave, *The Life of Saint Katherine*, ed. by Karen Winstead (Kalamazoo, Mich.: The Medieval Institute, 1999), p. 18.

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he provides in this prose treatise being the barley bread which is necessary for widespread consumption and digestion of that food.[32] The allusion is to Matthew 14:15–21, where, with five loaves of bread (and two fishes) Christ miraculously feeds the multitude which has come to hear his preaching. A little earlier in his text Dante had exclaimed, 'Oh blessed those few who sit at the table where the bread (*pane*) of angels is consumed, and wretched they who share the food of sheep!'[33] But then he addresses the needs of the wider public, the larger audience that will be enabled to partake of his feast with the help of the bread which he has (somewhat condescendingly) provided.

Such egotistical sublime or sublime egotism was not Chaucer's way. In *The House of Fame*, 1873–82 the speaker makes no claim whatever to inspiration from above, no reference to the ingestion of superior knowledge, and expresses no interest in distributing his textual consumables to a wide audience. Geffrey's statement of self-sufficiency, indeed of solipsism, is stark in its clarity. His achievements will extend as far as his knowledge of his art will reach, 'As fer forth as I kan myn art'(1873–82). No estimate is offered of where that may take him. No book is to be eaten, rather the metaphor concerns 'drynke' – if indeed it may be termed a metaphor, since the comparator is not identified. Might it refer to Chaucer's own writing (an attractive, and perhaps the most obvious, identification), or to his life-experience in general?[34] Furthermore, what is to be drunk is his own drink, rather than someone else's or something else, such as a heavenly potion which, following its consumption, can bestow great knowledge or confer prophetic powers.

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[32] *Il Convivio*, i.1, ed. by Bruna Cordati (Torino: Loescher Editore, 1968), pp. 5–6.

[33] *Il Convivio*, i.1, ed. by Cordati, p. 4; tr. by Philip Wicksteed, *The Convivio of Dante Alighier*i (London: Dent, 1903), pp. 2–3.

[34] Nick Havely elegantly translates ll. 1876–82 as follows: 'All I ask is that, when I'm dead, no-one should have power over my reputation. I'm the best judge of my own situation – for, whatever I may feel or think, I'll certainly cope with all or most of it myself, as far as my skill allows'. *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*, ed. by Helen Phillips and Nick Havely (London and New York: Longman, 1997), p. 202. I myself feel that the emphasis falls on Geffrey as being the best judge of his own achievements; in the field of literary endeavour he himself knows best where he stands. His skill is deployed, as far as his knowledge of art poetical can reach, in achieving as much as he can – rather than in coping with the opinions of others who seek to determine his literary fame or reputation. (Geffrey professes not to care about such opinions.) Literary-critical opinion has always been divided about the tone of this passage. Piero Boitani finds it 'stoic and Christian', *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984), p. 170, whereas in David Wallace's view it is 'huffy and evasive', 'Chaucer's Italian Inheritance', in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 36–57 (pp. 40–41).

B. J. Whiting identifies 'drinking one's own drink' as a proverbial expression relating to the imbibing of woe, and offers two further examples, one in the C-fragment of the *Romaunt of the Rose* (probably not Chaucer's work), where people who devote themselves to virtue are said to 'drinken gret mysese' (6807), i.e. endure much distress, and the other in this passage from *Troilus and Criseyde*, where Criseyde envisages the uncertainties which women suffer when they have embarked on the 'stormy lyf' of love.[35]

> 'Therto we wrecched wommen nothing konne,
> Whan us is wo, but wepe and sitte and thinke;
> Oure wrecche is this, oure owen wo to drynke'. (II.782–84).

So, then, could it be that the Chaucer-persona in the *House of Fame* is thinking of drinking his own 'wo'? The meaning is scarcely clarified by l. 1879, 'For what I drye, or what I thynke'. Obviously, thought can be either pleasant or painful, be about either weal or woe. The verb *dryen* is more difficult. It has the sense of enduring, bearing up in the face of circumstances. The *Middle English Dictionary* has a preponderance of references to the suffering of hardship, affliction, and torture, the experiencing of sorrow, troubles, misfortune, and so forth. Only four instances are offered of 'To experience (sth.); feel; enjoy'. One of them is *The House of Fame*, 1879–80, the very passage we are discussing. I myself can find no implication of enjoyment in Chaucer's vague reference to his experiences. Admittedly, there is no specification of suffering, but that is the more likely connotation of the verb *dryen*. In contrast with the situations of the book-eaters described in the Bible and Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine,* nothing sweet is to be tasted here, but only bitterness.

That suggestion squares with the somewhat sour taste of the passage as a whole. Geffrey seems rather irritated by the question posed by that nebulous 'oon' – which, after all, is a perfectly reasonable thing to ask, since a person encountered in the House of Fame may easily be assumed to be in search of fame. And yet, Geffrey denies any such motive, somewhat petulantly. 'I wot myself best how I stonde': he knows best, no matter what anyone else may say about his standing (by which is probably meant, his posterity). He will drink his own drink, with the emphasis falling on the notion that it is his *own*; the possessiveness expressed in this passage is marked (cf. the stress on 'myself'/'myselven'). So, then, Geffrey is not envisaging the consumption

[35] B. J. Whiting, *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1968), D405 (p. 144).

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of something he has acquired from someone or somewhere else, but rather of a concoction of his own making – a particularly appropriate idea here, given that literary *makynge* is implicated. Therefore it may be suggested that Chaucer had in mind the proverbial expression, 'One must drink as one brews', meaning 'one must take the consequences of one's actions' (cf. 'as one makes one's bed so must one lie on it', and 'as you sow, so must you reap').

Here are some of the examples which the *Middle English Dictionary* records under *breuen* (v.), 3 (figurative expressions and proverbial sayings): 'Let him habbe ase he brew!' (*Song of the Battle of Lewes*, *c.* 1325 [1265]); 'Þou schalt ... drinke þat þou hast ibrowe' (*The Seven Sages of Rome*, *c.* 1330); 'Who so wicked Ale breweth, Fulofte he mot the werse drinke' (John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, *a.*1393); 'As I haue brew, so most I drink' (*Generides*, *a.*1415); 'As he hath browyn, lete hym drynke' (*Castle of Perseverance*, *a.*1450); 'So brewe, so drynke' (a proverb in MS Douce 52, *c.* 1450); 'We must drynk as we brew' (*Towneley Plays*, *a.*1500 [*a.*1460]). The unknown author of the fifteenth-century morality play *The Castle of Perseverance* was particularly fond of brewing metaphors, including this one. Concerning the sinner who repents too late, Veritas (Truth, the daughter of God) exclaims, 'Lete hym drynke as he brewyth!' (3274). When such a person prospers in the world he enjoys dainty 'drynke at mete and mele', forsaking the Lord, but subsequently he will 'drynke' what 'he hathe browne [brewed] and bake [baked]' (3299–300).[36] A final (later) example: 'I am grieved it should be said he is my brother, and take these courses; well, as he brews, so shall he drink' (Ben Jonson, *Every Man in His Humour*, II.i).[37] Quite clearly, drinking one's own drink, the drink one has brewed for oneself, is not thought of as a happy experience; the notion of imbibing one's own woe is strong in these examples. And some if not all of them imply behavior which is headstrong or reckless. In like wise, Geffrey stands alone, sets himself apart. Even to the extent that he has applied to himself a proverb which (in all the above

[36] References are to the edition by David N. Klausner (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Medieval Institute Publications, 2010). For other brewing metaphors in this play see ll. 945–52, 963–66, 1298–310, 1877–98.

[37] *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 14th edn., rev. by Ivor H. Evans (London: Cassell, 1992), p. 353. Cf. *The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, 2nd edn., ed. by Elizabeth Knowles (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 51, 101–02, 674: 'As you brew, so shall you bake / as you bake, so shall you brew, / as you sow, so you reap'. With the last of these proverbs, cf. Galatians 6:7.

quotations) is imposed on a person by moralistic others. A perception which originates from outside the self has become an expression of selfhood.

Geffrey's reaction could well be described as passive-aggressive, to borrow a category from modern psychology.[38] I have in mind behavior characterized by the expression of negative feelings and aggression in a passive yet nevertheless assertive way. Indeed, the assertion can present itself in a quite forceful manner. Furthermore, people diagnosed with passive aggressive disorder (or, 'negativistic personality disorder', as it is also called) can exhibit an isolating stubbornness and scorn for authority. Chaucer has endowed his I-persona with symptoms remarkably like those, as the following comparison with Dante's strategies of self-authorization will, I hope, make clear. I suspect that those aggrandizing strategies were very much in Chaucer's mind as he wrote *The House of Fame*, and that he was reacting against them.

In the fourth canto of the *Inferno* Dante had placed himself in the presence of Virgil, Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan, superlative poet-philosophers who dwell in a 'noble castle' (a house of fame, indeed), which is populated with people of distinguished appearance, paragons who bear 'looks of great authority' (IV.112–13).[39] The Dante-persona is welcomed into this dead poets' society: 'they made me one of their company, so that I was sixth amid so much wisdom' (IV.101–02). In sharp contrast, Geffrey is no joiner, certainly not a clubbable person. Indeed, he questions the very existence of the club. Homer, Dante's 'sovereign poet', becomes a purveyor of 'lyes': 'oon' (yet another dispensable 'oon') has accused him of 'Feynynge in hys poetries', and being biased on the side of the Greeks (1477–80). Earlier in the *House of Fame* Chaucer had presented competing versions of the story of Dido and Aeneas, raising questions concerning the consonance, and the reliability, of the written records. There is worse to come. The third book of the poem comprises a dystopian vision of good reputation being awarded on the mere whim of Lady Fame. First the lovers who poets write about were

[38] I have consulted S. A. Pasternak, 'The explosive, antisocial, and passive-aggressive personalities', and K. L. Malinow, 'Passive-aggressive personality', in *Personality Disorders: Diagnosis and Management*, ed. by J. R. Lion, 2nd edn (Baltimore, MD: Williams & Wilkins, 1981), pp. 45–69 and 121–32, together with two publications by Christopher Lane, *Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), and 'The Surprising History of Passive-Aggressive Personality Disorder', *Theory and Psychology*, 19.1 (2009), pp. 55–70.

[39] Could Chaucer have been alluding to that passage in the last lines of *The House of Fame* as we have it, where a mysterious man appears, who 'semed for to be / A man of gret auctorite' (2157–58)?

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revealed as liars, then the poets themselves were revealed as liars, and finally fame itself is revealed as a pack of lies, or, at best, as a mixture of fact and fiction. Textual *auctoritas*, it would seem, has no sound basis. What is the point, then, of some *auctour newe*[40] going in search of literary fame?

Thus Geffrey can keep himself to himself, drink his own drink, keep out of the fray, distance himself from the cacophonous competition for fame. The passivity involved here is of a different order from that characteristic of medieval modesty topoi, largely due to the aggression with which that distance is specified. And yet, Geffrey (or, at least, the poet behind this persona) really wants to be a contender in the fame game, as the vaunting ambition of *The House of Fame* makes abundantly clear. It may be noted that, in many subjects, passive-aggressive disorder masks a profound desire for social approval, the wish to experience and share pleasure. The bitter taste of ll. 1873–82 features in a context dominated by frenetic literary play, the pleasure of the text evidently being savoured. Furthermore, the poem's all-pervasive humour by no means obscures the high seriousness of the poet's commitment to his craft. His art poetical reaches very 'fer forth' indeed. Here is a dazzling tour-de-force of textual engagement and allusion, revealing an intimate knowledge of the *auctores* on display. Whereas Dante had evinced awe concerning his men of great authority (in part as a means of affirming his own awesomeness), Chaucer claims an easy familiarity with them. The stubbornness and solipsism conveyed by his self-presentation seem to be reflexes of a confident individualism, the mark of a writer comfortable with where he himself stands, and not unaware of the prospect of future fame, when the drink he has brewed will be sweet on the palate. Aspects of this self-image will appear later, transmuted into the potent poppet of the *Introduction to Sir Thopas* and the creative translator of the *Melibee* who, invoking the precedent of the Four Evangelists, claims the right to tell things his way.

Conclusion

Developing his argument that, in *Sir Thopas*, Chaucer engages in 'a childish fantasy of selfish delights', Lee Patterson suggests that the poet presents himself as 'a minstrel-like tale-teller who has abandoned both courtly "making" and the responsibilities of the political adviser to indulge instead a penchant for vaguely erotic daydreams, a dabbler who habitually leaves his ambitious

[40] To borrow an idiom from *The Manciple's Tale*, IX.359.

projects unfinished, a bourgeois who celebrates a chivalric heroism he is unable to understand, and a ventriloquist who dresses up in other people's identities'.[41] This is an iteration of a widespread tendency (popular in the late 1980s and 1990s) to see Chaucer as a man on the margins – an excellent vantage point for a poet to occupy, to be sure, though such a positioning tends to undervalue his achievements as an administrator and man of affairs, when he was, so to speak, in the thick of things, at (or at least near) the difficult and dangerous centre of public life.

It also risks occlusion of the moments when Chaucer chooses to adopt an assertive persona, an aggressive 'identity', in marked contrast to those instances of self-diminution evoked so eloquently by Patterson. The emphasis on smallness of size, the ostentatious display of passive behavior, which occasionally feature – and feature prominently – in Chaucerian self-presentation should not occlude those instances when an alternative persona is projected, of a poet who has no problem with his stature. What emerges in such moments is an image of a manly man who is his own man, well at ease[42] and confident in the knowledge that whatever authority he may have is of his own making.

[41] Patterson, *Temporal Circumstances*, p. 105. Elsewhere Patterson writes of Chaucer as being 'on the boundary between distinctive social formations. Not bourgeois, not noble, not clerical, he nevertheless participates in all three of these communities'. *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p. 39.

[42] Here I recall Criseyde's description of herself: 'I am myn owene womman, wel at ese' (*Troilus and Criseyde*, II.750).

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NOTES ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Charles Burnett is Professor of the History of Arabic/Islamic Influences in Europe at the Warburg Institute, University of London, and Co-Director of the Centre for the History of Arabic Studies in Europe. His research centres on the transmission of texts, techniques and artefacts from the Arab world to the West, especially in the Middle Ages. Throughout his research and his publications he has aimed to document the extent to which Arabic authorities and texts translated from Arabic have shaped European learning, in the universities, in medical schools and in esoteric circles. Other interests include Jesuit education in Japan in the late sixteenth century, the use of Japanese themes in Latin drama in Europe in the seventeenth century and the use of music in therapy and in the Christian mission.

Michelle Bolduc is Associate Professor of French and Translation at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Author of *The Medieval Poetics of Contraries* (2006) and numerous articles on medieval literature, she is also the recipient of a NEH award for the translation of the New Rhetoric Project. Her current project explores the 'rediscovery' of rhetoric by means of translation, and Brunetto Latini's translations of Cicero are at its very heart.

Moreno Campetella obtained his PhD in Language Sciences at the University of Macerata (Italy) in 2001. Since then, he is a researcher and teaches at the Institute of Romance Linguistics « Pierre Gardette » (Université catholique de Lyon – France), and at the « Centre de Recherche en Terminologie et Traduction » (CRTT – EA 4162) at the University of Lyon (Université « Lumière » Lyon2). His research focuses on Italian technical treatises (zoology, botany, medecine) from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, in particular translations of texts of classical and late Antiquity.

Andrea Colli got a doctoral degree in Philosophy at the Albert-Ludwigs University of Freiburg (April 2009), with a dissertation on Augustine's influence on the works of the Dominican master, Dietrich of Freiberg. As a postdoc research fellow at the University of Trento, he has developed his studies on the thirteenth-century Dominican school, by investigating the idea of 'nobility' in Albert the Great. Currently, he is a Marie Curie (Horizon 2020) research fellow at the University of Cologne.

Stefania D'Agata D'Ottavi is Professor of English Language and Literature at the Università per stranieri, Siena. She has worked on Chaucer,

Shakespeare, Thomas More, Robert Burton, and William Blake. She has made the first complete Italian verse translation of *Piers Plowman* and has written a book on the *mise en abyme* in Chaucer's Dream Poems (*The Dream and the Book*). Her edition of Brunetto Latini's *La Rettorica* has recently been published. She is currently preparing an Italian edition of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and is working on an interpretation of the poems of the Pearl manuscript.

Pieter De Leemans is Professor at the De Wulf-Mansion Centre for Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Philosophy at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven) and academic secretary of the Aristotles Latinus. His research focuses on medieval Greek to Latin translations and on the reception of Aristotle's natural philosophy in the Middle Ages. Amongst others, he has published critical editions of *De progressu animalium* and *De motu animalium* in the *Aristoteles Latinus* series.

Juliette Dor is a honorary professor at the University of Liège. Amongst others, she has taught classes on English diachrony, medieval English literature, comparative grammar, and mythology in Northern Europe. After her PhD on the verbal system of the early period of Middle English, she has worked on the contacts between English and Scandinavian and between English and French, and explored several authors (a.o. Chaucer) and Middle English literary texts. In particular, she has translated into French *The Canterbury Tales* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Joëlle Ducos is Professor of Medieval French at the Sorbonne University and director of studies at the EPHE (*École pratique des Hautes Études*, Paris). She has studied extensively medieval French translations, in particular in the field of sciences. She is currently leading a project on a Dictionary of Medieval Scientific French.

Stefka G. Eriksen's research focuses on literary and manuscript culture of medieval Scandinavia. She has published the monograph *Writing and Reading in Medieval Manuscript Culture* (Brepols, 2014) and numerous articles on the dynamics between indigenous and translated Old Norse literature. During her postdoc at the University of Oslo (2011–15) she has studied and published on intellectual culture, pedagogy and attitudes to knowledge in medieval Scandinavia. She is the editor of the anthology 'Intellectual Culture in Medieval Scandinavia' (Brepols, 2016). She is presently working at the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research, Oslo.

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Igor Filippov is Professor of Medieval History of Europe. His main publication is *Mediterranean France in the Early Middle Ages* (Moscow, 2000, 800 p. in Russian). He's also the author of numerous articles and reviews on different aspects of social, legal, cultural and religious history and on modern and contemporary historiography in Russian, English and French. Presently he is working on two university textbooks: *The Epigraphics of Medieval Europe* and *The Anthroponymics of Medieval Europe*. He served as the Director of the Russian State Library (1992–96) and as Deputy Dean of the History Faculty of the Moscow State Lomonosov University for International Cooperation (2003–11) and for Academic Innovation (2011–15).

Christine Gadrat-Ouerfelli, archivist and palaeographer, PhD at the EPHE (Paris, *Section historique et philologique*), is researcher at the CNRS (*Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique*, Aix Marseille Université, LA3M UMR 7298, 13100, Aix-en-Provence, France). As a specialist in travel narratives and the knowledge of the world in the Middle Ages, she has recently published the monograph *Lire Marco Polo au Moyen Âge : traduction, diffusion et réception du* Devisement du monde, Terrarum orbis 12 (Turnhout : Brepols, 2015).

Michèle Goyens is Professor at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven). Her research areas include French diachronic linguistics, syntax as well as semantics. Her current research focuses on the edition of Évrart de Conty's French translation of pseudo-Aristotle's *Problemata*, but also on the development of the scientific vocabulary in medieval French, in particular neologisms in medical terminology; she is the principal investigator of several research projects with respect to that topic.

Ian Johnson is Reader in English and a member of the Institute of Mediaeval Studies at the University of St Andrews. He is founding General Editor of *The Mediaeval Journal* and was for many years General Editor of *Forum for Modern Language Studies*. His latest books are *The Middle English Life of Christ: Academic Discourse, Translation and Vernacular Theology* (Brepols, 2013) and *The Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ: Exploring the Middle English Tradition*, edited with Allan Westphall (Brepols, 2013). He is currently working on a study of the translation of Boethius's *De consolatione philosophiae* in late medieval England and Scotland.

Tamás Karáth is lecturer of medieval English literature at Pázmány Péter Catholic University, Budapest. His research focuses on religious culture, authority and heterodoxy in late medieval England. Currently he is working

on the fifteenth-century translations of Richard Rolle's writings. He also translates medieval English sources, as well as modern British and American literature into Hungarian.

Marthe Mensah was Senior Lecturer in the English Department of Reims University. Her field of research is English medieval civilisation and literature, particularly devotional and mystical literature. She has translated and published Old and Middle English lives of saints, *Vies de saints d'Angleterre et d'ailleurs* (Brepols), Walter Hilton's *Mixed Life,* co-translated with Claude Schwerzig, several romances (Auchinleck Manuscript). She has published articles on medieval life and religious thought with particular reference to Aelfric. She is currently completing a translation of Julian of Norwich's *Vision showed to a Devout Woman* with Claude Schwerzig.

Alastair Minnis obtained his PhD in 1976 in English Language and Literature at the Queen's University of Belfast. He taught at the universities of Belfast, Bristol and York, before becoming a Humanities Distinguished Professor at Ohio State University. Currently, he is the Douglas Tracy Smith Professor of English at Yale, where he teaches courses on Middle English Literature, particularly Chaucer, and movie medievalism. His research methodology brings together reading strategies from literary criticism and the history of ideas, and an interest in medieval philosophy and theology has informed much of his work. His latest monograph is *From Eden to Eternity: Creations of Paradise in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

Anne Elisabeth Mouron obtained her PhD from the University of Oxford (Lincoln College) in 1996. She is a member of Regent's Park (University of Oxford) and has published various articles on late medieval devotional texts, focussing on translations from Latin into Middle English and Old French. She has co-edited with Christiania Whitehead and Denis Renevey, the *Doctrine of the Hert* (Exeter University Press, 2010) and is the editor of the *Manere of Good Lyvyng* (Brepols, 2014).

After her PhD devoted to the edition of the French translation of Valerius Maximus by Nicolas de Gonesse (Université de Turin – Université Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle), **Graziella Pastore** is now a postdoctoral researcher at the École nationale des chartes (Paris) where she is currently editing the *Livre de jostice et de plet* (eighteenth century).

Marcela K. Perett is an Assistant Professor at North Dakota State University. Her main research interests are centered around theological writing in

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late medieval Bohemia, asking questions about the consequences of Latin theology becoming vernacularized and about the role it played in the formation of distinct religious groups, particularly Hussites in Bohemia and Lollards in England

Sharon Rhodes is a doctoral candidate at the University of Rochester where she is writing her dissertation – *Turning the Tide: Fathoming Noah's Flood in Old English Literature* – under the direction of Prof. Thomas Hahn. Her research focuses on Old English literature through the lens of Translation Studies. In addition to papers related to translation and Biblical translation, she has presented several papers on Old English Riddles.

Courtney E. Rydel is Assistant Professor of English at Washington College in Chestertown, Maryland. She has published on the *Golden Legend* and the thirteenth-century visionary Mechtild von Hackeborn, and spoken about the *Golden Legend* in a documentary that has aired internationally, 'Deadly Journeys of the Apostles'. Her current book project traces the British reception and translation of the *Golden Legend,* a collection of saints' lives that became one of the most popular medieval books. This understudied text contributed in important ways to models of gendered behavior and women's piety. This will be the first study to give a sustained consideration to the English translations of the *Golden Legend* together.

Claude Schwerzig studied English civilisation and literature for two years at the University of Strasbourg, before entering the Dominican monastery of Orbey, where she is a nun. She is very interested in medieval England and fourteenth-century mystics, particularly Julian of Norwich. She has given several talks about Julian's spiritual experience and theology to Dominican friars and nuns. She co-translated Walter Hilton's *Mixed Life* and Julian of Norwich's *Vision showed to a Devout Woman* with Marthe Mensah.

An Smets obtained in 2003 her PhD in French Language and Literature at the KU Leuven, with an edition and study of the Middle French translations of the *De falconibus* of Albertus Magnus (publication in 2010). Since 2007, she works as a conservator at the special collections department of the University Library of the KU Leuven.

Ildiko Van Tricht defended her PhD in december 2015 at the University of Leuven, analyzing the medical terminology in *Li livres des problemes* of Evrart de Conty, a Middle French translation of pseudo-Aristotle's *Problemata*, comparing it with other medical treatises of that time. She is mainly interested in the medical terminology in the Middle Ages.

Stefania Vignali is a researcher at the University of Turino. She focuses on the epistolary art in the seventeenth century, and was responsible for the critical edition of two of the eleven volumes of the correspondence of Mgr Philibert-Albert Bailly. More recently she is dealing with the cultural and linguistic relations between Italy and France, more in particular with the French reception of some Italian authors like Fiorenzuola, Boccacio and Dante Alighieri.

Paul Wackers published on a wide range of subjects. Prominent among them are: the Dutch and the European Reinardian tradition; the relationships between Latin and Middle Dutch and related to that multilingual phenomena; religious literature; and lastly miscellany manuscripts. Often he pays attention to the methodological aspects of scholarship. In December 2015 he retired as professor of historical Dutch literature to 1500 at the University of Utrecht.

Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa is Professor of English in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Shizuoka University. She works on late medieval devotional texts, religion and medicine. Her recent publications includes *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), to which she has also contributed an essay on medical discourse in Mechtild of Hackeborn's revelations.

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