Chaucer's Boethius and 'Fortune'

CHAUCER'S BOETHIUS AND *FORTUNE*

On the evidence of Chaucer's verse, the poet's knowledge of Boethius was restricted to the *De Consolatione*. There is no certain indication of his having read any other of Boethius's works, although one would have expected the translator of the *De Consolatione* to have shown at least a passing interest in the Aristotelian writings and the commentary on Cicero's *Topics*. And, if the similarity between the contents of Merton Old Library and Chaucer's attested reading is anything to go by, the book-shelves above Mob Quad would have contained just such additional reading.[1] Contrary to recent speculation there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that Chaucer had read the *De Musica*.[2] But even if Chaucer's own *Boece* had been shelved at his 'beddes hede'[3], it was certainly accompanied by the French prose translation of Jean de Meun and the Latin commentary written some forty years before Chaucer's birth by the Oxford-trained scholar Nicholas de Trivet – possibly all three works contained in one volume, for French examples of such compiling survive in continental libraries. Chaucer's interest in the *De Consolatione* was detailed and penetrating. His concern with capturing the compression of Boethius's syntax (especially in Chaucer's use of appositional clauses, present participles and absolute constructions), his discerning selection of alternative Old French words and phrasing, and his rigorous reduction of multiple glosses and explanatory phrases found in both Jean and Nicholas, testify to an alert intelligence concerned with literary style and with clarity of philosophical exposition.[4]

But this is not to suggest that Chaucer's philosophical interests and tendencies should be automatically circumscribed by discussions and solutions found in Boethius's famous work. After all, Chaucer's most philosophical poem, *The Parliament of Fowls*, opens with the poet's declared dissatisfaction with philosophical discussions and conclusions which he could not find in Macrobius's *Commentary* or Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*; and nothing in the *De Consolatione* would have taken him much further in a satisfactory definition of human love and its relation to society and common profit.[5] The discussions and solutions indicated in the *Parliament* show an abundant appreciation of later thinking, those speculations made possible by the teaching at Chartres and by Parisian poetry – though, I hasten to add, not that kind recommended by John of Garland.

Chaucerian criticism, from the third decade of the twentieth century to the present day, has been cursed by a tendency to apply in a wholly mechanical spirit, the terminology and range of philosophical discussion in the *De Consolatione* to nearly every work of Chaucer's own invention – as if his poetry could be visualized as a geological model with one of the many *strata* neatly identified as *sectio aevi Boetii*. On this widely accepted view, Boethius's most celebrated work might be retitled the *De Consecratione Philosophiae* – in more senses than one.

By 1933, many of the finest flowers of Chaucer's shorter verse (which had been cautiously described by Skeat as 'grounded upon Boethius') had become 'free adaptations of Boethius' – the emphasis of this thesis bearing the unmistakable authority of German scholarship.[6] By the end of the decade, scholars could speak confidently of Chaucer's 'Boethian balades', and the execration was nearly fulfilled. If a certain continental inflexibility of thought were not enough, the transatlantic penchant for the adjectival 'Boethian' opened the way for more grievous simplifications. If the usage had only served to indicate a simple source of origin not much harm would have been done. But from its earliest applications it seems to have easily shaded-over so as to mean 'characterized by philosophical ideas specifically evolved by Boethius' – though the *Oxford English Dictionary* and all its supplements fail to record the form: Hobbesian yes, Boethian, no. The apotheosis of this train of thought was complicated by the combining of the adjective with nouns indicating genre. By the mid 1950s the phrase 'Boethian tragedy' came into general use. One looks forward to that tell-tale article entitled 'The Boethian *callis vitae* and the *vacuus viator* in the *Canterbury Tales*'. 'Boethian comedy' cannot be far behind! Scholarship to this day subscribes to a deceased Berlin professor's *dictum* that five of Chaucer's poems (*The Former Age, Fortune, Gentilesse, Truth* and *Lak of Stedfastnesse*) form a distinct group, a 'cyclus', a closely related series of Boethian poems. In vain, I suppose to suggest that the notion of such a unity existed solely in the mind of Professor Koch, and that the earliest and finest anthology of Chaucer's minor poems, Bodley MS Fairfax 16 (written no later than 1450), deliberately groups these poems in an entirely different arrangement. The colophoning of these poems has never been noticed by any of Chaucer's editors – or his critics. But this is matter for another occasion.[7]

If the fortunes of Chaucer's poems which make use of extensive Boethian quotation remain involved in a certain obscurity, the fortunes

of Boethius in England until the invention of printing are fairly uncomplicated. If one consults, for example, the Bodleian catalogue or the British Museum catalogues, one finds evidence for a copious distribution of Boethius's works (genuine or otherwise) in England during the fourteenth century – but exclusively in their original language. With some minor exceptions, four translations are regularly recorded in English possession in this period – and these only of the *De Consolatione*. Before Chaucer undertook his translation sometime in the 1380s, the Latinless English reader would have had to make do with the Alfredian committee version which at best can be described as an educational primer – and it is unlikely that any one of Chaucer's day possessed enough Old English to have understood it. After Chaucer's death, John Walton's verse translation of 1410 might just be described as 'An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Philosophy'. For, if it had not been for Lord Berkeley's daughter, Walton (an Augustinian canon of Osney) gives the impression that he would not have bothered with it.[8] He and 'hende' Nicholas of the *Miller's Tale* had much in common besides living within walking distance[9] – I mean idleness. Alison 'Wright' found work for Nicholas 'clerk' and Elizabeth Berkeley for John 'capellanus'. The result of Walton's regimen for shunning 'sloth and idleness' is not without a certain superficial charm but it lacks the acuity and economy of Chaucer's prose, and Chaucer's serious concern for the underlying conceptual complexities of Boethius's argument.

The remaining vernacular version regularly represented in English libraries of Chaucer's day was the Old French prose version made by the poet Jean de Meun some seventy years before Chaucer undertook his rendering – and his consulting of Jean's French translation. During Chaucer's systematic comparison of Boethius's Latin with Jean's French, had his text contained the dedicatory epistle, Chaucer would not have failed to notice that Jean's original endeavour was probably motived by patronal, indeed, regal, excitation.[10] No such preface or confession accompanies any manuscript version of Chaucer's translation, and no recorded fifteenth-century gossip suggests that Chaucer was in any way socially motivated. His Middle English rendering must represent his own desire to come to a clear understanding of Boethius whatever the ultimate destinations of the manuscript copies. We know from the comic cursing verse on his own amanuensis, Adam Scriveyn, that the scribe was busy making transcriptions of *Boece* and *Troilus* – copies corrected by the poet *ipse*, and not one of which survives.[11] There is a little evidence, not as yet in the least promising, that many of the surviving fifteenth-century manuscripts of Chaucer's

translation were originally library copies. For example, MS Bodley 797 had a private owner by the beginning of the sixteenth century. 'John Hunte of Cherbury' (whoever he was), but one can still see the note of an earlier pressmark at the beginning of the manuscript – 'Conventus Clare' – which means that it once was in the library of Clare Convent, Suffolk after 1460. Erased areas on the pastedowns provide additional information. Whilst at Clare it was owned by John Bury, author of the *Gladius Salomonis*. The poet Bokenham in his old age could just have used this copy. After Bury's death it was given by him to Sheen (Surrey). But wherever Chaucer's earlier 'authorized' copies of *Boece de Consolation* found their way, the Boethius in Chaucer's library and in Chaucer's memory are hardly meant to be identified. Chaucer's great editor, Skeat, in the closing years of the nineteenth century charted the areas of the poet's remembering of Boethius.[12] Its ordinance reveals few surprises and certainly no *terrae incognitae*. We see the great landmasses and continents: for example, the long monologue in *Troilus* IV on free-will and predestination, Troilus's philosophical hymn to love which forms part of the close of book III, Duke Theseus's peroration in exposition of a coherent universe which concludes the *Knight's Tale*. Elsewhere, we find a generous distribution of 'instances', what one is tempted to call 'exemplary' usages; and, of course, we come upon the five poems which Skeat called 'grounded upon Boethius'. Like a simple map, this abstract of *loci originales* tells us little about the actual contours of the areas, though some of the listed evidence should have alerted us to the necessity of taking a closer look.

From Professor Skeat's lists one interesting tendency emerges: that the massed, concentrated areas of Boethian quotation have a pronounced homogeneity of origin. For example, the dramatic, psychologically revealing use of Boethius by Troilus in the temple monologue of book IV shows a consistent use of philosophical material which is closely related to one major sequence of argument in the *De Consolatione*; so, too, does Duke Theseus's state address. These passages have a direct, close relation to the intellectual problem under discussion: a topical source of origin and nature of application. A same degree of topicality may be found in a more simplified form in Chaucer's use of local instances scattered about in the rest of the poetry. But in the case of the five minor poems, the poems 'grounded upon Boethius', this same degree of topicality and bunching of references do not occur. Instead, we find in a short number of lines (in no more than 217 verses) the most extensive, wide and varied range of Boethian quotation. The range of spread is:

Book I:	pr.5, m.7.
Book II:	prs. 1,2,3,4,5,6,8.
Book III:	pr.2, pr.4, pr.6, m.6, m.10, pr.12.
Book IV:	pr.1, m.1, pr.4, pr.6.
Book V:	pr.1, m.4, m.5.

This variousness and width of distribution arise not wholly out of accident or the mistake of classifying these five poems into a *cyclus*, but more arguably out of the natural ease with which Chaucer could recall his reading of Boethius given some specific reason for wanting to recall these passages of Boethius. However we group these five poems ultimately, they all have two characteristics in common: (1) they are late or 'later' poems, and (2) they all exhibit strong circumstantial qualities. They are, almost to a poem, *vers de circonstances*.

In the case of *The Former Age*, the circumstance lies in the political events which accompanied the promulgation and enactment of the Ricardian doctrine of recovering the king's pleasure by the instrument of blank charters. So the poem falls unmistakably close after 1397; *Fortune* is related directly to a depressing period of Chaucerian neglect accompanied by a loss (more serious) in friendships. MS. Fairfax 16 relates this poem to the letter sent to Scogan, where we see the same twinning of themes. The *Scogan* poem, too, is very late. Truth, by the chance survival of one copy in a British Museum manuscript, was addressed to Sir Philip de la Vache on the occasion of some personal worldly set-back, probably about 1390. The *Lak of Stedfastnesse* (according to Shirley and Lydgate) was addressed to Richard II at the commencement of his final troubles. *Gentilesse* is the only poem without an obvious circumstantial frame of reference, and it is the only *balade simple* of this group which lacks an envoi. One suspects that the envoi containing the name of the addressee and identifying the type of occasion has not survived.

If we turn to the other column in the ledger, the agglomerate of passages of Boethius cited in these poems, we find an underlying consistency of mood which contradicts the variousness of places of distribution in terms of Books, proses and metres. Nearly all of these quotations or reminiscences refer not to self-contained philosophical sequences or to types of arguments or solutions. They refer to areas of conflict and disagreement. The vast majority of Chaucerian reminiscence of Boethius in the minor poetry refers to areas of the *De Consolatione* where the emotional tone is pronounced and where

intellectual conflict shows intensification. Chaucer seems to recall most naturally the inconsolable, anxious Anicius, the indignant, impatient Philosophia, the insolent, disdainful and overbearing Fortuna.

Perhaps this conclusion should come as no surprise if we consider how closely and intimately the poet had been concerned in the 1380s with rendering the *De Consolatione* in all its expressive, verbal detail– how concerned he had been with the long process of conflicting moods and arguments, the interaction of personages, impersonations, forces and aspects of personality out of which the philosophical argument develops and finally comes to a resolution. 'No man goes to church without debate' runs the Middle English maxim Chaucer would have been familiar with. Chaucer's critics seem to be slumbered in their pews long after 'the lesson endeth'. The conclusion which emerges from the collective, learned sleep is that these five poems of Chaucer constitute an agreeable philosophical bromide, a comfortable exercise in Boethian pastiche – 'the Boethian group' as Professor Clemen called these poems in 1963.[13]

Long ago[14], I argued that *The Former Age* had nothing to do with translation exercises, and that its presence in a fifteenth-century manuscript in the Cambridge University Library interposed in Chaucer's translation of the *De Consolatione* was due to the anthologizing spirit of an early, scholarly editor. The association was never part of Chaucer's original design. Indeed, so the argument ran, the poem is depressingly negative in its reasoning – that Chaucer's comparing of 'Past and Present' can bring no revival of the spirits, can offer no cordial (even by way of nostalgia) to the heart. The time is 1398, the king pursues insane, selfish policies. Estate feeds on estate. Universal acquisitiveness is on the increase; the writ of malice and bestial indulgence runs everywhere in the land. 'Golden Age' values (simplicity, honesty, self-restraint, temperance and moderation) are as dead as dodos. The closing words of the poem ring upon a dull and deathly monotone:

> For in oure dayes nis but covetyse,
> Doublesnesse, and tresoun and envye,
> Poysoun, manslauhtre and mordre in sondry wyse.

Now, I submit, there is nothing in this poem but a sad and truthful account of the moral and social degeneration of a reign. The Boethian elements have been skilfully blended with Ovidian echoes and the

poet's memory of Jean de Meun. But the reality which Chaucer seeks to depict is not that of a text, but of actual experience, however often the poet seeks literary guidance for the expression of his own feelings and observations. Although there is an overwhelming case for removing *The Former Age* and the *Lak of Stedfastnesse* from the penumbra of Boethian translation exercises, the remaining longer poem of the 'group', *Fortune*, lies nestled still in the shade of academic indifference. A closer examination of the poem illustrates clearly the critical, emotional nature of Chaucer's personal use of 'Boethius' in the minor verse, and how damaging it has been to associate these works with the activity of translation or mere philosophizing.

The medievalist who turns to the serried ranks of guide books to Chaucer – a goodly muster which takes up nearly as much space as Professor Skeat's seven volume edition of Chaucer – the reader will find repetitiously recorded various degrees of academic indifference to the poem now known as *Fortune*. I opine he will be surprised at the persistent tone of intellectual condescension, captured at its recent best by Professor Rossell Hope Robbins in Professor Rowland's *Companion to Chaucer Studies*.[15] He dutifully repeats the connection with Chaucer's translation of Boethius and adds dismissively that '*Fortune* also resembles several of Deschamps' ballades'. Any one who has taken the trouble to read the French poems alluded to will, I think, demur. On the other hand, Jean de Meun's long dialogue between Reason and the Lover in the *Roman* on the subject of Fortune and Friendship, goes unmentioned and has been consistently slighted by the critics of this poem.[16] Yet Jean's passage formed the intermediate link between Chaucer's experience of life and his precise memory of Boethius. Professor Robbins concludes that *Fortune* is a begging poem, an indirect request for money.

Should the curiosity of the reader survive the blandishments of Chaucer's twentieth-century guardians, his vigilance will be sorely tested when he opens his text of the poem. Gone is the title found (with variations) in Middle English, Old French and Latin in fifteenth-century manuscripts. The manuscript subtitle he will find emended, and he will be grateful for the correction as far as it goes; its meaning may still elude him. Unless he consults Robinson's Textual Notes or the variants at the foot of Skeat's page, he will be unaware that the poem now appears in a form almost certainly not that which Chaucer would have recognized. No fifteenth-century scribe would have agreed. The modern, editorial and neutral title, *Fortune*, replaces the older, more precise 'The Arguying between a man and the Qwen

of Fortune', as the contemporary index of the Fairfax manuscript runs.[17] The subtitle in French is unfortunately corrupt in all the manuscripts and reads 'Balades de vilage saunz peinture'. Presumably, the idiom was unfamiliar and a simple mechanical confusion between long *s* and *l* produced the vilatic register which modern editors sensibly emend to 'Balades de visage'. But the new editorial title has led many of Chaucer's critics to assume that the 'face' is that of Fortune herself – though in this poem she does not show the poet any alternations of character which correspond to Boethius's original double-faced iconography. One is tempted to observe that if the critics had read their Deschamps carefully they would not only have dismissed the claim of Balade 286 as having had any influence on Chaucer, but they would have noticed that another Deschamps balade (no. 947), a dialogue between a poor gentleman and Habitual Acceptance approaches nearer the spirit of Chaucer's invention. They would also have seen that it is subtitled 'Balade à deux visages et la complainte avecques la response'.[18] There are at least a half-dozen additional poems of Deschamps which include the words 'balades à deux visages' in the subtitling.[19] The French editor renders 'visages' in the glossary 'personnages'. All of these poems are dialogues where the characters are clearly indicated and named. It seems entirely probable that Chaucer's original subtitle read 'Balades de deus visages saunz peinture', and that haplography has occurred as well as the letter substitution in 'visage'. This particular sense of the French 'visage' was as unfamiliar to the fifteenth-century English scribes as it is to Chaucer scholarship. 'Saunz peinture' probably does not refer to Fortune's 'dissimulation', but to 'painting' or 'the art of painting'. Chaucer uses the noun 'peinture' only once (and in this sense) in the *Canterbury Tales*.[20] In his youth he had translated Guillaume de Lorris's phrase 'images et pointures' (*Roman* 142). He would have been familiar with this meaning and he would have been eager to exploit Middle English *visage* in its well-attested sense of 'portrait'. Not surprisingly, the poem answers true to such a description. Its wryly ironic account of two characters (the poet Geoffrey and Dame Fortune) is rendered by means of no art of *descriptio* but is composed of the purely verbal elements of the contending, quarreling voices.

The argumentative, dialogic structure of the poem is clearly indicated by the headings which occur in all the manuscripts identifying the speakers. The poet, 'le pleintif', who opens the dialogue is marked 'le Pleintif countre Fortune'. The poem, composed of three *balade simples* with a single stanza envoi, has a beautifully symmetrical distribution of dialogue: the first three stanzas (a complete

balade simple) belong to the pleintif-poet; the second unit of three stanzas (another *balade simple*) comprise Fortune's answer ('La respounse de Fortune au Pleintif'); the third and last *balade simple* is divided between the two litigants. Chaucer speaks, is answered by Fortune and answers back, although not entirely to Dame Fortune. In the envoi, Fortune has the last word. There is, then, a natural crescendo of voices raised in progressive anger and disagreement. Fortune's final rejoinder is the quintessence of disdain – detached and hardly directed at Chaucer. She ignores him and the cause of his genuine distress. Neither of the two disputants are listening to each other. This is the basic arrangement of the dialogue as the scribes recorded it, and, I believe, as Chaucer intended. The modern text reads otherwise.

The distressed, angry voice of the poet at its crest of indignation has been suddenly stilled by the ministrations of Chaucer's editors. Eased of its rubric 'Le pleintif encountre Fortune', the last balade-stanza has been re-assigned – to Dame Fortune. All the scribes were wrong! Professor Skeat argued:[21]

> But they are all wrong, for it is quite certain that this stanza belongs to Fortune. Otherwise, it makes no sense. Secondly, we know this by the original (in Boethius). And thirdly, Fortune cannot well have the 'envoy' unless she has the stanza preceding it... Here we have the formal proof that the speaker is Fortune; for this is copied from Boethius, bk. ii. pr.3, l.60... Hence *thy* refers to *man* and *myn* refers to Fortune;

Now, on the surface, this seems perfectly sensible, although why Fortune *a priori* cannot have the envoi without having the other stanza does not seem immediately obvious to me. Skeat was right in observing Chaucer's glance at Boethius, *De Consolatione* II. pr.3: *ultimis tamen vitae mors quaedam Fortunae est etiam manentis*, as Chaucer had translated:

> yet natheles the laste day of a mannes lif is a maner deth to Fortune, and also to thilke that hath dwelt.

Alas, Professor Skeat did not finish 'Fortune's' next sentence. The prose ends with an insolent question:

> Quid igitur referre putas? Tunc illam moriendo deseras, an te illa fugiendo?

which may be rendered: 'what difference does it make, then, whether you desert her by dying, or she you by leaving?' In other words, it makes no difference: *te* and *illa*, *thy* and *myn* are interchangeable. Fortune's own argument may be adapted to show that the plain duty

of a virtuous man is to effect a philosophical indifference to material increments. Philosophy (who, after all, is impersonating Fortune throughout) will use this argument again later. This is the point of giving these lines to Chaucer. They are his last rationalization and his last insult. The stanza reads:

> Lo, th'execucion of the majestee
> That al purveyeth of his rightwyseness,
> That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,
> Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!
> The hevene hath propretee of sikernesse,
> This world hath ever resteles travayle;
> Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse;
> In general, this reule may nat fayle.

Although the opening sentiment may closely echo Boethius IV. pr.6, the application of the noun 'majesty' to God recalls the Psalmist's usage not that of the Roman aristocrat or the changeful Dame who is everywhere worldly wise and hardly disposed to look beyond her own queenly *statutes*. If Chaucer seems to take final intellectual refuge in Boethius's ultimate otherworldliness, the 'sikernesse' of heaven, yet one is astonished at the accompanying angry, unsatisfied emotional tone of the expression in these lines. His outburst against fellow humanity (the result of the accumulating realisation of the frailty of friendship) borrows a prior use of Boethius's *blind* as applied to Fortune ('blind goddesse', 1.49) to a degraded and scarcely sentient mankind:

> Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!

This is a very savage outburst, unparalleled in this verbal arrangement anywhere else in Chaucer. It recalls the fourth-century Arnobius's description of mankind as 'animal caecum atque in nubibus semper ignorationis incedens'.[22] And so, too, the gibing, sardonic reworking of words originally given to Fortune by Philosophy: 'Thy laste day is ende of myn intresse'. It does not automatically follow that these words are more appropriate to 'Fortune' in Chaucer's poem. For Boethius's calm, philosophical solution provides no real 'consolation' in Chaucer's case. Fortune's cruel lesson, to teach how to tell 'Frend of effect and frend of countenance' (1.34), has undermined the poet's repeated insistence on his stoic self-sufficiency, a self-knowledge so triumphantly boasted by the poet in his opening *balade simple*. His declared defiance of the Dame does not survive her constant,

quiet reminding him of the loss of his friends. Chaucer may say of those friends who have proved untrue, mere 'summer-friends', 'Tak hem agayn!', but the poet proves unable to sustain his social isolation and the painful memory of the real friends lost. His strident, emotional remarks provide Lady Fortune with the text of her closing envoi and justify the dramatic placing of the poet's final stanza. The Dame says hautily:

> Princes, I pray you, of your gentilesse,
> Lat nat this man on me thus crye and pleyne ...

Deprive the poet-figure of his final outburst in lines 65–72 ('le pleintif encountre Fortune') and these answering and dismissive words of Fortune lose all their dramatic immediacy and logical application. Finally, it is Dame Fortune herself in her envoi who seems to turn the poem into a begging exercise, not Chaucer – though the figure of Fortune in the poem functions as a projection of the poet's 'fantasie', just as we all possess an area of ourselves which yearns for £2000 a year more, the second half of a salary award, or the election to some distinguished body.

This concentration on part of one of Chaucer's minor poems may seem a rather wasteful way of trying to prove that Chaucer knew his *De Consolatione* better than his editors. But I should like to suggest that the genuine lesson of this exercise is that individual poems have specific forms whatever their rhetorical conventions or affiliations with ostensible sources – more especially so in the case of great artists. Chaucer's appreciation of those areas of Boethius where emotional and intellectual conflict are intensified, corresponds to the specific occasion or real pressures which create the urge to write the poem – in some cases we have evidence of an actual person addressed, sometimes we have evidence of an occasion for the writing of the verses. In the case of this poem, *Fortune*, the ironic impersonations are not specifically speaking to an actual, identifiable person or persons (howsoever the commentaries may speculate), although we are permitted to imagine that Chaucer's verses might be – indeed, Dame Fortune herself encourages the poet's outcries to be so addressed. No reason to believe her! The implications are subtle, various and untraceable. Here we have another instance of Chaucer's 'Horatian' urbanity.[23] The impression which the poem leaves, its peculiar 'perfume and music within the ear', is of a progressive deprivation by Dame Fortune of Chaucer's self-confidence and self-knowledge; it is a form in which satiric indifference blends with

personal indignation at the fallability of friendship and an indirect, urbane concern for, and yearning after honour and preferment ('estate') as the poet-figure abandons his philosphical confidence and gradually loses himself in indignation and ebbing self-control. It possesses Chaucer's habitual concern for depicting psychological processes as well as illustrating his interest in Boethian philosophizing.

Later medieval poets suffering Adversity's buffets in England, notably Charles of Orleans and James I of Scotland, had recourse to their copies of Boethius's *De Consolatione* and emerged with their own, personal experiences committed firmly to paper.[24] There is no reason in the world to deny their poetic master, Chaucer, the same philosophical and literary privilege.

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NOTES

[1] Cf. J.A.W. Bennett, *Chaucer at Oxford and at Cambridge*, Oxford, 1974, pp. 58-85.

[2] Cf. P. Dronke, 'Chaucer and Boethius' *De Musica*', *N and Q*, March, 1966, p. 92.

[3] Cf. Bennett, *op.cit.*, p.32. From *The Book of the Duchess* 46-8 he draws evidence that Chaucer kept his books elsewhere.

[4] Cf. V.L. Dédeck-Héry, 'Jean de Meun et Chaucer: traducteurs de la *Consolation* de Boèce', *PMLA* 52, 1937, pp. 976-91; J.M. Cline, 'Chaucer and Jean de Meun: *De Consolatione Philosophiae*', *ELH* 3, 1936, pp. 170-81.

[5] Cf. J.A.W. Bennett, *The Parlement of Foules*, Oxford, 1957, pp. 35-6.

[6] J. Koch, *Geoffrey Chaucers Kleine Dictungen*, Heidelberg, 1928, pp. 14-15, 32.

[7] In the meticulously copied MS. Fairfax 16, *Fortune* begins on f. 191^{r}. After the French subtitle, Chaucer's authorship is asserted: 'Par Chaucer'. The poem follows Chaucer's *ABC* and belongs to the collection of shorter verse material after the blank leaves at the end of the *Hous of Fame*. *Fortune* ends on f. 192^{v} (without colophon) and is closely followed by a group of three poems, two of which have been deliberately left without colophons: *Scogan, Purse, Bukton.* The first 'explicit' colophon occurs at the end of *Bukton* on f. 194^{r}. The rubricing and colophoning of the manuscript maintains the high standard of the copying of the scribe of the text. Missing lines are regularly noted and mutiliated leaves are often exactly copied so as to show the precise state of damage to the written area of the exemplar. The poems *Fortune, Scogan, Purse* and *Bukton* have been deliberately placed together and reflect the authority of the exemplar. This arrangement may well represent Chaucer's original grouping of these poems.

[8] *Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae Translated by John Walton*, ed. M. Science, EETS, London, 1927, xlv-l.

[9] Cf. Bennett, *op cit.*, p.41. He suggests that John the carpenter's house may have stood near the old Smithgate ('near the north end of Catte Street').

[10] 'Boethius: *De Consolatione* trans. Jean de Meun', ed. V.L. Dédeck-Héry in *Medieval Studies* 14, 1952, pp. 165-275. Cf. p. 168: *Et por ce que tu me diis, lequel dit je tieng por commandement...* The monarch addressed was Philip IV.

[11] *Chauceres Wordes unto Adam.* Robinson (2nd. edition, p.859) notes that 'It has been suggested (*MP* XI, 223) that *Scriveyn* was a proper name, but this is unlikely.' But cf. Pächt and Alexander, *Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford*, Oxford, 1973, vol. 3, pp. 61-2, item 676 and plates LXX-I. Bodley MS. poet. a. I (3938-42), a miscellany of prose and verse treatises in Middle English and Anglo-Norman, was copied a little after 1382 for Thomas Heneley (? of Lichfield) by the scribe John Scryveyn.

[12] *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. W.W. Skeat, Oxford, 1894, vol. II, xxviii-xxxvii.

[13] W. Clemen, *Chaucer's Early Poetry*, London, 1963, p. 174.

[14] J. Norton-Smith, 'Chaucer's *Etas Prima*', *Medium Ævum* xxxvii, 1963, pp. 117-24.

[15] Rossell Hope Robbins, 'The Lyrics' in *Companion to Chaucer Studies* (ed. B. Rowland), Toronto, 1968, p.326.

[16] *Roman de la Rose* 4629-5182.

[17] MS. Fairfax 16, f.2[r]. The index is written in a fifteenth-century hand sometime after the manuscript had been produced.

[18] *Oeuvres Complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, SATF, Paris, 1878-1903, vol. VIII, pp. 130-32.

[19] *Ibid.*, cf. especially balade 717 (VI.211), chançon royal (VIII.182), balade 978 (VIII.184), balade 988 (VIII.200).

[20] *CT*, C 33.

[21] *Op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.547.

[22] *Adversus nationes* 7.6.

[23] J. Norton-Smith, *Geoffrey Chaucer*, London, 1974, pp. 218-223.

[24] J. Norton-Smith, *James I of Scotland: The Kingis Quair*, Oxford, 1971, xi-xii.

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