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Chaucer, Books, and the Poetic Library

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Introduction

Though books have a prominent role in Chaucer's fiction, the library does not. Chaucer *coins* the word "library" in his translation of *The Consolation of Philosophy* – known as the *Boece* – and uses that word just twice throughout his fictional corpus. He uses the word "study" as a synonym but employs that word just twice also, both times in *The Canterbury Tales*. As Chaucer is perceived as a great commentator on the pains and salvations of reading, and since libraries are a fountainhead for medieval reading, there is an interesting discord in his benchmarking literacy while invalidating the reading center. That Chaucer should be almost incognizant of the preservers of textual knowledge shows the library as a virtual nonentity for English readers of the 14th century. It is as though the library is an empty estate, a medieval orphan to a new birthright of reading reestablished by Chaucer by a melding of thought between traditions of classical and Christian reading.

It is obvious to the 21st century that the reading space should accommodate texts if readers have a stake in suitable collections. Chaucer wrote when the library was a vested fulcrum to language and education. Although public libraries did not make their appearance until the early 1400s, as the literacy of the growing merchant class increased, there was an attachment between public life and private reading.[1] Church and legal administrators required the study of history and theology, and Cambridge and Oxford universities flourished as collections increased for their scholars.[2] In the 14th and 15th centuries, the new "secular mind" became appreciative of classics after a long decline of Greek and Latin study.[3] A vigorous collection of manuscripts revived classical learning while preparing discussions on religious, moral, educational, and political issues. The personal library began to appear in this time, although lay and church writers had small collections of books before 1400 that functioned as libraries.[4] Depositories were increased regardless of location, funds, size and function. Raymond Irwin writes, "It is in Chaucer that we first meet with the word 'study,' the history of the study and the history of the domestic library after all, are much the same thing." [5] Thomas Kelly notes that Chaucer was "the possessor of a considerable library," and this acquisition of books was part of the transformation of English letters, the "revival of English as a literary language." [6] If one reads *The Legend of Good Women's* "sixty bokes olde and newe / Hast thow thyself" (LGW Text G 273-274) [7] as autobiographical, then Chaucer's library was a "considerable collection" in the fourteenth century, especially since a single "book" could actually have been a multivolume compilation of many independent works. [8]

It would be worthwhile to synthesize the records of royal decrees, letters of appointments, diplomatic itineraries, wills, purchases and transfers of property, lawsuits, and other public documents to embed Chaucer's fiction with biographic fact. Such research could identify where Chaucer read or how he procured his materials. [9] As he had multiple sources of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the conditions in which he read become pivotal, particularly if he translated at a site whose purpose was to facilitate reading by offering multiple texts and scholars who could access them. Those who were trained to collect and catalog would have been a harbinger of expression for a fictional transmission of texts. Did Chaucer

own the copies of *The Consolation* in a personal library, or did he access them at a cathedral, monastic, university, private, or royal library? If he had read inside the facilities at Canterbury, which held collections of depth, he would have found it a receptive institution “in the habit of lending books to persons who were not members of it, and even to laymen.”^[10] He could have requested interlibrary loans, as it was a “common method” to borrow through a “pledge” of security.^[11] However, he would have had to research and transcribe in poorly lit accommodations, where the ink, if not his skin, could freeze on a cold winter day.^[12] It would have been difficult to sift through texts, collect manuscripts, and organize them for transcription in inhospitable circumstances. “The familiar notice requiring silence is a modern invention:” the medieval library was a noisome, poorly-lit, under heated and under ventilated place, a “crowded reading room” that was not operated for the mutual cooperation between the preserver of text and the reader. The trustees of learning worked in an awkward whirlwind that was “murmurous as a hive of bees” and “ill-adapted for profound study.”^[13]

From Richard Sharpe one gathers that a medieval researcher learned without a skilled tutor for discovery: the librarian trained in descriptive cataloguing, assisting patrons with annotated lists, capable of instructing the craft of research, is a modern concept. Sharpe describes an erratic leadership rooted in inconsistent talents. The pattern for managers in “active librarianship” was simply ensuring a superficial catalogue, “the marking of books with shelf-marks, *ex libris* inscriptions and contents lists.”^[14] Their techniques had few customer service merits. Collections were not well-organized, materials were not consistently well-preserved, librarians were not well-trained –not by 21st century certification standards – and reading rooms were not designed for comfort in long hours of study. No medieval patron could have failed to notice how organization guided effective use of holdings. With scanty corroborative evidence about Chaucer’s personal experience, it is necessary to look at his literary footprints to surmise the mindset of patronage.^[15]

Medieval Literature and Language

Chaucer’s debt to literature is more certain than his personal rewards from reading, transcribing, and borrowing in the medieval library. His facility with words emanates from Latin, Italian, French, and Old and Middle English. With such diversity it is difficult to decide why he chose the word that he did to represent the “library” as it is understood today, as a place for the accumulation of books, although for Chaucer not as an intrinsic force to education. Christopher Cannon writes of a “constitutive vagueness” in past studies that have attempted any “historic and linguistic precision”^[16] in the rationale for a lexicon. Nevertheless, Chaucer makes fertile innovations to English using established texts: “At the same time that Chaucer was progressively antiquating the very lexical novelty he had fashioned in earlier texts he may also have been throwing away the very new words on which notions of lexical growth have been based.”^[17] The implication of modification is that languages are nimbly blended. In Chaucer’s *Boece*, the word “librarye” is used twice early in the treatise (Bo Bk1 Prosa 4 14 and Bk1 Prosa 5 39-40).^[18] All textual and lexical authorities assign Latin roots to that word and most include French as an intermediary. In the relevant passages, the translator S.J. Tester gives the original Latin words as “bibliotheca” and “bibliothecae,”^[19] and both words are translated into modern English as “library.” According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, the root of the English word “library” is “liber,” a Latin word which is “believed to be a use of *liber* bark (see LIBER), the bark of trees having, according to Roman tradition, been used in early times as a writing material.”^[20] While the Latin “libraria,” or a word with a variant spelling, was common in Latin manuscripts in Medieval England, the *OED* gives an approximation for the first *English* usage as circa 1374 with a stated uncertainty about the conjecture that “libro,” meaning a “book,” is the root: “The Rom. word admits of being viewed as f. libro book + -ar a, but this leaves the ultimate analysis unaltered.”^[21] Wayne Wiegand and Donald G. Davis trace a history back to those appointed to the care of books: “Early Roman librarians (*bibliothecarius* or *magister*) tended to be scholars. Other library staff positions included the generalist cataloger and copyist (*librarius*).... [emphasis given by Wiegand and Davis].”^[22] According to the *OED*, another word designating a library was used during Chaucer’s lifetime, but not by him: “armaries,” one of the many forms of “ambry” or “armary,” first signified a library in the year 1382.^[23] However, the *Middle English Dictionary (MED)* finds a first use long before the birth of Chaucer and affirms that “almarie” was used as early as 1225 in the Winteneý version of *The Benedictine Rule* in the line “Sume boc of þære bibliotecan, þæt is of þam almeri3e.”^[24] The English “almarie,”

related to the French medieval “aumaire,” is listed by the *MED* as “A bookcase; a store of books, a library; (b) a storehouse of knowledge; a chronicle, a commentary.”^[25] Regardless of the disparity between lexical authorities, an “almarie” historically signified a collection of books to be used for devotion and study by monks, who built reading spaces for books that were “frequently stacked on their sides on the shelves of armaria, or book presses, with hinged doors.”^[26]

There is a maze of awkward interconnection within the philological morphology. Cannon does not date word roots, but notates the extensive borrowings that Chaucer makes from Latin, French, and Old English. “Librarie” is listed as a derivation from Anglo-French and Continental French sources.^[27] In the *OED* Etymology section, “librarie” is a French word first used in 1380: it has transformed in the French so that it now designates a “bookseller’s shop.”^[28] Another Latin word which embodies the modern concept of a library is “study.” Cannon notes a broader tracing for “study,” a word with its roots in Old French, Anglo-French, and Latin.^[10] The *OED* cites the word as a mark of sympathy in the following passage from Chaucer’s *Boece*: “Al þe entencioun of þe wil of mankynde whiche þat is lad by diuise studies hasti þ to comen to blisfulnesse.”^[30] In another passage, Chaucer is the first recorded author to use “study” in the sense of “devotion to another’s welfare.”^[31] In *Troilus and Criseyde* he writes, “But Pandarus, that in a study stood” (Bk 2.1180): the “study” in this instance probably refers to Pandarus’ anxious abstraction, a “mental perplexity,” not a place of learning.^[32] In this paper, “study” will be only considered as a space used for the accumulation, storage, and reading of books, that is, a location in either a private or public structure, as explained by the *OED*.^[33]

The *OED* confirms Chaucer as the first *recorded* writer to use “library” as an English word^[34] and the second to use “study” as a synonym, that is, “A room in a house or other building, furnished with books, and used for private study, reading, writing, or the like.”^[35] No significant difference between the medieval words “library” and “study” has been found when either refers to a library as we know it in its modern usage. Alex Steer, the Assistant Editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, states that the medieval terms “study” and “library” can be regarded as interchangeable.^[36] In comparing the pair he writes, “Effectively, though, the sense is much the same,”^[37] and consequently, the two will be treated as synonyms when “study” is used in its *OED* meaning as “A place set apart to contain books for reading, study, or reference.”^[38] Irwin declares that the medieval study in a private residence, that area in a home with books for reading, was a domestic and frugal place of learning.^[39] The room was dissimilar to its modern descendants in that it was probably without “a degree of comfort in the general furnishings:” though small it still served in its capacity as a library.^[40]

Chaucer as Bibliophile

Five references to a library structure occur in Chaucer’s writings.^[41] Two instances of “librarie” occur within *Boece*,^[42] which are singular in their impact. The three other references to a library in Chaucer’s poetry are minimal: two uses of “studie” occur within “The Franklin’s Tale” (FranT.1207 and 1213),^[43] and one indirect reference occurs in the “General Prologue” of *The Canterbury Tales*. What links all these references is that they prompt the question of whether there was a source for the library’s legitimacy in Chaucer’s self-revelations or whether the debilities of the library were extrinsic to biographic data. Although historic facts energize literary episodes, one hesitates to assert that a poet’s life can be *truly* authenticated from fiction. Scholars describe their inability to make a conclusive biographical statement from “fragmentary and equivocal evidence.”^[44] Others find more than “glimpses”^[45] into Chaucer, although few ever aver that he fully reveals a personal dogma. In “The Lives of Geoffrey Chaucer,”^[46] Christopher Cannon writes of a triangular relationship between poet, his “textual” life, and a reconstruction of a life from surviving public documents.^[47] After an insightful survey, Cannon notes the frustration of “telling the difference” between creative interpretation and biographical fact.^[48] Another critic, G. K. Chesterton, discovers that among the poet’s admirers there is chronic disarray: “almost as many men have lost themselves in Chaucer’s mind as have lost themselves in Shakespeare’s.”^[49] Acknowledging the limits of connecting fiction to biography, one can still interpret an antithesis between Chaucer’s connoisseurship of the book and his image of the library.

Much of this image may be grounded in conditions within the medieval library. “The general open library is a creation of modern times,”^[50] and scholars were forbidden a convenient use of books that were usually “chained to their cabinets or lecterns.”^[51] The “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales* describes a University of Oxford clerk with a set of books, a library perhaps, for which he purchased dearly – he allows his coat to be “Ful thredbare” (GP 290) rather than miss a chance to be a “philosopher” (GP 297). The young man enjoys a twenty-book library, or at least a 20 item bookshelf at his leisure, without appreciating that it is at “beddes heed” (GP 293) rather than at an ecclesiastic or university library, where authorities would deny that his private access was a priority. The Clerk is insensible of location, that his comfort is unique because his privilege is not at the whim of church officials.

J. Mitchell Morse writes that the Clerk represents a renaissance in scholarship, a bibliophile among distinguished zealots who “revived the ancient interest in secular knowledge for its own sweet sake.”^[52] The Clerk has twenty books of Aristotle, which he values more than the apparel of a dandy, with ostentatious “robes rich, or fithle [fiddle], or gay sautrie [harp]” (GP 296). The bookish narrator who details the Clerk, and possibly Chaucer too, might have had “but litel gold in cofre,” (GP 298) and spent much of that to accumulate books. Edward C. Wagenknecht argues for a sensitive relation between poet and narrator: “There is more than a hint of sympathy in his [Chaucer’s] portrait of the studious, unworldly clerk....”^[53] However, the sympathy does not extend to commenting on the austerity of the environment for preserving and studying books.

The Oxford scholar shares a fervent bibliophilism with other characters in Chaucer’s fiction. The narrator of *The House of Fame* leaves his daily cares to return home, to occupy himself in reverie through reading. His candle-lit reading room is where he can relish substantial books for relief from the insubstantial woes of the day. “Domb as any stoon” (HF 656) though the narrator may be while he sits, as a “heremyte” (HF 659) enraptured with books he is fully satisfied. He does not discuss the relevance of the surroundings that ensure his light “abstynence” (HF 660) from vulgar distraction; reading, not the place of study, is distinctive. It is uncertain how precisely the narrator “Geffrey” (HF 729) of *The House of Fame* reflects the identity of its creator. R. F. Yeager describes Chaucer’s bibliomania, the “near omnipresence of books in his writings.”^[54] The Geffrey of *The House* is a dreamer. This fictional rhetoric indicates that the medieval book-lover has an uncited hermitage for study. Chaucer’s own books would have been in English, French, Italian and Latin.^[55] Chaucer, the “ideal book lover,”^[56] is zealous in his praise without indulging in the impact of the library.

A detractor may argue that Chaucer should not mention the library in *The House of Fame*, or in any poem. It is Chaucer’s bookishness that is interesting, not the place where his reading occurs. An argument from silence is no proof of dissatisfaction with the library; if disfavor exists, it is secondary to a fascination with the transmission of information through writing. The lack of hypothetical magnetism does not fault Chaucer since his characters, as bibliophiles, lead scholars in directions that are more pertinent to the poet’s role as an interpreter of education, as a judge of the way in which readers are transmitters of learning from one era to the next.

If Chaucer finds a niche in using text to integrate his fiction, why does he also not grant a charismatic status for the library, particularly after the precedent of the *Boece*? His book idealization gives a clue to the negligence. Laurel Amtower explains the novelty of an author depicting himself as a reader of literature rather than as a writer of it.^[57] In the dream vision of *The House of Fame*, Chaucer recreates his fiction through established masterpieces to discourse on the authority of great books. As he succeeds, he shifts the focus from his text to those works that supply materials for the fiction. He investigates the experience of books, at times humorously, and “privileges reading over the act of writing,” and “the venerated traditions of authority and canonicity necessarily melt away.”^[58] Reading interprets contemporary culture and the ideas transmitted from ancient works to that culture. Deanne Williams, in her article “The Dream Visions,” recognizes the importance that reading has on dramatic invention.^[59] In *The House of Fame*, Chaucer questions our assurance of the veracity of the ancient savants and the narrators who interpret them. Through references to poets such as Homer and Virgil, through comments on their commentators, and through accounts of historians, Chaucer raises the question of whether knowledge is manipulated by our reading rather than justified by it. Williams concludes that Chaucer’s

achievement is a plying of doubt about the validity of the classics. Classics are central to learning, but they stimulate pedantry and foolishness and can therefore be satirized. A bookish dreamer with self-effacing hesitancy is part of the grotesque rearrangement: “This lack of confidence produces daunting, phantasmagorical images such as the twenty-foot thick book that describes the embroidered coats of arms of the suppliants of the goddess Fame.....”[60] Chaucer’s narrators sought for imperative authorities, including Marcus Tullius Cicero, without knowing their own limitations. “Chaucer may not know much about love, but he certainly knows his books,”[61] states Williams as she explains why Chaucer chose Cicero’s *Somnium* to write the dream vision in *The Parliament of Fowls*. Chaucer’s narrator describes the “jasper pillars and painted murals”[62] on the voyage to meet Nature. These descriptions are not essential, according to Williams, for it is only when the narrator reaches the park that he finds himself “in the best position for a writer.”[63] Ironically, a library is never even a partial locus for writing as the garden is. If esteemed texts are to be questioned, it is reasonable to ask if Chaucer, who had “the magnifying lens of the critic’s eye,”[64] uses that faculty to evaluate the library in conjunction with texts as a co-calculator of the authenticity or absurdity of readers.

J.A. Burrow writes that Chaucer was “apparently quite happy among his books”[65] “Chaucer was a reader..... Reading Chaucer is to read about writing,” affirms Yeager.[66] The place of the book could delight an audience in the description of the “studie” (FranT 1125), which is in fact a library, as it functions as a room for accumulating, proofing, and profiting from reading.[67] Aurelius, seeking the connivance of a magician to secure the love of Dorigen, who is distraught at the absence of her husband Arveragus, finds the treacherous clerk of Orleans with an eerie foreknowledge of the dilemma. Aurelius and his brother enter the “studie.” (FranT 1207, 1214) and are enchanted with the “revel” (FranT 1204), the illusion in the library, that may allow them to trick Dorigen:

And yet remoeved they nevere out of the hous,

Whil they saugh al this sighte merveillous,

But in his studie, ther as his bookes be,

They seten stille, and no wight but they thre. (FranT 1205-1208)

The “studie” has a minor, almost comic plausibility. It is where the legendary beasts told of in books, the “greateste that evere were seyn with ye” (FranT 1192), are seen in a deception, a surreal visual spectacle. The clerk is a magician, and yet, there is no ominous physicality in the study. There is nothing to fear in the book shelves, book cases, or library appurtenances. The wizard’s magic, not a foreboding display of book titles and authors, demonstrates the “sciences / By whiche men make diverse apparences,” (FranT 1139-1140). He works with “moones mansiones” whose “magyk” had allowed him to foretell the coming of the two brothers (FranT 1154 – 1176) and to demand one thousand pounds to “removen alle the rocks of Britayne” (FranT 1121), ensuring the success of Aurelius’ machinations. A kaleidoscope of mesmerism is finessed, and when the shocking extravaganza is finished, the clerk has the courtesy to call upon his servant and demand that dinner be served promptly to his hungry guests, “Into my studie, ther as my bookes be” (FranT 1213). At the end of the tale, a newly christened “philosophre” (FranT 1607) abandons the pact consented to in his study and forgives a debt from the chastened Aurelius. The evil is not consummated. The library loses power of “japes” and “jogelrye” (FranT 1265, 1271): the magic and jugglery disintegrate over time and distance and epiphany. Seth Lerer writes of the clerk’s library, “Without ever leaving a room, magic – or literature – transports us.”[68] The “studie” of “magyk natureel” (FranT 1125) was for Chaucer’s listeners an “illusioun” (FranT 1264), a “foyle” (FranT 1131) or a foolishness that was “As in oure dayes is nat worth a flye” (FranT 1132). The reading room manufactures a bizarre, duplicitous reality and impels the momentum of the plot while remaining a background feature. It briefly preserves “the sighte merveillous” (FranT 1206) then, forgotten by the conclusion of the tale, it fades from further description more quickly than the sturdy rocks of Brittany were consumed by witchcraft.

The Franklin boasts of not using “Colours of rhetoric” (FranT 726), those ornaments of the ancient writers that supposedly aid superior deliberation. The Franklin was not educated on “the Mount of Pernaso” (FranT 721), sacred to ancient poets, and perhaps he did not have the training to make the library a semiotic for wisdom. Throughout the Middle Ages there were sources for the invention of such a symbolism. Chaucer’s characters could have commented on catalogues that contributed for the study of civil and canon law, medicine, science and scholasticism and on nurturing repositories for learning.[69] The dichotomy in growth was that the once dominant monastic libraries were in decline, crumbling later into “sloth and decay” by the time of Henry VIII’s Dissolution (1536-1539), the “progressive” cathedrals were responding to secular and religious enthusiasm.[70] Canterbury, the destination of Chaucer’s pilgrims, was itself a “literary center” that held “preeminence among English cities as the home of books,” and that home was secured by the cathedral’s repositories.[71] Irwin says that the religious library formed a sort of triumvirate along with the scriptorium, where the books were copied, and the school, where the clergy were taught.[72] Library, school, and scriptorium toiled as the second “heart of every monastic establishment,” with only the church itself more important.[73] Though medieval libraries were small by 21st century standards, those of the mendicant orders were “far richer than those of the secular colleges” of Oxford and Cambridge.[74] In the latter Middle Ages there was an accumulation of texts with a “great outburst of new buildings” to contain them.[75] No antiquarian study has placed Chaucer in direct contact with a medieval library, as a reader, scholar, borrower, or donor. Given his display of the pleasure of reading books, the contemplation of their truth and reputation, it is not implausible to suggest that Chaucer knew and visited Canterbury or another church library for his own edification. The religious library in England, a “heart of every monastic establishment,”[76] would be for him a place of introversion, unsuitable for human intimacy. To a cloistered student it might have been a shrine, but it would not have communicated favorably to 29 story-telling pilgrims finding their rhetoric on their way to the cathedral of Canterbury. The study where a silent monk, absorbed in scholarship, read scrupulously could not illuminate universal struggles, not on sociable pilgrimages. Sequestration could not engage Chaucer to render a chronicle of a typical bookish hermit who “lived immured until death.”[77] The church library, with its solitary learners, had no conjunction with pathos, adventure, or mirth to make it an inspired theatrical force; learning in a Draconian environment was negligible to a conversational drama, a performing process that lauds or chastises readers who use texts to expedite charismatic tales.

Sources of the *Boece*

Chaucer could have found inspiration for the indispensability of the library through his translation of a 900 year old philosophic apology. In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, the library is a *sine qua non* as a manual for comfort through self-inquisition. Boethius debates with his mentor, Lady Philosophy, in the library of his reflections, and their tribulation becomes an exhaustive contest on statecraft. A summary of textual bibliography will help explain Chaucer’s achievement in translation. First, there is the controversy as to what manuscript, or manuscripts, Chaucer read when he translated. After more than a century of debate, no scholar can confirm precisely the text(s) that Chaucer used and the way in which he used them. This paper begins with the accessible *Loeb Classical Library* as one of the modern authorities that represent the authorial intentions of Boethius, as much as scholars today understand them. Loeb gives a straightforward translation for the Latin text with the familiar word “library,”[78] which underscores how difficult it is to assign nuances without providing holographs upon which the Latin is based. As for the work or works that Chaucer read, and the words that were the source for his “librarye,” one can surmise to their composition by studying the scholarship of Machan, Hanna and Lawler, and William Walter Skeat. Skeat, one of the earliest scholars on manuscript identification, writes at first cautiously and then confidently of the “MS. C.,” identified as “MS. Camb. li. 3. 21,” as the primary Latin source for Chaucer.[79] This manuscript, held by the Cambridge University, has both the Latin original and English section bound together in one volume. At one point in his Introduction, Skeat admits of some doubt as to the actual Latin manuscript used by Chaucer: “Of course we must also make allowances for the variations in Chaucer’s Latin MS. from the usually received text. Here we are much assisted by MS. C., which, as explained below, appears to contain a copy of the very text he [Chaucer] consulted.....”[80] Skeat’s self-assured discrimination “of the very text” grows as he considers the problem. The joining of the Latin and English is a deliberate attempt by a scribe to pair Chaucer’s translation with its source. Skeat avows that “the first authority to be consulted is the Latin text in this particular MS.; for we are easily led to conclude

that it was intentionally designed to preserve both Chaucer's translation and the original text."^[81] At the end of the Introduction, Skeat is more than conjecturally certain that this single Latin text is the locus for the translation: "I take it to be, for all practical purposes, *the authentic copy* [Skeat's emphasis]..... if we examine the Latin text, there seems reason to suppose that it fairly represents the very recension which Chaucer used."^[82]

Others have updated Skeat's conjectures, offering dissent that supplements his arguments. Tim William Machan values multiple sources for the *Boece* and writes, "Chaucer draws on the Latin and two commentary traditions as well as the French."^[83] Machan does not believe that Chaucer failed in his translation because he used multiple sources, nor because he did not distinguish between the sources, nor because he did not contribute an exegesis on translation. "As a source text the Consolation was fluid, not static,"^[84] and fluid in the sense that it should be interpreted by the conditions in which the translator worked. One must judge Chaucer's work as a valid, though selective, representation of Boethius which differs from the modern literal translation with its perfecting elucidation of scholarship. Machan connects style and sources and analyzes the ambiguity that still surrounds the process for the *Boece*. Chaucer becomes a ground-breaker, a "word-loving innovator" with pleasure in "experimenting with words and their structures."^[86] Chaucer's *Boece* has a semblance of an "unrevised" draft, perhaps one that was not intended for "the general public."^[87] His aim is not "literary artistry" but approximation while learning the power of inventiveness, "to stay as close to possible to his source" and experiment in the "manipulation of language."^[88] From Machan, one sees "librarye" as Chaucer's triumph, a word not in the Latin or French texts which formed the basis of the translation. Chaucer's contribution to English recalls an association with Latin erudition: "librāria" means a bookstore or book scribe, and "librārium" refers to a book case.^[89] Words with the root of "librair" do have a place in medieval French; however, no authority has discovered a firm date for a first French usage which precedes Chaucer's.^[90] Further research of historic and literary documents should clarify an intermediary Romance language between Latin and English for his valuable neologism. At present the evidence points to a word – and a concept – created solely from Chaucer's Latin reading. Chaucer pioneers word-creation from the classics, and in spite of Machan's admonitions, one believes he is attuned to his multilingual audience. He relishes his role as a language shaper with a "philologist's joy" in the invention.^[91]

Ralph Hanna and Traugott Lawler further synthesize the "archetypes of the surviving manuscripts."^[92] Through them, Chaucer's translation is an "issue" which admits to more complexity than past commentators have understood.^[93] Hanna and Lawler write, "False assumptions about Chaucer's Latin source text and his reliance upon it have bedeviled discussions of the work."^[94] One is now persuaded to reconsider Skeat's choice of MS. Camb. li. 3. 21 as the primary source for the translation. Chaucer read, digested, and abridged multiple complementary texts to invent and remodel pre-figured expression. He "regularly combined Latin and French readings,"^[95] assimilating the originals and glosses in two languages to produce his English *Boece*. He aggregates sources from European languages and coins a new English word, "librarye," a productive blend within a shared lineage. Andrew Cole gives insight to the technique, particularly in Chaucer's "Prologue" to the *Treatise on the Astrolabe*.^[96] Chaucer accommodates a literary circle willing to listen to a new vernacular. As Chaucer and his contemporaries were "infused with a fresh generic sense,"^[97] they composed in a formative trend that simultaneously relied upon and broke with historic models. "Librarye" is more than a semantic derivative because Chaucer does not recycle by rote. His word is not Latin or French, but new Middle English. It no longer means a scribe or a bookcase or a bookshop but a room that transcends commercial transactions and the perfunctory activities of retrieving and copying books. Although the *Boece* may not have been polished to a final state, as Machan suggests,^[98] it invigorates English through the creative adaptation of foreign and ancient language. "Librarye," though a near nonce word (used only twice in Chaucer's extant writings), has suitability for an audience which knows European literature and favors adept lexical novelty.

Ralph W. V. Elliott connects the story-telling pilgrims and the individuality of their vocabulary so that neologism courts their "lexical adventures."^[99] The "choice and range of vocabulary" are an experimental linguistic element, along with adaptations of syntax and diction, that structure meaning. The language reservoir shapes "the first appearance in English literature of a number of individual voices."^[100] One can infer that "librarye" and other new Middle English words mark an audacious

capacity to transform language. In Machan's parallel text of the proposed *Boece* exemplars, the pair "bibliotheca/bibliotheca" and "t'aumaire/l'aumaire" represents the respective Latin and French designations for a library.^[101] Chaucer picks from neither pair for his translation. He introduces "librarye," a word with pre-existing connotations and roots in the Latin tradition, and possibly the French.^[102] His coinage pays homage to the classics and supersedes them. One can interpret this similarity to Latin as evidence of a fluency of style, of an ability to increase the "brisk colloquial give-and-take" of the dialogue.^[103] Innovation broadens a lexical treasure that allures the reading public raised on the same Latin and European authors that Chaucer savors.

The Library of Boethius

The *Boece* creates a potential for the library in Chaucer's fiction. The *Consolation* was a medieval opus magnum for educators and the literate public: "As central texts in the school tradition, Boethius' translations and commentaries were required reading, but equally famous was his last work, a bestseller by choice."^[104] Cultured readers found an empathy as Boethius challenges Lady Philosophy, his symbolic mentor, to pity him in the dwelling place where he endures a wretched banishment for supposed crimes against the state. In the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Edward Gibbon eloquently describes the potency of the scene, "The celestial guide, whom he [Boethius] had so long invoked at Rome and at Athens, now condescended to illumine his dungeon, to revive his courage, and to pour into his wounds her salutary balm."^[105] She speaks to him in the prison and generates a vivid memory of his former library, her "hous" (Bo Bk I, Prosa 4.16) as she calls it. She refers to it as she asks Boethius why her pedagogy has failed to teach submission to his fate:

Is this the librarye which that thou haddest chosen for a ryght certain

sege^[106] [seat] to the in myn hous, ther as thow disputedest ofte with me of the sciences of thynge touchynge dyvinyte and mankynde? Was thanne

myn habit swiche as it is now? Was my face or my chere [display] swyche as now whan I soghte with the the secretis of nature, whan thow

enformedest my maneris and the resoun of al my lif to the ensauple

of the ordre of hevене? (Bk I, Prosa 4.14-23)

Boethius answers bitterly with self-righteousness, and his library becomes an icon of turbulent protest. He recalls his former diligence, the reading of Plato and other contemplative philosophers; the labor guided incorruptibility but failed to stop misfortune. The "studie and bountes" (Bk I, Prosa 4.243-244) he achieved for the Roman Senate are forgotten. When goaded by Lady Philosophy to explain his torment, to "discover thy wonde [wound]" (Bk I, Prosa 4.5-6), he chastises her about the "scharpnesse of Fortune" (Bk I, Prosa 4.11) and moans in "a contynuel sorwe sobbyd" (Bk I, Prosa 5.1-2).

Lady Philosophy affirms that it the library taught him to stand firm against political cheats, and now he fails to rely on the strongest fortress, the "palys" within his mind that is a product of that training (Bk I, Prosa 5.32). This mind-library is sustained by an understanding that the government of "emperoures" and the "multitude" should be obedient to God, the "lord of thi cuntre [country]" (Bk I, Prosa 5.18-21). Within the walls of inquiry a righteous man should not fear: "ther nys no drede that he mai deserve to ben exiled" (Bk I, Prosa 5.33-34). It takes a dramatic give-and-take for the Lady to convince Boethius that divine justice is unswerving. Meanwhile, she bemoans his failure to implement what he once pledged to in their library of reflection:

So that I sieie that the face of this place ne moeveth me noght so mochel

as thyn owene face, ne I ne axe nat rather the walles of thy librariye,
apparayed and wrought with yvory and with glas, than after the sete
of thi thought, in whiche I put noght whilom bookes, but I putte that
that maketh bokes wurthy of prys [price] or precyous, that is to seyn
the sentence of my bookes.(Bk I, Prosa 5.36-45)

A richly decorated library, the walls with their ivory and glass, is useless if the “wurdy” (Bk I, Prosa 5.43) principles of the books are discarded. The Interlocutress counsels Boethius to remember the divine “sentence” (Bk I, Prosa 5.44) of her books, that is, to reason from their precepts, accept the change of fortune, and consider the manifold blessings that remain. The epilogue to this lengthy conference is the Lady asking him to “eschue thou vices; worschipe and love thou vertues; arise thi corage to ryghtful hopes” (Bk V, Prosa 6.302-303). Boethius pleads that nothing had tainted his administration: “Nevre man ne drew [drove] me yit fro right to wrong” (Bk 1, Prosa 4.66-67), and one trusts that honesty will find its consolation.

The reading of Boethius determines his doctrines, retribution of enemies, and the means to allay suffering. In his analysis of Chaucer’s tale *The House of Fame*, Amtower believes that the narrator must remain neutral in partisanship, “to remain distant from the entrapment of discourse and ideology.”^[107] Ideology is crucial for Boethius, and the library is part of the exercise to master political discourse. Self-examination brings revelation characterized by agitation, discomfort, and fear. Chaucer, portraying his “innovative discourse” through speeches on reading,^[108] engineers a contemplative rhetoric without political doctrine.^[109] The senator chastises the political auctoritas, the oratory of false accusers, with a zealotry that exceeds any of Chaucer’s fictional narrators satirizing the conceits of false book learning. One asks if a conceptual space, as created by Boethius, could have liberated Chaucer without setting forth political situations.

Boece and “The Franklin’s Tale”

Current scholars see the thematic links between the sufferings in the *Boece* and those of “The Franklin’s Tale.” “This passage echoes Boethius, Bk4, Cons.,” comments Joanna Rice on Dorigen’s lament that begins with the line “Eterne God, that thurgh thy purveiaunce” (FranT 965).^[110] Alastair Minnis considers Chaucer in a tradition of medieval interpreters who adapt Boethian sentiments to invigorate fictional characters. Minnis states:

“The *Consolatio Philosophiae*, with its medieval apparatus of glosses, provided a major reference-book for translators and mythographers,

and also for those more creative writers who found therein embryonic narratives which they could elaborate and alter in accordance with their personal literary purposes and interests.”^[111]

For Susanna Fein, the strife in “The Franklin’s Tale” resembles the struggle of Boethius.^[112] There is a “vibrant sense of elemental contrarities in operation” in the love between Dorigen and her spouse Arveragus as much as that between Boethius and his spiritual wife.^[113] The wife and the philosopher introspect, become querulous, and find an anchor of peace. As Lady Philosophy asks Boethius to “eschue thou vices” (Bo Bk5 Prose6.301), Arveragus demands obedience to the sanctity of pledging: “Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!” (FranT 1474). Pledges are a divinely governed compact – “Touthe is the hyste thyng that man may kepe” (FranT 1479). Dorigen achieves her domestic balance through compliance to her vows, first to husband Arveragus, and then to Aurelius, who

renounces the compact and respects her marriage vows. Boethius too complies with his vow, which requires that all choices be made with dignity, and resumes his fellowship with virtue defined by books.

Fein notes other characters in “The Franklin’s Tale” with the Boethian flavor. Aurelius becomes “whole in the Boethian sense, knowing the good within himself.” the clerk magician falls in line and does the same.^[114] The Boethian illusion animates the dramatic exhibition of the power of the book. In the library, Aurelius and the clerk bargain to satisfy adultery and avarice, not perceiving the duplicity of both. Though one may dispute whether they were ever victims of a “worldly independence,” as proposed by Fien, they “achieve a final sense of Boethian freedom”^[115] from transparent and sullied goals after a truer duty claims them. A most acute transformation occurs within Dorigen. The sea, which is supposed to transport mariners to port free from injury, forebodes the death of her husband, and the coast is a nexus of despair and illusion, as potent a revelation prompt as the library is for Boethius. Dorigen asks the Lord to explain the necessity of the rocks, believing in a Boethian strain that what we trust can be deceitful. In her almost sacrilegious tone, she tells the Lord that they are a lie, a testament not to His goodness, but to His indifference, perhaps even to His malignity. The questioning of the Lord’s Providence, the struggle for justification and redemption, are echoed from the *Boece* in “The Franklin’s Tale,” yet, some resemblances are parallels of dissimilarities. An adroit *unBoethian orientation* contrasts the devoted wife and the ambitious scholar. There is a tension between the classical and medieval world, between the learned and semi-learned, and between domestic and public virtue. The philosopher mimics and savors Socratic dispute; the lady, without a sparring partner, breaks the Old Testament commandment against adultery, then recovenants herself to God through Christian submissiveness. Opposite redemptive paths mark the psychologies of Dorigen and Boethius. She begins her lament outdoors, in the bleak ruggedness of Nature, perhaps a purer place of resolution than the library of Boethius. She can appeal directly to God to curse the terrible rocks of Brittany that threaten her husband:

But, Lord, thise grisly feendly [fiendishly] rokkes blake [black],

That semen rather a foul confusion

Of werk than any fair creacion

Of swich [such] a parfit wys [perfect wise] God and a stable,

Why han ye wrought this werk unreasonable?.....

Se ye nat, Lord, how mankynde it destroyethe? (FranT 868-876)

Dorigen challenges the Lord without assistance; Boethius requires an invisible helpmate. Dorigen does not need a studious mentor or a book-room; her spirit moves independent of scholarship. Boethius speaks to God by committee, as one who spoke to emperors in the domain of sophisticated ministers and could never be intimate with them. He masters his statecraft through confidential reading. Dorigen may not know as much about classicism as the philosopher – although she is certainly well-versed in classical tales, ranging from the attempted lechery against the “fifty maydens” of Sparta (FranT 1380) to the treachery committed by the last Roman King, Tarquin the Proud, with the result that “Lucesse yslyan herself” (FranT 1405). Even in her moment of greatest shame she states without bookish immersion her confidence in intercession: “God helpe me so as wys! / This is to much, and it were Goddess wille” (FranT 1470-1471).

Boethius’ reflective solitude has been conditioned by years of grave study; Dorigen’s horror is quick and intuitive. She dismisses advice from lengthy disputations – she will not commit suicide on literary precedent. She can reform herself and connect with other living intimates. She has no use with the “clerkes” and their method (FranT 890) that sustain Boethius, and she prays without an elaborate world-book for the immediate rescue of her husband from the rocks of Brittany:

But thilke God that made wynd to blowe

As kepe my lord! This my conclusion.

To clerkes lete I al disputison.

But wolde God that alle these rokkes blake

Were sonken into helle for his sake!

These rokkes sleen [slay] my herte for the feere (FranT 888-893)

Boethius, imprisoned and alone, maneuvers an adamantine home to books. Dorigen does not define her fate within a wall of books. She renews herself, is absolved of transgression, and is blessed by a “sovereyn blisse” (FranT 1552) with her corporeal spouse. She finds her honor and vindicates herself a woman “trewe for everemoore” (FranT 1556) with a virtuous “franchise and alle gentillesse”^[116] (FranT 1524). The cerebral Boethius compels our sympathy, perhaps because we know his terrible fate is sealed. His library, bereft of everything but solitude, commands respect and falters in vivid dénouement. Chaucer converts the Boethian limit of “compassion and constraint”^[117] as Fein explains it. “The Franklin’s Tale” alludes to and breaks from the *Boece* because the destinies of fictional characters are more moving when they are of a less encyclopedic faith. The majestic book grotto of the philosopher is laborious, even anticlimactic. Boethius is too strong to be corrupted by the vicissitudes of fortune, and his struggles, tragic though they are, can never really estrange him from virtue.

The Solitary Library

Chaucer is ebullient when linking the bibliophile to the missteps of learning. The *Boece* reflects on an unhappy prophet in turmoil, a defeated expert who followed the “judgement of Socrates” (Bk I, Prosa 4.160). Boethius’s provincial library cannot be significant unless he is politically active. Chaucer is humorous, informative, and critical of traditions, but never a political firebrand, never a militant practitioner of statecraft. He does not want a tonic for defiant seclusion or exacting spirituality.^[118] He is not an insular artist at war with a corrupt civic auctoritas. Nor does he empathize with austere religious sanctuaries that would have been contemporary habitations for books and book-lovers. One surmises that no repository of knowledge can justify abdication from society, even a voluntary one. John Willis Clark writes of the painstaking care that English and Continental monastic orders devoted to books: “With them [the monasteries] book preserving and book-producing were reduced to a system, and in their libraries – the public libraries of the Middle Ages – literature found a home.”^[119] Yet, Chaucer does not embellish monastic libraries as a home for literature, though in fact they were. That is the paradox of celebrating books and ignoring their place of accumulation. His fictional characters could immerse themselves in reading while his one great non-fictional subject found salvation by cognition of the space where solitary reading must occur. If for Chaucer, as Wagenknecht suggests, “books took first place among all his interests,”^[120] then they are a self-contained vehicle without an engaging arena. If the library has the dubious characteristic of provoking or sheltering too much, then Chaucer offers non-partisan entertainment that grasps at texts and steers away from excessive self-absorption. A Garden of Eden is represented in his fabliau-inspired comedy “The Merchant’s Tale,” where two Greek gods watch adultery in an indiscreet paradise. The outdoor space where flowers are planted, where fruit is created and eaten, where sin is committed, and where infidelity is satirized, has a deep history that blends Christian and classical thought. Chaucer inherits this tradition to create his reflective comedy. The static library, a non-entity except to the imprisoned Roman philosopher, cannot compete. It does not spur Chaucer to substantial truths about greed and carnality. In stories such as “The Merchant’s Tale” the books themselves, not the place where they are kept, explain Athenian Greece, the Roman Republic and Empire, Church Fathers, Anglo-Saxon history, and the contemporary pilgrimage. Deliberate, self-indulgent confinement is not the stuff of chivalry or the risqué for a Canterbury adventure. The library does not invest Chaucer’s powers with images of courtesy or beauty or ribaldry or gallantry. He does not

praise protracted solitary charms or struggles but the searches for a patrimony of the book as it transmits or changes the engagement of characters with their animate surroundings.

Chaucer spoke to those who would not be punished by severe study. In the "General Prologue" of *The Tales*, the narrator tacitly approves of the Monk who breaks from his cloister's transfixed, gloomy dominion and its more timorous inhabitants:

And I seyde his [the Monk's] opinion was good.

What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood [mad],

Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure,

Or swynken [work] with his handes, and labour,

As Austyn bit [as Saint Augustine bids]? How shal the world be served?

(GP 183-187)

The worldly-wise Monk "heeld after the newe world the space" (GP 176); he holds for the "new" custom of being a sharp businessman who deals outside the monastery. The Monk is an "outridere, that lovede venerie, / a manly man...." (GP 166): confident and blustery, he manages estates and loves hunting and fine horses; he is a virile man and a voluptuary who keeps his "sanity" by ignoring vows that would require him "alwey to poure" (GP 185) over a text. "A book in cloystre" (GP 185) does not an imposing library make, but the narrator has a delightful manner, a sort of favoritism for the Monk's worldliness. The unsociable erudition that the Monk ignored is perceived as meager if not dysfunctional. His stigmatized library is marginalized in *The Tales* because it has no equilibrium. It would only immerse the drama in self-absorption without robust sociability to vindicate it.

600 year old antagonisms to the library illuminate the purpose of the enclosure today. The modern reading space, whether driven by digital images or the print medium, is an instrument, not a yoke, and deliberate seclusion is an extolled aim. Karen Antell and Debra Engel discuss structure as a research stimulus in the university. For younger faculty, it has become a "unique place that facilitates the kind of concentration necessary for doing serious scholarly work."^[121] The relevance of library culture is not age or institution specific. Nancy Kalikow Maxwell, Director of the Miami Dade College North Campus Library, defends the trials of enlightenment in a structural boundary. The library guarantees a domain for those who wish for harmony or retirement with an invocation to learning:

Paradoxically, the library is a communal institution that promotes noncommunal activity. Indeed, it could be argued that one of the key purposes of libraries is to encourage its members to separate themselves from each other and pursue their own aims..... Somehow, just being in the library refreshes the soul, imbuing one with an elusive sense of the sublime..... The New York Public Library contains countless statues and paintings of winged emissaries of God. Angels represent the link between the secular and the divine, residing on earth yet somehow separated from it. Like angels, libraries also unite the secular and spiritual."^[122]

Chaucer finds no analogous rapture: books, not the reading space, are privileged. The library does not contribute to an idyllic enchantment for books. The text, not the reading space, gives a remarkable continuity between old and new literatures for the cultured reader. Nevertheless, Chaucer shows an evolution in perspective as the architecture for reflection has changed from disengagement to a more active enclosure. The modern library is built from a consciousness of past criticism. It accounts itself to patrons seeking comfortable and informed points of access. It will not condone the idea of an irretrievable break from society through laborious reading. The relevance of the arts and sciences to

community welfare validates the physical medium in which textual gathering and exegesis occur. As knowledge is transmitted from text to learner, the surroundings become part of the gain. The library is a conscious bedrock. It allows a retreat in equilibrium to contribute to the survey and dissemination of learning. Chaucer, “the most delightful and urbane of England’s major poets,”^[123] is not remote when he challenges the authority of the library. He disciplines an historic sensitivity as we explain the suitability of our arenas for literacy.

Notes

1. Thomas Kelly, *Early Public Libraries: A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain before 1850* (London: Library Association, 1966), 14-29. There is much evolving scholarship on the English medieval library. See notes 2 through 5 below. A current assessment is given by Elisabeth Leedham-Green, Teresa Webber, eds. *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For the contents and provenance of English libraries, there is N. R. Ker’s *Books, Collectors, And Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. by Andrew G. Watson. (London; Roncerverte, W. Va.: Hambledon Press, ([1985]). For European and non-European libraries of the Middle Ages, one can consult James Westfall Thompson, *The Medieval Library* (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1957). For an older bibliography of Canterbury libraries, one may consult Montague Rhodes James’ *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover. The Catalogues of the Libraries of Christ Church Priory and St. Augustine’s Abbey at Canterbury and of St. Martin’s Priory at Dover* (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1903). For a broad survey of medieval English culture, including its literature, this author consulted *The New Cambridge Medieval History. v. 6. c.1300 - c. 1415.* ed. by Michael Jones (Cambridge [England]; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995-2005).
2. Leigh S. Estabrook, “Library,” *Encyclopædia Britannic, Inc.* (accessed January 23, 2008 from Encyclopædia Britannica Online): 8-10.
3. Thompson, *The Medieval Library*, (n. 1 above), 371.
4. For a discussion on whether private individuals possessed what we would consider a “library,” and what the contents would be, one can consult Jenny Stratford and Teresa Webber, “Bishops and Kings: Private Book Collections in Medieval England,” *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (see n. 1 above) 178-217. This paper recognizes variations in the norm of the medieval library, private or public, and will focus on the one extrapolated from Chaucer’s canon.
5. Raymond Irwin, *The English Library: Sources and History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 184.
6. Kelly, *Early Public Libraries*, (n. 1 above), 28.
7. Geoffrey Chaucer and Larry Dean Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer* (3rd ed. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987). References to Chaucer will be taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, the standard reference for Chaucer’s extant writing. Line numbering for all his prose and fiction will follow that source, and all quotations will be cited parenthetically in this text. The following *Riverside* abbreviations (p. 779) will be used: Bo for *Boece*; FranT for “The Franklin’s Tale;” GP for the “General Prologue” to *The Canterbury Tales*; HF for “The House of Fame;” and LGW for *The Legend of Good Women*. All glosses and paraphrases for the lines quoted are strictly the author’s creation except where indicated.
8. Edward C. Wagenknecht, *The Personality of Chaucer* (3rd pr ed. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973), 45 and Thompson (*The Medieval Library*, n. 1 above), 373. Thompson affirms the bounty of Chaucer’s purported collection. He says that if “*Legends of Good Women* is to be taken literally, [Chaucer] owned 60 books – a library which would rival some of those in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge” (408). Other libraries were better endowed. Canterbury’s Christ Church library was one of those institutions that “showed light and vigor to the end of the medieval period” (373). It had in the early 14th century a collection of 3,000 distinct works that were contained within 698 separate volumes.

9. R. M. Ball has a detailed description of Thomas Gascoigne as a researcher dependent upon the repositories of the medieval library. See R. M. Ball, *Thomas Gascoigne, Libraries and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge Bibliographical Society, 2006). Thomas Gascoigne, an Oxford-trained theologian noted for his work on patristic interpretation, was born less than five years after Chaucer died. The “extraordinarily informative” (vi) and meticulous Gascoigne had a comfortable access to contemporary sources of scholarship. From his statements, some of it in his own handwriting and some from an amanuensis, his reading can be cataloged. More than 32 library collections were accessed. Ball proves that “for about a hundred of the works he cites in his writings – about a third of the total – Gascoigne can be connected with a particular copy. That would be unusual even in modern times, but is extraordinary and perhaps unique in the middle ages” (vi-vii). Gascoigne annotated the texts that he owned and the texts that he borrowed, read or purchased from a library. One of his notebooks survives, and it shows extensive notes. The entries confirm his use of institutional libraries, particularly those of Oxford’s Greyfriars, to research and copy materials as part of a conscientious plan of scholarship. The notebook helps in “bridging the gap between Gascoigne the reader in many libraries, and Gascoigne the theological author and controversialist” (5). To date no such documentation exists from the pen of Chaucer.

10. James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover*, (n. 1 above), xlv. For an interesting discussion on non-text material that would have been available, one can consult Catherine Eagleton, “John Whethamstede, Abbot of St. Albans, on the Discovery of the Liberal Arts and Their Tools: Or, Why Were Astronomical Instruments in Late-Medieval Libraries?” *Mediaevalia*, 29(1) (2008): 109-136.

11. Thompson, *The Medieval Library*, (n. 1 above), 627.

12. Irwin, *The English Library: Sources and History* (n. 5 above), 122.

13. *Ibid.*, 120-121.

14. Richard Sharpe, “The Medieval Librarian,” *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (n. 1 above), 241.

15. This author appreciates the gracious assistance of Elisabeth *Leedham-Green*, MA, PhD, FSA, who has shed light on the limited stewardship of libraries before 1400. In response to questions on their services she writes, “In a way I think that the notion of a library as a place for research is anachronistic. In *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* [see note 1 above], Teresa Webber and I settled on a notional date of c. 1420 when books stopped being stored in chests and began to inhabit rooms with shelves, or something similar. This happened in institutions (colleges, monasteries, etc.) where access to said books was largely limited to members of the institution and to ‘bigwigs.’ In MS libraries, books on shelves would have been mostly chained, and opening hours limited to the hours of daylight. The great mystery is the use of private libraries, simply because it is so ill documented before the 16th century, and then only patchily/anecdotally. Certainly readers copied, or had copied, texts for their circles of acquaintance, but this again has only a remote connection to the idea of a library. I am not even sure that the idea of a reading place, other than one’s own study, has any real meaning in Chaucer’s time” (Elisabeth *Leedham-Green*, e-mail message to the author, March 6, 2009).

This author also appreciates the gracious assistance of Teresa Webber, Lecturer in Palaeography, and co-editor of *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, for adding to the discussion of Chaucer’s potential immersion in the medieval institutional library [see note 1 above]. She writes, “My impression, however, is that, even by the time that Chaucer wrote, a library room as a place where books were not only stored but could also be consulted in situ was still largely confined to major academic institutions, and that the practice was only just becoming adopted within monastic and cathedral contexts. Even then, such a room need not contain all the books in the possession of an institution, nor need it be the only (or even the primary) place where books were actually read. It is possible that library rooms may have been used primarily for reference rather than prolonged reading, the latter taking place in, for example, a carrel in the cloister or a private study. This would have imposed practical constraints on ease

of consultation of multiple sources within a short time-span, unless one had been able to gather together in advance the relevant volumes. All this is based on evidence from booklists and administrative and building evidence relating to the location of books within English institutional contexts. It is possible that Chaucer was aware of the initiatives taken by several Oxford and Cambridge colleges from the 1330s onwards to install library rooms, some of which were accessible (though for reference only) to 'outsiders.' I suspect that such evidence (including evidence of lay patrons) will date from the fifteenth century. The closest we may get to a lay person's reading environment in England in a period close to that of Chaucer are the references to Henry IV's study at Eltham, and the desk with shelves for books made for it, where we might infer that Henry may have read, as well as stored, a small collection of books" (Teresa Webber, *e-mail message to the author, March 11, 2009*).

Formative evaluations of 14th century libraries by those who used them are meagre, and factual data is scattered; hence the need for an alternative route, that of recreating the library through literary analysis. This author recognizes the influence of modern "reader-oriented" theory in approaching Chaucer as a book-lover: we find through him that the book itself can be dichotomous, simultaneously nurturing and hampering creativity. The modern audience, as much as Chaucer, becomes the judge of his text, and that text is fluid in pronouncements on mannerisms of reading. MacNeil and Mak explain how art can be in constant reevaluation when we discern the tuition of the author: "The interpretation of texts is not closed, but rather is an open-ended conversation among author, editor, publisher, and reader. The implications of this perspective can be summarized as follows: the production of a literary text is not the individual endeavor of an author but a collaborative enterprise between and among the author, editors (including the editors of critical editions), publishers, and readers;" [Heather MacNeil and Bonnie Mak, "Constructions of Authenticity," *Library Trends*, 56 (1) (Summer 2007): 36.] See also n. 9 above and n. 44 below.

16. Christopher Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English: A Study of Words* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20. Tim Machan reasons that Chaucer did not complete a final draft of *Boece* [Tim William Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece* (Norman, Okla.: Pilgrim Books, c1985), 121. See n. 83 below]. If *Boece* was unfinished, was Chaucer's ambition stopped by the harshness of the medieval library environment or by the inadequacies of librarianship to secure him a broader range of source material? The medieval library was not uniformly endowed with professionals who were trained to assist scholars. See Richard Sharpe's article (n. 14 above).

17. Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer's English* (n. 16 above), 120.

18. No authority, including Tatlock and Kennedy, attributes more than two instances of the word "library" in all of Chaucer's output. See John S. P. Tatlock and Arthur Garfield Kennedy, *A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and to the Romaunt of the Rose* (Gloucester: Mass., P. Smith, 1963), 523. Tatlock and Kennedy use the spelling "librarie." Larry Dean Benson (n. 7 above) uses the form "librarye." It is recognized that the word "library" includes variant spellings in medieval works. In the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower uses the word to mean a collection of books and not necessarily the room in which they are contained [See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "Library," OED Online. Second Edition 1989 (accessed March 6, 2008) and see notes 19, 20 and 21 below]. Gower is quoted by the *OED*: "1390 **GOWER** *Conf.* l. 14 And slouthe kepeth the libraire Which longeth to the Saintuaire." There is a lively discussion on the prerequisites to be met before a room or building can be considered a "library." For an introduction to the structuring of collections, see Richard Gameson, "The Medieval Library (to c. 1450)," *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (n. 1 above) 13-50. For the usage that is signified by Chaucer and explained by lexicographical authorities, see notes 19 and 20 below.

19. Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. and tr. by H. F. Stewart, E. K. Rand, and S. J. Tester (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), line 10, p. 146, and line 21, p. 162. Tester can be a starting point for discussing the Latin roots of the "library." He is the translator for *The Consolation of Philosophy* in this selection from the Loeb Classical Library. He lists numerous sources for consideration (see vii-ix). Tester's goal is to give a modern text that represents the authorial intentions of Boethius, rather than those of Chaucer and the scribes who composed the texts that

Chaucer used. Although Chaucer's translation is mentioned (vii), there is no comment on which text(s) Chaucer used.

The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* defines "bibliothēca" to be "A library (whether a collection of books or the building, etc., containing them) (the person) in charge of the library" [The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 232]. There is a divergence of opinion on the remaking of "bibliothēca" from Latin into English. No one disputes that Chaucer is responsible for that achievement. However, conclusions have varied on sources, methodology, and technical skill. "Achieving a more precise identification of the sources of the Boece will be difficult for several reasons" [Tim William Machan, *Sources of the Boece* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2005), 11]. Machan disputes with Hanna and Lawler on certain conclusions (see notes 28 and 90-93 below). Machan responds to Chaucer's "fairly fluid activity" in translating (*Sources of the Boece* 13). He notes problems in trying to present an idealized text, including the lack of a holograph for Chaucer's *Boece* and an uncertainty about the exemplars for Chaucer's sources. Nevertheless, Machan recreates a parallel source text, in French and Latin, which helps to explain Chaucer's *Boece* as a blending of prototype and gloss. Machan restores Chaucer's materials with a "theoretical" choice of the readings that were accessible to Chaucer, one that keeps the "textual integrity of the medieval witnesses" (15). S. J. Tester's Latin/English translation corresponds to a plausible degree with Machan's choice of language for the "library." In Machan's Latin-French parallel reconstruction, there is a "biblyotheca" in *Prosa Quarta* (line 6, p. 34) and a "bibliothece" (line 15, p. 44) in *Prosa Quinta*. It appears that both of these Latin words correspond in the parallel text to the French word "aumaire," which is similar to the English word "ambry" (see n. 23 below). In the French language text of Book I, *Prosa IV*, titled as *Prose Four*, there is "l'aumaire des livres" (line 9, p. 35), and for the following Book I, *Prosa V*, in the French section, titled as *Prose Five*, there is written "t'aumaire" as the correspondent to the Latin original (line 21, p. 47).

For more on the relation between the sources of Chaucer's *Boece*, presented alongside recreated source texts, consult the Introduction to Machan's *Sources of the Boece* (see n. 28 below). Machan gives a "contextualized" collation of manuscripts that he reconstructs for Chaucer's work, a translation he finds to be excellent in an "almost seamless combination of sources and in its linguistic ingenuity" (13). Machan completes a Chaucer *Boece* that differs from the third edition of *The Riverside Chaucer*. See Boethius, *Chaucer's Boece: A Critical Edition Based on Cambridge University Library, MS li.3.21, ff. 9r-180v*, ed. Tim William Machan (Heidelberg: Winter, 2008). Machan gives a spelling of "librarye" that is consistent with the *OED* and the *MED* and the *Riverside Chaucer*, though it differs from the older Tatlock and Kennedy Concordance (see n. 18 above). Machan offers "librarye" in identical spellings (*The Verthe Prose*, line 7, p. 7, and *The Fyfthe Prose*, line 21, p. 13).

20. See the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* [OED], "Library." OED Online. Second Edition 1989 (accessed March 6, 2008). The citation "OED" refers to the *Oxford English Dictionary* online version and will be used except where the print version of the *OED* is specifically mentioned. There are some differences between the *MED* and the *OED* and between their respective print and online versions. (See notes 23 to 28 below). Disagreements between the *MED* and the *OED*, or between their print and online versions, will be noted as they pertain to authentication. It should be noted the both the online and print versions of the *OED* give the same etymology and approximately similar first usage dates for "library." The online *OED* entry for "library1" includes the following in its "Etymology" section: "a. F. *librairie* (1380 in Godefroy), now only in sense 'bookseller's shop' = It. Sp. *libreria*, Pg. *livraria*, repr. Com. Rom. **librara* (with suffix -a, -Y), f. L. *libri-um* (F. *libraire* bookseller), subst. use of *librius* adj., concerned with or employed about books, f. *libr-*, *liber* book, believed to be a use of *liber* bark (see LIBER), the bark of trees having, according to Roman tradition, been used in early times as a writing material. Late L. *librria* (sc. *taberna*) occurs with the sense 'bookseller's shop'. [The Rom. word admits of being viewed as f. *libro* book + -ara, but this leaves the ultimate analysis unaltered.]" The *OED* continues with a series of definitions and usages, the most important of which for this paper is listed: "1. A place set apart to contain books for reading, study, or reference. (Not applied, e.g. to the shop or warehouse of a bookseller.) In various applications more or less specific. a. Applied to a room in a house, etc.; also, a bookcase. In mod. use, the designation of one of the set of rooms ordinarily belonging to an English house above a certain

level of size and pretension. c1374 CHAUCER *Boeth.* I. pr. v. 15 (Camb. MS.) The walles of thi lybrarye aparayed and wrowht with yuory and with glas.”

21. See the *OED* (n. 20 above) for background discussion. The *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (n. 19 above) gives multiple entries for antecedents of our modern “library” (1027). The Latin word *librāria* has two distinct numbered entries with the following definitions: “A female secretary or copyist” and “A bookshop;” *librāriolus* has “A scribe, copyist;” *librarium* has the entry “A case for books;” and *librāius* has “Of books” in its first heading and “A scribe, copyist, secretary” and “A dealer in books, bookseller” in its second. It is interesting to note that Cicero, a writer that Chaucer was familiar with, is a source for the etymology in four of the seven references, and in a fifth Cicero is referred to by the Roman philosopher Seneca, a philosopher whose struggles Chaucer also knew. For a discussion on Seneca, see Alastair Minnis’ comments in “Aspects of the Medieval French and English Traditions of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*,” *Boethius, His Life, Thought, and Influence*, ed. Margaret T Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 337-341. There are nuances in the English definition as well as the Latin. In the *OED* there is a usage of “library,” the second one recorded, that is now considered as “Obs.,” meaning “obsolete.” In 1382, the Wyliff Bible used “librarijs” to mean a scribe, a copier of written materials. The entry for “library2” in this sense includes the single following example: “1382 WYCLIF *Esther* viii. 9 The scribis and the librarijs [1388 *writeris*, *Vulg. librariis*] of the king” [See the *Oxford English Dictionary Online*]. David N. Bell gives evidence to a long evolution in the terminology of the “library.” [See “The Libraries of Religious Houses in the Late Middle Ages,” *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland* (n. 1 above)]. Bell writes, “Libraria as a bookshop can be found in classical Latin, but only became common as a term for a book-room in a monastery from the late fourteenth century, although it had been used earlier to refer more generally to a collection of books. Between 1381 and 1500, the term is used to refer to a book-room by the Carmelites of Aylesford, The London Greyfriars, the Benedictines of Bury, Rochester, St. Albans and Westminster (and also Gloucester College, Oxford), the Premonstratensians of Titchfield, the Augustinians of Leicester and the Bridgettines of Syon” (147). As Chaucer’s *Boece* is dated at 1374 to 1380 by the *OED/MED* (see n. 28 below), this widespread use of “libraria” in Latin-reading centers after 1381 suggests the popularity of Chaucer’s translation in the adoption of English words to a growing medieval Latin vernacular.

22. Wayne Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, *Encyclopedia of Library History* (New York: Garland Pub. 1994), 388.

23. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Ambyr,” *OED Online*. Second Edition 1989 (accessed March 6, 2008). The entry for “Ambyr” includes the following: “Forms: . 4 armary, 6 armorie; . 4-6 almarie, 5 -arye, -erye, 5-6 -ary, 5-7 -erie, 5-9 almyry; . 6 awmyry, amrye, 6-7 aumery, 8-9 awmyry, aumry, -ie, (amrie); . 6-7 aumbrie, -bray, 6-9 aumbry (-brye, ambery, -brey), ambry. [ad. L. armrium, in med.L. also almrium and almria (cf. Pr. armari, Sp. and It. armario, It. armadio, Pg. almario, OFr. 12th c. armarie, almarie, 13th c. almaire, aumaire, aumoire, 16th c. refash. after L., armoire)” Note the relation of the English to Old French in “ar marie” and “al marie” above. The *OED* notes a first usage of “Ambyr,” signifying a library, as occurring more than a century after the *MED* states (see n. 24 below). Under definition 2 for “Ambyr,” the *OED* has the following: “2. *spec.* The following are the chief uses:..... c. A place for books; library; archives. *Obs.*..... 1382 WYCLIF *Ezra* iv. 15 Thou shall finde write in armaries.”

24. *Middle English Dictionary [MED]*, “Almarie,” University of Michigan. <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/medidx?type=byte&byte=3665639&egdisplay=compact&egs=3671898> (accessed May 18, 2008). There is roughly a century and a half discrepancy between the *MED* and the *OED* as to the dating of the “ambyr” when that word signifies a library. Both dictionaries, however, agree that the Old French “almarie” or “aumaire” is the source for the English “ambyr.”

25. *Middle English Dictionary*, “Almarie,” See also notes 23 and 24 above.

26. Wiegand and Davis, *Encyclopedia of Library History* (n. 22 above), 351. Thompson (*The Medieval Library*, n. 1 above) considers that the “*armarium commune*, or special room or building for the books, became a necessity” during the 12th century in Europe (623).

27. Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer’s English* (n. 16 above), 322.

28. Oxford English Dictionary Online, “Library.” The dating of the *Boece* varies with a range of 10 years, depending on the authority that one consults. Tim Machan’s most recent comments on the work argue for 1380, uncertain though the date may be. See Tim William Machan, *Sources of the Boece* (n. 19 above). He writes that “the *Boece* does not contain any internal evidence of the date of its composition, but it is widely accepted that 1380, just before the putative composition of the *Knight’s Tale* and the Boethian poems, is the most likely time” (3). Hanna and Lawler (n. 91 below) state it to be “most probably a labor of the late 1370s or early 1380s” (1003). The *OED* has “c1374” as the date. The online *MED* uses a different passage from *Boece* than does the *OED*: “Is this the librarye..in myn hous, there as thow disputedest ofte with me?” and offers a more tentative later dating with the following: “?a1425(c1380) Chaucer Bo.(Benson-Robinson)” [Online *MED* accessed July 26, 2008 from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED25399&egs=all&egdisplay=open>]. According to the *MED* “Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography,” there is a dual dating system: the first number is the calculated date for the composition of the existing manuscript, and the second is the earlier conjectured date for Chaucer’s composition from which the latter manuscript is derived. The earliest date of HyperBibliography is 1380, and this is “conjectural.” The print version of the *Middle English Dictionary (MED)*, concurs with the current online *MED* [Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, editors, *Middle English Dictionary*. Pt. L (Ann Arbor, Mich., U.S.A.: University of Michigan Press; London: G. Cumberledge, Oxford University Press, 1956), 963]. Under the entry “*lībrārī(e)*,” the print and online *MED* list “c1380,” or circa 1380, for the date of the *Boece*. The two *MEDs* give “AF” and “CF,” Anglo- and Continental-French, for the etymology; whereas the *OED* has no corresponding subcategories. The *OED* makes references to the Spanish and Italian languages; the two *MEDs* do not. Differences in dating and etymology are curious, as both the *OED* and the *MED* are produced through the same parent organization, the Oxford University Press.

Machan writes with reservation, “.... given the inadequate resources available, one can never be sure if the earliest citation in the *OED* or *MED* is in fact the first time a word was used.... Moreover, the dating of many medieval texts is uncertain” (*Techniques of Translation*, 50. See note 16 above). One can assent to this imprecision and still draw inferences from the incomplete chronology. What can be inferred is provocative. Whether one cites the *OED* or the *MED* or Machan or *The Riverside Chaucer* as an authority, there is a question of whether Middle French was responsible for “library” in English. The *Dictionnaire de L’ancienne Langue Française* connects the modern French word *bibliothèque*, which translates to English as “library,” to the Middle French words that have the root of *librair*- [Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de L’ancienne Langue Française*. Volume 4. (Vaduz Scientific Periodicals Establishment New York, Kraus Reprint Corp. 1961), 773]. The earliest dated citation in Godefroy is from 1380, in “*Inv. De Ch. V, n° 2153, Laberte*,” for the entry “*LIBRAIRIE, librayre*.” In this usage the word means the room or the shelf where book storage occurs. There is no indication that books are to be gathered there for deliberate study or appreciation. The distinction is important, as it shows that the area is deficient in any higher order qualities that we now associate with a library. The full definition from Godefroy is “*pièce qui renfermait des meubles en forme de çasiers sur les rayons desquels on plaçait des manuscrits, et par extension ces meubles eux-mêmes*” (A paraphrase is, “A furnished room that holds lockers on bookshelves in which are placed manuscripts, and by extension, the furnishings for the books themselves.) Godefroy’s date of 1380 appears to be the one cited by the *OED* (see note 20 above), an entry which argues for the *OED* that Middle French is the source of Chaucer’s neologism. However, Godefroy’s French lexicon dates the first *French* usage approximately 6 years *after* Chaucer first wrote his *Boece*, if the tentative 1374 date from the *OED* is referenced. Even if “librarye” is dated by the *MED* to be circa 1380, it still has not been shown that any French usage with a root of “*librair*” in any context is *antecedent* to 1380.

29. Cannon, *The Making of Chaucer’s English*, (n. 16 above), 38

30. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, “Study,” OED Online. Second Edition 1989 (accessed March 6, 2008). The medieval usage of “study” indicates a greater scope in meaning than does the word “library.” An abbreviated set of entries for the word “study” include variants in sense. Note that while many usages of “study” were common, only in definition “8” is the word synonymous with “library.” The first entry is: “1. In certain senses of L. *studium* (chiefly in translations from Latin): Affection, friendliness, devotion to another’s welfare; partisan sympathy; desire, inclination; pleasure or interest felt in something. *Obs.* c1374 CHAUCER *Boeth.* IV. pr. ii (1868) 113 Al e entencioun of e wil of mankynde whiche at is lad by diuise studie hasti to comen to blisfulnesse.....” The third entry is “3. a. A state of mental perplexity or anxious thought..... c1290 *Beket* 1187 in *S.E. Leg.* 140 In gret studie he was i-brout; He rounede in is wiues ere and tolde hire al is out. 1338 R. BRUNNE *Chron.* (1725) 58 Whan Edward perceyued, his herte was in studie, How at werre bigan on him so sodanly.....” Also listed is a further sub-definition: “b. A state of reverie or abstraction.” Finally, there is the classification most pertinent to this paper. Here, Chaucer is recorded as the second person to use the word with this meaning: “8. a. A room in a house or other building, furnished with books, and used for private study, reading, writing, or the like. Often applied to ‘the private room or office of the master of a house, however it may be used’ (*Cent. Dict.*)..... 1303 R. BRUNNE *Handl. Synne* 4745 Next hys chaumbre, besyde hys stody, Hys harpers chaumbre was fast erby. c1386 CHAUCER *Frankl. T.* 479 But in his studie ther as hise bookes be They seten stille.”

31. *OED Online* (n. 30 above), “Study.” Entry 1.

32. *Ibid.*, “Study.” Entry 3.

33. *Ibid.*, “Study.” Entry 8.

34. *Ibid.*, “Library.” Entry 1

35. *Ibid.*, “Study.” Entry 8

36. Alex Steer, Assistant Editor, *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, UK) Letter to the author. January 29, 2008. This author appreciates the gracious assistance of Mr. Steer. The body of his letter, which was sent in response to a question on the relationship between “library” and “study,” runs as follows: “Chaucer uses the word LIBRARY in *Boece* to refer to a room in a house in which books are kept for study. In *The Franklin’s Tale* STUDY has much the same meaning (‘my studie’ is explained as the place ‘ther as my books be’). There is, perhaps, a slight different [difference] of emphasis: what’s essential about the library is that it contains books; what’s essential about the study is that it is where studying is done. Effectively, though, the sense is much the same. What’s important is that the sense of ‘library’ has no qualification of size: like a study, it may be a single room in a house containing a person’s books, and need not imply a large or organized collection as it normally does in modern usage.” The word “study” appears 22 times in Chaucer’s works; as a synonym to “library,” the word is used just twice. See Tatlock and Kennedy (n. 18 above), 890. Although “library” and “study” are not technically nonce words, for they are each used more than once, they are still quite rare when we consider “study” in its use as a synonym to “library.” However, Ralph W. V. Elliott’s discussion contributes to the thesis that the rarity of vocabulary is a literary marker. (See n. 98 below). From Elliott, one infers that Chaucer’s low use of the words “library” and “study” is pertinent when explaining a conceptual space that expands a reader’s knowledge or pleasure.

37. Steer (n. 36 above).

38. *OED Online* (n. 20 above), “Library.” Entry 1

39. Raymond Irwin, *The Heritage of the English Library* (New York: Hafner Pub. Co., 1964), 262-264

40. *Ibid.*, 263. There will also be no distinction made between public and private libraries, although their sizes and purposes could differ.

41. Geoffrey Chaucer and Larry Dean Benson (n. 7 above). A sixth possible reference, that of the Monk's cloister in the "General Prologue," will be examined in the conclusion of this paper. It is postponed because no substantial marks of the interior make the cloister denote more than a tenuous connection to a library.

42. For a fuller discussion see note 18 above.

43. See Tatlock and Kennedy *A Concordance to the Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (n.18 above), 890. Since "The Franklin's Tale" was apparently written after the *Boece*, the word "library" could have been substituted for "study" in the tale. Why it was not done so could perhaps be answered by a look at poetic devices such as syntax, diction, rhyme, meter, stress, alliteration, and allusion.

44. Paull F. Baum, *Chaucer, a Critical Appreciation* (Durham: N.C., Duke University Press, 1958), 3. A corollary to the modern biography is that an author should be understood through literary output as well as public records and private documents. In this paradigm, the conventions of culture shape the writer's thought and art. There is factual evidence that supports such a track [see Martin Crow and Clair Colby Olson, *Chaucer Life-records* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966)]. Direct biographic testimony would be an asset but is beyond the direction of this paper. It would require a lengthy configuration of Chaucer's life and a discussion about the assumptions of critique. Authorial intent will be limited to the internal data of Chaucer's writings as they show an estimation of consciousness of a reading space. (See n. 15 above).

45. *Ibid.*, 3.

46. Christopher Cannon, "The Lives of Geoffrey Chaucer," *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 31-54.

47. *Ibid.*, 33.

48. *Ibid.*, 52.

50. Karl Christ, *The Handbook of Medieval Library History* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, c1984), 49.

51. *Ibid.*, 48

52. J. Mitchell Morse, "The Philosophy of the Clerk of Oxenford," *Modern Language Quarterly*, 19 (1958): 15.

53. Wagenknecht, *The Personality of Chaucer* (n. 8 above), 45.

54. R. F. Yeager, "Books and Authority." *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Corinne J. Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 53.

55. *Ibid.*, 61.

56. Ernest Albert Savage, *Old English Libraries; the Making, Collection, and Use of Books During the Middle Ages* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1968), 182.

57. Laurel Amtower, "Authorizing the Reader in Chaucer's House of Fame," *Philological Quarterly*, 79(3) (Summer 2000): 273-291.

58. *Ibid.*, 275.

59. Deanne Williams, "The Dream Visions," *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*. ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 147-178.
60. *Ibid.*, 163-164.
61. *Ibid.*, 168.
62. *Ibid.*, 170.
63. *Ibid.*, 170.
64. Amtower, "Authorizing the Reader in Chaucer's House of Fame" (n. 57 above), 275.
65. J. A. Burrow, *Essays on Medieval Literature* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 1984), 176.
66. Yeager, "Books and Authority" (n. 54 above), 51.
67. *OED Online* (n. 30 above), "Study." Entry 8.
68. Seth Lerer, "The Canterbury Tales," *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 273.
69. William J. Courtenay, *Schools & Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1987), 99-116. See also Estabrook (n. 2 above), 8-10 and Irwin (n. 39 above) *The Heritage of the English Library*, 150-167.
70. Thompson, *The Medieval Library* (n. 1 above), 371, 373.
71. James, *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover* (n. 1 above), xix.
72. Irwin, *The Heritage of the English Library* (n. 39 above), 150.
73. *Ibid.*, 150.
74. Courtenay, *Schools & Scholars in Fourteenth-Century England* (n. 69 above), 85.
75. *Ibid.*, 153
76. Irwin *The Heritage of the English Library* (n. 39 above) 150.
77. John C. Hirsh, "Christianity and the Church," *A Concise Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Corinne J. Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006), 243.
78. Boethius, *The Theological Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy* (see note 19 above).
79. Geoffrey Chaucer and William Walter Skeat, "Introduction to Boethius," *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: Boethius and Troilus*, vol. 2 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1894), xxxvii – xli.
80. *Ibid.*, xxvii.
81. *Ibid.*, xl.

82. *Ibid.*, xxxviii.
83. Machan, *Techniques of Translation: Chaucer's Boece* (n. 16 above), 127.
84. *Ibid.*, 129.
85. *Ibid.*, 54-55
86. *Ibid.*, 127.
87. *Ibid.*, 121, 127. Also see notes 19 and 21 above.
88. *Ibid.*, 126.
89. *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (n. 19 above), 1027.
90. See n. 28 above.
91. Machan., *Techniques of Translation*, 55.
92. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler, "Textual Notes" of *Boece* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (3rd ed. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987), 1151. See notes 16, 19, and 28 above for a brief comparison of Hanna and Lawler's conclusions with those of Machan.
93. Ralph Hanna III and Traugott Lawler, "Explanatory Notes" of *Boece* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (3rd ed. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987), 1003.
94. *Ibid.*, 1003. Some who criticize Chaucer's bad Latinity may not have realized that he had both the vulgate and traditional Latin texts in front of him; furthermore, Chaucer amalgamated a long "Latin tradition," (1003) and "translated literally, and from both Latin and French simultaneously" (1004). To add further to this intricacy, Chaucer relied upon explanatory notes with a French or Latin translation, and these commentaries may have come from more than one source. Skeat may have not undertaken a "collation of all manuscripts known to the editor" ["Textual Notes," (n. 92 above), 1151]. Hanna and Lawler expand upon Skeat's choice for the primary Latin text, MS. Camb. li. 3. 21. For the pair, it becomes the "copy-text," but it is also a part of an aggregation of sources that trace back to a lost "ancestor of all surviving manuscripts" ("Textual Notes," 1151). They emend to make what they call an "O" reading, one which they believe most faithfully represents Chaucer's holograph ("Textual Notes," 1152).
95. *Ibid.*, 1004.
96. Andrew Cole, "Chaucer's English Lesson," *Speculum: A Journal of Medieval Studies*, 77(4) (October 2002): 1128-67.
97. *Ibid.*, 1138.
98. Machan, *Techniques of Translation* (n. 16 above), 121-127.
99. Ralph Warren Victor Elliott, *Chaucer's English* ([London] Deutsch [1974]), 161.
100. *Ibid.*, 422.
101. Machan *Sources of the Boece* (n. 19 above), 35, 47.

102. See the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (n. 19 above), 1027 and notes 20, 21, and 28 above for the etymology.

103. Elliott, *Chaucer's English* (n. 99 above), 154.

104. Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400-1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press. c1997), 47.

105. qtd. in Skeat, "Introduction to Boethius" (n. 79 above), ix.

106. There is disagreement about "sege." The online *MED* lists the word as a noun, "a callus" (accessed November 25, 2008) while *The Riverside Chaucer* lists it as a "seat," and the online *OED* has no listing with "sege" in a lead entry and gives unrelated definitions for alternative spellings, such as "rush of the waves upon the shore" for the variant "seege" (accessed November 25, 2008). This lack of concord between primary lexical authorities permits an educated guess. This author has taken "seat," as chosen by *The Riverside Chaucer*, as the definition appropriate to the reprimand from Lady Philosophy. Thus the passage becomes in paraphrase: "Is this then my house, my library, the one in which you alone chose to be the certain seat to dispute with me on the sciences that touch divinity and mankind?"

107. Amtower, "Authorizing the Reader in Chaucer's House of Fame" (n. 57 above), 289.

108. *Ibid.*, 289.

109. This author does not see a strong case for Chaucer as an active political mirror to his surroundings. See Lee Patterson, "Writing about Writing: The Case of Chaucer," *University of Toronto Quarterly: A Canadian Journal of the Humanities*, 48 (1979): 263-82. Patterson states, "The times were after all cataclysmic, but how do they register Chaucer's poetry? The Peasants' Revolt provides material for two or three lines of a simile; the deposition and murder of a king can be inferred from a begging poem addressed to his successor. In a poet so enamored of the feel and tone of life, a poet so palpable and visible, the absence of specific reference is extraordinary. He presents fourteenth century England virtually without history, a time without a 'Times'" (264).

The idea of a refined political punditry is provocative and unfeasible. Chaucer adds little to our knowledge of English kings or democracies. Comparing him to his friend John Gower, C. David Benson writes, "Chaucer and Gower take us on very distinct tours of London (Figures 6, 7). We are alerted to this in their different treatments of the invasion of the city in 1381. Chaucer had every reason to share the hysteria of Gower's narrator: he lived over one of the gates of the city by which the rebels entered London and many of his business associates were involved in crushing the Rising. Yet Chaucer's most explicit reference to 1381 is an almost flippant comment. In the *Nun's Priest's Tale* he says that the commotion during the attempted rescue of the rooster Chanticleer from the fox was at least twice as great as that made by the rebels and their leader Jack Straw: "Certes, he Jakke Straw and his meynee / Ne made nevere shoutes half so shrille / Whan than they wolden any Flemyng kille. (VII.3394-96) The most serious political threat of the time is reduced to a case of a little local ethnic violence." [C. David Benson, "Some Poets' Tours of Medieval London: Varieties of Literary Urban Experience," *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 24 (2007): 8.]

110. Joanna Rice, "The Franklin's Tale," Explanatory Notes of *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (3rd ed. Boston, Mass: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1987), 897.

111. Minnis, "Aspects of the Medieval French and English Traditions of the De Consolatione Philosophiae" (n. 21 above), 347.

112. Susanna Fein, "Boethian Boundaries: Compassion and Constraint in the Franklin's Tale," ed. Wendy Harding. *Drama, Narrative and Poetry in the Canterbury Tales* (Toulouse, France: PU du Mirail; 2003), 195-212.
113. *Ibid.*, 196.
114. *Ibid.*, 212.
115. *Ibid.*, 212.
116. The page gloss for "franchise" is "nobility of character" in *The Riverside Chaucer* (n. 7 above), 188.
117. Fein, "Boethian Boundaries: Compassion and Constraint in the Franklin's Tale" (n. 112 above).
118. See n. 109 above.
119. John Willis Clark, *The Care of Books; An Essay on the Development of Libraries and their Fittings, from the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press. 1901), 65.
120. Wagenknecht, *The Personality of Chaucer* (n. 8 above), 48.
121. Karen Antell and Debra Engel, "Conduciveness to Scholarship: The Essence of Academic Library as Place," *College & Research Libraries*, 67(6) (November 2006): 536.
122. Nancy Kalikow Maxwell, *Sacred Stacks: The Higher Purpose of Libraries and Librarianship* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2006. Accessed November 10, 2008 from NetLibrary, Inc.), 78. Also available in print format.
123. [*Albert C. Baugh*](#), "Fifty Years of Chaucer Scholarship," *Speculum*, 26(4) (October 1951): 672.

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