Chaucer’s Latin Boccaccio: The Influence of Early Humanist Compendia on Late Medieval Vernacular Historiography

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Abstract

This thesis offers new insights into the influence of Giovanni Boccaccio's Latin historiographical compendia, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men) and *De mulieribus claris* (Concerning Famous Women), on Geoffrey Chaucer. It is the first full-length study dedicated to the subject. In it, I ask three key questions relating to this intellectual meeting: 1) How did Chaucer encounter Boccaccio's Latin texts? 2) Which features of Boccaccio's work – material, textual, and paratextual – did Chaucer reproduce and interrogate in his own compendia? 3) How was Boccaccio's distinctive historiographical style, influenced by the predicates of early Italian humanism, interpreted by other late-medieval vernacular writers? This thesis shifts the narrative on Chaucer and Boccaccio's relationship by envisioning Chaucer as part of a network of early readers of Boccaccio's Latin works. I compare Chaucer's transmission of Boccaccian material in his own compendia, the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*, to the responses and engagement of other early readers and scribes in a sample of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*. Using this material contextualisation, I propose new connections between Boccaccio's compendia and Chaucer's experimentations in humanist form. I trace the distinctive and dynamic relationship between author and audience staged by Boccaccio, Chaucer, and two other significant translators of *De casibus*: the French clerk, Laurent de Premierfait, and Chaucer's most significant successor, John Lydgate. In considering these progressive stages of engagement with Latin Boccaccio, I show the strikingly different ways these vernacular writers responded to Boccaccio's innovative historiographical forms and dense Latin prose, and what their responses, and stylistic adaptations, indicate about their own readership.

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Contents

Introduction..1

Chapter One

'Posterity shall read of me and thee': Petrarch, Boccaccio and early humanist historiography 39

Chapter Two

Audience, affect and dullness in *De casibus virorum illustrium* and the *Monk's Tale*..78

Chapter Three

***De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women*: authors, readers and patrons**

....125

Chapter Four

***De casibus virorum illustrium* in translation: Laurent de Premierfait and John Lydgate** 163

Conclusion..215

Appendices……………………………………………………………….. 259

Introduction

‘There is nothing going on in Petrarch and Boccaccio that cannot, with profit, be brought into intelligible relation with Chaucer.’[1]

‘reading works of literature for form often means searching out language that has been crafted, that bears the trace of past work.’[2]

‘Any attempt at fully accounting for medieval reading must treat fully of the particularities and complexities of the medieval manuscript book, its production, its exemplar(s), its scribes, annotators, patrons, and owners.’[3]

This thesis explores the evolving relationship between authorship and audience – writers and readers – in the genre of humanist biography, tracing their exchanges across texts and paratexts. I focus on the transmission of Giovanni Boccaccio’s Latin compendia, *De casibus virorum illustrium* (Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men) and *De mulieribus claris* (Concerning Famous Women) and their reinterpretation by three late-medieval vernacular authors: Geoffrey Chaucer, Laurent de Premierfait, and John Lydgate, in whose work we observe the confluence of Laurent’s Boccaccio and Chaucer’s Boccaccio. Although the subject of Chaucer and Boccaccio’s relationship has been extensively investigated, Chaucer’s reception of Boccaccio’s Latin compendia has often been marginalized, because the evidence of direct use is limited to Chaucer’s translation of the accounts of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, in *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* in the *Monk’s Tale*, and it is necessary to consider analogous echoes and the evidence of the manuscript tradition. My thesis paints as full a picture as possible of the ways in which Chaucer engaged with and was influenced by the material form of manuscripts as an early reader of Boccaccio. Accordingly, the thread which runs through my chapters is a material study of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century annotated manuscripts of Boccaccio’s *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*. This materialist approach can shed light on some fundamental questions: how did Chaucer encounter

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[1] David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity - Absolute Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 8.

[2] Kara Gaston, *Reading Chaucer in Time: Literary Formation in England and Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 1.

[3] K. P. Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 6.

Boccaccio's Latin texts? How did he read them? What did he make of the intellectual project to which Boccaccio subscribed, which we call humanism? Which aspects of all of these factors – materiality, author-reader dialectic, humanist historiography – did he reproduce, augment and interrogate? I argue that the threat of disjunction between authorial expectation and readership latent in Boccaccio's Latin works is reflected in the fraught dynamic between author and audience portrayed in Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*, modelled on *De casibus*, and his *Legend of Good Women*, modelled on *De mulieribus*.

The turning point for this project was a research trip to Italy undertaken in January 2022. I began my research in September 2020 during the Covid 19 pandemic, and for the most part I had only been able to scroll through images of manuscripts online; hundreds of folios, surveyed, screenshot, and assessed in thirty minutes. With manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works in my hands, I was able to comprehend something which I could not have realized from the bright and flat digitized folios. It is a simple observation, but these manuscript books are heavy, they are unwieldy, they are not easy to navigate, and they cannot be comprehensively read in one sitting. If they contain multiple works, the place where one work ends and the next begins is sometimes clearly demarcated and illuminated, and sometimes nondescript and easily missed. It became evident to me why many manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works contain paratextual devices, such as tables of contents with folio numbers and rubricated chapter titles, to allow readers to navigate their copious contents, and why readers often contributed their own navigational systems, adding folio numbers to tables of contents and writing names and chapter titles in the margins. These material features cannot be ignored when we consider Chaucer as an early reader of Boccaccio's Latin works. My thesis begins from this standpoint – Chaucer visiting Italy in 1372-73 and 1378, reading these works in manuscript form, and choosing to adopt their genre in two of his works: the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*.

We can gain a better understanding of late medieval author-reader dynamics via the comparative analysis of textual and paratextual detail. I consider Boccaccio the humanist as both imitator and innovator – embracing the ideas of his mentor Petrarch, whilst also transforming them into a Latin corpus which was radical and very influential. These Petrarchan ideas, mediated by Boccaccio's Latin works, and reproduced in English by Chaucer and Lydgate were transformative for the landscape of English historiographical writing. Chapter One introduces the perspective of Boccaccio as a historian, the influence of

Petrarch on Boccaccio and Chaucer, and considers the "humanist" concerns which are shared between these three authors. In Chapters Two and Three, my focus on the author-audience relationship takes the form of a manuscript study, proposing the influence of Chaucer's material encounter with the manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works. Chapter 4, which focuses on John Lydgate and Laurent de Premierfait, considers this relationship in the context of authorship which is beholden to patronage. Both Laurent and Lydgate recognise the need to adapt both their style and their content to reach their particular audience and flatter their princely patrons. I have chosen to focus on Laurent de Premierfait rather than Christine de Pizan, who translated Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* in the same years that Laurent was translating *De casibus.* This is, first, because Laurent is the intermediary between Boccaccio and John Lydgate, and, as such, provides a unique insight into the early reception of Boccaccio's historiographical works. Second, while Christine de Pizan's work, for good reason, continues to enjoy considerable scholarly attention and interpretation, Laurent de Premierfait's *Des cas* has, historically and to this day, been neglected. My thesis is indebted to, and responds to, a rich landscape of scholarship in the fields of early Italian humanism, Chaucer studies, codicology, and fifteenth century humanism, and it brings these fields together.

Petrarch, Boccaccio, and humanism

Locating Petrarch and Boccaccio within the scope and development of the humanist movement has long been an issue of contention, adjacent to the question of whether Petrarch and Boccaccio may be considered as 'medieval' or 'Renaissance', or somewhere in between.[4] The term humanism derives from the Latin *humanitas,* which has a multivalent significance from human nature, to courtesy, to culture, and was used by Cicero to describe the cultural

[4] Burkhardt sees the beginning of the Renaissance with Dante, 'the man who first thrust antiquity into the foreground of national culture' (Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1860), p. 104). By contrast, Theodore E. Mommsen and Thomas Greene place Dante in the medieval and Petrarch in the Renaissance because of their differing viewpoints in relation to antiquity (Theodore E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch's Conception of the "Dark Ages"', *Speculum*, 17.2 [1942], pp. 226–42; Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, Elizabethan Club Series, 7 [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982]). Margreta de Grazia has provided a valuable challenge to the divide between 'medieval' and 'modern' in 'The Modern Divide: From Either Side', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 37.3 (2007), pp. 453–67.

and moral values divined by education, particularly in language, literature, history and moral philosophy – Ann Vasaly describes these studies as a 'kinship of virtue'.[5] By the fifteenth-century, the term *umanista* was being used 'to describe a teacher or student of classical literature and the arts associated with it, including that of rhetoric.'[6] By describing Petrarch and Boccaccio as humanists, I refer not only to their recovery, imitation, and material engagement with ancient Latin and Greek texts, but their ambition to stir virtue in their readers through their devotion to portraying the virtuous subjects of antiquity, and through this to influence moral, social and intellectual reform. Though, traditionally, Petrarch has been granted the title, the 'Father of Humanism', Petrarch, and particularly Boccaccio, often continue to be described as "prehumanists" or "protohumanists".[7] On the other end of the spectrum, Robert Witt's now seminal study places Petrarch in the third generation of humanism, after Lovato Lovati (1241-1309) and Albertino Mussato (1262-1329), though he acknowledges that Petrarch first provided humanists 'with a clear conception of the purpose of their enterprise', and significantly an enterprise which is grounded in a Christian moral framework, which neither Lovato nor Mussato provided in such a clear form.[8] This synthesis

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[5] Ann Vasaly, "Cicero's Early Speeches," in *Brill's Companion to Cicero: Oratory and Rhetoric*, ed. James M. May (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 103; Nicholas Mann, "The Origins of Humanism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 1. See also Benjamin G. Kohl, 'The Changing Concept of the "Studia Humanitatis" in the Early Renaissance', *Renaissance Studies*, 6.2 (1992), pp. 185–209.

[6] Mann, p. 1. Michael D. Reeve notes that Petrarch marks a passage in his manuscript of Cicero's *Pro Archia* which describes 'cultural and literary pursuits' [studiis humanitatis ac litteramm] (Michael D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. by Jill Kraye, Cambridge Companions to Literature [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], p. 22.)

[7] Douglas Biow, *Doctors, Ambassadors, Secretaries: Humanism and Professions in Renaissance Italy* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. xiv.

[8] Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Boston: Brill, 2000), 231. Mann identifies Lovati as the forerunner in 'a main root of humanism' which emerged in Italy surrounding the study of Roman law and through this became interested in other classical texts, including history and moral philosophy. Lovato surrounded himself with a group of kindred thinkers in Padua and was familiar with a variety of classical texts, rare for the time, including Seneca's tragedies and the poetry of Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius. Tying into the impression of humanists as archaeologists, both philological and material, Lovato identified the remains of a recovered sarcophagus as being the legendary Trojan founder of Padua, Antenor. He also wrote a number of Latin verse epistles, and engaged in precursive practices for Petrarch and Boccaccio such as commentary, and compilation. He shares Petrarch and Boccaccio's preference for *exempla,* having compiled an *Anthology of Noteworthy Examples of Virtuous Behaviour* (*Compedium moralism*

of the classical and the Christian stimulated a shift in humanism toward the pursuit of virtue, and hence societal benefit – what would develop into the 'civic' humanism of the *quattrocento*.[9]

As my subject is Petrarch and Boccaccio's historiographical writing, and its influence on Chaucer, I might be expected to follow the well-trodden road of defining Petrarch's 'sense of history'. A recurring trope in criticism on Petrarch and his relationship with the past is the idea that Petrarch was the first person to articulate the disjunction between his own time and the classical past, and that this realisation is a bitter one.[10] In his influential study on this subject, Thomas Greene gives the example of Petrarch's letter to Homer (*Familiares* XXIV,12) which concludes with the regretful admission:

> Quam longe absis intelligo [I realize how far from me you are] (*Fam,* 24.12).[11]

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notabilium). Lovato's pupil, Mussato, likewise anticipates some Boccaccio and Petrarch's humanist practices, writing a defence of poetry (similar to Books 14 and 15 of Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*), and a Livy-inspired history, *De gestis Henrici VII Cesaris* (The Deeds of Emperor VII). Mussato was most famed was his verse tragedy, modelled on Seneca's tragedies, *Ecerinis,* 'the first play to have been composed in classical meter since antiquity (Mann, p. 7)'. Like Petrarch, Mussato was crowned with the laurel in 1315, 'in recognition of his work of poetry and patriotism' (see Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', pp. 6-8). Roberto Weiss also sees 'the first faint signs of humanism' with Lovato and Mussato (*The Spread of Italian Humanism* [London: Hutchinson & Co., 1964], pp. 15-16).

[9] Jerrold E. Seigel, '"Civic Humanism" or Ciceronian Rhetoric? The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni' in *Past and Present*, 34.1 (1966); Albert Rabil, 'The Significance of "Civic Humanism" in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance', in *Renaissance Humanism, Volume 1: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 141-174.

[10] De Grazia challenges the opinions of Greene, Erwin Panofsky, and Peter Burke who argue that the Middle Ages had no 'sense of history' ('The Modern Divide: From Either Side', p. 456.) For the opposing opinion, see Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 1; Greene, *The Light in Troy*, pp. 81-127; and Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). The idea of the 'crucial gap' between Dante's idea of antiquity and Petrarch's, which Greene propounds, is challenged by Martin Eisner, who argues that though 'Petrarch may foresee future ways of looking at the past in the scholarly methods and forms he develops, […] he perceives and describes his relation to that past through a Dantean lens' (Martin Eisner, 'In the Labyrinth of the Library: Petrarch's Cicero, Dante's Virgil, and the Historiography of the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67.3 [2014], p. 783; Greene, p. 28).

[11] Greene, p. 29. For a translation of this letter, see *Letters on Familiar Matters: Rerum Familiarium Libri*, ed. by Aldo S. Bernardo, vol. 3 (New York: Italica Press, 2005), pp. 342-50.

There is not the scope, in this thesis, to interrogate Petrarch's 'sense of history', which has, in any case, been a rich and comprehensively covered subject of discussion over many years.[12] Rather, my thesis focuses on how Petrarch thought history should be written, ideas which he expressed most clearly in the prefaces to his *De viris illustribus* (Concerning Illustrious Men). Boccaccio's Latin works are permeated with the ideas of Petrarchan humanism and historiography, but they also deviate from Petrarchan ideologies in fundamental and novel ways.[13] In order to understand Chaucer's relationship to Boccaccio's Latin works, it is necessary to return to Boccaccio's relationship with Petrarch and trace the ideas of both in Chaucer's Italianate writings.

Chaucer and Boccaccio

The subject of Chaucer and Italy is one of the mainstays of Chaucerian scholarship, and it

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[12] On this subject, see Mommsen; Panofsky; Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969); Nancy S. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970); Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 212-14; Stephen Murphy, *The Gift of Immortality: Myths of Power and Humanist Poetics* (London: Associated University Presses, 1997); and Zachary Sayre Schiffman, *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[13] On Boccaccio's humanism see Charles L. Stinger, 'Humanism in Florence', in *Renaissance Humanism, Volume 1: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. by Albert Rabil (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 175–208; Tobias Foster Gittes, 'Boccaccio and Humanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, ed. by Guyda Armstrong, Rhiannon Daniels, and Stephen J. Milner, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 155–70; James Hankins, 'Boccaccio and the Political Thought of Renaissance Humanism', in *A Boccaccian Renaissance: Essays on the Early Modern Impact of Giovanni Boccaccio and His Works*, ed. by Eisner and David Lummus, The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante and Medieval Italian Literature (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), xvii, pp. 19–34. On Boccaccio's relationship with Petrarch see *Petrarch and Boccaccio: The Unity of Knowledge in The Pre-Modern World*, ed. by Igor Candido (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018); Gur Zak, 'Boccaccio and Petrarch', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, pp. 139–54; Eisner, *Boccaccio and the Invention of Italian Literature: Dante, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, and the Authority of the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

continues to be approached in different ways.[14] Likewise, the relationship between Chaucer and the author to whom he owed the greatest debt, Giovanni Boccaccio, has been turned over by many generations of scholars, and yet there is still more to be uncovered about this intellectual meeting of literary giants. Robert R. Edwards' valuable study positions Boccaccio as 'the shadow author behind Chaucer's invention of antiquity and modernity' – Boccaccio influences both Chaucer's treatment of ancient sources, such as Statius, Virgil, and Ovid, and his literary innovations, such as his experimentations in form and framework in the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Legend of Good Women*.[15] Edwards sees the relationship between Boccaccio and Chaucer as indicative of Chaucer's 'fundamentally revisionist' poetry; he is a writer who 'shapes his borrowed stories'.[16] Edwards's viewpoint reflects a tendency to see Chaucer's relationship to Boccaccio as experimental, and radically transformative. In his study of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Barry Windeatt describes Chaucer's treatment of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* as a 'transformation-through-translation'.[17] Yet, as David Wallace and Kara Gaston have observed, Chaucer both shapes and is shaped by the Italian literature he reads: 'Chaucer's reading of Italian literature had an effect on him; before he changed it, it changed him.'[18]

It cannot be denied that Chaucer's engagement with Boccaccio is wide-ranging, profound and 'intricately threaded', although, as Leonard Michael Koff describes, it ranges from 'direct echoes' to 'full scale allusions' to 'oblique glances.'[19] Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are translations of Boccaccio's early Neapolitan works, the *Teseida* and the *Filostrato*. Boccaccio's *Decameron* provided the inspiration for the framework of the

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[14] Marion Turner's recent biography has demonstrated how fruitful it is to consider Chaucer as a European thinker and writer, and how his career and his travels influenced his work (*Chaucer: A European Life* [Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2019].) For a useful survey of the scholarship on Chaucer and Italy up until 2011, see Clarke, 'Chaucer and Italy: Contexts and/of Sources', *Literature Compass*, 8.8 (2011), pp. 526–33.

[15] Robert R. Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 10.

[16] Edwards, p. 11.

[17] Barry A. Windeatt, 'Chaucer and the *Filostrato*', in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. by Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 163.

[18] Gaston, *Reading Chaucer in Time*, p. 5. Wallace observes that 'Chaucer understood before he 'transformed' (*Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio* [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1985], p. 2).'

[19] *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. by Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), p. 11.

Canterbury Tales, as well as analogues for a quarter of its narratives.[20] The *Franklin's Tale* draws from Boccaccio's *Filocolo.* Boccaccio's encyclopaedic compendia, *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De claris mulieribus*, provided the form for Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*, with Zenobia being translated from each of these two works. The scope of Chaucer's engagement is extraordinary and spans the diverse range of Boccaccio's rich oeuvre, in different Italian dialects and in Latin.

Despite this rich network of textual connection, one of the most significant sticking points for analysing the profundity of this relationship has been Chaucer's refusal to name Boccaccio as the source for any of these works. It has been suggested that Chaucer did not name Boccaccio because it was preferable to name a Latin authority in order to validate his authorial enterprise, in the manner of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae*, which is translated from Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* but claims the authority of the "eye-witness" accounts of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis.[21] This argument has particularly been applied to *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which Chaucer invokes the spurious Latin authority, Lollius, in place of Boccaccio.[22] This hypothesis has been robustly challenged in recent times, largely because Chaucer is not afraid to reference Dante, a master of the vernacular, and Petrarch who, like Boccaccio, was known for both vernacular and Latin excellence.[23] Some scholars have suggested that Chaucer was not aware of Boccaccio's authorship, a theory which I cannot agree with for many reasons. As Nick Havely points out:

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[20] Wallace, 'Afterword', in *The* Decameron *and the* Canterbury Tales*: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. by Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), p. 317.

[21] For more on the medieval 'matter of Troy' see Marilynn Desmond, 'Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature. Volume I, 800-1558*, ed. by Rita Copeland, 1st edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 251–68.

[22] Stephen A. Barney, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry Dean Benson, 3rd ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 1022. Alastair Minnis suggests that 'credit was not given to Boccaccio and Petrarch, therefore, but material from their works was ascribed to writers who were respectable as 'ancients' (*Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), p. 25). Wallace contends that 'it is quite evident that Chaucer, in completing his *Troilus*, is willing to countenance association with the greatest of poetic masters, ancient and modern', and if Chaucer had named Boccaccio 'this might have prompted comparisons that he was willing to avoid (*Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio*, Chaucer Studies [Suffolk: D. S. Brewer, 1985], XII, p. 152).'

[23] Karen Elizabeth Gross, 'Chaucer's Silent Italy', *Studies in Philology*, 109.1 (2012), pp. 19-20.

> For someone who had visited Italy at least twice and spent some time in Florence, to misattribute one or two of the works may be considered ignorance; but to disregard the authorship of the whole corpus begins to look like design.[24]

This opinion is affirmed by Karen Gross who argues that Chaucer 'was far too well read to be ignorant of the name of the author of so many works he used'.[25] Edwards has also pointed out that Chaucer treats his French sources, such as Machaut and Froissart, in a very similar way, and concludes that Chaucer is more interested in 'the works themselves and the possibilities they bring to English poetry', than in the specific *auctors* who produce them.[26] Contrastingly, Richard Neuse has argued that Chaucer identified with Boccaccio so profoundly that it 'rendered superfluous any explicit acknowledgment of indebtedness'.[27] Some scholars have suggested that Chaucer's selective citing of authorities is yet another influence from Boccaccio himself. Frederick Biggs proposes that Chaucer does not mention Boccaccio as a source in the *Canterbury Tales* because 'to do so would oppose what he had learned from Boccaccio: to engage in the illusion that his tales, as part of a vast collection of amusing stories, simply reflect the views of his tellers.'[28] Leah Schwebel suggests that Chaucer's 'aesthetic of erasure' is learned from Boccaccio, who himself gives no credit to Statius as the source of the *Teseida,* claiming that no Latin author has spoken of it.[29] By doing so, Chaucer

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[24] Giovanni Boccaccio and N. R. Havely, *Chaucer's Boccaccio: Sources of Troilus and the Knight's and Franklin's Tales* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1980), p. 12. Havely thinks it is possible, however, that Chaucer might have mistaken the authorship of *De casibus* (Havely, p. 12).

[25] Gross, p. 20.

[26] Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, p. 11.

[27] Richard Neuse, 'The Monk's *De Casibus*: The Boccaccio Case Reopened', in *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. by Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), pp. 248-9.

[28] Frederick M. Biggs, *Chaucer's Decameron and the Origin of the Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Studies, XLIV (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), p. 15

[29] 'una istoria antica / tanto negli anni riposta e nascosa / che latino autor non par ne dica' [An ancient story so hidden and concealed over the years that no Latin author seems to speak of it (1.2.2-4)] (*Filostrato, Teseida, Comedia Delle Ninfe Fiorentine*, ed. by Branca, Alberto Limentani, and Antonio Enzo Quaglio, *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, I [Milano: Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 1964], ii, p. 254 [my translation]). Leah Schwebel, 'The Legend of Thebes and Literary Patricide in Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Statius', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 36 (2014), p. 140.

and Boccaccio both take part in 'a tradition of authorial usurpation practiced by the Latin epicists'.[30] They do so to establish their place in an ongoing tradition, in which they will be remembered above their source material – a practice which Schwebel calls 'literary patricide'.[31] In a similar way, in the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate almost entirely erases the identity of his direct source, Laurent de Premierfait, and uses Chaucer and Boccaccio as his chosen *auctores* to validate his own position in the canon of great writers on these matters.

Chaucer and the Latin works of Boccaccio

Many monographs which treat the subject of Chaucer and Boccaccio sideline, or neglect to address, Boccaccio's Latin works. For example, Havely's collection of works which Chaucer used does not include 'works by Boccaccio that Chaucer might perhaps have known - such as the *Decameron* and the *De Casibus*.'[32] Piero Boitani's *Chaucer and Boccaccio* treats neither *De casibus* nor *De mulieribus*. Likewise, Edwards explains in *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity* that

> I have not dealt extensively with the *Monk's Tale* and Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* or with Boccaccio's other compendia, the *De mulieribus claris* and *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, because their stories are points of reference –entries in a catalogue, *raisonné* of the past – rather than narratives to be explored.[33]

In his chapter on the *Legend of Good Women*, Edwards engages with *De mulieribus claris* only in so far as to say that Chaucer 'goes beyond it'.[34] The Latin works have also largely been disregarded in companions and critical guides, although Wallace's exemplary chapter in *A Companion to Chaucer* is an exception.[35] There has yet to be a monograph dedicated to the subject, but there have been several edited collections and monographs on Chaucer and Italy which include a chapter on Boccaccio's Latin works. Peter Godman's chapter in the seminal

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[30] Schwebel, p. 140.

[31] Schwebel, p. 141.

[32] Havely, p. 16.

[33] Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, p. 15.

[34] Edwards, p. 77.

[35] Wallace, 'Italy', in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Peter Brown (Newark: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2001), pp. 218–34 (especially pp. 224-27).

Chaucer and the Italian Trecento conducts a detailed comparative analysis of Chaucer's treatment of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* in the *Monk's Tale*. Chapters in Wallace's *Chaucerian Polity* and Warren Ginsberg's *Chaucer and the Italian Tradition* address Chaucer's response to the socio-political attitudes of Boccaccio, Petrarch and Dante in the *Monk's Tale*.[36] Wallace proposes that, in the *Monk's Tale*, Chaucer allies himself with Boccaccian republicanism in opposition to Petrarchan despotism:

> Discriminating between diverse Italian humanisms and their differing political agendas, the *Monk's Tale* forges a pressured and unfinishable narrative for English people living under, or in sight of, Richard II or any "myghty man".[37]

On the other hand, Ginsberg argues that 'Boccaccio's humanism is to a large extent Petrarchan', and that 'Chaucer responded to Petrarch's and Boccaccio's humanism poetically', sidestepping political engagement.[38] Although Ginsberg contends that *De casibus* was 'the guiding inspiration, if not the chief source' of the *Monk's Tale*, he focuses largely on the Prohemium because he speculates that

> Chaucer, like Petrarch reading the *Decameron*, paid particular attention to the beginning of the work.[39]

There is more work to be done on the significance of the work as a whole, particularly as Chaucer's use of "Zenobia", the sixth chapter of the eighth book of *De casibus*, indicates that he was not solely focused on the beginning of the text. Neuse considers the relationship between Chaucer and *De casibus* as a more sustained engagement. Neuse considers the *Monk's Tale* a 'miniature imitation of Boccaccio's vast tract' and suggests that the Monk is 'recognizable as Boccaccio's ironic double'.[40] This plays into the dynamics of Chaucer's citation of certain authors and not others – Boccaccio's tributes to Petrarch and Dante in *De casibus* are echoed by Chaucer's references to these authors in the *Monk's Tale*. A recent and

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[36] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*; Warren Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

[37] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity,* p. 300.

[38] Ginsberg, p. 190.

[39] Ginsberg, p. 190.

[40] Neuse, pp. 247-8.

very useful contribution to the subject of Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin works is Gaston's *Reading Chaucer in Time*, which considers the Monk as a teller who struggles to establish the bounds of his tale according to the expectations of genre and of his listeners. Gaston foregrounds the fraught interdependency of author and audience, an approach which has been instrumental for me in my study of the *Monk's Tale* and *De casibus*.

Chaucer and the *tre corone*

We cannot consider the relationship between Chaucer and Boccaccio in isolation from the other two crowns of Italian Literature, as Chaucer certainly did not. To give one example of many, in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer translates Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, but employs Boccaccio's *Teseida* to lend spiritual substance to Troilus's death. To voice Troilus's anguish in love he uses a Petrarchan sonnet and to conclude his masterpiece he draws on Dante's *Commedia*. William Rossiter prefaces his study of Chaucer and Petrarch's relationship by acknowledging that Chaucer read Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio 'intertextually':

> And so by examining Chaucer's relationship with Petrarch we also trace the English poet's hermeneutic interaction between Italy's Three Crowns, which might profitably be thought of as three points on the same *corona.*[41]

In her comparative study of Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* and Chaucer's *House of Fame*, Kathryn L. McKinley proposes that 'Chaucer grapples with Boccaccian narrative, technique, and style as a means of answering Dante.'[42] Likewise, Warren Ginsberg argues that Chaucer read 'the three Italian writers not as separate texts but in the light one could throw on the other.'[43] This mode of intertextuality is particularly pertinent to my consideration of the *Monk's Tale*, in which Chaucer uses a Boccaccian framework, while lauding Dante and Petrarch. Ronald Martinez has argued that the *Monk's Tale* demonstrates the 'entanglement

[41] William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2010), p. 3.

[42] Kathryn L. McKinley, *Chaucer's House of Fame and Its Boccaccian Intertexts: Image, Vision, and the Vernacular*, Studies and Texts (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2016), pp. 4-5.

[43] Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*, pp. 6-7. See also Gross, who identifies Chaucer's intertextual relationship with the *tre corone* in his rejection of the qualities, or ideas, which Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio have in common ('Chaucer's Silent Italy', *Studies in Philology*, 109.1 [2012], pp. 27-9).

of Chaucer's Italian authors.'[44] In this way, it reflects the triangulation of the *tre corone* in Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*, which also celebrates Petrarch and Dante. Martinez shows how the influence of the *tre corone* is threaded throughout the *Monk's Tale*, particularly in the inclusion of the 'modern instances', and in Chaucer's interpretation of the theme of fame which is central to Boccaccio and Petrarch's historiography.[45] As I will discuss in Chapter One, Martinez's analysis of the dialectics at work in the *Monk's Tale* demonstrates how fruitful attendance to intertextuality can be in considering Chaucer's relationship with Boccaccio, especially his Latin works.

Chaucer and his sources

Though there is huge value in recognising these intertextual resonances, it is worth bearing in mind that many of these echoes would not have been picked up by readers of his own time. Much of the scholarship on Chaucer and the Italian tradition has focused on the identification of sources for specific vignettes and passages in Chaucer, or on examining how Chaucer transforms the Italian works with which we know he engaged in a sustained way. However, several scholars, including Gaston, Koff and Karla Taylor, have observed that Chaucer was an 'uncommon', and '*avant-garde*' figure in the late fourteenth century in terms of his relationship to Italian literature.[46] As Gross points out:

> Chaucer's intimacy with Italian authors is even more striking when he is compared with his contemporaries. If one wishes to discuss "Anglo-Italian literary relations at the end of the fourteenth century," this impressive-sounding subject can swiftly be

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[44] Ronald L. Martinez, 'Chaucer's Petrarch: "Enlumyned Ben They"', in *The Oxford Handbook of Chaucer*, ed. by Suzanne Conklin Akbari and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 327-8.

[45] Martinez, p. 328. Martinez argues that Boccaccio uses names from Dante to 'mark chronological jumps to the contemporaneous' in *De casibus* and in *De mulieribus* (p. 328). Therefore, Dante becomes the 'germ for the inclusion of the Monk's *modern* instances' which are themselves a product of Boccaccio's model in *De casibus* (p. 328). This is a distinct historiographical praxis to that of Petrarch, who favours Roman *exempla*, as I will discuss in Chapter One.

[46] Karla Taylor, 'Chaucer's Uncommon Voice: Some Contexts for Influence', in *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. by Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), and Koff's 'Introduction' in the same volume, p. 11. See also Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*, p. 1.

> deflated, as by “Anglo” in the “fourteenth century” one can really mean Chaucer, and only Chaucer.[47]

Therefore, in considering these sources we risk ‘assigning crucial interpretive significance to intertextual relations that early readers would not have recognised.’[48] In more recent times, there has been a shift in how scholars view source studies in relation to Chaucer, moving towards a broader model of influence. This has largely been driven by scholarship on the relationship between the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Decameron*, about which many scholars remain ‘agnostic’.[49] There has been a reluctance to make a firm claim in relation to Chaucer’s use of the *Decameron*, and the same is true of Boccaccio’s Latin compendia. Due to this affinity, Neuse’s chapter on *De casibus virorum illustrium* finds its place in a volume on Chaucer and the *Decameron*.[50] However, much more attention has been given to the connection between Chaucer and the *Decameron* – several books being dedicated to the subject.[51] In their respective studies on Chaucer and the *Decameron*, Peter Beidler and Frederick Biggs have both sought to redefine the strict terminology of ‘source’ and ‘analogue’.[52] Beidler coins the terms ‘hard analogue’ and ‘soft analogue’, arguing that:

> A hard analogue can be said to have “near-source status” if it is old enough for Chaucer to have known it and if it gives closer parallels in plot or character than are available in other works Chaucer could have known, even if there are no or few specific language parallels.[53]

He defines a ‘soft analogue’ as a work that ‘because of its date or because of the remoteness

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[47] Gross, pp. 24-25.

[48] Gaston, p. 7.

[49] Biggs, p. 2.

[50] Neuse, ‘The Monk’s *De Casibus*’, pp. 247–77.

[51] See, for example, Biggs and Robert W. Hanning, *Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Stories for an Uncertain World: Agency in the* Decameron *and the* Canterbury Tales, Oxford Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[52] Biggs, pp. 13-14. Peter G. Beidler, ‘Just Say Yes, Chaucer Knew the *Decameron*: Or, Bringing the *Shipman’s Tale* Out of Limbo’, in *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. by Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen (London: Associated University Presses, 2000).

[53] Beidler, pp. 41-42.

of its specific parallels with the Chaucerian narrative in question, Chaucer could scarcely have known.'[54] Beidler argues that the *Decameron* is in the 'hard analogue' category, but he does not mention *De casibus virorum illustrium* in any of the categories. More simply, Biggs defines a source as 'anything Chaucer used in composing his collection', while an analogue is 'a story that is neither the source of nor itself derived from one of Chaucer's tales, but similar to it in some significant way.'[55] According to Biggs's terminology, I categorise both *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* as sources. In the case of the *Decameron*, which Chaucer draws upon but never directly translates, there is also the question of whether Chaucer had a manuscript of the work in front of him, or, having read the work, remembered some parts of it. Beidler argues that studies such as Mary Carruthers's on memory has made this kind of "memorial borrowing" imaginable, and that 'it is possible that Chaucer would have remembered well things that he had read but no longer had in front of him.'[56] The same could, perhaps, be theorised about *De casibus virorum illustrium*, which clearly influenced Chaucer in the composition of the *Monk's Tale*, and yet he does not translate any large part of it. However, the closeness of his rendering of the account of Zenobia from *De mulieribus claris* would indicate that, at a minimum, Chaucer had a copy of that chapter made, from which he formed his own account, whilst remembering details from *De casibus* for its conclusion.

Chaucer in Italy

This question of the specificities of the manuscripts Chaucer used leads on to another integral part of my project, which is envisioning Chaucer's material encounter with manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works. As K. P. Clarke emphasizes, Chaucer's significant literary and cultural encounter with Italy and Italian works was also a codicological encounter:

> If recent accounts of Chaucer and Italy have emphasized the culturally complex nature of the encounter, then the materiality of the book must also form part of this

[54] Beidler, p. 42.

[55] Biggs, pp. 13-14.

[56] Beidler, pp. 31-32; Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

account.[57]

This necessitates a consideration of how Chaucer might have come into contact with this material. Many scholars have observed that, having been brought up in a mercantile family, Chaucer would have been in frequent contact with Italians – 'shipmen, traders, and financiers'.[58] This experience, and his fluency in Italian, was indispensable in his professional life. Chaucer was controller of the wool custom between 1374 and 1386, and, as Wendy Childs points out, 'the only alien group to take part in the export of English wool by this time was the Italian.'[59] Moreover, Chaucer's first master, Lionel, Duke of Clarence, for whom Chaucer worked between 1357 and 1360, travelled to Italy in 1368 to marry the daughter of Bernabò Visconti, Violante. A warrant was granted for Chaucer 'to pass at Dover' on 17th July 1368, which possibly indicates that he travelled to Milan to attend Lionel's wedding, at which Petrarch was present.[60] Certainly, as Wallace observes, he would have heard about the 'sumptuous Visconti wedding', especially as Lionel died only a few months after in mysterious circumstances.[61] It is also possible that Chaucer's Italian contacts in London provided him with literary manuscripts.[62] However, as many scholars have argued, his voyages to Italy would have provided him with the most fruitful opportunity to consult, copy and purchase Italian manuscripts. We have recorded evidence of Chaucer visiting Italy twice. These travels were transformative for his writing, and, through him, a significant moment in English literary history more broadly:

> There he encountered the texts of Dante and Boccaccio for the first time, and his understandings of, and approaches to, poetry were forever changed by the writings of

[57] Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality*, p. 4.

[58] See Wendy Childs, 'Anglo-Italian Contacts in the Fourteenth Century', in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, pp. 65-88; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* and 'Chaucer's Italian Inheritance' in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 36–57; Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*; and Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 102–9.

[59] Childs, p. 68.

[60] *Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. by Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 29.

[61] Wallace, 'Italy', p. 219.

[62] William E. Coleman, 'The Knight's Tale', in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, Chaucer Studies (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), II, p. 97; McKinley, p. 69.

these authors.[63]

From Winter 1372 to Spring 1373, Chaucer went first to Genoa, where he negotiated the use of an English port by Genoese merchants, and then to Florence 'on the king's secret business'.[64] As McKinley observes, there is a lot which we do not know about the dissemination of Boccaccian manuscripts during the 1370s, although very valuable work such as that by Marco Cursi on the manuscripts of the *Decameron* and Petrarch's *Canzoniere,* and by Rhiannon Daniels on the manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris,* the *Decameron,* and the *Teseida* has greatly helped to elucidate this picture.[65] At the time when Chaucer visited Florence, Dante and his *Commedia* were at the zenith of their fame.[66] Havely also observes that at this time 'Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were being identified (by the city's chancellor, Coluccio Salutati) as the 'three crowns of Florence'.[67] It is possible that Chaucer may have encountered Boccaccio during his time in Florence, but there is no evidence to prove this.[68] When Chaucer visited Florence, Petrarch was in Padua, and Boccaccio was periodically moving between his hometown of Certaldo and Florence.[69] Havely contends that 'a visitor with literary interests and ambitions would have been aware of the author of the *Decameron* and *De casibus* as the grand old man on the Florentine literary scene', especially as plans had begun for Boccaccio's final and unfinished project: his public lecture series on

[63] McKinley, p. 67.

[64] Coleman argues, and Havely reiterates, that this was 'most likely a matter concerning one of Edward III's many loans from the Italian bankers (Coleman, p. 97; Havely, p. 317)'.

[65] Marco Cursi, *Il Decameron: Scritture, Scriventi, Lettori: Storia Di Un Testo*, Scritture e Libri Del Medioevo, 5 (Rome: Viella, 2007); Carlo Pulsoni and Marco Cursi, 'New Excavations of the Early Fourteenth-Century Forms of the *Canzoniere*: Manuscript 41.15 in the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence', in *Petrarch and His Legacies*, ed. by Ernesto Livorni and Jelena Todorovic (Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2021); Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340-1520*, Italian Perspectives, 19 (London: Legenda, 2009). See also *Boccaccio autore e copista*, ed. by Teresa De Robertis et al. (Florence: Mandragora, 2014).

[66] See Robert A. Pratt, 'Chaucer and the Visconti Libraries', *ELH*, 6.3 (1939), p. 192.

[67] Havely, 'The Italian Background', in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 318.

[68] Howard speculates imaginatively on this potential meeting between a thirty-year-old Chaucer and a sixty-year-old, bad tempered and unwell Boccaccio (Donald R. Howard, *Chaucer and the Medieval World* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), pp. 191-2. See also Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer*, p. 104; and Clarke, p. 4.

[69] Havely, p. 318.

Dante's *Commedia*.[70] In either case, Florence was at this time 'an important center for the copying of works by Boccaccio'.[71] It is generally agreed that, at a minimum, Chaucer encountered a manuscript of Dante's *Commedia* during this trip. Some scholars, who believe that Chaucer composed the *Monk's Tale* between his two trips to Italy and not at the same time as the rest of the *Canterbury Tales*, argue that Chaucer also encountered a manuscript of *De casibus virorum illustrium* at this time.[72] McKinley has noted that the Franciscan monk, and friend of Boccaccio, Tedaldo della Casa, copied many works by Petrarch and Boccaccio in Florence around this time. These included Petrarch's Griselda, and Boccaccio's *De genealogia deorum gentilium* and *De casibus*.[73] However, Tedaldo's surviving manuscript of *De casibus*, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 26 sin. 6, is dated 4th June 1393, some twenty years after Chaucer's visit to Florence.[74] Moreover, given that Chaucer used both *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus* when composing the *Monk's Tale*, it is reasonable to suggest that he encountered them at the same time.

Chaucer's second documented journey was to Lombardy, where he stayed from May to September 1378, to negotiate with Bernabo Visconti and the English mercenary John Hawkweed on 'busoignes touchantes lexploit de nostre guerre' ('matters concerning the execution of our war').[75] As Wallace observes, it does not seem that Chaucer formed a favourable opinion of Visconti rule, based on the evidence his post 1378 poetry:

> he has his good queen Alceste urge her irascible spouse, in the *Legend of Good Women*, not to be 'lyk tirauntz of Lumbardye' (F 374). Marquis Walter, the

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[70] Havely, p. 318.

[71] Coleman, 'The Knight's Tale', p. 97.

[72] See, for example, M. C. Seymour, 'Chaucer's Early Poem "De Casibus Virorum Illustrium"', *The Chaucer Review*, 24.2 (1989), pp. 163–65.

[73] This has been noted by McKinley, p. 69. See also Francesco Mattesini, '"La Biblioteca Francescana di Santa Croce e Fra Tedaldo Della Casa', *Studi Francescani*, 57 (1960), 254–316 (esp. pp. 284 and 303-7); and Timothy Kircher, *The Poet's Wisdom: The Humanists, the Church, and the Formation of Philosophy in the Early Renaissance*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 133 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 23.

[74] '[... se]nectutem quiaultra modum fuit sibi grave MCCCLXXXXIII, IIII iunii completus (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 26 sin. 6, fol. 120v)'. For more information on this manuscript, see Emanuele Romanini, '*De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*', in *Boccaccio autore e copista*, pp. 193-4.

[75] Crow and Olsen, *Life-records,* p. 54. See also Howard, pp. 225-8; Wallace, 'Italy', pp. 219-20; Ginsberg, p. 1; and Pratt, p. 97.

> pathological Lombard of the *Clerk's Tale*, is hardly exemplary; Bernabò Visconti, 'God of delit and scourge of Lumbardye', rates one *Monk's Tale* stanza – following his murder in 1385 – as just one more toppled tyrant (2399–406).[76]

While in Lombardy, Chaucer may also have gone to Pavia, twenty miles south of Milan. While Chaucer was in Milan, Galeazzo Visconti, Petrarch's patron between 1353 and 1361 and 'the founder of the great Visconti libraries', died in Pavia.[77] Howard suggests that Chaucer might have been required to go to Pavia to pay his respects, or to attend Galeazzo's funeral.[78] Moreover, there were several graves at Pavia which would have interested Chaucer, including that of his erstwhile master Lionel as well as the tombs of Augustine and Boethius, both greatly admired by Chaucer, in the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro.[79] Biggs finds it 'almost inevitable' that Chaucer visited the library at Pavia, where amanuenses were available to copy works.[80] Both Coleman and Pratt note that the Visconti dukes were renowned for their hospitality and gift-giving, and that they would have looked favourably on a man such as Chaucer:

> The Visconti dukes, who were unusually generous in allowing copies of their manuscripts to be made, might have been particularly inclined toward generosity in dealing with a book-loving English emissary who, as a young man, had been connected with the household of the late prince Lionel.[81]

Galeazzo's ducal library at Pavia was 'one of the outstanding libraries of Europe',[82] and from the evidence of an inventory of 1426, we know that a considerable number of Chaucer's source texts were kept there.[83] The library had eight manuscripts of Dante, including the

[76] Wallace, 'Italy', pp. 219-20.

[77] Howard, p. 228.

[78] Howard, pp. 228-9.

[79] See Rodney K. Delasanta, 'Chaucer, Pavia and the Ciel d'Oro', *Medium Aevum*, 54 (1985), 117–21.

[80] Biggs, p. 9.

[81] Coleman, 'The Knight's Tale', pp. 97-8; Pratt, 'Chaucer and the Visconti Libraries', pp. 197–9.

[82] Pratt, 196.

[83] It is also possible that, if Chaucer did not go to Pavia, he obtained works from Bernabò's library, which was also very rich, though no specific record of its contents survive (See Pratt, p. 197). Howard argues that Chaucer 'surely saw during these six weeks Bernabò's library at Milan', of which no records remain because of the riots

Commedia, twenty-six manuscripts of Petrarch, including *De viris illustribus, De remediis utriusque fortunae*, and the *Rerum familiarum liber,* although it is likely that several of Petrarch's works were added to the library after Chaucer's visit.[84] The twelve Boccaccian manuscripts kept at Pavia are of particular interest, which include the *Filostrato*, *Teseida*, *Decameron*, *Amorosa Visione, De genealogia deorum gentilium, De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium.*[85] Several scholars have used the inventory to vouch for exemplars of Chaucer, although often these claims rely on records alone as many of the original manuscripts are lost, including those of *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*. William E. Coleman argued that one of the manuscripts of the *Teseida,* 881, was Chaucer's manuscript because it lacks parts of the text which Chaucer seems not to have used: 'the prose prologue, the introductory sonnets, Book XII, lxxxiv–lxxxvi, and the two concluding sonnets.'[86] Coleman also argued that the lack of Boccaccio's name in this manuscript might account for Chaucer not naming Boccaccio. As Chaucer translates these works so closely in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale* respectively, and they seem not to influence his works before 1378, many authors have insisted that Chaucer must have taken a copy of Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and *Teseida* home after his trip to Lombardy.[87]

Leading on from this, scholars have argued that it is equally likely that Chaucer acquired copies of other manuscripts from the Visconti libraries, such as the *Decameron* and

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in Milan in 1385 (p. 229). Moreover, Bernabò was 'renowned for hospitality and gifts', so we can imagine that he would not have been stingy with his collection (Howard, p. 229).

[84] We know that some of Petrarch's Latin works would not have been brought there until after Gian Galeazzo's defeat of Francesco Novello da Carrara in 1388 (see Maria Pia Andreolli Panzarasa, 'Il Petrarca e Pavia viscontea', ASL series 9, anno 100 (1974): 4265, p. 64; and Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 52.

[85] The manuscripts of Boccaccio's works, with their inventory numbers, are *De casibus virorum illustrium* (383), *De claris mulieribus* (381), *De montibus, silvis, fontibus*. . . (382), *De genealogia deorum* (384), the *Filostrato* (800), *Amorosa visione* (859), the *Rime* (859), the *Caccia di Diana* (859), the *Decameron* (870), "Res vulgares" (296), which is likely to be another copy of the *Decameron*), and the *Teseida* (881, 935) (See Èlisabeth Pellegrin, *La Bibliothèque Des Visconti et Des Sforza Ducs de Milan, Au XVe Siecle* [Paris: L'Institut de Recherche et D'Histoire Des Textes, 1955]).

[86] Coleman, 'Chaucer, the "Teseida", and the Visconti Library at Pavia: A Hypothesis', *Medium Ævum*, 51.1 (1982), p. 98. Both of the *Teseida* manuscripts from the Visconti library are now lost.

[87] Wallace finds it 'irrefutably clear' that Chaucer 'owned, or had frequent access to' manuscripts of the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida* ('Italy', pp. 221-2). See also Pratt, p. 192; Pearsall, p. 118; McKinley, p. 67; and Coleman, 'The Knight's Tale', p. 97.

the *Commedia*, or at a minimum consulted them.[88] Following Coleman, Biggs visualises Chaucer's material encounter with the manuscript of the *Decameron* kept in Galeazzo's library, manuscript 870, which is described as 'Liber unus in vulgari grossi voluminis […] cum clavis grossis platis ac assidibus copertis corio rubeo hirsute' (A thick, one volume book on paper in Italian […] with thick, flat clasps and fine bindings of rough, whitened red leather):[89]

> A thick book in Italian written on paper. Had Chaucer paid for it himself, he might well have economized by leaving it unbound or getting a limp binding.[90]

No one has yet analysed the record of the manuscripts of *De mulieribus* and *De casibus* in this way, as texts which Chaucer may have had copied, and though neither manuscript survives, we can glean crucial details from their record in the 1426 inventory, including which redaction of each text was kept in the library, as I will discuss in Chapters Two and Three. Ginsberg, the only scholar to consider the different redactions of *De casibus* in relation to Chaucer, concludes 'one cannot be sure which version Chaucer saw.'[91]

Methodologies

My thesis builds upon the work on Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin compendia in combination with the work on Chaucer and Italian textuality, a methodology which has yet to be applied to Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin works. One method I employ in my thesis is linguistic comparative analysis. I compare the vernacular adaptations of Chaucer, Laurent de Premierfait and Lydgate to Boccaccio's Latin. Translation is also an important feature of my methodology. There is some material which I translate in my thesis which has not yet been translated into English, and in some cases does not exist in a critical edition. I believe that one of the reasons that Laurent de Premierfait has been neglected in the study of the *De casibus* tradition is because only the first book has been edited into a critical edition, and no parts of it have been translated into English. This has led to some mistakes being made in

[88] See for example Biggs, p. 9; and Clarke, p. 4.

[89] Pellegrin, p. 267. Translation by Biggs, p. 9.

[90] Biggs, p. 9.

[91] Ginsberg, p. 191.

comparisons of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* to *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*. We add much richness to our analysis of Lydgate by looking at the language of Laurent de Premierfait's text in more detail, as it is the text which Lydgate was working with directly. I hope that my translations of Chapters 1 and 8 of Book VIII of *Des cas* will be of use to scholars of Boccaccio and Lydgate. I have also translated large sections of *De casibus virorum illustrium* into English as no unabridged English translation exists. Although Louis B. Hall's translation, *The Downfall of the Famous*, is useful, it is based on Redaction A of *De casibus* and it abridges large sections of the text, representing approximately half of the original. In my thesis, I have tended to use my own translation rather than Hall's, which can be imprecise in parts. Through these translations I hope to contribute to the field by making these texts more accessible.

Manuscripts

My methodology also encompasses codicology. As the studies of Coleman, Biggs, and Clarke (to name a few) demonstrate, in order to understand Chaucer's reception of Boccaccio's works, it is essential to consider their physical form, what they are compiled with, how readers engaged with them, and their paratextual features. As Carruthers observes:

> To pull in one text is to pull all the commentary, as well as other texts concording with it. Source, glosses, citations, punctuation, and decoration are all married up together in a single memorial image which constitutes the text; one cannot meaningfully talk for long about one of these strands in isolation from the others, for that is not how they were perceived.[92]

We cannot speculate on the nature and scope of Chaucer's engagement with Boccaccio's Latin works without imagining that reading process, and one way to do that is to consider the experience and embodied, active reading of other early readers. In doing so, I follow the methodology of Clarke who uses the term 'textuality', which covers both the thematic, ideological, and cultural cross-relationships and echoes between texts and 'a strong sense of the material, physical locus of the text on the page'.[93] These two definitions often overlap and

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[92] Carruthers, pp. 268-9.

[93] Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality*, p. 6.

reflect each other, as intertexualities are often 'physically enacted on the page' by the reader for the purpose of reference or as a memorial aid. I agree with Clarke completely when he contends that:

> Medieval books are, in many ways, complex archaeological sites and are layered with many different responses. Any attempt at fully accounting for medieval reading must treat fully of the particularities and complexities of the medieval manuscript book, its production, its exemplar(s), its scribes, annotators, patrons, and owners.[94]

To acknowledge the process of reading a manuscript book is to be attendant to the more intimate relationship between readers, in all their forms, and texts in a manuscript culture. As A. S. G. Edwards observes:

> Readers were necessarily in closer contact with those who supplied the works they read and hence had the opportunity to shape both the form and the content of those works. Moreover, the reader generally formed one component in a larger entrepreneurial nexus that included stationers, scribes and decorators who each had their own potential to affect the final form that constituted the manuscript book.[95]

In my study, I use the evidence of manuscript annotations to create a picture of how early readers perceived and engaged with the text, based on a sample of twenty-eight manuscripts of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* and twenty-nine manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris*.[96] I also consider the textual intervention and annotations of scribes, who, as Windeatt observes in relation to Chaucer, provide 'a reaction to what in the poet's text makes it distinctive and remarkable in its own time'.[97] It is, of course, difficult to determine many aspects of readers' engagement. Some readers may not have written in their books, and it is crucial to acknowledge that a huge number of manuscripts of this period have been lost,

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[94] Clarke, p. 6.

[95] A. S. G. Edwards, 'Manuscripts and Readers', in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c. 1350 - c.1500*, ed. by Peter Brown (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 93.

[96] This number has been limited by the restrictions and limitations of the Covid 19 pandemic. I have consulted the majority of these manuscripts in person, but some (including the manuscripts in the Bibliotheque Nationale de France) I have only been able to access in digitised form.

[97] Barry A. Windeatt, 'The Scribes as Chaucer's Early Critics', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 1 (1979), p. 120.

including the manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works from the ducal library at Pavia. Similarly to the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, for which, out of eighty-three manuscripts we have only one (arguably two) surviving exemplars which date from Chaucer's lifetime, *De casibus virorum illustrium* has a complex textual tradition.[98] It has no surviving autograph, and was disseminated in two redactions; Redaction A, which was composed between 1356 and 1360, and Redaction B, dedicated to Boccaccio's friend Mainardo Cavalcanti and completed between 1373 and 1374. However, the manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works which survive, including an autograph of *De mulieribus,* provide a representative picture of the culture of Latin Boccaccio in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There has been invaluable research conducted on the manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works, most notably the seminal codicological scholarship of Pier Giorgio Ricci, Vittore Branca, and Vittorio Zaccaria, and more recent work on the textuality of *De mulieribus claris* by Daniels and of the production context and form of *De casibus* by Guyda Armstrong.[99] However, the specific signs of heuristic engagement and annotation, and what it tells us about readers' reception of these works, has yet to be addressed in a dedicated study. Using the evidence of notes, symbols, and marginalia does not constitute a perfect study of readership, but, as Daniels point out, 'traces of reading' constitute 'a rare and valuable visible record of the reader's interaction with the text.'[100] Daniels does not explore these marks in detail, as they 'would constitute a study in its own right', rather choosing to give an outline of the kinds of responses which can be found in manuscripts and printed editions of Boccaccio's texts.[101] There is much to be learned by examining these annotations in detail and doing so has deepened my understanding of the relationship between Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin works.

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[98] For more on the manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* see Hanning, p. 5; Ralph Hanna, "The Hengwrt Manuscript and the Canon of *The Canterbury Tales*," in Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 148; and Larry Dean Benson, 'The Texts', in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xlv–xlvii.

[99] Vittore Branca, *Tradizione Delle Opere Di Giovanni Boccaccio* (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958); Vittorio Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore, storico, moralista e mitografo* (Olschki, 2001); Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book*; and Guyda Armstrong, *The English Boccaccio: A History in Books* (University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 22-34.

[100] Daniels, p. 8. For more on manuscript annotations see the edited volume *Annotation and its Texts*, ed. by Barney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), especially Stephen G. Nichols' chapter, 'On the Sociology of Medieval Manuscript Annotation', pp. 43–73.

[101] Daniels, p. 33.

It is also important to note that not all 'traces of reading' signify the same thing. I have considered various different kinds of annotation in my study of early reader engagement in the manuscripts of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*, and each indicate a different kind of response to the text. As H. J. Jackson observes:

> The writer of marginalia acts on the impulse to stop reading for long enough to record a comment. Why? Because it may be done and has been done; it is customary. Under certain conditions (subject to change) it is socially acceptable behavior. But it is seldom required behavior; not all readers write notes in their books. Those who choose to make the effort to register their responses must foresee some advantage for someone […][102]

Readers' notes are evidence that they have paused and engaged with a text and absorbed it at a deeper level. In relation to the manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris*, Daniels notes that 'expressions of personal opinion are rare', and this is also the case in manuscripts of *De casibus.*[103] The most common kind of note in manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin compendia are *notae*. Writing the word 'nota' in the margin, from the Latin verb 'notare', meaning 'observe, pay attention, inscribe', marks a passage which a reader finds 'important or difficult' and wishes to distinguish for the purpose of returning to it.[104] Alongside the adverb 'bene', meaning 'note well', it could be construed as a value judgement upon whichever text it adorns – a sign that a passage is worth making careful note of. A single 'nota' is more ambiguous, as J. D. Sargan has pointed out, and could function simply as a 'verbal flag'.[105] Both Carruthers and Jackson observe that readers make notes to aid memory, particularly in the case of *notae*. Carruthers proposes that

[102] H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 82.

[103] Daniels, p. 150.

[104] Carruthers, p. 136.

[105] J. D. Sargan, 'Creative Reading: Using Books in the Vernacular Context of Early Anglo-Norman England' (University of Oxford, 2018), p. 198. For more on *notae* see Evina Steinová, '"*Nota* and *Require*: The Oldest Western Annotation Symbols and Their Dissemination in the Early Middle Ages', in *Scribes and the Presentation of Texts (from Antiquity to c. 1550)*, ed. by Barbara A. Shailor, Consuelo W. Dutschke, and et al., 2021, pp. 477–93, especially p. 481., and Sargan, p. 198-9.

> Mental marking is mnemonically advantageous because each individual makes up his own system of *notulae*, his own filing system, and, as we know from *Ad Herennium*, one's own *notae* and *imagines* are to be preferred to memorizing a pre-existent system, because such exercise stimulates the memory more fully and fixes it more securely.[106]

Carruthers is not alone in noticing the way in which these annotations allow readers to create their own curated document. Sylvia Huot notices a similar phenomenon in the manuscripts of the *Roman de la Rose*.[107] Building on the observation of Pierre-Yves Badel, that many readers of the *Roman* do not look for unity of meaning in the text, Huot constructs a picture of 'discontinuous' reading in manuscripts of the *Rose*. She observes that the use of *notae* contributes to this, singling out specific lines 'in terms of their universal value and not necessarily in terms of their function within the *Rose*.'[108] This is compounded by the length of the text and its moralistic density:

> The encyclopedic scope of the *Rose*, coupled with Jean de Meun's propensity for proverbial discourse, make it a poem susceptible of numerous and highly variable readings, each involving an aspect of continuity throughout the poem yet each also selective.[109]

The readers of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*, similarly encyclopaedic and moralistic texts, respond to Boccaccio's compendia in a comparable 'discontinuous' way, using *notae* and other annotation to create their own reading of the text, and transform it into 'a repository of edifying sayings'.[110] In his study of Renaissance bibles, Peter Stallybrass notes that the technology of the codex allowed readers to 'mark up places discontinuously'.[111] This is aided

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[106] Carruthers, p. 136.

[107] Sylvia Huot, 'Medieval Readers of the "Roman de La Rose": The Evidence of Marginal Notations', *Romance Philology*, 43.3 (1990), 400–420; and 'Drama and Exemplarity in the Narrative Text: Reader Responses to a Passage in the *Roman de La Rose*', in *"Aufführung" Und "Schrift" in Mittelalter Und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996), pp. 494–507.

[108] Huot, 'Medieval Readers', p. 402.

[109] Huot, 'Medieval Readers', p. 402.

[110] Huot, 'Drama and Exemplarity in the Narrative Text', p. 504.

[111] Peter Stallybrass, 'Books and Scrolls: Navigating the Bible', in *Books and Readers in Early Modern*

by the innovations of tables of contents, indexes, and rubricated headings and capitals.[112] The tables of contents (both chronological and alphabetical) found at the beginning or end of many manuscripts of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*, and often annotated by readers, allow for a very similar kind of selective reading engagement, as I will discuss in Chapter Two.[113]

Another common form of annotation in manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works are descriptive glosses which assist with navigation of the text. Daniels coins the term 'notabilia' to describe this phenomenon which encompasses 'notes of key names, places or events placed in the margin adjacent to the relevant text'.[114] Daniels finds notabilia to be the most common form of marginalia in manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris*.[115] These kinds of notes function as an aid to memory and navigation for the reader, allowing them to return to certain biographies. I focus particularly on the practice of writing names in the margin, which, as well as functioning in the ways I have just described, also participates in a key dynamic in *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* which is to excavate and glorify particularly famous names above others:

> Absit tamen ut omnes dixerim. Quis enim mortalium tanti foret? Ut infinito labori possit sufficere? Sed ex claris quosdam clariores excerpsisse satis erit.
> (*DCV* Pref. 8)[116]
> [Yet I am far from including all in my work, indeed who among mortals could do as much? Who could undertake that infinite labour? But it will be enough to have selected from the famous the most famous individuals]

I also take into account symbols and other traces of reading such as lines, brackets, underlinings, manicules, trigons and crosses. These marks are difficult to date and enigmatic

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England: Material Studies, ed. by Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer, Material Studies (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 42.

[112] Stallybrass, pp. 44-46.

[113] For more on tables of contents in manuscripts of *De mulieribus* see Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book*, p. 148.

[114] Daniels, pp. 151-2.

[115] ibid.

[116] Citations of *De casibus* are from *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 9: *De casibus virorum illustrium*, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Vittorio Zaccaria (Milan: Mondadori, 1983). Unless otherwise specified, translations are my own.

to interpret. As Daniels observes, in relation to the use of crosses in manuscripts of *De mulieribus*:

> When a reader marks a passage with a cross, it is evident that he or she found something remarkable about that section of text, but the full significance of the response often remains a mystery. It might signify agreement or disagreement with the author's sentiments; it might mark a section of text the reader wished to return to later; or it might signal a connection the reader has made with another text.[117]

The idea that a reader uses these symbols to navigate and create their own kind of text is also reflected in the use of manicules, which are also very common in manuscripts of *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*. Helen Barr observes that manicules are often associated with 'teaching authority', marking particular significant or portentous passages, in the manner of *notae*. Barr, and Rebecca Menmuir, also emphasise the personal quality of manicules. They are 'anthropomorphic', imitating the process of a human hand turning a page, writing, or running their hand over a line, and thus become 'a metonym for the body and a connection to the text.'[118] William Sherman has argued that 'after a signature and a monogram the manicule was the most personal symbol a reader could develop and deploy.'[119] In my survey of manuscripts, I have followed Daniels's example by not regarding doodles or marginalia which appear unrelated to the content of the text itself.[120]

Writers and readers

My focus on the inscribed responses of readers in Boccaccian manuscripts serves a dual purpose. As well as representing parallel responses to Chaucer the reader, the engagement of

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[117] Daniels, pp. 33-34. For more on crosses in manuscripts in the Middle Ages see J. D. Sargan, 'Creative Reading: Using Books in the Vernacular Context of Early Anglo-Norman England' (University of Oxford, 2018), p. 185. Sargan suggests that crosses 'present an alternative or additional means of fulfilling gestural interactions: a means of inscribing, prompting, and historicising an embodied reaction.'

[118] On this see, also, Rebecca Menmuir, 'Tracing Ovid's "Best" Line in the Middle Ages', *The Journal of Medieval Latin*, 33 (2023), pp. 71-72.

[119] William Howard Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), p. 51.

[120] See Daniels, pp. 152-4.

these early readers provides the opportunity to compare Boccaccio's expectations of his readers set out in his Latin compendia with the real responses of his readers.[121] Texts and readers are mutually generative, or, as Julie Orlemanski puts it: 'Texts "happen" when they are read'.[122] In their respective compendia, both Boccaccio and Chaucer present themselves as readers who write: the miniature on the title page of Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 935, one of the earliest manuscripts of *De casibus virorum illustrium*, depicts Boccaccio writing whilst surveying an open book propped on the desk in front of him.[123] Likewise, the Prologue of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, concludes with Chaucer describing his composition through the act of reading: 'And with that my bokes gan I take, / And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make (F, ll. 556-579).' Boccaccio and Chaucer are, therefore, keenly aware of the role of readers in reinterpreting texts. As Carruthers observes, readers have the power to redefine and reauthorise the texts they read and comment on:

> As a composition, the written exemplum is expansive; it offers a "common place" which collects subsequent comments, glosses, references, as readers apply, adapt, restate, meditate upon it. Truly it is commentary and imitation which make a text an *auctor* – not the activities of its writer but of its readers […] And the revising process was not limited to the first author. Readers, in the course of familiarizing a text, became its authors too.[124]

Several scholars have noted Boccaccio's dynamic construction of an intended readership. In her discussion of the woman-reader in Dante and Boccaccio, Elena Lombardi describes Boccaccio's unique construction of the writer-reader relationship:

> Boccaccio firmly tightens the bond between writer and reader in ways that were never as persuasively fixed either before or after him. He features writing as an operation fixated on the reader, and reading as a way of decoding not only the text but also the

[121] Boccaccio is also a fruitful object for codiocological study, because, as Clarke underlines, he is 'an important figure in book history', not only as an incredibly influential author but as 'one of its [the fourteenth century's] most innovative and important copyists. (Clarke, p. 3).'

[122] Julie Orlemanski, 'Scales of Reading', *Exemplaria*, 26.2–3 (2014), p. 218.

[123] Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 935, fol. 4r.

[124] Carruthers, pp. 263-4.

> writer.[125]

The idea that writing is 'an operation fixated on the reader' is very pertinent to Boccaccio's authorial position in *De casibus* and *De mulieribus claris*, particularly in his paratextual material. The individual audiences of these texts – in the case of *De casibus*, 'tyrannical princes'; in the case of *De mulieribus*, the 'ladies of today' – require a tailored style to meet Boccaccio's estimation of their intellect, taste, and attention span. In relation to *De casibus*, Rhiannon Daniels has noted Boccaccio's 'modulation of technique' to fit a broad range of different kinds of readers in order to fulfil the 'threefold function of literature to delight, entertain, and also affect an audience':

> From this perspective, the audience is not an extrinsic factor, but integral to the creation and success of a literary work.[126]

The interconnection of style, material, and audience is one which is translated in the vernacular renditions of *De casibus* by Laurent de Premierfait and John Lydgate. Chaucer was also attentive to this aspect of Boccaccio's style in his reproductions of Boccaccio's Latin compendia.[127] Largely, Boccaccio pitches his work to a reader whose response he can predict. However, as Gaston points out: 'it is difficult for a living person to play the role of the ideal reader'.[128] Readers will not necessarily respond in the way one expects or desires. Several scholars have observed that Chaucer often experiments with the idea of an unpredictable and uncontrollable audience. As Orlemanski notes:

> Since a text cannot capture its own reception (which necessarily lies outside the elements on the page), Chaucer's metapoetic episodes – from the *Parliament of Fowls'* oneiric Scipio to the Canterbury pilgrims' contentious quyting – stage the ontological distinction between text and reception, so as to exemplify how much can change when literary form becomes meaningful for someone.[129]

[125] Elena Lombardi, *Imagining the Woman Reader in the Age of Dante* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 190.

[126] Daniels, 'Boccaccio's Narrators and Audiences', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, pp. 45-6.

[127] Gaston, p. 3.

[128] Gaston, p. 3.

[129] Orlemanski, 'The Heaviness of Prosopopoeial Form in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess', in *Chaucer and the*

In Chapters Two and Three, I consider these Chaucerian metapoetic episodes, and their dramatization of the meeting between reader and text, in dialogue with the author-audience relationship staged in Boccaccio's Latin works.

The *De casibus* tradition in the fifteenth century

Studies which consider Chaucer's relationship to Boccaccio's Latin works will often discuss Lydgate as the next writer to reproduce Latin Boccaccio in English. I chose to include Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* in my study because it represents a meeting point between Latin Boccaccio and the influence of Chaucer's Anglicized Boccaccio. The majority of the material which my thesis considers has historically been deemed unsuccessful – dull, didactic, overlong and out of tune with modern tastes in poetics and historiography – and Laurent de Premierfait and John Lydgate are no exceptions to this. To classify Lydgate as a humanist would be controversial to some: in literary history Lydgate has occupied a liminal position between medieval strictures and humanist innovation, particularly in the *Fall of Princes*. Alessandra Petrina argues that, 'among English writers', Lydgate represents:

> an uneasy transition between Middle Ages and Renaissance, the acceptance of some of the new intellectual attitudes and a curiosity for newly discovered or translated texts that is, sometimes awkwardly, grafted onto a solid and self-sufficient medieval structure.[130]

On one side of the spectrum, Walter Schirmer, who wrote the first dedicated monograph on Lydgate, saw him as pre-empting the Renaissance:

> The historical outlook of the Renaissance differed little from Lydgate's own: history was regarded as a mirror from which the present could derive knowledge and enlightenment from the past, by studying the fortunes and misfortunes that had

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Subversion of Form, ed. by Thomas A. Prendergast and Jessica Rosenfeld (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 126.

[130] Alessandra Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), pp. 282-3.

> befallen princes and peoples. Lydgate was outdated only in that he said little about more recent history, particularly English history.[131]

On the other side of the spectrum, Derek Pearsall's influential *John Lydgate* argues that

> Lydgate profited in a multitude of ways from Chaucer's example, but nevertheless in all his writing he reasserts medieval traditions and habits of mind against Chaucer's free-ranging innovations.[132]

Though Pearsall's book treats Lydgate with more nuance than the scholarship which preceded him, he is still largely viewed in relation to Chaucer, a comparison from which Lydgate does not emerge favourably. In the scholarship of this century, there has been an endeavour to consider Lydgate on his own terms. The essays in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England* 'take Lydgate seriously as a major poet, and offer some account of the truly remarkable range and variety of his work', extracting him from Chaucer's long shadow.[133]

There has also been renewed interest in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes,* which has long been seen as a significant stage in the development of the *De casibus* genre from history to tragedy, alongside Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*.[134] Lydgate's unique understanding of tragedy, drawn from the 'history' of Boccaccio and Laurent, mediated by the 'tragedie' of Chaucer, and deepened through his own reading of philosophers such as Seneca and Boethius, has attracted varied debate.[135] For the purposes of this study, I am interested in interrogating how

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[131] Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate, A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. by Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen and Company Ltd, 1961), p. 226. For a similar argument, see Alain Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1967).

[132] Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1970), p. 14.

[133] *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 6.

[134] A significant stage in the study of the *Fall of Princes* is Nigel Mortimer's monograph (*John Lydgate's Fall of Princes: Narrative Tragedy in Its Literary and Political Contexts* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005]), which focuses solely on the *Fall* in all its aspects.

[135] See for example Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, Chaucer Studies (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), and *Ideas and Forms of Tragedy from Aristotle to the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Paul Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates and the De Casibus Tradition* (Toronto: Toronto University

Lydgate's tragic mode relates to his audience and to the models which he is imitating. Another key element of discourse relating to the *Fall of Princes* has been Lydgate's authorial positioning in relation to Boccaccio, Laurent, and Chaucer.[136] Seth Lerer's *Chaucer and His Readers* connects Lydgate's voice in the *Fall of Princes* to that of Chaucer's Clerk. Both the Clerk and Lydgate adopt a kind of laureate pose, which I will address in relation to my discussion of Petrarch's public image and Chaucer and Boccaccio's reception of it, as well as in relation to Lydgate.[137]

Many scholars have also been fascinated by the complex dynamics of patronage, diplomacy and power which permeate the *Fall.*[138] Lerer finds in the *Fall*:

> an exploration of relationships of power and powerlessness that define the quality of patronized literature.[139]

There is an obvious dissonance between the patronage of the ambitious Duke Humphrey of Gloucester and the *De casibus* genre, the ostensible purpose of which is to speak truth to power.[140] The framing of Lydgate's work in relation to his patron is pertinent to my discussion of reader-focused writing, particularly in relation to Boccaccio's patronage.

Press, 2000); Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, pp. 153-218.

[136] See, for example, Petrina, 'A Stranger at the Margins: Giovanni Boccaccio in John Lydgate's Work', in *Boccaccio and the European Literary Tradition*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Emilia di Rocco (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2014), pp. 73–88; Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 22-56.

[137] Lerer, p. 31.

[138] See Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 298-350; David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH*, 54.4 (1987), 761–99

[139] Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers,* p. 31. See also David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *ELH*, 54.4 (1987), pp. 761–99.

[140] To name a few: Jennifer Summit, '"Stable in Study": Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and Duke Humphrey's Library', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, pp. 207–31; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 332-335; Alessandra Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

Where Chaucer elides Boccaccio's moral exhortations, Lydgate greatly increases them. Pearsall notes that 'the most overwhelming of Lydgate's amplifications in the *Fall* are in the form of moralisation', and that 'of the 6600 lines of book I, without the Prologue, over a quarter are direct moral statement.'[141] Lydgate's envoys have become an enduring part of his legacy.[142] However, even more so than in Boccaccio, Lydgate's moral envoys do not always have a straightforward relationship to the narratives they accompany. As Maura Nolan observes:

> the very mixed bag of authorities and sources that Lydgate employs and attempts to synthesize makes simple moralization impossible.[143]

By including an exhaustive number of authorities on a given topic, Lydgate inevitably introduces contradictions which are not then easily reconciled, if at all. We can learn more about the reception of Lydgate's moralism by looking at the material reception of the *Fall*. A. S. G. Edwards has led the way in the study of manuscripts of the *Fall*, and we have much to learn from the dissemination and reception of the work. Over various studies, Edwards has identified some significant strands which are crucial to understanding the *Fall*'s legacy. One dominant feature of the dissemination of *Fall* manuscripts is that readers are more interested in the moral envoys, which constitute Lydgate's most significant addition to Laurent's *Des cas*. The envoys are excerpted in many manuscripts, forming a commonplace book of moral dictums and proverbial wisdom. One excerpt, Book II, lines 4432-8 seems 'to have enjoyed a popularity amounting almost to an oral tradition.'[144] These practices of excerption, and attention to authorial moralism, in relation to the *Fall* have not yet been compared with similar forms of reception and dissemination in the manuscripts of Boccaccio's original *De*

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[141] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 235.

[142] See A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Influence of Lydgate's Fall of Princes c. 1440-1559: A Survey', *Mediaeval Studies*, 39 (1977), 424–39.

[143] Maura Nolan, '"Now Wo, Now Gladnesse": Ovidianism in the "Fall of Princes"', *John Hopkins University Press*, 71.3 (2004), pp. 537-8.

[144] 'Deceit deceyueth and shal be deceyued, / For be deceit[e] who is deceyuable, / Thouh his deceitis be nat out parceyued, / To a deceyuour deceit is retournable; / Fraude quit with fraude is guerdoun couenable: / For who with fraude fraudulent is founde, / To a diffraudere fraude will ay rebou*n*de.'

See A. S. G. Edwards, 'Selections from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*: A Checklist', *The Library*, s5-XXVI.4 (1971), p. 338.

casibus. The manuscripts also show that, despite the ill-disposition of critics toward him, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Lydgate and Chaucer enjoyed a similar favour amongst readers who would place their works in manuscripts together, and even mistake works of Chaucer's as Lydgate's, and vice versa.[145] Mortimer and Armstrong have also provided detailed studies of manuscripts of the *Fall*, while Branca's *Boccaccio visualizzato* details the illuminated manuscripts of the *Fall*.[146]

Although more attention has been paid to Lydgate, Laurent de Premierfait's influence on his mode in the *Fall of Princes* merits further attention. Both Armstrong's and Mortimer's analyses of the *Fall of Princes* take Laurent's role in the *De casibus* tradition more seriously. Armstrong argues that translation practice of Laurent and Lydgate 'speaks volumes about their particular textual cultures':

> In both cases, the target text privileges its readers over the source text (what is called "domestication" in modern translation studies), and thereby produces translations that above all conform to the expectations of the receiving culture.[147]

I follow Armstrong in considering the way in which Laurent and Lydgate transform and direct their iterations of the *De casibus* framework toward their particular audience and cultural milieu.

Chapter outline

My first chapter provides an overview of Francesco Petrarca's and Giovanni Boccaccio's perception of what it means to be a poet-historian, particularly the framing and shaping of historiography and poetry in relation to style, audience, and legacy, and discuss how these

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[145] See Edwards, "Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for Future Research," in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 22.

[146] Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, pp. 219-273; Armstrong, pp. 19-91., and 'A Bibliography of Boccaccio's Works in English Translation: Part I. The Minor Works', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 38 (2010), 194–95; *Boccaccio visualizzato. Narrare per parole e per immagini fra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. by Branca, vol. 3 (Torino: Einaudi, 1999).

[147] Armstrong, p. 93.

ideas are reproduced and transformed in Chaucer's *oeuvre*. I consider Boccaccio the humanist, and how he relates to and mythologizes his famous teacher, Petrarch. I then show the ways in which Boccaccio's humanism differs to Petrarch's Rome-centric model, and how each of these models were influential on Chaucer and his successors. In writing *De casibus virorum illustrium (*The Falls of Illustrious Men), *De mulieribus claris (*Concerning Famous Women) and *De genealogia deorum gentilium* (The Genealogy of the Pagan Gods), Boccaccio carved a unique and innovative path of historiographical writing which would become incredibly influential across Europe almost as soon as they were disseminated.

In Chapter Two, I argue that the problematic depiction of the author-audience relationship in the *Monk's Tale* stems from Chaucer's engagement with Boccaccio's Latin works and their material form. In my survey of this relationship, I consider many kinds of audience – intended audience, constructed audience, and real scribes and readers. I first consider Boccaccio's intention to communicate with his audience on the level of emotions, rather than *ratio* and logic. This endeavour necessitates an adjustment of authorial style, and a reformulation of material, and I examine how this applies in three different accounts of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra: two by Boccaccio in *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus* respectively, and Chaucer's "Cenobia" in the *Monk's Tale*. I also offer a new perspective on Chaucer's attribution of "Cenobia" to Petrarch, based on my consideration of the manuscript tradition of Boccaccio's Latin works. I then address the longstanding discussion in Chaucerian scholarship regarding the quality of the *Monk's Tale*, and specifically its dullness or monotony. I argue that the root of the alleged dullness of the *Tale* can be found in *De casibus*, and that the disparaging responses of the Knight and the Host to the *Monk's Tale* put Boccaccio's ideas about style and audience to the test in a dramatized setting, reflecting Boccaccio's anxieties in relation to the response of his future readers. I then draw comparison between the responses of Chaucer's fictionalised audience, and the interpretations and annotations of the early readers in manuscripts of *De casibus*. Finally, I consider how the charged dynamic between author and audience is fundamental to another shared concern between *De casibus* and the *Monk's Tale* – the remembrance of great names and the pursuit of enduring fame.

Chapter Three focuses on a similarly maligned work, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, and its relationship to the content, form, and materiality of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (*Concerning Famous Women*). Although they look similar in many ways

and were very closely associated in the late fifteenth century, *De mulieribus claris* has a different, more humanistic, emphasis and framework than *De casibus virorum illustrium*, and this is reflected in the way readers reused and interpreted it. As in the previous chapter, I am concerned with the dynamics of authorship, reading, and engagement. Both *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women* portray a lively interaction between the figure of the *auctor* and their reader or readers. I also consider the response of Boccaccio's readers in manuscripts of *De mulieribus claris* and compare their treatment of the text to the fraught relationship in the *Legend of Good Women* between Geoffrey and the God of Love, his most irascible reader. In this chapter, I argue that Chaucer is influenced by two fraught dynamics present in Boccaccio's *De mulieribus*. First, I consider the question of framework – in Boccaccio's case 'famous' women, and in Chaucer's the more contentious, 'good' women – and how this framework, which most closely resembles a catalogue or compendium, influences the narratives which are kept within it. I examine how Chaucer plays with the limitations of framework to create carefully curated narratives, using the *Legend of Dido* and the *Legend of Cleopatra* as case-studies. Secondly, I consider how the moral exhortations in *De mulieribus* sit uncomfortably with a female audience and, more keenly, with his patron, Andrea Acciaiuoli. I argue that Chaucer smooths this disjuncture in the *Legend of Good Women* by placing his patron, Alceste, and female readers, at the heart of his artistic enterprise. Finally, I show how the response of another early reader of *De mulieribus*, Ludovico Sandeo, responds to Boccaccio's text in a similar way to Chaucer, highlighting the cognitive dissonance inherent in Boccaccio's depiction of women.

In my final chapter, I discuss how Chaucer's interpretation of Latin Boccaccio compares with the conventions of late medieval vernacularisation through the lens of Laurent de Premierfait's two French translations of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium*. Laurent de Premierfait has often been sidelined in surveys of the *De casibus* tradition, with many studies moving from Boccaccio to Chaucer and straight on to John Lydgate, with minimal mention of the distinctive perspective of the French translator. My chapter considers how Boccaccio's concern with the relationship between audience, material, and style, is reinterpreted by Laurent de Premierfait. I begin by showing the adaptation in Laurent's language between his first translation of *De casibus* in 1400, and his second, and much more popular, translation in 1409. I argue that Laurent's desire to broaden the audience of the *De casibus* genre and to make it more accessible has an effect on the meaning of Boccaccio's text, using his account of Zenobia and Petrarch's intervention in the Prologue of Book VIII as

representative examples. The second part of my chapter analyses the author-audience relationship in John Lydgate's English *De casibus,* the *Fall of Princes,* in which Lydgate combines the influence of Laurent de Premierfait's 'Bocace' with unmistakably Chaucerian style. Lydgate concludes his Prologue with an intriguing commitment to 'sette eloquence aside' and proceed in a plain style which better befits his tragic matter (I.235). Though Lydgate's interpretation of tragedy in the *Fall of Princes* has long been a subject of scholarly interest, the question of why Lydgate feels that eloquence and tragedy are incompatible has yet to be answered. My chapter will address this question by returning to Boccaccio and tracing the relationship between style and audience in the cycle of translation which culminates with Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. The stylistic influence of Laurent de Premierfait on Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* is a subject which demands scholarly attention. Using this network of textual influences, including Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* and *Clerk's Tale*, I shed light on the construction of Lydgate's somewhat confused identity as a historian and tragedian in the *Fall of Princes*, and how this identity is intrinsically connected to the response of the reader. I show that the author-reader dynamic becomes particularly fraught in the case of the pressurising influence of his aristocratic patron, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester.

Chapter One

‘Posterity shall read of me and thee’: Petrarch, Boccaccio, and early humanist historiography

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine how Chaucer’s reception of Petrarch and Boccaccio’s humanist ideas and writings influenced his perception of what it means to be a poet-historian, particularly the framing and shaping of historiography in relation to style and audience. I will also define what I mean by describing Petrarch and Boccaccio as ‘humanists’ and ‘humanist historians’, the extent to which their ideas surrounding humanism, poetry, and historiography were transmitted to Chaucer and his successors, and how their humanist and historiographical philosophies differed from each other. Chaucer’s direct point of contact with these ideas is, predominately, Boccaccio’s Latin works, which are complicatedly influenced by, and yet defy, Petrarch’s historiographical philosophy. We do not have evidence for Chaucer’s engagement with Petrarch’s historiographical works - *De viris illustribus* (Concerning Illustrious Men) and *Africa* - nor do we have evidence of Boccaccio’s direct engagement with them (though he certainly discussed them with Petrarch). Petrarch was a perpetual revisionist, and much of his influence on Boccaccio, and, to a lesser extent, Chaucer, came from his public self-presentation in his letters, his *Invectives,* and the renowned oration which he delivered on Capitoline hill when he was crowned poet laureate: the *Collatio Laureationis* or *Coronation Oration.* Though many of the ideas which define Petrarch and Boccaccio’s historiography were present in some form in other historiographical material which Chaucer was reading – exemplarity, rhetorical style, heurism – I argue that the relationship between writer and reader is particularly dynamic in these Italian influences and exerted a transformational influence on Chaucer’s historiographical compendia, the *Monk’s Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*. The relationship between writer and reader is central to the construction of authorial identity, in relation to the authors who have gone before, and in relation to the readers of the future who will preserve the writer’s name and works. I begin by outlining the key features of Petrarchan humanism which are reproduced in Boccaccio’s Latin corpus and in Chaucer’s Italianate material, in particular the representation of fame and its centrality to the practice of writing history. I will then investigate the specificities of

Boccaccian humanism, its diversions from the Petrarchan model, and the distinctive qualities which Chaucer found worthy of imitation in the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*.[1]

Petrarchan humanism

Petrarch's distinctive relationship to the ancients is one of discovery, imitation, intimacy, and bitter distance. Classical imitation is the core tenet of Petrarch's humanism – each of Petrarch's works emulates a different ancient model, each with a distinctive style.[2] Petrarch's famous practice of epistolary writing was based on his 1345 rediscovery of Cicero's letters to Atticus in the Capitular library in Verona, often considered to be 'a foundational moment in the historiography of the Renaissance.'[3] Whilst steeped in the 'cultural and intellectual milieu' of the papal court at Avignon in the early 1320s, Petrarch demonstrated a practical and philological engagement with classical texts.[4] He oversaw the preparation of the 'Ambrosian Virgil' manuscript which contains a collection of classical works which were hugely influential on him, including Virgil's *Eclogues, Georgics* and the *Aeneid,* Statius' *Achilleid* and four Horatian odes. Petrarch annotated this manuscript extensively, contributing details of significant events in his life, such as the deaths of Laura and his son Giovanni. From the *Aeneid* and *Eclogues* Petrarch derived his own epic poem, *Africa*, and his *Bucolicum Carmen*, and he formed the framework for *De remediis utriusque fortune* from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*.[5] In the late 1320s Petrarch edited and compiled manuscripts of three of the first four decades of Livy's *Ab urbe condita libri* (*History of Rome*), piecing

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[1] For a short survey of Chaucer's relationship to Italian humanism see Honey, 'Chaucer and Italian Humanism', *The Encyclopedia of the Global Middle Ages*, Arc Humanities Press (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019) <https://www.bloomsburymedievalstudies.com/encyclopedia-chapter?docid=b-9781350990005&tocid=b-9781350990005-131-10000183>.

[2] Mann, 'From Laurel to Fig: Petrarch and the Structures of the Self', *British Academy Review*, 1999, p. 23. Zak, 'Petrarch and the Ancients', in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 142.

[3] Eisner, 'In the Labyrinth of the Library: Petrarch's Cicero, Dante's Virgil, and the Historiography of the Renaissance', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67.3 (2014), p. 755. On Petrarch and Cicero, see Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Petrarca e Cicerone', in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, Studi e Testi, 124 (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946), IV, 88–106.

[4] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', p. 9. See also the essay by Michael Reeve in the same volume, pp. 21-22.

[5] Mann, 'From Laurel and Fig', p. 22.

the text together from a variety of incomplete manuscripts, and correcting the text to make 'the most complete text of Livy then known.'[6] Livy was instrumental for Petrarch's history writing, and influenced Petrarch to place the moral exemplarity of history at the forefront of his agenda. Another classical writer who defined Petrarch's ideas about writing was Cicero. In 1333, whilst on a trip to Liège, Petrarch uncovered Cicero's oration *Pro Archia,* in which Cicero advocates for Archias, the Greek poet, to be granted Roman citizenship.[7] *Pro Archia* greatly influenced Petrarch's 1341 oration on Capitoline Hill, and Petrarch's thinking more broadly:

> sed pleni omnes sunt libri, plenae sapientium voces, plena exemplorum vetustas; quae iacerent in tenebris omnia, nisi litterarum lumen accederet. quam multas nobis imagines non solum ad intuendum verum etiam ad imitandum fortissimorum virorum expressas scriptores et Graeci et Latini reliquerunt! quas ego mihi semper in administranda re publica proponens animum et mentem meam ipsa cogitatione hominum excellentium conformabam.
> [But all books are full of such precepts, and all the sayings of philosophers, and all antiquity is full of precedents teaching the same lesson; but all these things would lie buried in darkness, if the light of literature and learning were not applied to them. How many images of the bravest men, carefully elaborated, have both the Greek and Latin writers bequeathed to us, not merely for us to look at and gaze upon, but also for our imitation! And I, always keeping them before my eyes as examples for my own public conduct, have endeavoured to model my mind and views by continually thinking of those excellent men.][8]

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[6] Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', p. 9.

[7] It seems that Petrarch shared this manuscript with Boccaccio when he first visited in 1351, as Boccaccio's panegryic *Trattatello in laude di Dante* (Life of Dante) owes much to Cicero's model. See Victoria Kirkham, 'The Parallel Lives of Dante and Virgil', *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society*, 110, 1992, p. 249.

[8] Cicero, *Pro Archia. Post Reditum in Senatu. Post Reditum Ad Quirites. De Domo Sua. De Haruspicum Responsis. Pro Plancio.*, trans. by N. H. Watts, Loeb Classical Library, 158 (Harvard University Press, 1923): *Pro Archia*, 6.14.

Although Petrarch's original manuscript has been lost, there are some manuscripts which have copied the marginal notes Petrarch made.[9] Petrarch wrote Cicero's phrase 'litterarum lumen' in the margin and drew a lamp or candle.[10] These Ciceronian ideas would form the framework for his own identity as a public poet and historian – imitating the classics and classical virtue, shedding light on the names of the past, and using emulating the examples of antiquity.

Boccaccio, like Petrarch, embarked on classical study at a young age. Under the tutelage of Paolo da Perugia at the library of the Angevin court, Boccaccio was exposed to both Latin and Greek materials, and studying under Leontius Pilatus, Boccaccio read Homer, which was very influential on his mythological encyclopaedia, *De genealogia deorum gentilium* (On the Genealogy of the Pagan Gods).[11] Boccaccio cites Homer in 217 passages of *De genealogia* and quotes him directly in 45 passages; as Solomon observes, it is 'the first influential scholarly work in modern Europe to incorporate quotations, translations, and analyses of passages from Greek literature.'[12] Boccaccio has historically been positioned, in a somewhat intangible way, as *medieval* and a subordinate follower on the shining path of humanism which Petrarch set.[13] Their famed meeting of 1350 has often been identified as the impetus for a new interest in classicism for Boccaccio. In the last decade, scholars such as Eisner, David Lummus, Tobias Foster Gittes and Gur Zak, have challenged this framing.[14]

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[9] See Reeve, 'Classical scholarship', p. 21. Reeve consults MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 9305, fols. 46r -50r.

[10] Reeve, p. 21. Vat. Lat. 9305, fol. 48r.

[11] Jon Solomon, 'Gods, Greeks, and Poetry (*Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*)', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria. Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), p. 236.

[12] Solomon, pp. 236-7.

[13] Branca's *Boccaccio medievale e nuovi studi sul Decamerone* (Florence: Sansoni, 1981) has contributed to this perception, as has the position of Francesco Bruni, who argues that Boccaccio occupies a middle ground between the low and the high, which is where he operates most successfully, according to Bruni. Following this framework, Bruni finds Boccaccio's Latin compendia pale imitations of Petrarch's precedent (*Boccaccio: L'invenzione Della Letteratura Mezzana* [Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990]). See also Victoria Kirkham's perceptive review of Bruni's *Boccaccio* (Victoria Kirkham, review of *Review of Baccoccio: L'invenzione della letteratura mezzana.*, by Francesco Bruni, *Speculum*, 68.1 [1993], 113–16).

[14] Eisner and Lummus assert that, though Petrarch's 'association with the idea of the Renaissance' is well-established and persistently discussed, often to the disparagement of Boccaccio, that, in fact, Boccaccio had an

Like Petrarch, Boccaccio engaged deeply with classical material – in *Epistle* IV of 1339 Boccaccio earnestly enquires that the recipient of his letter, who remains anonymous, send him a glossed copy of Statius's *Thebaid* so that he may transcribe its commentary.[15] Gittes further justifies Boccaccio's pre-existing 'humanistic interests' by pointing to the multiple classical transcriptions in Boccaccio's hand, his early Latin writings, the 'classical miscellany' which can be found in his notebooks (*zibaldoni*), and to his early vernacular works, the *Filocolo, Filostrato,* and *Teseida*, all of which demonstrate his erudition and command of both Latin and Greek materials.[16] Boccaccio was evidently ardently engaged in classical scholarship long before his meeting with Petrarch, and far exceeded Petrarch in his knowledge of Ancient Greek. However, there is no doubt that Petrarchan ideas provided the impetus and purpose for the Latin works on which Boccaccio worked in the last twenty-five years of his life, and that returning to Petrarchan material aids us in elucidating Boccaccio's position in *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris*.

Petrarch's most notable works of humanist historiography are his biography of Scipio Africanus, *Africa*, and *De viris illustribus.* Boccaccio cites *De viris* as a significant influence for his historiography in *De mulieribus claris*, which he offers as a parallel to Petrarch's work. However Petrarch edited and amended both of these works throughout his life, and they were not published until after his death. Though we know Boccaccio discussed their ideas with Petrarch, and the influence of these ideas on Boccaccio should not be underestimated, he never owned a copy of *Africa*, *De viris,* the *Secretum* or *De remediis utriusque fortune* (Remedies for Good and Bad Fortune), and he does not appear to make any

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'equally wide-ranging influence on early modern thought' (*A Boccaccian Renaissance: Essays on the Early Modern Impact of Giovanni Boccaccio and His Works*, ed. by Martin Eisner and David Lummus, The William and Katherine Devers Series in Dante and Medieval Italian Literature [Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019], xvii., p. 12). On Boccaccian humanism see, also, Tobias Foster Gittes, *Boccaccio's Naked Muse: Eros, Culture, and the Mythopoeic Imagination* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); and 'Boccaccio and Humanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, pp. 155–70; and Zak, 'Boccaccio and Petrarch', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, pp. 139–54.

[15] Gittes, 'Boccaccio and Humanism', p. 166. See Epistole IV.29-30, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 5.1: *Epistole e Lettere*, ed. by Ginetta Auzzas and Augusto Campana (Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 1992).

[16] Gittes, p. 161.

direct textual reference to them in his own Latin works.[17] Francisco Rico has argued that contrary to the romanticised view of their mentor/disciple relationship, Petrarch did not readily share his works with Boccaccio (or with anyone), and that Petrarch allowed Boccaccio to copy only a few letters, in prose and verse, and the *Bucolicum carmen*.[18] Accordingly, both Zak and Rico have argued that, primarily, Petrarch was a 'paradigma di vita' for Boccaccio, or a guide of how, and what, to write and how to behave.[19] However, other scholars have argued there was more cross-fertilization between Petrarch and Boccaccio's Latin works than Zak and Rico allow for. Zaccaria observes that during his visit to Milan in 1359 Boccaccio had the opportunity to see the work Petrarch had been working on since 1338, the *Vita de Scipione Africane* (Life of Scipio Africanus), and the *Vita Cesaris* (Life of Caesar).[20] It was only in 1368, due to the pleas of Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara and Boccaccio, that Petrarch began the project of adapting the existing versions of *De viris* into a compendium of thirty-six lives from Romulus to Trajan – a project which remained unfinished.[21] Stephen Kolsky suggests that Boccaccio may have had an influence on Petrarch's decision to introduce figures from outside Roman history to *De viris*, between 1351 and 1353.[22] During this time, Petrarch wrote twelve new biographies, which included Adam, Hercules, and the 'honorary man', Semiramis.[23] It has also been suggested that Boccaccio may have seen Petrarch's letter to Empress Anne of Bohemia on the birth of her daughter, *Familiares* 21.8, which contains a short treatise - 'De laudibus feminarum' (In praise of women), and that it influenced Boccaccio's own, and much more extensive,

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[17] See Zak, 'Boccaccio and Petrarch', p. 141; and Francisco Rico, *Ritratti allo specchio (Boccaccio, Petrarca)* (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 2012), pp. 36-7.

[18] Rico, pp. 36-7.

[19] Zak, p. 141.

[20] Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore,* p. 161.

[21] Zaccaria, p. 161.

[22] Stephen D. Kolsky, *The Genealogy of Women: Studies in Boccaccio's De Mulieribus Claris*, Studies in the Humanities (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), lxii, pp. 40-41. On the verbal parallels between *De viris illustribus* and Boccaccio's *De genealogia*, see Chiara Ceccarelli, 'Boccaccio erudito e il prologo del *De viris illustribus* petrarchesco', in *Studi e saggi*, ed. by Giovanna Frosini, 1st edn (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2020), ccxix, pp. 149–63. Kolsky finds many similarities between Boccaccio's Semiramis in *De mulieribus claris* and Petrarch's Semiramis in the broader *De viris illustribus* and suggests that 'Boccaccio was at least familiar with this redaction of the *De viris illustribus*, if not the mover behind it (pp. 40-41).'

[23] See Elsa Filosa, 'Petrarca, Boccaccio e Le Mulieres Clarae: Dalla *Familiare* 21:8 al *De Mulieribus Claris*.', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 22 (2004), pp. 381–381.

compendium of women - *De mulieribus claris*.[24] In the face of this uncertainty with regard to Boccaccio's engagement with Petrarch, I will focus on what Boccaccio's Latin works themselves tell us about how Petrarchan ideas were transmitted and transformed in the oeuvres of Boccaccio and Chaucer. I will also examine how Petrarch expresses his philosophy on the role of the poet and historian in the publicly available material which formed the larger part of his legacy, such as the oration Petrarch's delivered at his laureation ceremony, the *Collatio laureationis*, and the *Invective contra medicum* (Invectives against a Physician) which was sent to Boccaccio on July 12th, 1357, and which he uses in his defence of poetry in *De genealogia*.[25]

Many of the Petrarchan ideas which influenced Boccaccio can be found in the 1341 *Collatio laureationis,* or *Coronation Oration*, a piece of oratory which communicates the principles of Petrarchan humanism, specifically 'his understanding of the relationship between past and present as mediated by a body of canonical texts to which he would add his own'.[26] Petrarch's illustrious title, poet laureate, is a significant factor in his legacy, and his portrayal by his contemporaries and successors, such as Boccaccio and Chaucer. Chaucer is likely to have seen the title, 'Francisco Petrarca poeta laureato', in manuscripts of Petrarch's *Historia Griseldis* (Seniles XVII. 3), which Chaucer translates in the *Clerk's Tale*.[27] The laureation ceremony on Capitoline hill recalled the values of classical Roman culture, which Petrarch desperately sought to restore, and placed the poet 'at the centre of a unified Christian republic at the centre of the Holy Roman Empire.'[28] In 1315, Albertino Mussato had been

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[24] Kolsky observes that 'nearly all the classical women' from Petrarch's letter appear in *De mulieribus* claris. He argues that there is a strong case to be made that Boccaccio read Petrarch's defence of women, and that 'given that Petrarch was breaking new ground in gathering his exempla from disparate sources and welding them into a coherent, evaluative discourse, it seems most likely that Boccaccio consulted the epistle for knowledge of these women (p. 43).

[25] Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore,* p. 165; Zak, 'Boccaccio and Petrarch', p. 142; Rico, *Ritratti allo specchio*, pp. 36-7.

[26] Dennis Looney, 'The Beginnings of Humanistic Oratory: Petrarch's *Coronation Oration*: *Collatio Laureationis*', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, p. 133.

[27] On this see Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 234. Lerer notes that variations of this title appear in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 275 ('Ffrancisci Petrarche lauriati poete'); London, British Library, MS Add.19904 ('Francisco Petrarcha florentino poeta laureato'); and London, British Library, MS Harley 2492 ('poeta laureatissimo').

[28] Looney, 'The Beginnings of Humanistic Oratory', p. 133.

appointed poet laureate with a crown of ivy and myrtle in Padua, but Dante, who was invited to receive the laureate in Bologna, refused, wishing to be crowned in Florence, from which he was exiled (though he was posthumously crowned). As Looney observes, the 'most fitting model' for Petrarch was Statius, who Petrarch believed had been crowned at the end of the first century CE at Capitoline Hill.[29] This imitation of Roman culture is representative of Petrarch's humanism more broadly, which centres upon the glorification of the classical past, particularly of Rome. Introducing his 1953 translation of the *Collatio*, E.H. Wilkins declares that the oration 'illuminates more clearly than does any other existing document the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance.'[30] Petrarch's *Collatio* sets out an agenda for what it meant to be a poet in *trecento* Italy, particularly a poet of cultural influence, and, more importantly, what Petrarch hopes that role will become. In it, Petrarch positions himself as the leader of a new cultural and artistic movement. Alongside Petrarch's oration was read the *Privilegium laurea domini Francisci petrarche*, the *instrumentum*, or document, which records Petrarch's trial before King Robert of Anjou in order to be granted the title of poet laureate.[31] Interestingly, while the *Collatio* survives in only one manuscript, which dates from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, the *Privilegium* was copied in numerous manuscripts in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and is therefore an important document to consider, alongside the *Collatio*, in the construction of Petrarch's public legacy.[32]

Petrarch begins the *Collatio Laureationis* by quoting from Virgil's *Georgics*:

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[29] In fact, Petrarch was mistaken in this belief; though victors at Capitoline hill were crowned with oak leaves, Statius never won this contest (See Looney, p. 133). There are two passages of Statius which refer to poetic coronation: the *Thebaid*, I, 32-33 and the *Achilleid* I, 15-16 (*Thebaid, Volume I: Books 1-7*, trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library, 207 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); *Thebaid, Volume II: Thebaid Books 8-12. Achilleid.*, trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library, 498 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[30] Ernest H. Wilkins, 'Petrarch's *Coronation Oration*', *PMLA*, 68.5 (1953), p. 1241.

[31] See Von Dieter Mertens, 'Petrarcas »Privilegium Laureationis«' in *Litterae Medici Aevi Festschrift Für Johanne Autenrieth*, vol. 65 (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag Sigmaringen, 1988), p. 225. Mertens also includes a complete edited text of the *Privilegium*.

[32] The *Collatio* survives only in Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, 2.8.47. Mertens notes that the *Privilegium* has often been neglected because scholars thought it was written for Petrarch, not by him, despite its close affinity with the *Collatio* (pp. 229-30).

Sed me Parnasi deserta per ardua dulcis raptat amor,
[But a sweet longing urges me upward over the lonely slopes of Parnasus][33]

He begins with a quotation from a poetic source, because ‘poetico mihi more procedendum est’ [I must follow in my speech the ways of poetry], and what greater model to follow than ‘illustrissimo et omnium maximo poeta’ [the most illustrious and greatest of poets].[34] Petrarch’s use of Virgil in his oration also sets the example for how poetry should be read and understood. Petrarch performs a kind of exegesis of each part of Virgil’s verse.

> Primum ex eo apparet quod “me Parnasi deserta per ardua”, ubi notare oportet pro “Parnasi” pro “ardua”, pro “deserta”. Secundum ex eo quod “dulcis raptat amor”, ubi attendendum pro “amor” et pro “dulcis amor” et pro “rapere valens amor”.
> [The phrase *me Parnasi deserta per ardua* suggests the difficulty of the task I have set myself - and we should note the force of the several words *Parnasi* and *ardua* and *deserta*. The phrase *dulcis raptat amor* suggests the ardent eagerness of a studious mind - and we should note the force of *amor* in itself, of *dulcis amor*, and of *amor* having the power to urge one upward.][35]

In this analysis, Petrarch sets out the ideas which form the structural framework of his oration, and which recur throughout his poetic career as central to his philosophy as both a writer and a reader. Petrarch outlines ‘three roots’ which drive his ascent of Mount Parnassus. These are, first, ‘the honour of the Republic’ [honor rei publice]; second, ‘the charm of personal glory’ [decor proprie glorie]; and third, ‘the stimulation of other men to a like endeavour’ [calcar aliene industrie].[36] Relating to the first of these ‘roots’, Petrarch hopes that his coronation may ‘because of the novelty of the occasion if for no other reason […] bring some glory to this city, to the city whence I come, and to all Italy.’[37] The idea of local, and

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[33] Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, Books I-VI*, ed. by G.P. Goold, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press, 1990), *Georgics,* III.291-2.

[34] All Latin text of the *Collatio* is from Carlo Godi, ‘La “Collatio Laureationis” del Petrarca nelle due redazioni’, *Studi Petrarcheschi*, 5 (1988), pp. 29-30. Unless otherwise specified, all translations of the *Collatio* are taken or adapted from Wilkins, ‘Petrarch’s *Coronation Oration*’.

[35] *Collatio*, p. 30.

[36] *Collatio*, pp. 35-6; Wilkins, p. 1244.

[37] *Collatio*, p. 38.

national, glory plays a significant role in the construction of Petrarch's legacy by his contemporaries and successors, which in turn, ensures the fulfilment of the second 'root': 'the charm of personal glory'. In the Prologue of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale,* the Clerk's famous description of Petrarch is fundamentally tied to his national and local identity:

> I wol yow telle a tale which that I
> Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
> As preved by his wordes and his werk.
> He is now deed and nayled in his cheste;
> I prey to God so yeve his soule reste!
> "Fraunceys Petrak, the lauriat poete,
> Highte this clerk, whos rethorike sweete
> *Enlumyned al Ytaille* of poetrie,
> As Lynyan dide of philosophie,
> Or lawe, or oother art particuler;
> But Deeth, that wol nat suffre us dwellen heer,
> But as it were a twynklyng of an ye,
> Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle shul we dye
> (*ClT* 26-38)[38]

Chaucer's description connects Petrarch to 'the city whence [he] come[s]', and to 'all Italy' [al Ytaile], which is 'enlumyned' by his 'poetrie'.[39]

Chaucer's final lines, and the *memento mori* they contain, symbolically link to another pillar of Petrarch's oration – *fama,* and the longevity of one's name. Though John P. McCall

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[38] Citations of Chaucer's works are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Line numbers are given parenthetically in the main body of the text.

[39] Chaucer's reference to 'Lynyan' is to Giovanni Legnano. John P. McCall explained what the significance of this name would be to Chaucer's English audience in the 1380s, due to the Great Western Schism: 'After 1378 the English court was intimately involved in the schism on the side of Urban VI and, therefore, was concerned with the views of Urban's chief apologist, John of Legnano. Moreover, as a member of Richard's court and as one who had actually been present in Italy when the schism broke out, Geoffrey Chaucer would have been especially aware of these matters (John P. McCall, 'Chaucer and John of Legnano', *Speculum*, 40.3 (1965), 489).'

finds the intent of these lines clear – 'to emphasize the frailty of earthly life and fame in the face of death' – they could equally be seen to serve the opposite purpose.[40] Rather than call attention to the frailty of earthly fame in the face of death, they demonstrate the triumph of Fame over Death, following the cycle of Petrarch's *Trionfi.*[41] Boccaccio, likewise, emphasises his mentor Petrarch's fame in geographical terms. In one of the many tributes to Petrarch in Boccaccio's *De genealogia*, Boccaccio describes the laureation ceremony, linking Petrarch to Florence and, like Chaucer, to 'all Italy':

> Et Franciscum Petrarcam florentinum […] nuper Rome ex senatus consulto, approbante Roberto, Ierusalem et Sycilie rege inclito, ab ipsis senatoribus laurea insignium […] Quem non dicam Ytali omnes, quorum singulare et perenne decus est, sed et Gallia omnis atque Germania, et remotissimus orbis angulus, Anglia […] (*GDG* XV.VI.11)[42]
>
> [Francesco Petrarca of Florence […] Not many years ago at Rome, by vote of the senate and approval of the famous King Robert of Sicily and Jerusalem, he received the laurel crown from the very hands of the senators […] His great eminence as a poet has been recognized by – I will not say merely all Italians, for their glory is singular and perennial – but by all France, and Germany, and even that most remote little corner of the world, England;]

Beyond recognising his local fame, Boccaccio demonstrates his fame throughout Europe.[43] In Boccaccio's short biography of Petrarch, *De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petracchi de Florentia* (On the Life and Character of Master Francesco Petrarca of Florence), which he

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[40] John P. McCall, 'Chaucer and John of Legnano', *Speculum*, 40.3 (1965), 484.

[41] The *Trionfi* is divided into six chapters, or Triumphs, the *Triumphus Cupidinis* (or Triumph of Love), the *Triumphus Pudicitie* (Triumph of Chastity), the *Triumphus Mortis* (Triumph of Death), the *Triumphus Fame* (Triumph of Fame), the *Triumphus Temporis* (Triumph of Time), and the *Triumphus Eternitatis* (Triumph of Eternity), each Triumph staging a victory over the one preceding it.

[42] Citations of *De Genealogia* are from *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vols. 7-8: *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, ed. Vittorio Zaccaria (Milan: Mondadori, 1998). Translations of *De Genealogia* are adapted from *Boccaccio on Poetry, Being the Preface and Fourteenth and Fifteenth Book of Boccaccio's 'Genealogia Deorum.'*, trans. by Charles G. Osgood, 2nd edn (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1956).

[43] On this passage, and on Chaucer's description of Petrarch in the *Clerk's Tale*, see Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers*, pp. 29-30.

wrote before he met Petrarch, he describes Petrarch's fame on a global level twice: 'maximo gloriosissima fama per orbem floruit universum' (his glorious fame flourished throughout the whole world); and 'famam per orbem gerulonum oribus reportare' (he is the bearer of fame which is talked of throughout the world.[44] The descriptions of Petrarch which permeate Boccaccio's corpus represent a shining exemplum for the heights that Florentine writers can achieve.

As well as bringing honour to his city and his country, Petrarch seeks a 'personal' glory. Looney argues that the *Collatio* records Petrarch's 'obsession with literary fame', and the word 'obsession' does not overstate the matter.[45] Fame is not only one of the 'roots' with the aid of which Petrarch climbs his poetic mountain, he also hopes it will be the 'reward' for his poetic endeavours:

> Id autem multiplex non ambigitur. Est equidem premium poeticum imprimis glorie decus, et de hoc satis est dictum. Item nominis immortalitas; eaque duplex: prima in se ipsis, secunda in his, quos tali honore dignati sunt.
> [The poet's reward is beyond question multiple, for it consists, firstly, in the charm of personal glory […] and secondly, in the immortality of one's name. This immortality is itself twofold, for it includes both the immortality of poet's own name and the immortality of the names of those whom he celebrates.][46]

Petrarch has no shortage of classical quotations to draw upon to bolster his argument. He paraphrases Cicero – 'There is hardly anyone who after the completion of a laborious task or the meeting of perils does not desire glory as a reward for what he has accomplished'– and quotes Ovid:[47]

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[44] Latin text is from *Tutte Le Opere Di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 5.1: 'Vite Di Petrarca, Pier Damiani e Livio', ed. Renata Fabbri, pp. 23-4. Translations are mine. *De vita et moribus* survives in one manuscript: Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Marc. lat. XIV 223 (= 4340) (Fabbri, pp. 882-4). This manuscript is described by the Petrarch Exegesis in Renaissance Italy database: https://petrarch.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php/manuscripts/selection-of-rvf-poems-with-boccaccios-life-of-petrarch-venice-biblioteca-nazionale.

[45] Looney, p. 133.

[46] *Collatio*, p. 44.

[47] Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. by Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library, 30 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), I.XIX.

> *Excitat auditor studium, laudataque virtus / crescit, et immensum gloria calcar habet*. [The thought of the listener excites the toiling writer; excellence grows when it is praised; and the thought of glory is a powerful spur.][48]

Petrarch also quotes from the conclusions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Statius's *Thebaid* to demonstrate the immortality of the poet's name, from Virgil for the immortality of the poet's subjects, and from Lucan to demonstrate both kinds:

> Venturi me teque legent; Pharsalia nostra vivet, et a nullo tenebris damnabitur aevo. [Posterity shall read of me and thee; and our Pharsalia shall live and shall not by any age be condemned to oblivion.][49]

He saves Lucan's passage till last to add particular rhetorical force; no age, not even Petrarch's own, can erase that which is due to a great writer. Petrarch's examples are doubly effective, not only for their sentiment, but for the power and authority which accompanies the evocation of those names – Ovid, Statius, Virgil, Lucan – which alone supports Petrarch's claim. It is interesting to note that, these are, with the exception of Homer, the very same poets to whom Chaucer submits his 'litel book' at the close of *Troilus and Criseyde*:

> kis the steppes where as thow seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan and Stace
> (5.1791–2).[50]

'Our name will be written among the immortals': history and fame

[48] Ovid, *Tristia. Ex Ponto.*, ed. by G.P. Goold, trans. by A. L. Wheeler, Loeb Classical Library, 151 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1924), IV.II.35-6.

[49] Lucan and J. D. Duff, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, Loeb Classical Library, 220 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1928), IX.985-986.

[50] Preceding both these passages is Dante's *schiera* of illustrious poets, of which he becomes the sixth member: Virgil, Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan (Statius appears at a later point, in *Purgatorio*). For more on Chaucer and Dante's *schiera* see Rossiter, 'Chaucer Joins the Schiera: The *House of Fame*, Italy and the Determination of Posterity', in *Chaucer and Fame: Reputation and Reception* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), pp. 35-6.

Fame is as central to Petrarch's ideas about writing history as it is to his self-fashioning, and this focus is transmitted in the historiographical writing of Boccaccio and Chaucer. For Petrarch, history and fame are two sides of the same coin. The *Privilegium* describes Petrarch as 'a great poet and historian', but it is the latter vocation which Petrarch felt would define his legacy. In Petrarch's *Secretum,* the figure of Saint Augustine (Augustinus) interrogates Petrarch's pursuit of 'fame among posterity', and the texts which he believed would fulfil this goal:

> Ideoque manum ad maiora iam porrigens, librum historiarum a rege Romulo in Titum Cesarem, opus immensum temporisque et laboris capacissimum, aggressus es. Eoque nondum ad exitum perducto (tantis glorie stimulis urgebaris!) ad Africam poetico quodam navigio transivisti; et nunc in prefatos *Africe* libros sic diligenter incumbis, ut alios non relinquas.
> (III.14.9-10).[51]
> [And so turning your hands to grander matters, you started on a historical book reaching from King Romulus to the Emperor Titus, a huge work requiring endless time and effort. And without even completing it (so spurred on were you by fame), you crossed over to Africa on a poetic voyage, and now you're completely immersed in the previously mentioned books of your *Africa*, yet trying not to abandon the other.]

This passage indicates that at this stage in Petrarch's life (c. 1337), he considered *De viris illustribus* and *Africa* to be the works which would secure his future glory and poetic legacy. In Boccaccio's *De vita et moribus* and in the *Notamentum* (Boccaccio's tribute to Petrarch celebrating his coronation), *Africa* is the work which Boccaccio highlights as significant in Petrarch's career, describing it as 'memoratu dignissima' [entirely worthy of memory].[52] If

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[51] Text and translation from *My Secret Book*, ed. and trans. by Mann, The I Tatti Renaissance Library (London: Harvard University Press, 2016).

[52] 'et inter alia memoratu dignissima opus suum illud magnum et mirabile cui Affrica nomen imposuit, eo quod maioris Affricani gesta (*De vita et moribus,* 12-13)' [and, among other works, entirely worthy of memory, he wrote, with an ingenuity more divine than human, that great and admirable work of his which he entitled *Africa* because there are sung, likewise in heroic meter, the deeds of the most notable Africanus.]; 'Composuit quidem usque in hodiernum diem libros, videlicet Affricam metrice, dyalagum quemdam prosaice, et alios (*Notamentum*)*'* [He has indeed composed books to this day, namely the metric *Africa*, a certain dialogue in

fame is the poet's reward, as Petrarch hopes in the *Collatio*, then the writing of history is accompanied by an even greater expectation of acquiring fame through one's efforts.

The association between writing history and acquiring glory is one which Boccaccio ascribes to the figure of Petrarch who appears in the prologue of Book VIII of *De casibus virorum illustrium*. Petrarch, who Boccaccio calls 'inter mortales nostro evo gloriosissimus homo' [the most famous man of our time], appears to galvanize a disillusioned Boccaccio, who has fallen into a hopeless reverie and thinks of giving up the project of writing *De casibus* (*DCV* VIII.I.28). In his study on fame, Boitani observes that for writers such as Augustine, fame served a moral and exemplary function: 'it spreads the good news of one's works and sets them as models for others.'[53] This is Petrarch's repeated and final message to the weary Boccaccio in his appearance in *De casibus*:

> Ergo agendum est, laborandum est et totis urgendum viribus ingenium, ut a vulgari segregemur grege; ut, tanquam preteriti labore suo profuere nobis, sic et nos nostro valeamus posteris, ut inter peremnia nostrum scribatur nomen ab eis, ut famam consequamur eternam;
> (*DCV* VIII.I26)
> [Therefore, we must act, we must work, and we must strive with all our strength and talent to distinguish ourselves from the common crowd; so that, just as those who came before have benefited us with their toil, we too may benefit future generations with our efforts, in order that our names may be recorded among the immortals. Thus, we may achieve eternal fame;]

Here, the apparition of Petrarch makes no mention of the aims which Boccaccio sets out in the Prohemium to *De casibus* – to stir contemporary princes toward virtue and away from the vices with which they afflict their states. Ultimately, what motivates Boccaccio in this

prose, and others.] The *Notamentum* is recorded in Boccaccio's notebooks, the *Zibaldone* (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo XXIX, 8). The text of the *Notamentum* can be found in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 5.1, pp. 882-4.

[53] Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame*, Chaucer Studies, 10 (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1984), p. 48.

moment of despondency is the promise of glory after he is dead – of the future, not the present.

The idea of poets and historians as the bearers and upholders of fame, is a motif which recurs throughout Petrarch's writing. Chaucer's Italianate dream vision, the *House of Fame*, reflects this idea, when he describes the great writers positioned on high pillars in Fame's house:

> And by him stood, withouten les,
> *Ful wonder hy* on a piler
> Of yren, he, the gret Omer;
>
> And ther he [Ovid] bar up wel hys fame
> Upon this piler, *also hye*
> *As I myghte see hyt with myn yë.*
>
> And on hys [Lucan's] shuldres bar up than,
> *As high as that y myghte see*.
> The fame of Julius and Pompe.
> (III.1464-6; 1490-92; 1500-3.)

This supremacy of writers amongst Fame's company is further foregrounded by Chaucer's Virgilian allusion ('Arma virumque cano' [Arms and the man I sing]),[54] used to underpin Fame's power, and to introduce a company which is almost entirely made up of poets and historians:

> That thys ylke noble quene,
> On her shuldres gan sustene
> Bothe th'armes and the name
> Of thoo that hadde large fame:
> Alexander and Hercules […]

[54] Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, Books 1-6*, ed. by G.P. Goold, trans. by H. Rushton Fairlcough (London: Loeb Classical Library, 1999), Book I, l. 1.

(III. 1407-1413.)

Boitani highlights the significance of this decision – that rather than fill the hall of Fame with heroes such as the Nine Worthies, Fame bears on her shoulder only the names of Alexander and Hercules: 'His hall is instead full of the metal pillars surmounted by *writers*'.[55] Petrarch constructs a similar image in the *Triumphus Temporis* (Triumph of Time), in which he depicts historians and poets not merely as emissaries of Fame but as the enemies of Time, or of the Sun seeks to destroy human fame. The Sun is most envious of historians and poets, because they have the ability to preserve fame:

> Poi ch' i' ebbi veduto e veggio aperto
> il volar e 'l fuggir del gran pianeta,
> ond'io ho danni et inganni assai sofferto,
> vidi una gente andarsen queta queta,
> senza temer di Tempo o di sua rabbia,
> ché gli avea in guardia istorico o poeta.
> Di lor par che più d'altri invidia s'abbia [...]
> (*Triumphus Temporis,* 85-91)[56]
> [Then, having seen, as I still clearly see,
> the flight and escape of the Sun,
> from which I have suffered many harms and deceits,
> I saw a group of people moving quietly, quietly,
> without fearing Time or its wrath,
> for they were guarded by historians and poets.
> It seems that they are more envied than the others.]

Chaucer's focus on the figure of the writer in relation to Fame demonstrates once again his 'instinctive cultural affinity for – if not a more or less direct influence of – the Italian

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[55] Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame*, 128-9.

[56] Citations from the *Trionfi* are from *Trionfi, Rime Estravaganti, Codice Degli Abbozzi*, ed. by Vinicio Pacca, Laura Paolino, and Marco Santagata, 2nd edn (Milan: Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 2000). Translations are my own.

avantgarde', specifically Dante's *Divine Comedy,* Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione,* and Petrarch's *Trionfi,* in which heroes and leaders are outshone by philosophers and writers.[57]

Illustrious men and women

Thus far, I have established the central role that fame plays in Petrarch's poetry and historiography, and how this is reproduced by Boccaccio and Chaucer. It is also important to investigate how Petrarch thought history should be written - its boundaries, its stylistic qualities, and the effect which it should have on its reader – glory cannot be won for the writer without the love of the reader. Petrarch's historiographical principles are eloquently expressed in the prefaces to *De viris illustribus*, a scholarly endeavour which, like Boccaccio's *De genealogia,* encompassed almost the whole of Petrarch's adult life, and was never completed by him. The various iterations of *De viris* reflect Petrarch's shifting thought process regarding what a history of 'illustrious' men should entail.[58] The first stage, developed in around 1337, was envisioned as a history of figures from the Roman republic (Romulus to Titus). The next iteration of *De viris*, written roughly between 1351 and 1353 was to be an 'all-ages plan', ranging from Adam to Caesar (a more similar project to Boccaccio's *De casibus*) - this version featured Petrarch's 'long preface', which is a useful document for establishing his ideas for who and what should be included in history during this period. The following phase of *De viris* removed any non-Roman figures and returned to a compendium of 'ancient secular heroes' from Romulus to Trajan. This version was dedicated to Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara and features the 'short preface'. The final, and incomplete version of *De viris* was completed by Lombardo della Seta in 1379.[59] Giuseppe Mazzotta sees these various iterations of *De viris illustribus* as 'striking symptoms of Petrarch's perplexities about the possible form the work was to take and, beyond that, of his bewilderment about the mode of representation of history.'[60] Although Petrarch changed his mind on the scope of the history which he wanted to include in his compendium, Benjamin

[57] Boitani, pp. 128-9.

[58] On the phases of *De viris illustribus*, see Vicenzo Fera, 'I *Fragmenta de Viris Illustribus* Di Francesco Petrarca', in *Essays in Memory of Vittore Branca*, The Italianist, 27 (King's Lynn: Biddles Ltd., 2007), pp. 101-32.

[59] See Hans Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni: Studies in Humanistic and Political Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 24-30.

[60] Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The Worlds of Petrarch* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 115-6.

Kohl, who has translated both of Petrarch's prefaces to *De viris*, observes that Petrarch's predicates for the practice of writing history remained 'uncharacteristically constant'.[61] In Petrarch's prefaces, Kohl identifies three consistent aims which set the terms for how history should be written: history should be moral, aesthetic, and critical.[62]

I will consider the 'critical' aim first. In the 'long preface' to *De viris*, Petrarch makes clear that part of the historian's role is as a compiler of vast and complex material.[63] In doing so the historian relieves the reader of 'the burden of research' and they impose a modicum of unity onto chaos:

> Ordinem quisque et dispersorum congeriem advertat et quod fideliter effecti grato animo suscipiat, sin eleganter quoque gratissimom, cogitans me, ut sibi querendi preriperem laborem, colligendi molestiam suscepisse. Namque ea que scripturus sum, quamvis apud aliios auctores sint, non tamen ita penes eos collocate reperiuntur. Quedam enim que apud unum desunt ab altero mutuatus sum, quedam brevius, quedam que brevitas obscura faciebat expressius eoque clarius dixi; multa etiam sciens apud alios historicos interserta vel vetusti moris vel insulse religionis, dicam melius superstitionis, plus tedii quam utilitatis aut voluptatis habitura preterii; multa apud alios carptim dicta coniunxi et vel de unius vel de diversorum multis historiis unam feci.
> (*DVI* Pref. 14-16)[64]
> [Let everyone be aware of the volume and order of the many disparate facts and if I have done my task well let him be grateful to me; if I have done it with some elegance, let him be very grateful. Also the reader should realize that as I have taken upon myself the task of collecting the facts, so I have relieved him of the burden of research. For although the things I am going to write about are found in other authors,

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[61] Kohl, 'Petrarch's Prefaces To *De Viris Illustribus*', p. 134; Zak, 'Boccaccio and Petrarch', p. 144.

[62] Kohl, p. 135.

[63] On the authorial roles of *auctor*, *scriptor*, and *compilator* see Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), pp. 94-95.

[64] Citations of *De viris illustribus* are from *De Viris Illustribus*, ed. Caterina Malta, 3 vols (Firenze: Le Lettere, 2003). All translations are from Kohl, 'Petrarch's Prefaces To *De Viris Illustribus*'.

> they are not, however, found collected there in the same way. For what is lacking in one author I have supplied from another. One account I have made shorter, another clearer; there were still others whose brevity made them obscure, so I have expanded these and thus made them more lucid. I have also omitted many things which I know are found in other historians who treated of the ancients' customs and absurd religious practices (I should say superstitions); for these things would have been more tedious than useful and pleasant. I have joined together many things which were found dispersed in many histories, by one author or by several, and I have made them a whole.]

Greene notes that Petrarch's description of gathering together the dispersed fragments of history recalls an archaeological recovery - 'a digging up that was also a resuscitation or a reincarnation or a rebirth.'[65] These fragments, 'dispersed in many histories, by one author or by several', which Petrarch has gathered cannot be merely laid out like pieces of a broken vase, they must be put back together to create something unified - they must be made 'whole'.

In the genre of encyclopaedic compendia, unity is determined by a chosen framework or criteria. This framework also defines the contents kept within it, for example, the criteria of illustrious men and famous (or good) women. Nancy Streuver argues that, compared to previous historical practices, the humanist historiographer seeks unity and comprehensive meaning:

> where the medieval chroniclers produce a scrapbook approach with contemporaneity as the only criterion, the Humanists employ the annalistic form to juxtapose and coordinate domestic and foreign affairs of the political unit they had chosen as subject.[66]

Struever suggests that this humanist desire for unity of meaning causes Petrarch to limit his subject in *De viris illustribus* to those he considers truly illustrious, rather than merely lucky:

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[65] Greene, p. 92.

[66] Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance*, p. 80.

> Quis enim, queso, Parthorum aut Macedonum, quis Gothorum et Unnorum et Vandalorum atque aliarum gentium reges ab ultimis repetitos in ordinem digerat, quorum et obscura semper et iam senio deleta sunt nomina? quod si aggrediar, ut laboris ac temporis iactura sileatur et operis immensitas et legntium fastidium, nonne propositi mei videbor oblitus? Neque enim quisquis opulentus et potens confestim simul illustris est; alterum enim fortune, alterum virtutis et glorie munus est; neque ego fortunatos sed illustres sum pollicitus viros.
> (*DVI* Pref. 22-24)
> [For who, I ask, would want to set down, in order, from the most distant past, the names of the kings of the Parthians or Macedonians, of the Goths and Huns and Vandals and other peoples which have always been obscure and that now are obliterated by time? And even if I were to try to do this, would I not seem to have forgotten my own purpose, because of the immensity of the work and the boredom for the reader, not to mention the labor and loss of time involved for me? Besides, not every rich and powerful person is similarly distinguished; these are the result of good luck, while the illustrious ones are the product of glory and virtue. In any case, I have not promised to describe lucky men, but illustrious ones.]

As Mazzotta observes, while Petrarch clearly defines what he means by 'illustrious men' – men whose renown is the product of 'glory and virtue' not luck, this criterion seems to have caused him some difficulty, judging by the various forms of *De viris*, and its incomplete state.[67]

In the Prohemium of *De casibus*, Boccaccio sets a similar precedent, explaining that due to the enormity of his task, he will select from the pool of famous individuals only the 'most famous'.[68] Around ten years later, Boccaccio's scheme for *De mulieribus claris* takes a different approach, disregarding Petrarch's requirement of both glory and virtue, and choosing the more ambivalent framework of *claritas*:

> Non enim est animus michi hoc claritatis nomen adeo strictim summere, ut semper in virtutem videatur exire; quin imo in ampliorem sensum - bona cum pace legentium -

[67] Mazzotta, pp. 115-6.

[68] 'Sed ex claris quosdam clariores excerpsisse satis erit' (*DCV* Pref. 7-9).

trahere et illas intelligere claras quas quocunque ex fa1 cinore orbi vulgato se~mone notissimas novero;
(*DMC* Pref. 6)[69]
[It is not in fact my intention to interpret the word 'famous' in such a strict sense that it will always appear to mean 'virtuous'. Instead, with the kind permission of my readers, I will adopt a wider meaning and consider as famous those women whom I know have gained a reputation throughout the world for any deed whatsoever.]

Boccaccio's model of famous pagan women, who range from the virtuous to the murderous, treated with Christian doctrine was a radical move which Boccaccio's imitators writing compendia of women generally did not follow.[70]

The subjects and details you include in your work of history depend on the purpose of the work, as Petrarch makes clear – the inclusion of subjects who are not truly illustrious will make his reader think he has 'forgotten [his] own purpose'. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Two, although Boccaccio treats some of the same historical subjects in both *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*, the details he selects for each account are not the same because the purposes of each of these works are not the same. In *De viris*, Petrarch finds it superfluous to mention small details which do not contribute to his subjects' glory, and therefore are not 'useful':

Quid enim, ne res exemplo careat, quid nosse attinet quos servos aut canes vir illustris habuerit, que iumenta, quas penulas, que servorum nomina, quod coniugum artificium peculium ve, quibus cibis uti solitus, quo vehiculo, quibus phaleris, quo amictu, quo denique salsamento, quo genere leguminis delectatus sit?
(*DVI* Pref. 31)

[69] Citations of *De mulieribus* are from *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 10: *De mulieribus claris*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milano: Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 1970). Unless otherwise stated all translations are from *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Brown (London: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[70] See Kolsky, p. 177.

[For what use is it, to give some examples, to know what slaves or dogs an illustrious man has had, what beasts of burden, what cloaks, what were the names of his servants, what was the nature of his married life, his profession, or his personal property? What use is it to know what sort of food he liked best, or what he preferred as a means of transportation, as a breastplate, as a cloak, or finally, even for sauces and vegetables?]

By contrast, as Gaston observes, these worldly details (if a 'married life' can be called such) are often very significant to the narratives in *De casibus* because it is often a failure in these particulars which is the catalyst for an illustrious man or woman's downfall.[71]

Chaucer rehearses these humanist historiographical tenets of curation and unification in the Prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women.* The God of Love describes the contents of Chaucer's sixty books in which he can 'seke' the subjects of his *Legend*:

Yis, Got wot, sixty bokes olde and newe
Hast thow thyself, alle ful of storyes grete,
That bothe Romayns and ek Greeks trete
Of sundry wemen, wich lyf that they ladde,
And evere an hundred good ageyn oon bade.
This knoweth God, and alle clerkes eke
That usen swiche materes for to seke
(G.273-79)

The God of Love also demonstrates the need for selection when producing a compendium; it should not contain the kind of superfluous detail which Petrarch scorns, but rather focus on extracting 'of al hir lyf the grete', using the multiple accounts of 'thise olde auctours':

I wot wel that thou maist nat al yt ryme
That swiche lovers dien in hire tyme;
It were to long to reden and to here.
Suffiseth me thou make in this manere:

[71] Gaston, pp. 148-50.

That thou reherce of al hir lyf the grete,
After thise olde auctours lysten for to trete.
For whoso shal so many a storye telle,
Sey shortly, or he shal to longe dwelle.'
(F.570-79).

I will elaborate more on the influence of humanist compendia on the *Legend of Good Women* in Chapter Three. Chaucer's chosen criteria for the *Legend*, that of 'good women', represents a much more rigid framework (and one liable to be subverted) than Petrarch's illustrious men, or Boccaccio's more ambivalent category of *claritas*.

<u>'The profitable goal for the historian': eloquence and history</u>

Alongside the 'critical' aspect of history writing, the other two tenets of Petrarch's history writing are that it should be 'moral' and 'aesthetic'. History should be exemplary, and it should point out to the reader models of virtuous behaviour to emulate, a concept which Timothy Hampton calls 'the rhetoric of exemplarity'.[72] As Petrarch describes in his 'short preface':

> Apud me nisi ea requiruntur, que ad virtutes vel virtutum contraria trahi possunt; hic enim, nisi fallor, fructuosus historicorum finis est, illa prosequi que vel sectanda legentibus vel fugienda sunt;
> (*DVI* Pref. 6)
> [In my book, nothing is found except what leads to virtues or to the contraries of virtues. For, unless I am mistaken, this is the profitable goal for the historian: to point up to the readers those things that are to be followed and those to be avoided.]

This principal, inspired by Livy's *Ab Urbe condita*, is also adopted by Boccaccio in his Latin works, as he describes in the *De casibus* Prohemium:

[72] Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

Nam quid satius est, quam vires omnes exponere, ut in frugem melioris vitae retrahantur errantes, a desidibus sopitis letalis somnus excutiatur, vitia reprimantur, et extollantur virtutes.
(*DCV* Pref. 3-4)
[For what is better than to exert all one's strength to bring back erring souls to enjoy a better life, to shake lethal sleep from those slumbering in idleness, by repressing vice and extolling virtue?]

In humanist compendia, the moral and the aesthetic go hand in hand, following the Horatian commonplace that poetry should be delightful or useful, but ideally it should be both.[73]

This same principle is applied to humanist historiography. Struever's study on *The Language of History in the Renaissance* investigates the connection between eloquence and history. Struever draws a connection between the supremacy of beauty in the fourteenth-century humanists' mindset with their new approach to history, spear-headed by Petrarch:

> They [the humanists] characterize eloquence as essential, not accidental; to add form radically transforms the content […] The rhetor is preeminently a mediator, i.e. the vital link between exemplary action and action imitative of the exemplar. The original deed must be expressed in artistic prose in order both to live on and to move the will of others. And it is exactly these two purposes which link eloquence and history in Humanist theory.[74]

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[73] Horace, *Ars Poetica,* 333-344. For more on the subject of moral literature in the Middle Ages, see Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[74] Nancy S. Struever, *The Language of History in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 61. Struever defies previous critical opinion, namely that of Jacob Burckhardt and Baron, that humanist rhetoric had a 'perjorative influence' on history and the humanist historian was merely 'a philologist too concerned with his own language. Struever maintains that 'the Humanist's general interest in language precedes and stimulates his specific interest in establishing texts':
it is in the area of philosophy of language, not philology, that the important Humanist achievement lies (pp. 63-4).

In Petrarch's historiography, 'the aesthetic' ensures the efficacy of 'the moral'. This principle is eloquently expressed in Petrarch's invective *De sui ipsius et multorum ignorantia* [Concerning his own ignorance and that of others], in which he fiercely defends poetry and argues for the importance of eloquence as an affective tool which stirs the reader toward virtue:

> Nostri autem – quod nemo nescit expertus – acutissimos atque ardentissimos orationis aculeos precordiis admouent infliguntque, quibus et segnes impelluntur, et algentes incendutur, et sopite excitantur, et inualidi firmantur, et strati eriguntur, et humi herentes in altissimos cogitates et honesta desideria attolluntur; ita ut terrena iam sordeant et conspecta uitia ingens sui odium, uirtus *internis* spectate oculis *formaque et 'tanqua, honesti uisa facies*,' *ut uult Plato, miros sapientie,* miros sui pariat amores. [Everyone who has read our Latin authors knows that they touch and pierce our vitals with the *sharp, burning barbs of their eloquenc*e. By these, the sluggish are aroused, the frigid are inflamed, the drowsy are awakened, the weak are strengthened, the prostrate are raised, and *the earthbound are lifted up toward lofty thoughts and noble desires*. Then earthly matters seem squalid, and the sight of vices inspires great loathing. *Virtue in turn is revealed to our inner eyes*; and its beauty and what Plato calls "the visual aspect of the good" engender a wonderful love of both wisdom and virtue (my italics.)][75]

The reader is affected by the eloquence and beauty of the historian's rhetorical style, and thus moved, are more likely to derive moral profit from the text.[76] In Boccaccio's Latin compendia, it is the moral aspects of the work which Boccaccio thinks will be delightful to his audience, and he offers these exhortations as a 'pleasant' reprieve from his narratives. In the Prohemium of *De casibus*, Boccaccio employs the Horatian pleasure and profit pairing:

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[75] Text and translation from *Invectives* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), ed. and trans. David Marsh, p. 317.

[76] For more on humanist ideas of eloquence see Nathan Crick, 'Invectives against Ignoramuses: Petrarch and the Defense of Humanist Eloquence', *Review of Communication*, 19.2, p. 178-93.

Porro ne continua historiarum series legenti possit fastidium aliquod inferre, morsus in vitia, et ad virtutem suasiones inservisse quandoque, tam delectabile, quam utile arbitratus annectam.
(*DCV* Pref. 9-10).[77]
[In order that an unbroken succession of stories be not tiresome to the reader, I think it will be both more pleasant and useful from time to time to add inducements to virtue and dissuasions from vice.]

Boccaccio gives a similar reasoning for the moral framework of *De mulieribus claris*:

ratus sum quandoque historiis inserere non nulla lepida blandimenta virtutis et in fugam atque detestationem scelerum, aculeos addere; et sic fiet ut, inmixta hystoriarum delectationi, sacra mentes subintrabit utilitas.
(*DMC* Pref. 7-8)
[Hence, I have decided to insert at various places in these stories some pleasant exhortations to virtue and to add incentives for avoiding and detesting wickedness. Thus, holy profit will mix with entertainment and so steal insensibly into my readers' minds.]

Boccaccio describes moral change as a subtle process - when mixed with delight, these lessons 'steal insensibly' into the minds of Boccaccio's readers. In his rebuttal 'In garrulos adversus rethoricam' [Against the detractors of rhetoric] in Book 6 of *De casibus*, Boccaccio compares the effect of rhetoric on the listener to the sweetness of a stringed instrument:

sic et exornata locutio, in animam diffusa per aures, illam ante alia titillatione demulcet, inde pulsis conceptis reliquis in se trahit adeo, ut si spectes audientes, attonitos et immobiles videas et totos in loquentis ire sententiam.
(*DCV* VI.XIII.15)
[In the same way adorned speech flows into the soul by way of the ears, and it first soothes the mind by its brilliance. It first sweetens the soul, as if tickling it, then, having driven out other concepts, concentrates it so much into itself that if you were

[77] Translation by Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*, pp. 191-4.

to observe the listeners, you would see them astonished and immobile, and all, so to speak, changing their ideas according to the will of the speaker.]

We can see from these passages, that, following Petrarch, Boccaccio's historiographical style is predicated on the distinctive responses of his reader, and their amenability to his moral message.

Boccaccian historiography

Although there is much to be found in common between Petrarch's model for history and Boccaccio's, Boccaccian historiography also forges new pathways. It is often at these points of divergence from the Petrarchan model that the seeds of Chaucer's intervention can be found. In the dedication to his patron, Jean, Duke of Berry, Laurent de Premierfait describes *De casibus virorum illustrium* as 'un tres exquis et singulier volume des cas des nobles hommes et femmes' [a very exquisite and unique volume concerning the falls of noble men and women].[78] Though it has been considered a more 'medieval' text than *De mulieribus claris,* due to its Dantean influence and sermon-like moralism, in recent times scholars have begun to investigate the politics of *De casibus virorum illustrium*, which anticipated later humanist thought and continued to be influential for centuries after Boccaccio's death.[79] Although he largely agrees with Zaccaria's conclusion that *De casibus* 'si ferma al di qua dell'Umanesimo' [stops short of humanism], Pastore Stocchi observes that *De casibus*'s popularity in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries belies this conclusion, and that the humanist

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[78] Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Arsenal 5193, fol. 14. My translation.

[79] In his introduction to *De casibus* in *Tutte le opere,* Zaccaria asserts that '([l]a concezione individualistica e agonistica del Rinascimento, che pone l'uomo al centro dell'universo, non è ancora matura' [the individualistic and agonistic conception of the Renaissance, which places man at the center of the universe, is not yet mature (p. xxxiv)]. In the chapter devoted to *De casibus* in the *Critical Guide* to Boccaccio's works, Simone Marchesi compares the depiction of Fortune in Boccaccio to that in Chapters 24 and 25 of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and finds that 'the point made in the *De casibus* is much more "medieval" in quality, as well as in cultural points of reference ('Boccaccio on Fortune [*De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*]', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 247-9).

Poggio Bracciolini (1380 – 1459) 'practically rewrote' sections of *De casibus* in his own treatises on Fortune - *De varietate Fortunae, De miseria humane conditionis* and *De infelicitate principum*.[80] James Hankins' extensive study compares the ideas present in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanist treatises, letters, and orations with *De casibus*, and finds that in many ways Boccaccio's ideas, particularly in relation to the moral conduct of rulers, are 'representative of Renaissance humanism.'[81]

De mulieribus claris is also a text which anticipates Renaissance thought, and follows a more Petrarchan humanist model, removing the dream setting of *De casibus* and the short moralising chapters. This change of direction is evident from the Prohemium to *De mulieribus claris*, Boccaccio sets himself in relation to Petrarch whilst also showing that he can do more. He begins with reference to *De viris illustribus*:

> Scripsere iam dudum non nulli veterum sub compendio de viris illustribus libros; et nostro evo, latiori tamen volumine et accuratiori stilo, vir insignis et poeta egregius Franciscus Petrarca, preceptor noster, scribit; […] Sane miratus sum plurimum adeo modicum apud huiusce viros potuisse mulieres, ut nullam memorie gratiam in speciali aliqua descriptione consecute sint, cum liquido ex amplioribus historiis constet quasdam tam strenue quam fortiter egisse non nulla.
> [Long ago there were a few ancient authors who composed biographies of famous men in the form of compendia, and in our day that renowned man and great poet, my teacher Petrarch, is writing a similar work that will be even fuller and more carefully done. […] What surprises me is how little attention women have attracted from writers of this genre, and the absence of any work devoted especially to their memory, even though lengthier histories show clearly that some women have performed acts requiring vigour and courage.]
> (*De mulieribus*, Prohemium, 3-4)

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[80] Zaccara, p. xxxiv; Manlio Pastore Stocchi, 'Il Boccaccio Del *De Casibus*', *Giornale Storico Della Letteratura Italiana*, 161.515 (1984), pp. 429-30

[81] Hankins, 'Boccaccio and the Political Thought of Renaissance', p. 20. Hankins argues that 'what was new' in relation to humanist thought on virtuous leaders, was the 'idea of meritocracy': 'the idea that virtuous character was not merely desirable in princes but also a condition of exercising power in general (p. 21).'

Boccaccio's preface shows his commitment to contribute to classical scholarship, and to do something which had not yet been done – as Glenda McLeod argues, they are 'the reasons of the humanist scholar.'[82] Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* is an innovative and original project, and as Kolsky observes: 'it placed humanism on the cutting edge of culture', provoking multiple imitations from the time of its publication into the Renaissance.[83] The first innovation which *De mulieribus* offer is that in its use of a wide variety of sources, *De mulieribus* represents a 'conscious enlargement of early humanism.'[84] Boccaccio makes use of texts which Petrarch could not have, such as Tacitus' *Annals* which Boccaccio uncovered in a monastery library around 1362.[85] *De mulieribus* also exhibits Boccaccio's Greek scholarship, making fruitful use of Homer and setting it apart from Petrarchan humanism.[86]

Although many scholars have noted the misogyny which pervades *De mulieribus*, and that dynamic cannot be denied, it is also important to acknowledge that, in many ways, the presentation of women in *De mulieribus* broke new and radical ground.[87] Kolsky foregrounds the fact that *De mulieribus* is a guiding light in the trend of compendia focused on women, but even more unique is its focus on *famous* women:

> The adjective 'famous' indicates an attempt to re-evaluate the female presence in history: to grant space to the intervention of women in the public domain and allow them to share in the glory of the humanists' hall of fame, hitherto exclusively the domain of men.[88]

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[82] Glenda McLeod, *Virtue and Venom: Catalogs of Women from Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), p. 62.

[83] Kolsky, p. 177.

[84] Kolsky, p. 40.

[85] Tacitus influenced the narratives of Agrippina the Younger, Poppaea, Paulina (the wife of Seneca), and Epicharis. See Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus' Annals*, Oxford Approaches to Classical Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 197-8.

[86] Kolsky, p. 40.

[87] For critiques of Boccaccio's misogyny in *De mulieribus* see, for example, Desmond *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval Aeneid*, Medieval Cultures (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), viii, pp. 58-73; and Constance Jordan, 'Boccaccio's In-Famous Women: Gender and Civic Virtue in the *De Mulieribus Claris*', in *Ambiguous Realities: Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Carole Levin and Jeanie Watson (Wayne State University Press, 1987), pp. 25-47.

[88] Kolsky, p. 3.

In relation to Boccaccio's mode, McLeod observes that Boccaccio treats the *mulier clara* in accordance with the traditions of epideictic encomium, which O. B. Hardison summarises in his study of praise in the Renaissance:

> It is in some respects closer to biography than oratory. The body of the encomium is devoted to a summary of the life of the man being praised. It will usually be with favourable notice of his nation, family, comeliness and education. Such material should be secondary, however, to his noble deeds […] While the subject's deeds are central, they need not be presented in the objective light of history. Instead, they should be "heightened" to make the praise more emphatic.[89]

As we can surmise from Hardison's choice of words – 'the life of the man' – this is not a form commonly used to describe women, for whom *effictio* (the praise of the "goods of nature" and the "goods of fortune") rather than *notatio* (the praise of the "goods of character") would normally be employed.[90] McLeod observes that epideictic praise has 'long been associated with civic virtue', and thus 'anticipates future links between the good woman and the good state.'[91]

In the introduction to her translation of *De mulieribus,* Virginia Brown highlights that Boccaccio provides:

> a striking foretaste of ideas that would later find clearer expression in the Renaissance – ideas such as the view that it was appropriate for gifted women (at least) to seek and acquire fame for their contributions to art, literature, and the active life of public affairs.[92]

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[89] O. B. Hardison, *The Enduring Monument; A Study of The Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 30.

[90] See Hardison, pp. 30-31; and McLeod, pp. 6-7.

[91] McLeod, pp. 3-4.

[92] Virginia Brown, *Famous Women*, pp. xiv-xv.

I want to highlight the significance of Boccaccio providing examples of women engaging in literary, artistic and scholarly pursuits. Laura Torretta gives a nuanced evaluation of the different kinds of women in *De mulieribus*, a work which she describes as occupying a position 'ad indicare il termine di un' età e il principio di un'altra' [at the end of one age and the beginning of another].[93] Alongside the many humble, meek, and chaste women who occupy the pages of *De mulieribus*, Boccaccio provides 'un altro ideale di donna' [another ideal for women] – women who even explicitly reject the traditional *mores* of womanhood.[94] Torretta gives the example of Cornificia the poet, who has 'neglected the deeds of women and applied her intellect to the studies of the greatest poets (*DMC* LXXXVI. 3)', and of another female intellectual, Proba, who Boccaccio describes with great admiration:

> Erat huic satis - si femineos consideremus mores - colus et acus atque textrina, si, more plurium , torpere voluisset; sed quoniam sedula studiis sacris ab ingenio segniciei rubiginem absterxit omnem, in lumen evasit eternum.
> (*DMC* XCVII.10)
> [It was enough for her, if we consider the manners of women, to be a spinner and needlewoman and skilled in weaving, if, according to the custom of many, she had wanted to be idle; but since she diligently removed all the rust of sloth from her mind by applying herself to sacred studies, she emerged into eternal light.]

Proba is not only an example for women, she is a figure aligned with Boccaccio himself. Proba rejects sloth, just as Boccaccio does in the Book VIII Prologue of *De casibus*, and through her studies she achieves the 'eternal light' of fame. Boccaccio's conclusion to her biography would fit seamlessly into any of Boccaccio's or Petrarch's descriptions of their own ambitions. Boccaccio hopes that his idle readers will learn from Proba's example:

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[93] Laura Torretta, 'Il "Liber de Claris Mulieribus" Di Giovanni Boccaccio. Parti I e II.', *Giornale Storico Della Letteratura Italiana*, 39 (1902), p. 253.

[94] Torretta, p. 266. Torretta notes that, in doing so Boccaccio 'is in full disagreement with the ideas of his own days and previous times' (Boccaccio è in pieno disaccordo colle idee de'suni giorni e dei tempi anteriori). She cites opinions such as those of the Tuscan writer Francesco da Barberino (c. 1264–1348), who considers reading and writing gateways to sin for women, and advised all women to be able to perform the duties of a housewife (See Torretta, pp. 267-8).

> Adverterent edepol quantum differentie sit inter famam laudandis operibus querere, et nomen una cum cadavere sepelire, et, tanquam non vixerint, e vita discedere. (*DMC* XCVII.10-11)
> [They would then undoubtedly see how much difference there is between seeking fame with noble deeds, and burying one's name, along with the body, and dying as if they had never truly lived.]

The biography which Chaucer chose to translate from *De mulieribus*, that of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, also reflects these dynamics. Like Cornificia and Proba, Zenobia disregards 'omnino muliebribus offitiis', or, as Chaucer renders it*,* 'From hire childhede I fynde that she fledde / Office of wommen' (*MkT* 2255-56). Zenobia is an impressive linguist and scholar, reading Egyptian hieroglyphs, and, in the manner of a humanist, she commits 'all Latin, Greek, and barbarian histories' to memory 'with the greatest zeal', and even compiles them into 'epitomes'.[95] Zenobia's scholarliness is a feature of her character which Boccaccio augments from the account in the *Historia Augusta* in which she is described as 'not wholly conversant with the Latin tongue'.[96] In *De casibus*, when Zenobia falls from her high position, it is emphasised that the antithesis of her glorious heights would be to perform the 'offices of women':

[95] 'Et si plurimum venationibus armisque vacasset, non obstitere hec quin literas egyptias nosceret et sub Longino philosopho preceptore grecas etiam disceret. Quarum suffragio hystorias omnes latinas grecas et barbaras summo cum studio vidit et memorie commendavit. Nec hoc tantum; quin imo creditum est illas etiam sub epythomatis brevitate traxisse et preter suum ydioma novit egyptium eoque, cum syriacum sciret, usa est (*DMC* C.14).'

[96] 'filios Latine loqui iusserat, ita ut Graece, vel difficile vel raro loquerentur. ipsa Latini sermonis non usque quaque gnara, sed ut loqueretur pudore cohibito; loquebatur et Aegyptiace ad perfectum modum. historiae Alexandrinae atque orientalis ita perita ut eam epitomasse dicatur; Latinam autem Graece legerat.' [She ordered her sons to talk Latin, so that, in fact, they spoke Greek but rarely and with difficulty. She herself was not wholly conversant with the Latin tongue, but nevertheless, mastering her timidity she would speak it; Egyptian, on the other hand, she spoke very well. In the history of Alexandria and the Orient she was so well versed that she even composed an epitome, so it is said; Roman history, however, she read in Greek (*Historia Augusta*, ed. by David Rohrbacher, trans. by David Magie, Loeb Classical Library, 263, 3 vols [Harvard University Press, 2022], 24.30. 20-23).]

> hec nuper galeata contionari militibus assueta, nunc velata cogitur muliercularum audire fabellas; hec nuper Orienti presidens sceptra gestabat, nunc Rome subiacens colum sicut cetere baiulat.
> (*DMC* C.14)
> [This woman, who, helmet-clad, was accustomed to addressing soldiers, is now veiled, confined to listening to the tales of working girls. She who sat on high, and bore the sceptre of the East, now is subject to Rome and carries the distaff just like the others!]

This rhetorical dichotomy between the sceptre and the distaff is appended onto Zenobia's narrative in the *Monk's Tale*, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Two. With all this said, Boccaccio's representations of educated women do not reflect a straightforward advocacy for women scholars or leaders in *De mulieribus*. Kolsky observes that because they have trespassed into male rather than female territory, many of the women of *De mulieribus claris* are in a 'no-win situation' in the text.[97] Likewise, Torretta identifies the opposing principles in Boccaccio's depiction of women 'che generare nel lettore un curioso senso di perplessità' [which generates a curious sense of perplexity in the reader].[98] It is this 'sense of perplexity' which Chaucer capitalises on in the *Legend of Good Women*, as I shall discuss in Chapter Three.

<u>'What is all history except the praise of Rome?': Petrarch, Boccaccio and the disappointments of their age</u>

Another innovative aspect of Boccaccio's historiography, and a key matter on which Petrarch and Boccaccio diverged, is the inclusion of contemporary figures in his history. Petrarch held, and sustained, a strong disillusionment with his own age, which is expressed frequently throughout his writings. In the *Collatio*, Petrarch looks back in admiration at a golden age of poetry:

> In Grecia primum, deinde in Ytalia, et presertim sub imperio Cesaris Augusti, su quo vates floruerunt: Virgilius, Varus, Ovidius, Flaccus multique alii;

[97] Kolsky, p. 3.

[98] Torretta, pp. 268-9.

> [there was a time, there was an age, that was happier for poets, an age when they were held in the highest honour, first in Greece and then in Italy, and especially when Caesar Augustus held imperial sway, under whom there flourished excellent poets, Virgil, Varus, Ovid, Horace, and many others.][99]

He laments that, 'today, as you well know, all this is changed'.[100] Likewise, the *Trionfi* opens with the vision of a triumphal chariot, a scene with which Petrarch regrets that he is unfamiliar:

> I' che gioir di tal vista non soglio
> per lo secol noioso in ch'i' mi trovo
> voto d'ogni valor, pien d'ogni orgoglio
> [I am not used to rejoicing at such a sight
> Thanks to the dreary century in which I find myself,
> vacant of every valour, full of every pride]
> (*Triumphus Cupidinis* I. 13-18)

This distaste for his own age translates into Petrarch's opinions in relation to writing history. In the long preface to *De viris illustribus*, Petrarch sardonically thanks 'those contemporary princes' who relieve him from the task of recounting their lives, which make more fitting material for 'satire' than 'history'.[101] Though, in the late 1340s, he decided to broaden his illustrious lives to include Biblical figures, as he aged Petrarch narrowed his focus in the direction of what Kohl terms 'militant classicism', exclaiming in the *Invectiva contra eum qui maledixit Italie* (Invective Against a Detractor of Italy), 'Quid est enim aliud omnis historia, Romana laus?' [for what is all history but the praise of Rome?].'[102] The evolution of *De viris illustribus* reflected this perspective – Petrarch hoped that lives of illustrious Romans would be aspirational 'models of character' for his readers: 'he hoped that by eloquently recreating

[99] Godi, *Collatio*, p. 34.

[100] Francesco Petrarca, 'Petrarch's *Coronation Oration*', trans. by Ernest H. Wilkins, *PMLA*, 68.5 (1953), p. 1244.

[101] 'Gratiam habeo principibus nostris qui michi fesso et quietis avido hunc prerivjunt laborem; neque enim ystorie sed satyre materiam stilo tribuunt' (*DVI* Pref. 10). Translation from Kohl, p. 138.

[102] Petrarch and Marsh, *Invectives*, pp. 416-17.

the lives of ancient Roman heroes, he might arouse the hearts and minds of his contemporaries to imitate their example'.[103]

Boccaccio does not follow Petrarch's narrow maxim that history is nothing 'but the praise of Rome'. In fact, Boccaccio's commitment to praising Petrarch, and Dante, throughout his *ouevre* goes against this limitation. In *De genealogia,* contemporary poets play a significant role in Boccaccio's defence of poetry, where they are placed on equal footing with classical poets like Virgil:

> Quis tam sui inscius, qui, advertens nostrum Dantem sacre theologie implicitos persepe nexus mira demonstratione solventem, non sentiat eum non solum phylosophum, sed theologum insignem fuisse? Et si hoc existimet, qua fultus ratione arbitrabitur eum bimembrem gryphem, currum in culmine severi montis trahentem, septem candelabris et totidem sociatum nynphis, cum reliqua triunphali pompa, ut ostenderet quia rithimos fabulasque sciret componere? Quis insuper adeo insanus erit; ut putet preclarissimum virum atque christianissimum Franciscum Petrarcam, cuius vitam et mores omni sanctitate laudabiles vidimus ipsi, atque, prestante Deo, diu videbimus […]
> (*DGD* XIV.X.52-53)
> [let any man consider *our own poet* Dante as he often unties with amazingly skilful demonstration the hard knots of holy theology; will such a one be so in-sensible as not to perceive that Dante was a great theologian as well as a philosopher? To mention another instance: that most distinguished Christian gentleman, Francis Petrarch, whose life and character we have, *with our own eyes*, beheld so laudable in all sanctity – and by God's grace shall continue to behold for a long time.]

Boccaccio emphasises the proximity and familiarity of these contemporary poets – Dante is 'our own poet', and the reader has witnessed the glory of Petrarch's life and character (a recollection of his biography of Petrarch) with their own eyes. In Book XV, Boccaccio devotes a short chapter to defending 'The modern authors herein cited', imagining that his critics will complain at his use of both 'such Ancients as are obscure and unheard of, and

[103] Witt, 'The Rebirth of the Romans as Models of Character - *De Viris Illustribus*', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide To The Complete Works*, p. 104.

such moderns as have no reputation.'[104] The moderns he has 'dared cite' are those whose character he knows and believes to be exemplary:

> Hoc enim michi constat ex omnibus, eos fere per omne vite tempus studiis vacasse sacris, eos inter insignes scientia et moribus semper versatos homines, eos vita laudabiles, nec ulla turpi nota signalos, eorum scripta aut dieta a prudentioribus etiam approbata. Credo, his agentibus, equiperanda sit eorum novitas vetustati.
> (*DGD* XV.VI.2)
> [I know by every sign that they have spent nearly their whole lives in sacred studies, that they have ever mingled with men eminent for their attainments both of learning and character, they have lived laudable lives, are without stain or taint of any kind, and that both their writings and conversation are approved by the wisest. On such terms, I think, their modernity should offset the age of others.]

Boccaccio grants Petrarch the highest honour of being worthy to be numbered 'not among the moderns, but among the illustrious ancients'.[105] Boccaccio's reverence for contemporary poets demonstrates his impulse to assimilate the classical and contemporary worlds, an impulse which also shapes his historiographical practice.

Boccaccio's inclusion of contemporary subjects in *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris* is one of the most notable features of his historiography. *De casibus virorum illustrium* relates the falls of famous men from Adam to Walter of Brienne and John II the Good who died at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356 (Boccaccio composed Redaction A of *De casibus* during the 1350s). In the Prohemium, Boccaccio hopes that the effect of this uncomfortable proximity would cause contemporary princes and leaders to re-evaluate their conduct:

> ut, dum segnes fluxosque principes et Dei iudicio quassatos in solum reges viderint, Dei potentiam, *fragilitatem suam*, et Fortune lubricum noscant, et letis modum ponere discant, et aliorum periculo sue possint utilitati consulere
> (*DCV* Pref. 8-9; my italics)

[104] *De Genealogia*, XV. VI, 2.

[105] 'inter veteres illustres viros, numerandum potlus quam inter modernos induco' (*DGD* XV.VI.11).

> [when our princes see these rulers, old and spent, prostrated by the judgment of God, they will recognize God's power, the shiftiness of Fortune, and *their own insecurity*. They will learn the bounds of their merrymaking, and by the misfortunes of others, they can take counsel for their own profit.][106]

This is an aspect of Boccaccio's historiographical practice which clearly influenced Chaucer, as he chose to follow suit in his own *De casibus virorum illustrium*, the *Monk's Tale*, contributing the narratives which have become known as 'the modern instances': Peter of Spain (1334-69), Peter of Cyprus (1328-69), Bernabò of Lombardy (1323-85), Ugolino of Pisa (1214-89). In his discussion of Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* in relation to Italian humanism, Wallace argues that 'Chaucer aligns himself with Boccaccian revisionism and against a Petrarchan cultural project that proves congenial to despotic ideology'.[107] Wallace finds the distinction between the two men to be Boccaccio's civic-mindedness – *De casibus virorum illustrium* is 'a deliberate attempt to make his scholarly skills serve the public good, or the state' – the Florentine republic, whose greatest threat was the despotic princes of northern Italy.[108] When taking on the patronage of the Visconti, Petrarch's policy of not including contemporary figures in *De viris illustribus* suited him well:

> It was the promise of being associated with "Eternal Men" that made north Italian despots so very keen to patronize Petrarch: for Petrarchan scholarship could distract attention from the immediate, often squalid and illegitimate, sources of their own personal power by associating them with a grand historical tradition of great men.[109]

Where Petrarch's historiography allows the despots he serves to further secure their authority and legacy, Boccaccio's seeks to destabilise those in power by reminding them of the lessons of history. Ginsberg also interrogates a dialectical tension between different forms of Italian polity, but he locates this tension in *De casibus* itself, in the form of Boccaccio's two mentors, Dante and Petrarch.[110] In opposition to Wallace, Ginsberg paints an image of

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[106] Italics are mine. Translation from Ginsberg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition*, pp. 191-4.

[107] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 300.

[108] Wallace, p. 303.

[109] Wallace, p. 301.

[110] For more on Boccaccio's relationship to these poetic mentors see Jason Houston, *Building a Monument to Dante: Boccaccio as Dantista* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Victoria Kirkham, Michael

Boccaccio who is by no means a straightforward representative of Florentine republicanism, but a man torn between polities:

> Part of Boccaccio the humanist - a large part - is a member of the Petrarchan academy, and it is the humanist Boccaccio, we should remember, whom Chaucer would have heard about, or met, when he was in Florence.[111]

Having experienced the distinct polities of Florence and Milan in his two trips to Italy, Chaucer was certainly aware of these dynamics, and deemed Bernabò Visconti a tyrant in the *Monk's Tale*. For the purposes of this study, I am interested in how the novel parameters of Boccaccian humanism which I have described in this chapter, and which reflect both adherence and divergence from the Petrarchan model, were interpreted by Chaucer in his own compendia. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Boccaccio's historiographical mode is reproduced and challenged in Chaucer's uncomfortable adaptation of the *De casibus* framework – the *Monk's Tale*.

Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr, 'Part VII. Devotion to Dante and Petrarch', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*; and 'Part III. Boccaccio's Literary Contexts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*.

[111] Ginsberg, p. 197.

Chapter Two

Audience, affect and dullness in *De casibus virorum illustrium* and the *Monk's Tale*

Introduction

In many ways, Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* dramatizes the moment when texts and readers meet, and the unpredictable results of that meeting. This chapter explores the complex author-audience relationship portrayed in the *Monk's Tale*, in dialogue with Boccaccio's Latin works, *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris*. First, I consider how Chaucer 'met' Boccaccio – I examine the scope of the influence of *De casibus* on the *Monk's Tale* and how the material form of Boccaccio's Latin manuscripts might have influenced Chaucer's reception of their contents. I then discuss how the 'bewailling' mode which Chaucer adopts in the *Monk's Tale* reflects Boccaccio's adaptive style in his Latin works, using Chaucer's account of Zenobia as a case study. The most significant source of rupture between the *Monk's Tale* and its audience, both fictional and actual, is its monotony – in the setting of the Canterbury pilgrims it is interrupted by the Knight, who cannot bear to hear more, and disparaged by the Host for its soporific effects. I use the evidence of Boccaccio's mode, along with the responses of his early readers, to shed light on the Monk's monotonous form. By reconsidering Chaucer's engagement with Boccaccio's Latin works, we can elucidate Chaucer's narrative and paratextual decisions in the *Canterbury Tales,* and in the *Monk's Tale* most powerfully. Recently, rather than viewing the relationship between the *Monk's Tale* and Boccaccio's Latin works through a sources and analogues lens, it has begun to be viewed by scholars such as Gaston, Schwebel, Neuse, Wallace, and Winthrop Wetherbee as an investigational work, which engages in a complex way with humanist ideas.[1] I agree with Wetherbee when he argues that both *De casibus* and the *Monk's Tale* should be regarded as 'laborator[ies] of narrative experimentation.'[2]

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[1] Gaston, *Reading Chaucer in Time*; Schwebel, '"Trophee" and Triumph in the *Monk's Tale*', in *Chaucer and Italian Culture* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2021), pp. 193–216; Wallace, 'Italy', pp. 218-34; Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The Context of the *Monk's Tale*', in *Language and Style in English Literature: Essays in Honour of Michio Masui* (Hiroshima: The Eihosha Ltd., 1991), pp. 159–77.

[2] Wetherbee, p. 164.

First, it is important to establish what has been argued thus far in relation to Chaucer's engagement with *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*. *De casibus* has long been acknowledged as a generic analogue for the *Monk's Tale.* Piero Boitani finds that 'the design of the Tale as a whole is that of a 'de casibus virorum illustrium.'[3] Boitani's use of the indefinite article is a reflection of the adaptability of the *De casibus* genre, and its amenability to be taken on and expanded by a new author of a new generation. Both *De casibus* and the *Monk's Tale* treat the falls of great men throughout history, although Chaucer transforms Boccaccio's formula in three significant ways; he removes Boccaccio's dream vision setting and the inducements toward virtue and against vice which intersperse his narratives, and he does not tell the narratives in chronological order. The *Monk's Tale* has the subtitle 'De casibus virorum illustrium' in fifteen manuscripts of various different kinds of production, including the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts. Thomas Bestul argues that this makes it 'likely, but not certain, that Chaucer himself was responsible for this apparent confirmation of an obligation to Boccaccio.'[4] Of the seventeen 'tragedies' in the *Monk's Tale,* six of them have a precedent in *De casibus*: Adam, Samson, Croesus, Zenobia, Nero, and Pompey (within the narrative of Julius Caesar). In his account of the sources and analogues of the *Monk's Tale,* Robert Kilburn Root deemed it likely that, in addition to the final stanzas of Zenobia, the first sentence of 'Adam', the second stanza of 'Nero', the story of Pompey in 'Julius Caesar', 'Croesus', and some 'moralizing sentiment' in 'Samson' were derived from *De casibus*.[5]

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[3] Boitani, 'The "Monk's Tale": Dante and Boccaccio', *Medium Ævum*, 45.1 (1976), p. 50.

[4] Thomas H. Bestul, 'The Monk's Tale', in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel, Chaucer Studies (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), p. 410. See also Boitani, 'The "Monk's Tale"', p. 50.

[5] Root, 'The Monk's Tale', in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. by W.F Bryan and Germaine Dempster, 2nd edn (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1958), p. 632. Since then, there have been many contesting claims of sources, notably Pauline Aiken, who finds Chaucer's connection to Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale* more convincing, Dudley R. Johnson, who presents the case for Chaucer having used the thirteenth-century *Bible Historiale of* Guyard Desmouslins, and Vincent di Marco who proposes Arnold of Liege's early fourteenth-century text, the *Alphabetum narrationem* (Pauline Aiken, 'Vincent of Beauvais and Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*', *Speculum*, 17.1 (1942), 56–68; Dudley R. Johnson, 'The Biblical Characters of Chaucer's Monk', *PMLA*, 66.5 (1951), 827–43; Vincent DiMarco, 'Nero's Nets and Seneca's Veins: A New Source for the "Monk's Tale"?', *The Chaucer Review*, 28.4 (1994), 384–92). There are some linguistic echoes between the *Monk's Tale* and *De casibus*, such as the first two lines of the 'tragedie' of Adam, which can also be found in the *Speculum Historiale,* making it difficult to judge which of these texts Chaucer

However, Chaucer only directly translates Boccaccio’s Latin works in the narrative of Zenobia which is largely sourced from Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus* with its conclusion drawn from *De casibus.* Chaucer follows Boccaccio’s model of including historical examples from very recent history, such as Bernabò Visconti who died in 1385, only a couple of years before Chaucer began writing the *Canterbury Tales.* While Petrarch’s *De viris illustribus* focused exclusively on Roman heroes, and in doing so avoided engagement with the condemnable actions of his patrons, the Visconti, Boccaccio’s method is to discomfort his powerful audience through the proximity of contemporary victims of Fortune. In following Boccaccio’s suit and adding further contemporary victims of Fortune to his collection, Chaucer identified the most novel element of Boccaccio’s enterprise in *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris,* and one which set Boccaccio apart from his mentor Petrarch. I will discuss the effect of this contemporaneity in the *Monk’s Tale* at a later point.

<u>Chaucer and the manuscript tradition of Boccaccio’s Latin works</u>

A factor which complicates a broader association between Boccaccio’s Latin works and the *Monk’s Tale* is the fact that the Monk attributes the ‘tragedie’ of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, to Petrarch and not to Boccaccio (*MkT* 2325). This misdirection has mystified many scholars and opens up the question of Chaucer’s material encounter with the Latin works of Boccaccio, and whether, in fact, he may have mistaken their authorship. Boitani theorised that Chaucer may have confused a manuscript of Petrarch’s *De viris illustribus* with an anonymous and mutilated manuscript of *De casibus* and that Chaucer may also have thought *De mulieribus claris* was by Petrarch, due to the author’s commitment to treat ‘tam viros quam mulieres’

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used, if not a combination of the two (See *De casibus,* I.I. 4. and *Speculum Historiale Vincentii Belvacensis,* I, cap. xli.) The possibility that Chaucer used any, or all, of these texts would not discount him from having used Boccaccio’s Latin works. Chaucer’s account of ‘Hugelyn’ is drawn from Dante’s *Inferno,* but Boitani points out that Boccaccio includes a brief but memorable account of Ugolino which opens Book IX chapter XX, ‘Infortunati quidam’ (Some unfortunate individuals): ‘Attonitus magnanimi regis declivium callem spectabam adhuc, cum venientem Ugolinum, Pisarum comitem, vidi, amplissimo fletu civium suorum sevitiam ac inediam qua cum filiis perierat deflentem’ [Dazed, I was still considering the downward path of the noble king when I saw Ugolino, the Count of Pisa, approaching, lamenting with ample weeping the cruelty of his fellow citizens and the hunger by which he had perished with his sons (my translation).] See Boitani, ‘The “Monk’s Tale”’, ‘p. 54.

[both men and women].[6] There are a few reasons why I find this hypothesis improbable: first, that Boccaccio's name appears prominently in manuscripts of *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris.* As Neuse points out:

> Chaucer would not have had to read very far into *De casibus* to become aware that Petrarch could not be its author, he being referred to by name in three different places (III. 14; VIII. 1; IX. 27) – and, incidentally, in the first sentence of the prohemium to *De claris mulieribus*. Even if his copy lacked the explicits at the end of every book identifying author and title of the work – *Iohannis Boccaccii de Certaldo De casibus virorum illustrium liber* – Chaucer would still have been likely to light upon the reference to Boccaccio's birthplace in Fortune's address to the author (VI. 21, 472), as well as the mention of the latter's father: *ut aiebat Boccaccius, genitor meus* (IX. 21, 830).[7]

Petrarch's appearance in Book VIII occurs only five chapters before the account of Zenobia, and Boitani cedes that Chaucer would have to have seen a manuscript without the Book VIII Prologue.[8] Of the selection of fourteenth-century manuscripts of *De casibus* which I have consulted (Pal. Lat. 935, Chig. L.VII. 264 and Arch. Cap. S. Pietro. C. 133 in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Plut. 26. sin. 6 and Plut. 66. 10 in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, and Cod. Lat. 235 in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena) there is not one which does not bear Boccaccio's name, nor, to my knowledge, is there a florilegium which contains extracts of the Zenobia narrative separate from their context.[9]

I will now speculate based on our existing knowledge of the manuscript tradition of *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*, what kind of manuscripts Chaucer is likely to have read, and how this might have affected his reception of these works. For the purposes of this study, I have consulted a sample of fifty-seven fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts of *De*

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[6] Boitani, 'The "Monk's Tale"', p. 69.

[7] Neuse, p. 249.

[8] Boitani, p. 69.

[9] Another theory, which historically has not been given much credit and which I will explore in more depth later in the chapter, is that in citing Petrarch at that moment Chaucer is in fact making reference to the brief account of Zenobia in the *Triumphus Fame* (II. 107–17).

casibus virorum illustrium and *De mulieribus claris* , focusing in particular on paratexts, compilation, and evidence of reading and annotation (see Appendices A and B).[10] The first factor to take into account when we envisage Chaucer's encounter with manuscripts of *De casibus,* is that Boccaccio's text was disseminated in two redactions: Redaction A, which was composed between 1356 and 1360, and Redaction B, dedicated to Boccaccio's friend Mainardo Cavalcanti and completed between 1373 and 1374, both of which were in circulation during Chaucer's second visit to Italy.[11] The dating of the inception of Redaction A to approximately 1356 was proposed by Henri Hauvette, the reasoning behind this being that the latest chronological 'fall' in the work is the Battle of Poitiers and the capture of John II of France which took place in September 1356.[12] Zaccaria offers a more detailed picture of the composition of Redaction A, theorising that Boccaccio had written up to Book VII (which is considerably the shortest of the *De casibus* books, being only nine chapters long), at which point he took a break from his project until a visit to Milan to see Petrarch in 1359.[13] The Prologue of Book VIII, in which an apparition of Petrarch reprimands Boccaccio for sloth and lack of desire to complete his already extensive work, may be based on this real life encounter, after which Boccaccio completed the final two books of *De casibus.*[14] Books VIII and IX treat falls from late antiquity to the mid-fourteenth century, culminating the project according to Boccaccio's original intention that the work should relate histories,

> a mundi primordio in nostrum usque evum.
> (*DCV* I.I.7)
> [from the beginning of the world until our age.]

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[10] I have consulted the majority of these in person, but some (including the manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France) I have accessed only in digitised form. For an almost comprehensive list of *De casibus* manuscripts see *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. IX, 'Nota al Testo', pp. 875-878.

[11] Of the complete manuscripts in my sample, seven are Redaction A, and fourteen are Redaction B. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Cap. S. Pietro. C. 133 begins with Redaction A up until Book VII chapter 6 and switches to Redaction B.

[12] Henri Hauvette, 'Recherches Sur Le *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium de Boccace*', in *Entre Camarades Publié Par La Société Des Anciens Élèves de La Faculté Des Lettres de l'Université de Paris* (Alcan, 1901), pp. 281–97.

[13] Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore*, pp. 35-6.

[14] Zaccaria, pp. 35-6.

Redaction B must have been completed at some point in the period between 1373, when Boccaccio decided to dedicate the work to his friend Mainardo Cavalcanti, and Petrarch's death in July 1374, as Boccaccio invites Petrarch to amend his work in the conclusion of Redaction B, indicating that he was still alive at the time of its production.[15] Mainardo's manuscript, when he allowed it to be copied, became the archetype of the manuscripts of Redaction B which contains the dedication.[16] Chaucer's direct textual engagement is so limited that we cannot use it to determine which Redaction Chaucer used, based on textual differences.

This poses the question: how would Chaucer's reading experience have differed depending on whether he read Redaction A or B? As Zaccaria details, the most notable non-paratextual changes from A to B are additional mythological or historical detail, knowledge which Boccaccio had acquired in the approximately twenty-year period between the redactions. This included additional material from Homer and Tacitus and the amplification of his description of Cicero in Book VI, Chapter XII.[17] Some additions reflect his relationships, for example the addition of two references to Petrarch – one in Book III, Chapter XIV, 'Auctoris purgatorio et commendatio poesis', and the long insert in the Conclusion of Book IX inviting Petrarch to amend or edit the work where it was not consonant with Christian faith.[18] If we look back to Neuse's argument in relation to the presence of Petrarch in *De casibus*, we must qualify his point with the fact that in Redaction A, Petrarch only appears once, in the Book VIII Prologue. Perhaps the most notable revision made for Redaction A is the addition of final *postille*:

> Tu autem, parve liber, longum vive felixque, insignis militis Maghinardi meique tenax nominis atque fame.
> (*DCV* XI.XXVII.11)

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[15] Boccaccio's decision to dedicate *De casibus* to Mainardo Cavalcanti followed an exchange of letters in 1373 in which Boccaccio congratulated Mainardo on his marriage to Andrea Acciaiuoli, and Mainardo asked Boccaccio to baptise his son (see *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio,* vol. 9, p. xx).

[16] There are several versions of Redaction A which include the dedication to Cavalcanti; Laurent de Premierfait used such a version in his two translations of *De casibus*, as I will discuss in Chapter Four.

[17] Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore*, pp. 64-5. Boccaccio's knowledge of Homer dates from his connection with Leontius Pilato, who translated Homer's poems between 1360 and 1362.

[18] *DCV* XI.XXVII.6.

[But you, little book, live long and happily, honouring the enduring name and reputation of the knight Mainardo, and of me.]

It is tempting to draw comparison between Boccaccio's 'parve liber' and Chaucer's 'litel bok' in the conclusion to *Troilus and Criseyde* (V.1786). Boccaccio also makes some changes to the Prohemium. As Ginsberg has noted, one notable change is that Boccaccio transfers some of his ire directed to the princes of the time toward the masses, who imitate their behaviour.[19]

Although Ginsberg argues that 'we cannot be sure which version Chaucer saw', we must consider the strong possibility that Chaucer used the manuscripts of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus*, now lost, which are recorded in the 1426 inventory of the ducal library at Pavia, as has been proposed for the *Teseida* and *Decameron*.[20] These records offer us a valuable insight into Chaucer's engagement with these texts, which has yet to be commented on. The record of *De casibus* in the 1426 inventory, manuscript 383, provides useful clues as to the kind of manuscript Chaucer engaged with, if it was indeed the text that Chaucer used:

> Iohannes Boccaccius de casibus virorum illustrium copertus corio gialdo ad modum parisinum
> incipit in textu: *Exquirenti michi quid ex labore*
> et finitur: *fortune cuncta uertentis.* Sig. DCLXIII.
> [Giovanni Boccaccio *de casibus virorum illustrium* covered in yellow leather in the Parisian style, the text begins: 'In asking myself from what labour'; and ends: 'by fortune who overturns all things' Sig. DCLXIII.] [21]

The first thing to note is that this is not an anonymous manuscript, so, if it is indeed the manuscript which Chaucer saw, Boitani's theory that Chaucer misattributed his manuscript would not hold water. That the manuscript is in a Parisian style is interesting. There is

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[19] For a description of these changes see Ginsberg, p. 192. For an edition of the Redaction A preface, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*, Chaucer Studies (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 26-7. For the Redaction B text see *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 9.

[20] See Coleman, 'Chaucer, the "Teseida"', and 'The Knight's Tale'; and Biggs, p. 9.

[21] Pellegrin, p. 159 (my translation).

evidence of some co-production of Boccaccio's Latin manuscripts between Italy and France. Daniels observes of Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{II}, that its script and decoration 'link it with France' but it seems to have been finished in Rome in 1389.[22] The opening line of the manuscript, 'Exquirenti michi quid ex labore', are the first words of Boccaccio's Prohemium, indicating that this is a manuscript which lacks the dedication to Mainardo Cavalcanti, and, therefore, that it is a Redaction A manuscript.[23] This is further affirmed by the closing lines 'fortune cuncta uertentis', which shows that the *postille* added to Redaction B is not present. We can conclude, then, that if this was the manuscript of *De casibus* which Chaucer saw, that it was likely to be a Redaction A manuscript, that it bore Boccaccio's name, and that it was a complete textual exemplar of the work.[24]

Unlike *De casibus virorum illustrium*, an autograph manuscript of *De mulieribus claris* survives (identified by Pier Giorgio Ricci), although the majority of the extant manuscripts of the text follow lost former autographs. In *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio,* Zaccaria proposes nine editorial phases in the production of *De mulieribus*.[25] As

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[22] Daniels, p. 147.

[23] Before producing Redaction B and composing the dedication to Cavalcanti, Boccaccio distributed his slightly revised Redaction A, and then distributed Redaction B, giving the only complete copy to Mainardo Cavalcanti. This would account for the fact that there are versions of the Redaction B text which do not include the dedication, and some which contain the dedication at the end (see Zaccaria, pp. 72-5).

[24] Of course, it is possible that Chaucer used different manuscripts of these works, and so I continue to consider both A and B manuscripts in my study. See Zaccaria, 'Nota al Testo' in *De casibus virorum illustrium*, pp. 875-898.

[25] See Appendices A and B for details of the manuscripts I discuss. The first three editorial phases of *De mulieribus* probably correspond with the first drafting of the text, c. 1361, and are made up of 102 chapters. In June 1362, Boccaccio accepted an invitation from Niccolò Acciaiuoli to go to Naples, after which he composed a dedication to Niccolò's sister, 'the most gracious lady', Andrea Acciaiuoli, which represents phase IV (an example of which is Vu). Following this, Boccaccio expanded chapters XXVI (Almatea), XXVII (Nycostrata), LI (Atalia) and LXXVII (Sappho) with additional authorial moralising and added two new chapters (XXXI (De coniugibus Meniarum) and LXXX (De coniugibus Cymbrorum)); this is phase V, represented in the manuscript owned by Lorenzo de Medici, L. For phase VI, Boccaccio modified and added to the text, radically reorganized the chapters, made the order more chronological, removed any duplicate chapters, and added three new biographies (LXXXVI (De Cornificia poeta), CV (De Cammiola senensi vidua), CVI (De Iohanna Ierusalem et Sycilie regina)) and a conclusion. Phase VI is represented by a large group of manuscripts. A subsequent phase of revisions differentiates Phase VII, represented by P^{1}, Vz, Vz^{1}, and FR (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, Cod.

all the phases include the Prohemium and the chapters which Chaucer likely read or used in some capacity – the subjects of the *Legend of Good Women* and the *Monk's Tale* – it is difficult to narrow down further than this, our only clue being the entry in the Pavia inventory.[26] The manuscript of *De mulieribus*, number 381, is described as follows:

> Iohannes Bochacius de mulieribus claris disquaternatus
> incipit in rubrica: *Iohannes de Certaldo*
> et finitur: *dentibus inuidorum depereat*. Sig. DCC LVII.[27]
> [Giovanni Boccaccio *De mulieribus claris*, divided into quaternions, begins with the title: '*Iohannes de Certaldo'*; and ends with: '*dentibus inuidorum depereat'* Sig. DCC LVII.]

Pellegrin describes this as a 'texte complet' of *De mulieribus* and dates it to approximately 1375.[28] This is also a manuscript which names Boccaccio at its outset. It is unusual that the title is recorded as 'Iohannes de Certaldo' and not 'Iohannes Boccaccius de Certaldo', which is how Boccaccio's name typically appears in manuscripts. We cannot tell from this title alone whether the manuscript included Boccaccio's dedication to Andrea Acciaiuoli, as both the dedication and Prohemium begin with his name. However, the ending of the conclusion, 'ut potius alicuius in bonum vigeat opus, quam in nullius commodum laceratum dentibus invidorum depereat', shows that this manuscript is from editorial phase VI or later of *De mulieribus*, which is the stage when Boccaccio added a conclusion to the work. This also means that it included the dedication to Andrea Acciaiuoli, which is present from editorial phase IV. This is unsurprising, as the highest number of fourteenth-century manuscripts of

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791). Phases VIII and IX are represented by the surviving autograph, Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{I}, and its marginal notes and corrections, respectively. Daniels surveys an additional fourteen manuscripts which are not included in the studies of Ricci and Zaccaria (Ca^1, CaF, Lo^2, O^3, OM, P, P^2, P^3, P^4, P^5, T, Vb, Vp^1, and Vr) (Daniels, Appendix VIII). These manuscript abbreviations are taken from *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vols. 9 and 10; and from Daniels. See Appendix B.

[26] The shared subjects between *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women* are Cleopatra (LXXXVIII), Thisbe (XIII), Medea (XVII), Hypsipyle (XVI), Ariadne, Lucretia (XLVIII), Philomene, Hypermnestra (XIV) and Dido (XLII.). Chaucer draws on Zenobia (C) for the *Monk's Tale*.

[27] Pellegrin, p. 159.

[28] Pellegrin, p. 159.

De mulieribus derive from phase VI.[29]

We must also consider the possibility that Chaucer may have encountered *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus* in the same manuscript. The two texts are combined in four of my sample manuscripts.[30] Though the two works are demarcated with separate incipits and tables of contents (in manuscripts where such rubrics are integrated), the division between the two texts is not pronounced in any of these manuscripts. In Vsp and O^{3}, the presentation, illuminated initials, and scribal annotation of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* are identical and the two texts are divided by only two folios in Vsp and half a folio in O^{3}. Likewise, in Vu, only a half folio separates the two texts – *De mulieribus* begins with a more elaborate decorated initial, but not a full new title page, and the same style of blue, green, red and gold illuminated initial which demarcates the *De casibus* chapters is used for the preface of *De mulieribus.* That Chaucer produced two texts individually inspired by the premise of each text – a compendium of fallen individuals, and a compendium of famous (but not necessarily good) women – indicates that he viewed the two as separate. However, each of these texts contain the influence of both of Boccaccio's Latin works. Daniels observes that all five manuscripts which contain both texts are 'high-quality, large-sized parchment manuscripts, which confer high status on Boccaccio as a Latin author' – the kind of manuscript which might have been kept in Bernabò Visconti's library.[31] Given that Chaucer used both texts for his account of Zenobia in the *Monk's Tale*, it is reasonable to suggest that he may have used a manuscript which contained both works, and one which contained a table of contents for easy navigation between the two. An example of such a manuscript from the fourteenth century would be Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C 133 (Vsp), dated c. 1375, owned by a cardinal, and which, in addition to *De casibus,* contains several of Petrarch's letters, including Petrarch's *Historia Griseldis*, the source of Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale.* This manuscript is remarkable because it contains all of the Latin works which we

[29] These include Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C 133 (Vsp); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Misc. 58 (O^{1}) and Digby 78 (O^{2}); and Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{II} (L^{2}).

[30] Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C 133 and Urb. Lat. 451 (Vu); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Lincoln College 32 (O^{3}); and Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Ll, II, 8 (Ca^{1}). See Appendices A and B.

[31] Daniels, 149. Unlike Galeazzo's library, records of Bernabò's library do not survive (see my Introduction, p. 28).

know Chaucer read in Italy, produced only three years before Chaucer's visit, and is at minimum an indicator that this kind of manuscript was being produced during the time Chaucer was there.

With this material context in mind, I will embark upon my comparison of the *Monk's Tale* and Boccaccio's Latin works from the standpoint that Chaucer saw both *De mulieribus* and *De casibus* in their entirety and use my sample of manuscripts as evidence of the way in which other early readers engaged with these texts.

'Literary bastards': the *Monk's Tale* within the *Canterbury Tales*

A theory which has endured throughout the twentieth century in Chaucerian scholarship is the idea that the *Monk's Tale* was composed independently from the framework of the *Canterbury Tales,* and at a much earlier stage, as an English imitation of *De casibus*. This hypothesis was memorably described by Root:

> when he came to construct the *Canterbury Tales,* he saw a chance to utilize these discarded fragments, dramatically so appropriate to the ponderous dignity of the Monk, while at the same time indicating his maturer critical judgment as to their literary worth […] Here is a thrifty way of disposing of one's literary bastards![32]

It may be true that Chaucer began to compose a *De casibus*-esque poem and repurposed it, adding the modern instance of Bernabò Visconti. One justification for this 'widely assumed' theory has been that the *Monk's Tale* is of an inferior literary quality and philosophical complexity to Chaucer's other late work, and therefore must have been composed earlier.[33] Aside from the fact that I believe that Chaucer encountered *De casibus* on his second trip to Italy, I certainly do not follow the conclusion of Seymour who argues that 'if the *Monk's Tale* is an unrevised early poem, all interpretations of it as a dramatic extension of the Canterbury

[32] Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer*, p. 206.

[33] Seymour, pp. 163-4. Seymour also points out that the *Monk's Tale* has ninety-seven stanzas, making it 'too close to be coincidental' to the one hundred stanza composition of late medieval verse, for example the *Parliament of Fowls* (Seymour, p. 164).

pilgrimage are null and void.'[34] The fictive framework of the pilgrim audience in the *Canterbury Tales* is crucial to understanding the *Monk's Tale* in relation to Boccaccio, and I will argue that there are several reasons why Chaucer would have found the *Canterbury Tales* to be the ideal setting for an experiment in the *De casibus* form.

In *De casibus*, Boccaccio constructs various different kinds of intended reader, who will respond (or perhaps fail to respond) in subjective ways to the work. The pilgrims of the *Canterbury Tales* provide Chaucer with an environment to trial Boccaccio's formula in front of a constructed autonomous audience (in the case of the *Monk's Tale* – the Knight and the Host) and to explore subjective and unpredictable responses to his exemplary narratives. As Gaston argues:

> this act of reception helps the *Monk's Tale* function as one of the *Canterbury Tales*. It enables Chaucer to include the expansive *De casibus* genre within the story collection, allowing the tale to stand for its genre via synecdoche while still capturing the expansive, lengthy nature of Boccaccio's and Petrarch's texts.[35]

Grudin draws a connection between Boccaccio and Chaucer as writers because they both recognise 'the manifest tension between discourse and its receivers'.[36] This dynamic is heightened by the interrelationship between reading and writing. Both the Monk and Boccaccio foreground the act of reading as a crucial part of the process of composition – the Monk's process is that of reading, memorising, and retelling. As Judith Ferster observes:

> Writers themselves demonstrated the reader's power to transform a poem and thus showed that reading can be a kind of rewriting.[37]

Several scholars have noted Chaucer's concern with the responses of readers, or listeners, in the *Canterbury Tales* and the interpretive unpredictability that accompanies taletelling.

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[34] Seymour, p. 164.

[35] Gaston, pp. 164-5.

[36] Michaela Paasche Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 140.

[37] Judith Ferster, *Chaucer on Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 10.

Grudin suggests that Chaucer's pilgrim audience remind us that 'it is characteristic of a listener to hear subjectively.'[38] In *De casibus*, the dreamlike setting, in which the subjects of history clamour for the author's attention, creates an arena for the author to interact with his subjects, enlivening the act of recording their experiences.[39] However, Boccaccio constructs a readership which cannot answer back; they are contained within the bounds of the expectations he sets for them. By contrast, Brenda Schildgen observes that Chaucer recognizes how open texts are to multiple meanings and to 'interpretive anarchy.'[40] Both Schildgen and Ferster have noted that this 'personalization of motive', which begins to appear as a motif in fourteenth-century literature, may have arisen from the spread of private reading and the recognition that readers' individual responses cannot be controlled.[41] In the *Monk's Tale*, Chaucer devises an open field for an unfavourable reception, and premature interruption, of the *Tale*. 'Interpretive anarchy' is nowhere more notable, or, as Gaston puts it, more 'violent', than in the responses of the Knight and Harry Bailly to the tragedies of the Monk.[42]

'I seye for me it is a grete disese': 'tragedy' in the *Monk's Tale*

We see from the first stanza of the *Monk's Tale* that, more than being a genre, 'tragedie' is for the Monk a 'manere' of telling a particular tale:

> I wol biwaille in *manere of tragedie*
> The harm of hem that stoode in heigh degree,
> And fillen so that ther nas no remedie
> To brynge hem out of hir adversitee.
> For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee,

[38] Grudin, p. 135.

[39] For more on Boccaccio's dream vision setting and his use of Fortune see Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The Context of the Monk's Tale', in *Language and Style in English Literature: Essays in Honour of Michio Masui* (Hiroshima: The Eihosha Ltd., 1991), p. 165.

[40] Brenda Deen Schildgen, 'Jerome's Prefatory Epistles to the Bible and The Canterbury Tales', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 15 (1993), p. 122.

[41] Schildgen, p. 123; Fester, p. 10.

[42] Gaston, p. 174.

Ther may no man the course of hire witholde.
Lat no man truste on blynd prosperitee;
Be war by thise ensamples trewe and olde.
(*MkT* 1-8)

The Monk introduces tragedy as a poetic mode; he will 'biwaille in manere of tragedie', while the tales that he tells are 'ensamples trewe and olde', or historical *exempla*. Chaucer's reference point for 'tragedie' derives from a definition in Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* and an accompanying gloss from Nicholas Trevet's commentary:

> What other thynge bywaylen the cryinges of tragedyes but oonly the dedes of Fortune, that with an unwar strook overturneth the realmes of greet nobleye? (Glose. Tragedye is to seyn a dite of a prosperite for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse.)
> (*Boece*, II. *Prosa* 2. 67-72)

The *Consolation* defines tragedy as an unexpected blow of Fortune upon a person of high status. Trevet's gloss re-emphasises tragedy as an enactment of metabasis – a fall from prosperity to wretchedness. This definition functionally describes the falls in *De casibus,* which are not necessarily dependent on an Aristotelian fatal flaw, but sometimes represent suffering brought on by random misfortune, and at other times by an excess of pride, or some other moral failing. It is also worth noting that tragedy, and its capacity to evoke emotion, is condemned in the *Consolation.* Lady Philosophy guides Boethius' persona, the prisoner, away from the negative influence of tragedy, persuading him that the power of sweet rhetoric lacks the philosophical and intellectual substance of logic and reason, and leading him to conclude:

> Serteynly […] thise ben faire thynges and enoynted with hony swetnesse of Rethorik and Musike; and oonly io whil thei ben herd thei ben delycious, but to wrecches is a deppere felyng of harm {this is to seyn, that ivrecches felen the harmes that thei suffren more grevously than the remedies or the delites of thise wordes motven gladen or conforten hem). So that, whanne thise thynges stynten for to soune in eris, the sorwe that es inset greveth the thought.
> (*Boece*, II. Prosa 3. 8-18)

The 'hony swetnesse of Rethorik and Musike' which Boethius condemns, and which inspires 'depper felynge of harm' and penetrates 'the thought', fittingly describes the goal of eloquence in early humanist historiography, which is designed to move and even discomfort its reader and stir them toward 'lofty thoughts' and virtuous actions.[43] Where Boethius's Lady Philosophy advocates for ratio over rhetoric, Petrarch and Boccaccio argue that reason is not sufficient to stir one toward virtue:

> si forsan saxea hec corda tenui spiritu oris mei in salutem suam mollire saltem paululum queam. Sane cum tales, obscenis sueti voluptatibus, difficiles animos demonstrationibus prestare consueverint, et lepiditate hystoriarum capi non nunquam, exemplis agendum ratus sum eis describere quid Deus omnipotens, seu - ut eorum loquar more — Fortuna, in elatos possit et fecerit.
> (*DCV* Pref. 5-7.)
> [I will direct the impetus of my speech where it seeks to go, and see whether I can perhaps soften, at least a bit, their stony hearts for their good with the tender breath of my mouth. Since, of course, those grown used to obscene pleasures are wont to follow rigorously reasoned arguments with difficulty and sometimes are taken by the delights of history, I have decided to make use of examples to describe what almighty God – or, to speak in their manner, Fortune – can do and has done against the high and mighty.][44]

Here Boccaccio imagines two different kinds of audience, which we might think of as the intellectual reader and the sensual reader. The former is liable to be influenced by the logic of a 'rigorously reasoned argument' such as Aristotle's *Ethics*. The sensual reader, in this case the amoral princes of Boccaccio's lifetime, accustomed to obscene pleasures, must find their morality not in logical principles but in exemplarity, whereby the 'delights of history' are treated rhetorically. Boccaccio's phrase 'with tender breath' emphasises the oratorical nature of his prose, such as we see in the mode of public storytelling in the *Canterbury Tales*. Boccaccio even specifies that to reach his reader he will 'speak in their manner', by using the framework of Fortune rather than of 'almighty God' or providence. It is the affective designs

[43] Francesco Petrarca and David Marsh, *Invectives* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 317. On his own ignorance, v. 109.

[44] Translation by Ginsberg, pp. 191-4.

of Boccaccio's rhetoric upon the reader's emotions - the ability to soften their hearts – which will change his readers' behaviour and help them realise the instability of their position:

> ut, dum segnes fluxosque principes et Dei iudicio quassatos in solum reges viderint, Dei potentiam, fragilitatem suam, et Fortune lubricum noscant, et letis modum ponere discant, et aliorum periculo sue possint utilitati consulere
> (*DCV* Pref. 8-9)[45]
> [when our princes see these rulers, old and spent, prostrated by the judgment of God, they will recognize God's power, the shiftiness of Fortune, and their own insecurity. They will learn the bounds of their merrymaking, and by the misfortunes of others, they can take counsel for their own profit.]

This is a sentiment which several scribes and readers of *De casibus* found worthy of returning to, for example, the scribe of Vat. Lat. 2941 (Vl^1) marks it with a manicule.[46] Thus, Chaucer's choice for the Monk to adopt the style of tragedy to communicate his 'ensaumples trewe and olde' indicates his understanding of both Boethius and Boccaccian humanism, and his ability to comprehend and give voice to diverse and oppositional philosophies in his texts.

Four Zenobias

One way in which Boccaccio and Chaucer guide their reader, or listener, toward the correct response is by tailoring their material according to its context. An example of this is the account of Zenobia, and as it is the only episode which Chaucer translates directly from Boccaccio's Latin works, it is the perfect 'tragedy' to explore Chaucer's relationship to Boccaccio's historiographical mode in *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*. In many ways, Zenobia is a representative figure for Chaucer to have selected from Boccaccio's Latin works. Although she is a seemingly blameless victim of Fortune, as Boitani observes, her story reflects some of the most prominent concerns in Boccaccio's humanistic works: Fortune, Fame, and Chastity.[47]

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[45] Translation by Ginsberg, pp. 191-4.

[46] Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 2941, fol. 3r.

[47] Boitani, "The Monk's Tale", p. 65.

Boccaccio's two renditions of the story of Zenobia, Queen of Palmyra, which he sourced from the *Historia Augusta,* demonstrate his ability to adapt his mode of storytelling according to the classification of the text in which it is enclosed. Although both *De mulieribus* and *De casibus* are works of moral historiography, their objective, which is defined by their audience, is different. The constructed reader of *De mulieribus* is a woman who may be influenced by the exemplary or censorious behaviour of historical women, while the constructed reader of *De casibus* is a wayward prince, who will 'recognise [his own] insecurity' through the emotional power of the text, and 'the tender breath' of Boccaccio's rhetorical voice. This transformation is evident both through stylistic difference and through the adjustment of the framing and details of Zenobia's narrative. In *De casibus,* Boccaccio has a vested interest in provoking emotion and generating pity from his audience. I would argue that it is this motivation which leads him to omit certain details of Zenobia's narrative in *De casibus* that would be included in *De mulieribus.* For example, though both accounts describe Zenobia ruling in the name of her two young sons, she shows them due deference:

> Zenobia vero virili predita animo, viro mortuo et privigno et hoste insuper ceso, Heremnianum et Thimolaum parvulos filios produxit in medium eorumque nomine quod paternum fuerat occupavit imperium regioque incedens habitu parvulos filios romanorum imperatorum insignibus decoratos pre se ferens,
> (*DCV* VIII.VI.6)
> [Zenobia, endowed with a truly manly spirit, after the death of her husband and her stepchild, defeated her enemy and introduced her two small sons, Hermianus and Thimolaus, into the midst of things. Taking upon herself the authority that had belonged to their father, she advanced in regal attire, carrying before her the little sons adorned with the insignia of the Roman emperors.]

In *De mulieribus claris,* rather than dressing her sons in Roman insignia, Zenobia assumes the mantle herself:

> […] filiis eius adhuc parvulis, imperiali sagulo humeris perfusa et regiis ornata comparuit, filiorumque nomine, longe magis quam sexui conveniret, gubernavit imperium.
> (*DMC* C.8-9)
> [Since her children were still young, she draped the imperial mantle around her own

shoulders, put on the royal insignia, and ruled the empire in her sons' name longer than was suitable to her sex.]

This small detail gives an indication of the fact that the Zenobia of *De mulieribus claris,* despite her many exemplary qualities, has assumed her role inappropriately, and crucially for 'longer than was suitable to her sex'. Though both texts indicate that Zenobia is a strong and feared leader, *De casibus* makes a point of the fact that she is 'endowed with a truly manly spirit' and that in battle she arms herself with 'virtute mulieris virili preposita sexui' [masculine courage beyond the female sex].[48] In *De mulieribus claris,* Zenobia's womanhood is a warning to female readers, in *De casibus* it is suppressed so that she may be identifiable to every reader. Boccaccio's curation of the narrative also demonstrates his desire to omit details which taint Zenobia's reputation, such as the fact that the precedent of her rule might be illegitimate. Another incriminating detail which Boccaccio includes in *De mulieribus*, but omits from *De casibus*, is that Zenobia was reported to have had a hand in her stepson Herodes' death:

> Et cum iam omnem orientem ad Romanos spectantem una cum viro pacatum obtineret, et ecce a Meonio consobrino suo Odenatus una cum Herode filio occisus est; et, ut quidam asserunt, ob invidiam, existimantibus aliis, Zenobiam in mortem Herodis prestitisse consensum, eo quod sepius eius damnasset molliciem et ut filiis Herenniano et Thimolao, quos ex Odenato susceperat, successio cederet regni. (*DMC* C.8-9)
> [Then suddenly Odaenathus and his son Herodes were killed by a cousin named Maeonius. According to some accounts, envy was the cause, but others report that Zenobia had consented to Herode's death because she had often condemned his softness and wanted to ensure that the succession of the kingdom would fall to Herennianus and Timolaus, the sons she had born to Odaenathus.]

It is not out of historical accuracy that Boccaccio makes this suggestion, for, as Kolsky observes, it is from an 'unverified source' and 'may well have been completely unfounded'.[49] Rather, this detail serves to delegitimize Zenobia's choice to rule as a woman, by presenting

[48] *DCV* VIII.VI.11.

[49] Kolsky, p. 164.

her as a usurper, and ensures that her exemplarity for female readers is solely found in her chastity and not in her leadership.[50]

Boccaccio also adapts the Zenobia narrative to fit his intended audience through his style and the use of his moral authorial voice, which intervenes with a very different emphasis in the two texts. In his study of Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin works, Peter Godman observes the way in which Boccaccio selects features of Zenobia's narrative from the *Historia Augusta* upon which he expands according to the moral framework of his own Latin texts:

> Perceived by a partisan witness in the *Historia Augusta,* recreated and expanded to suit moralistic and misogynistic biography in *DMC* and summarized with almost homiletic style in *DCVI,* the career of Zenobia is transformed by Boccaccio from an event in political history to a vehicle for two distinct types of polemical generalization. Both have some foundation in his source, but both go far beyond it.[51]

In *De mulieribus claris,* Zenobia's exemplary abstemious sexual habits are the focus of her account. Breaking from the narrative, Boccaccio strongly commends Zenobia for her conviction that sexual intercourse with her husband, Odenatus, must be only for procreational purposes:

> O laudabile iudicium mulieris! Satis quidem apparet arbitratam nil ob aliud a natura mortalibus immissam libidinem quam ut prolis innovatione continua conservetur posteritas et reliquum, tanquam supervacaneum, viciosum. Perrarissimas quidem huiuscemodi moris comperies mulieres.
> (*DMC* C.12)
> [How praiseworthy was this woman's attitude! Clearly, she thought that nature had instilled sexual drive in human beings for no other reason than to preserve the species by a continuous replenishment of offspring; beyond this, the instinct was apparently superfluous and therefore a vice. Very rarely indeed will you find women of this

[50] Christine de Pizan, like Chaucer, chooses not to include this accusation in the account of Zenobia in her *City of Ladies*, which is also based on *De mulieribus claris.*

[51] Godman, 'Chaucer and Boccaccio's Latin Works', pp. 274-5.

stamp.]

This authorial interjection is representative of the tenor of much of the moral didacticism in *De mulieribus claris.* Boccaccio acknowledges the exemplary nature of Zenobia's character and uses this characteristic to condemn the behaviour of women generally, and show how they are inadequate, even in comparison to a pagan woman.

Despite its prominence in *De mulieribus claris,* Zenobia's marital abstinence is not mentioned in her account in *De casibus,* where Boccaccio's moral didacticism is focused on Zenobia's glorious battle exploits juxtaposed with her debasement – another example to contribute to the work's 'theses on mutability and reversal'.[52] Accordingly, it is at the conclusion of the story that Boccaccio's authorial voice emerges most strongly:

> Mortalium equidem nimium inconsiderata conditio, quam crebris atque dissonis eventibus concussa distrahitur. Hec nuper persis syrisque tremenda regibus, nunc vilipenditur a privatis; hec nuper imperatoribus admiranda, nunc venit miseranda plebeis; hec nuper galeata contionari militibus assueta, nunc velata cogitur muliercularum audire fabellas; hec nuper Orienti presidens sceptra gestabat, nunc Rome subiacens colum sicut cetere baiulat.
> (*DCV* VIII.VI.14)
> [Truly, the condition of mortals is too little considered, that which is torn asunder by numerous and discordant accidents. She, who not long ago had shaken the kings of Persia and Syria, now is spurned in private. She, who once was admired by emperors, now is pitied by ordinary people. This woman, who, helmet-clad, was accustomed to addressing soldiers, is now veiled, confined to listening to the tales of working girls. She who sat on high, and bore the sceptre of the East, now is subject to Rome and carries the distaff just like the other women!]

The rhetorical drive of this passage is found in the cumulative repetition of Zenobia's reversal of Fortune; from greatness to humility, military tactics to gossip, empire to household. Boccaccio's message to his reader is clearly articulated; awaken from your thoughtless slumber, or you too shall suffer the same fate as Zenobia, or worse, 'fall to a most certain

[52] Godman, pp. 274-5.

death'. Boccaccio's moral and rhetorical agenda is even more striking when you compare the conclusion of Zenobia's story in *De casibus* with the equivalent moment in *De mulieribus claris*:

> Sane consumato triunpho thesauro et virtute spectabili, aiunt illam privato in habitu inter romanas matronas cum filiis senuisse, concessa sibi a senatu possessione apud Tiburtum, que zenobiana diu postmodum ab ea denominata est, haud longe a divi Adriani palatio, quod eo in loco est cui Conche ab incolis dicebatur.
> (*DMC* C.22)
> [At the conclusion of this triumph, conspicuous for its treasure and its valour, Zenobia is said to have lived privately with her children amidst the women of Rome until she reached old age. The Senate granted her an estate near Tivoli; long called Zenobia after her own name, it was not far from the palace of the emperor Hadrian, in the place which the inhabitants call Conca.]

It is not only the tone and style of the passage which makes this conclusion so different to that of *De casibus*, but the way in which the facts of the narrative are presented, and the details that are included. This conclusion shows that Zenobia was allowed to remain with her children, that she was granted an estate by the Senate, and that the surrounding area was named after her for many years following her death; the Zenobia of *De mulieribus claris* does not seem to have suffered such a terrible fate. These plainly stated historical details certainly do not arouse the same pity, fear, or discomfort that Boccaccio hopes to provoke in *De casibus.*

Boccaccio's stylistic flexibility in telling these two different versions of the same story evidently intrigued Chaucer, as he drew on not one, but both of Boccaccio's texts. Why did Chaucer do this? Why, for example, did he not just use the *De casibus* version of Zenobia, given that the framing of that text is more aligned with the *Monk's Tale* than that of *De mulieribus claris*? I propose that the two versions of the text presented Chaucer with the opportunity to create a composite version of Zenobia, which by drawing on Boccaccio's different modes allowed Chaucer to affect his reader in a different way.[53] Accordingly, in the

[53] It is a similar intertextual technique to that which Chaucer employs in the conclusion to *Troilus and Criseyde.* Though the majority of the poem is drawn from Boccaccio's *Filostrato,* the ending, Troilus' apotheosis, is taken

Monk's Tale, Chaucer intersects one Boccaccian mode with another, in order to create something more stylistically and thematically diverse; at times, lighter in tone than Boccaccio's, and at times even more emotionally stirring. The focus of *De casibus* is on Zenobia's fall, and Chaucer recognises that the greater the height reached, the more dramatic and lamentable the fall. The detail from *De mulieribus claris* about Zenobia's character and her virtues, with Chaucer's careful omission of the moral ambiguities which Boccaccio includes, combined with the concluding emphasis on her fall, which Chaucer draws from *De casibus,* create a composite narrative which is literally constructed, or woven together, to evoke empathy. Where Boccaccio re-frames the *Historia Augusta* through a process of decantation and separation according to the intended audience of his two texts, Chaucer positions these parts adjacently in order to augment the affective impact of the narrative's moral conclusion.

Moreover, we may find in Chaucer's motivation to increase the pathos of his narrative, an alternative answer to the mystery of the attribution of 'Cenobia' to Petrarch, rather than Boccaccio – that it is indeed a reference to Petrarch's work, specifically to the brief account of Zenobia which Petrarch provides in the *Triumphus Fame*.[54] Although some scholars have lent little credence to this theory because of the brevity of the character accounts in the *Trionfi*, Martinez points out that Petrarch's inclusion of Zenobia gains significance by the fact that she is the only addition to the comparable passage in Dante's *Inferno,* Canto 5, which lists Helen, Semiramis, and Cleopatra.[55] I suggest that the particular moment at which Chaucer cites Petrarch in the account of "Cenobia" is no coincidence, nor does it necessarily signify that Chaucer is misleadingly attributing the *whole* tale to Petrarch,

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from the Teseida. See Gerald Morgan, 'The Ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*', *The Modern Language Review*, 77.2 (1982), pp. 262-5.

[54] In fact, I suggest that it is possible that Petrarch's account inspired Chaucer to use the accounts of Zenobia in *De casibus* and *De mulieribus claris*. It is as reasonable an explanation as any for Chaucer's choice to translate that particular narrative. After all, Boccaccio's accounts of Zenobia appear towards the end of both of these works, which, due to their length, were used in an encyclopedic fashion than a chronological one (Zenobia's narrative is found in the hundredth chapter of *De mulieribus claris,* and in chapter VI of Book VIII of *De casibus virorum illustrium*). Because of this, I find it unlikely that Chaucer would have chosen to translate specifically and solely Zenobia's narrative by the means of chronological reading of *De mulieribus* or *De casibus.*

[55] Martinez, 'Chaucer's Petrarch: "Enlumyned Ben They"', p. 341.

as some scholars have presumed must be the case. Although Petrarch's account of Zenobia appears brief, it is in fact the longest description of a historical figure in the *Triumphus Fame.*[56] By comparison, Cicero and Virgil receive only two lines each. Zenobia appears amongst a company of warrior women:

> […] e vidi in quella tresca
> Zenobia, del suo honore assai più scarsa.
> Bella era, e nell'età fiorita e fresca:
> quanto in più gioventute e 'n più bellezza,
> tanto par ch'onestà sua laude accresca.
> Nel cor femineo fu sì gran fermezza,
> che col bel viso e coll'armata coma
> fece temer chi per natura sprezza:
> io parlo de l'imperio alto di Roma,
> che con arme assalìo, ben ch'a l'estremo
> fusse al nostro trionpho ricca soma.
> [and I saw in that line
> Zenobia, much more protective of her honor.
> She was beautiful, and of a flowering and fresh age:
> The more in beauty and the more in youth,
> Such that her honour merits more praise.
> In her feminine heart was such great steadfastness
> That with her beauty and her armored locks
> She brought fear to those who by nature disdained it -
> I speak of the lofty empire of Rome
> That she assailed in war - although at the end
> She was a rich prize for our triumph.]
> *(Triumphus Fame* II.107-117)[57]

[56] As Fabio Finotti observes: 'although they open a subjective horizon, we are bound to be disappointed if we look for deep psychological analysis in Petrarch's *Triumphi.*' Rather, Petrarch's goal is 'the completeness of the processions, and characterization as succinct as possible ('The Poem of Memory: *Triumphi*', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 66).'

[57] My translation.

Petrarch's description of Zenobia as 'more jealous of her honour', is reminiscent of one of the few parts of Chaucer's narrative where he deviates from Boccaccio's two accounts. Where Boccaccio writes, 'amores hominum et contubernia spernere assuetam et virginitatem summopere colere' [She used to scorn the love and companionship of men and greatly valued virginity], Chaucer writes, 'She kepte hir maydenhod from every wight', which is more reflective of the sense of 'scarcity' and protectiveness that is in Petrarch's description.[58] Zenobia's defeat by the Romans, which is the focus of her account in *De casibus,* is expressed in notably favourable terms in the *Trionfi*; she 'assailed' the 'imperial might of Rome', and though defeated, represented a most rich prize. Petrarch's Zenobia is an admirable and triumphant figure, befitting her position in the *Triumphus Fame*. Given this, I propose that Chaucer's reference to Petrarch in his own account of Zenobia, at the moment which it appears, is not a coincidence. The reference occurs in a stanza in which Chaucer describes Zenobia's triumphs and her military prowess:

> Hir batailles, whoso list hem for to rede,
> Agayn Sapor the kyng and othere mo,
> And how that al this proces fil in dede,
> Why she conquered and what title had therto,
> And after, of hir meschief and hire wo,
> How that she was biseged and ytake -
> Lat hym unto my maister Petrak go,
> That writ ynough of this, I undertake
> (*MkT.* 2319-2326)

Chaucer's closing lines, which imitate the rhetorical ending of *De casibus*, may also offer some insight on his potential engagement with Petrarch's *Trionfi*:

> And she that helmed was in starke stoures,
> And wan by force townes stronge and toures,
> Shal on hir heed now were a vitremyte;
> And she that bar the ceptre ful of floures

[58] *DMC* C.304; *MkT* 2669.

Shal bere a distaf, hire a cost for to quyte.
(*MkT* 2370-4)

The collection of rhyming words 'stoures', 'toures', 'floures', recall the motifs in Petrarch's stanza; elegantly expressing her warrior-like dress, her skill in conquest, and her youth and beauty. More than this, though Boccaccio's account in the *De casibus* focuses on Zenobia's fall from greatness to debasement, Chaucer has specifically chosen to represent Zenobia's wealth with 'a ceptre ful of floures', an image which appears in neither of Boccaccio's accounts. The image seems to me to represent not just a fall from greatness, but an expression of the transience of life and youth; from the flower of youth to the bearing of burdens. Though it is a small parallel, this image does resemble a phrase in Petrarch's account of Zenobia:

Bella era, e ne l'età fiorita e fresca;
[For she was fair, and in the flower of youth]
(*TF* II.109)

In his desire to express both the character and vivacity of the Zenobia of *De mulieribus claris,* and the misfortune and decline of the *De casibus* passage, Chaucer recalls Petrarch's poignant imagery. Chaucer's multi-textual rendering of Zenobia demonstrates his sophisticated understanding of Boccaccio's audience-centred practice.

'Hoo! […] Namoore of this!': The response to affective exemplarity

I have shown how Boccaccio adapts his material and style to be effective to his audience in *De casibus*, and Chaucer's recognition of this practice in his own account of Zenobia. Through the example of falls like Zenobia's, Boccaccio hopes that his reader will begin to 'fear the winds of breathing Fortune' and wake up to instability of the human condition.[59] However, the persistency of Boccaccio's examples, and the lamenting nature of his style may be hard to tolerate for some readers. Through the Knight's interruption of the *Monk's Tale,* with his cry of "Hoo! […] namore of this!", Chaucer imagines a more realistic response to Boccaccio's design in *De casibus virorum illustrium* – that, though they may be momentarily

[59] *DCV* VIII.VI.16.

affected, those in power would rather close their ears to the uncomfortable truths of history, than allow their hearts or minds to be stirred toward change:

> For the Knight's class, self-interest turns a deaf ear to morality.[60]

Both Grudin and L. O. Aranye Fradenburg remark on the fact that exemplary warnings, such as Boccaccio's and the Monk's, cannot be expected to be enjoyable to listen to:

> This tale and the contradictory remarks of the Knight and Host that follow it suggest Chaucer's interest in issues similar to those raised by Boccaccio in *De casibus* and demonstrate the difficulty, in practice, of the generic and explicit command, "Be war by these ensamples trewe and olde." Is it possible, even in a genre so overtly aimed at moral improvement, to penetrate the guard of the listener?[61]

The awareness at which the reader must arrive – as described by Boccaccio, 'fragilitatem suam […] noscant', to recognise their own insecurity or fragility – is not a comfortable process.[62] As Fradenburg observes:

> If tragedy is meant to give us the gift of preparedness, this is, after all, not a simply pleasurable thing to receive. Jouissance rarely looks like fun.[63]

In some ways, the Knight's response to the *Monk's Tale* indicates that the Monk's endeavour has been successful – the Knight has been made aware of his own fragility. Just as Boccaccio uses contemporary falls in *De casibus* as a tool to instruct and destabilize, Wallace argues that the *Monk's Tale* is 'energized' by its use of contemporaneity:

> Great men have fallen, great men are falling – here the genre features as a modality not for the recording of history but for the experiencing of it; great men will fall.[64]

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[60] Grudin, p. 148.

[61] Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse,* p. 145.

[62] *DCV* Pref. 8-9.

[63] L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 144-5.

[64] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity,* p. 299.

This reflects the nature of the *De casibus* tradition, that in no work can it ever be finished, so long as great and powerful men and women exist. There have been many interpretations of the Knight's response, but various scholars have concluded that the Knight's position as the pilgrim of highest standing, and therefore the one most vulnerable to the warnings of the Monk's tragedies, is the source of his reaction:[65]

> "I seye *for me*, it is a greet disese,
> Whereas men han been in greet welthe and ese,
> To heeren of hire sodeyn fal, allas!"
> (*MkT* 2771-73; my italics)

His phrase, 'I seye for me, it is a great disese', and his cry, 'allas', an exclamation which is uttered fourteen times by the Monk in relation to his own tragedies, demonstrates the subjective and personal nature of the Knight's response.

Harry Bailly also acknowledges the emotion which the *Monk's Tale* has provoked (although he later goes on to say that it has nearly sent him to sleep), saying that it is a 'peyne' to hear the *Monk's* tragedies. However, he finds no usefulness or catharsis in this feeling:

> and als of a tragedie
> Right now ye herde, and pardee, no remedie
> It is for to biwaille ne compleyne
> That that is doon, and als it is a peyne,

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[65] For an argument in favour of the Knight interrupting due to the uncomfortable proximity of the *Monk's* modern instances see Donald K. Fry, 'The Ending of the "Monk's Tale"', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 71.3 (1972), 355–68., and Terry Jones. That the Knight's reaction is due to social status see also Stephen Knight, 'Colloquium on The Monk's Tale: "My Lord, the Monk"', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 22 (2000), 381–86., and William C. Strange, 'The "Monk's Tale": A Generous View', *The Chaucer Review*, 1.3 (1967), pp. 167–80. For the argument that the Knight interrupts the *Tale* because it is philosophically inadequate in comparison to his own, see Helen Cooper, *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), pp. 177-79, and R. E. Kaske, 'The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale', *John Hopkins University Press*, 24.4 (1957), 249–68.

As ye han seyd, to heere of hevynesse.
(*MkT* 2783-87)

Notably, the Host's response closely mirrors the opinion of Boethius's Lady Philosophy in relation to tragedy - that it offers 'no remedie':

> "For thise ne ben yit *none remedies* of thy maladye, but they ben a maner norisschynges of thi sorwe, yit rebel ayen thi curacioun. For whan that tyme is, I schal moeve and ajuste swiche thynges that *percen hemselve depe*.
> (*Boece* II *Prosa* 3. 19-22; my italics)

Through the reactions of the Knight and the Host, Chaucer demonstrates realistically that though the author of a *De casibus* text may seek to reach his audience's emotions for the purpose of waking them up to their own self-deceit, the emotion of defensiveness or irritation may be the first to be roused. The threat that moral exemplarity of this kind might not be well received by a tyrant is foretold by the Monk's 'tragedie' of Nero and Seneca. As Wetherbee observes:

> Seneca's success seems to depend on keeping Nero in a state of compliance through "drede" (2504); the only illustration of his teaching is a banal injunction to "be vertuous and hate tirannye" (2508), and the suddenness with which this counsel provokes Nero's sentence of death is unaccountable and rather horrifying. The Monk has assimilated Jean de Meun's pessimism about the efficacy of advice to princes, but his narrative preserves scarcely a trace of dignity with which Jean had invested the figure of Seneca.[66]

It does not seem a coincidence that Chaucer's abbreviation of Seneca's dialogue – 'be vertuous and hate tirannye' – mirrors the intention of Boccaccio's address to princes:

> Nam quid satius est, quam vires omnes exponere, ut in frugem melioris vitae retrahantur errantes […] vitia reprimantur, et extollantur virtutes.
> (*DMC* C.22)

[66] Wetherbee, 'The Context of the Monk's Tale', pp. 166-67.

> [For what is better than to exert all one's strength to bring back erring souls to enjoy a better life […] by repressing vice and extolling virtue?]

The exemplum of Seneca is a latent warning that the responses of the Knight and Host are not so violent as this kind of moralism is capable of provoking.

"I sholde er this han fallen doun for sleep": The function of dullness in Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* and Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*

The critiques of the Knight and the Host do not only relate to its affecting content, they also find the *Tale* tedious. This is an unusual combination which prompts Fradenburg to ask: 'how it is possible that the Monk could be both terrorizing and stupefyingly boring?'[67] In his study of the *Monk's Tale* in relation to Italian humanism, Wallace notes both of these qualities in the Knight's response:

> The Knight's cry of "Hoo!" and his plea for "namoore of this" testifies to the potential of the genre's affective power as well as to its remorseless monotony.[68]

Though Wallace gives due attention to the 'affective power' of the *Monk's Tale* and its roots in early humanist exemplarity, he does not address the significance of the *Tale's* 'remorseless monotony', a feature of Chaucer's stylistic construction which I believe to be equally relevant to Boccaccio's humanism, and the mode he adopts in *De casibus*. A criticism which has been consistently levelled at the *Monk's Tale* is that it is monotonous and repetitive, although scholars have disagreed on whether this is intentional from Chaucer. For Joella Brown, it is the circulatory and repetitious nature of the Monk's tragedies which lead her to accuse the *Tale* of 'consummate dullness' and 'sheer redundancy', though she acknowledges that the *Tale's* dullness is likely to be of Chaucer's purposeful design; a parody of a dull sermon.[69]

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[67] Fradenburg, p. 146.

[68] Wallace, p. 319.

[69] Brown, 'Chaucer's Daun Piers', pp. 49-50. The idea that the *Monk's Tale* is dull is not a matter of universal agreement. Going against the critical grain, Grudin argues that the *Monk's Tale* does not 'show the obvious signs of deliberate dullness: mishandled tropes, repetition, needless digression, self-contradiction, chopped logic, and clichés', on the contrary, she argues that 'it is more variegated, rhetorically and otherwise, than most

Brown also notes the Monk's repetitive word choice, using the word Fortune thirty-one times, with many iterations bunched up into particular tragedies, and the word God, twenty-two times, with no use of alternative phraseology such as 'our heavenly Father'.[70] Ramazani reiterates Brown's point about 'wearisome lexical repetition' and accuses the Monk of 'tiresome' rhetorical strategies and senseless internal rhyme.[71] Likewise, Helen Cooper describes the Monk's offering as 'an unlimited series of tales that share a single tone, a single genre, a single narrative pattern, and a single moral.'[72]

Few arguments relating to the *Tale*'s monotony account for the fact that repetition is an integral and deliberate characteristic of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium.* Brown complains that the 'seventeen stories' of the *Monk's Tale* 'contain seventeen falls from "prosperitee" to "adversitee"' – *De casibus* contains nearly two hundred,[73] and as Paul Budra has observed, 'it is an essential feature of its pedagogy':

> One biography, or a few, would not demonstrate that metabasis is the active principle in the history of humanity. Several hundred, however, do mount a compelling argument […][74]

Boccaccio was sensible to the fact that some readers may find this approach tiresome. He acknowledges that his reader may feel they have reached a surfeit of misfortune even by the end of the nineteen chapters of Book I, as he writes in the Book II Prologue:

> Forsan erunt qui dicant iam dictis exemplis satis ostensum esse que sint Fortune vires, que mortalium rerum stabilitas, quam fallax felicium orbis huius spes et inanis gloria;

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anything else in the *Canterbury Tales* (p. 138).'

[70] Brown, p. 50.

[71] Jahan Ramazani, 'Chaucer's Monk: The Poetics of Abbreviation, Aggression, and Tragedy', *The Chaucer Review*, 27.3 (1993), pp. 263-4.

[72] Helen Cooper, *The Structure of the Canterbury Tales* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1984), p. 177. See also Donald R. Howard, Chaucer*: His Life, His Works, His World* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1987), p. 446.

[73] *De casibus* has 174 chapters.

[74] Paul Budra, *A Mirror for Magistrates and the De Casibus Tradition* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2000), p. 17.

et ob hoc, si quid ultra monstraretur, superfluum. Ego quidem fatebor ultro unico, nedum tot exemplis, generosos posse moveri animos, et in rectum reduci: sed non talibus tantum hic assumptus est labor. Sunt plurimi adeo rebus perituris innixi, ut vix etiam strepentem assiduis tonitruis aerem sentiant, nedum facili sono labentia verba percipiant, quos continua semper incumbentium casuum reverberatione feriendos arbitror, ut, uti assiduo aque casu durissimus perforatur lapis, sic et adamantinum cor talium longa narratione molliatur; et gratias agens his quibus satis est me hue usque laborasse, bona eorum pace ad obsequendum reliquis veniam: ad quod iam revocer sentio.

(*D*CV II.I.1-4)

[Perhaps there will be those who say that now, with the examples already uttered, enough has been shown about the power of Fortune, the instability of human affairs, how treacherous is the hope of happiness, and how empty is worldly glory; and for this reason if anything more were to be advised, *it would be superfluous*. For my part, I will certainly admit that only one, let alone so many examples, can stir noble souls and bring them back to the right path. However, it is not only for such people that this effort has been undertaken. There are many, indeed, who rely on things which are doomed to perish, to the point that they can scarcely feel the wind vibrating with constant thunder, nor hear words which easily slip away. I believe that they need always to be struck by *the continuous reiteration of falls*. Just as *a hard stone is eventually worn down by constant drops of water*, so too can the adamantine hearts of such people be softened by *a lengthy narration*; and giving thanks to those for whom my effort thus far suffices, I ask for their good will while I attend to the rest (my italics).]

It is worth remembering that this is the Prologue of Book II and there are eight books still to come! Boccaccio uses the proverbial image of drops of water gradually eroding stone, which Ovid uses both in the *Ars Amatoria* and in his post-exile *Epistulae ex Ponto*, and which, in a range of medieval texts, including Chaucer's Franklin's Tale, has been applied to varied contexts, from the persuasion of a lover to the efficacy of prayer to God.[75] The concept of

[75] Ovid, "The Art of Love" and Other Poems, trans. J. H. Mozley, rev. G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library 232 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929), I.473–77. *Epistulae Ex Ponto*, II.vii.39–41. On this image see Alastair Bennett, '"The Emprentyng of Hire Consolacioun": Engraving, Erosion, and Persistent Speech in

telling a tale in such a way that it will imprint upon the reader also appears as a prominent discourse in *Troilus and Criseyde*. When Antigone sings to Criseyde in the garden in Book II, the words become printed on her heart and her behaviour is changed by what she hears:

> But every word which that she of hire herde,
> *She gan to prenten in hire herte faste,*
> And ay gan love hire lasse for t'agaste
> Than it dide erst, and synken in hire herte,
> That she wex somwhat able to converte.
> (*TC* II.899-903; my italics)

Robert Payne discusses Chaucer's awareness in *Troilus and Criseyde* of 'the difficulty consequent upon basing critical standards on the readers' responses.'[76] He quotes the *Troilus* narrator:

> For to thi purpos this may liken the,
> And right nought, yet al is seid or schal;
> Ek som men grave in tree, some in ston wal,
> As it bitit; but syn I have bigonne,
> Myn auctour shal I folwen, if I konne.
> (*TC* II.45-49)

Chaucer's metaphor, 'som men grave in tree, some in ston wal', acknowledges that audiences are fundamentally varied. Where some will be easily imprinted upon, others are unreceptive and require the kind of long persistence which Boccaccio and Ovid describe. The Book II Prologue in *De casibus* constructs imagines just such an audience – the noble person, for whom one example would be enough to stir them toward virtue, and the person who will not open their ears and require a lengthy narration to soften their stony hearts.

The Franklin's Tale', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 41 (2019), pp. 141–2.

[76] Robert O. Payne, *The Key of Remembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* (London: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 76-77.

Through the responses of the Knight and the Host, Chaucer both exemplifies Boccaccio's ethos of copiousness and the stone being gradually and persistently worn down but also illustrates its failure. Depending on your reading of the Knight (whether he intervenes through tedium or by being affected by the message of Fortune's mutability), the two responses Chaucer provides, via two different kinds of reader, exemplify both the affective force of the genre and its inefficacy. The Knight is the reader who is swiftly discomforted, although not necessarily moved towards virtue, and the Host is the stone that will not be eroded. When the Knight interrupts the Monk, it is the Boccaccian copiousness and cumulative weight of the *Tale*, which compounds his emotional 'disese'. This is demonstrated by his repetition of the word 'ynough' which signifies both abundance and sufficiency:

> "Hoo!" quod the Knyght, "good sire, *namoore* of this!
> That ye han seyd is right *ynough*, ywis,
> And *muchel moore*; for *litel* hevynesse
> Is right *ynough* to muche folk, I gesse."
> (*MkT* 2767-70; my italics)

This is exactly the response Boccaccio envisions in the Prologue of Book II of *De casibus;* that there will be those among his readers who, like the Knight, will say, 'perhaps we now have enough examples'.

While the Knight has understood the *Tale* well enough to be discomforted by it, Harry Bailly betrays his confusion at the Monk's message:

> "Ye," quod oure Hooste, "by Seint Poules belle!
> Ye seye right sooth; this Monk he clappeth lowde.
> He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde
> I noot nevere what;"
> (*MkT* 2780-83)

The Host agrees with the Knight's accusation of excess; 'He clappeth lowde' implies both the excessive and amplified nature of the Monk's telling, which relates to Boccaccio's imagined

reader who ‘cannot hear words spoken quietly’, but also that it is inconsequential; the Middle English Compendium defines ‘clappe’ as ‘talking; esp., noisy, idle talking’ and relates to the bell’s clapper, producing a hollow sound.[77] The Host gestures several times to the pointlessness of the *Tale,* and that there is no audience for it:

> Youre tale anoyeth al this compaignye
> […]
> Thanne hadde your tale al be toold *in veyn*.
> For certeinly, as that thise clerkes seyn,
> Whereas a man may have *noon audience*,
> Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence.
> (*MkT* 2789-90; 2799-2802; my italics)

The Host’s critique speaks to one of the great fears which haunts Boccaccio’s authorial persona in *De casibus*; that his writing will be in vain:

> Quid demens sudore excruciaris in tanto? Quid veterum monimenta revolvens tam assiduo vexaris labore cum a nemine inpellaris? Ex antiquorum ruinis, ex cineribus infortunatorum, novis literulis extorquere conaris famam atque protelare dies nomenque tuum desideras […] Sino quod nomen tuum, quod tam egregie colendum posteritati paras, multis poterit esse commune; et utrum iam sit, incertum est; si sit, aut futurum sit, non minus alteri quam tibi laboras, cum tibi possis ignave quiescere. (*DCV* VIII.I.2-3)
> [Through what madness do you torment yourself with such hard labour? Why do you vex yourself with this constant toil, when no one is urging you on? […] I allow that your name, which you are preparing to hand down so gloriously to posterity, may be common to many; and whether it is already so, is uncertain; but if it is, or shall be, you are no less labouring for another than for yourself, when you might rest in indolence.]

Boccaccio’s idleness in this moment speaks to another recurring motif in *De casibus,* which

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[77] ‘Clappen v.’ <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english dictionary/dictionary/MED7866/track?counter=1&search_id=72585718>.

is also present in the Host's response to the Monk – sleep. If it had not been for the bells on the Monk's bridle, Harry Bailly would have '*fallen doun for sleep* (*MkT* 2794-97)'. Sleep, sloth, and a lack of vigilance are portrayed as moral faults, and a source of great danger in *De casibus,* even more so than Fortune.[78] It is sleep to which Boccaccio succumbs at his greatest moment of authorial crisis, in the Book VIII Prologue when he almost abandons his work:

> Nam dum omissis habenis in amplissimum ocium avidus liquissem labantia membra, in tantum tanque profundum demersus soporem sum ut, nedum alteri, verum michi ipsi immobilis factus mortuus fere viderer […]
> (*DCV* VIII.I.1)
> [While I, desirous of the most ample leisure, had let my relaxed limbs sink down, abandoning myself to idleness, I was so plunged into a sleep both deep and profound, that not only did I seem lifeless to others, but almost dead to myself as well.]

Sleep is also fundamentally connected to the audience of *De casibus*, and their reception of Boccaccio's work. In the Preface, Boccaccio declares:

> Nam, quid satius est quam vires omnes exponere, ut in frugem melioris vitae retrahantur errantes, a desidibus sopitis letalis somnus excutiatur, vitia reprimantur et extollantur virtutes.
> (*DCV* Pref. 3-4)
> [For what is better than to exert all one's powers, in order that those who have gone astray may be brought back to the path of a better life, so that the idle may be shaken from their deadly sleep, vices may be repressed and virtues extolled?]

To awaken those who slumber in obliviousness and self-indulgence is at the core of Boccaccio's enterprise in *De casibus,* and a reason to continue writing more and more *exempla,* as we can see in this extract of the Book IV Prologue:

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[78] An example of this is *DCV* II.XIII.12-13, 'About Sardanapalus and His Ilk': 'Preterea, somno plurimo quid damnabilius? Multum illi temporis dare, multum perdere est' [Moreover, what is more blameworthy than excessive sleep? To give much time to it is to waste it].

> Movisse reor aliquantisper ab obstinata olim duritie presidentium animos, et exemplis tam ingentibus elatorum spirituum insolentiam terruisse […] Quam ob rem, cum iam talium salutem sperare possimus, non frustra laborasse gaudemus. Sane, cum eduxisse soporatos in vigiliam satis non sit, ni in lucem deducantur integram, in solidationem credulitatis iam sumpte procedendum est, ut, dum promissa sequemur, fides etiam maiorum deiectorum copia amplietur.
> (*DCV* IV.I.3-5)
> [I think, to some extent, that I have moved leaders away from their stubborn hardness of mind. Through the impressive examples of those who had such elevated spirits, I have frightened their insolence […] Nevertheless, it is not enough to have awakened those who were sleeping to vigilance, unless they are brought forth fully into the light. We must now proceed to the consolidation of newly established belief, until while we have fulfilled our promise that, through the recounting of abundant falls, their faith may be strengthened.]

We are reminded of the Host's jibe that the Monk has told his *Tale* 'in veyn (*MkT* 2799)'. In this passage, Boccaccio's desire to awaken and, having awakened, to enlighten his reader is undeniably connected to his belief in the need for copious narratives – once awakened their faith must be strengthened by further abundant examples. Harry Bailly's reaction to the *Monk's Tale* mirrors the audience response which Boccaccio is desperate to prevent in *De casibus*. Chaucer's language amplifies this connection with the image of Harry Bailly who would have '*fallen doun* for sleep (my italics)', an image reminiscent of the conclusion of the Zenobia narrative in *De casibus*:

> Ite igitur humane conditionis immemores et scandite celsa ut, aut omnem Fortune spirantis auram timeatis, aut sopiti inpulsu minimo in mortem certissimam corruatis.
> (*DCV* VIII.VI.16)
> [Therefore, go, you who are heedless of human mortality, and climb to lofty heights, that you may either fear the winds of breathing Fortune, or *while you drift off to sleep, you will be overthrown and fall to a most certain death* (my italics).]

To sleep and to take no heed of the author is to fall as the subjects of *De casibus* and the *Monk's Tale* have fallen. Chaucer, in dialogue with *De casibus*, suggests Harry Bailly's

attitude to the Monk's warnings to be fatal.

The connection between the Host's response and *De casibus* is strengthened by the Monk's final lines in the conclusion of the narrative of Croesus, which are an original addition by Chaucer to his source material for this narrative in the *Roman de la Rose*:

> Tragedies noon oother maner thyng
> Ne kan in syngyng crie ne biwaille
> But that Fortune alwey wole assaille
> With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
> For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille,
> And covere hire brighte face with a clowde
> (*MkT* 2761-6)

These are the lines to which Harry Bailley directly, and confusedly, responds:

> "He spak how Fortune covered with a clowde
> I noot nevere what;"
> (*MkT* 2782-3)

The Monk's image depicts a betrayal of trust from Fortune toward men; though men trust in her she may withdraw her favour, or 'hire brighte face', at any time. [79] It has not yet been noted that this is the same image which Boccaccio uses to describe wilfully immoral readers who are asleep to his words, in the conclusion of the final book of *De casibus*:

> Vos autem, qui celsa tenetis imperia, aperite oculos et aures reserate; et ne vos letifer sommus obrepat, vigilantes aspicite […] quibus quantisque Fortune tragulis pectus geratis adversum cognoscite, et eius viribus humana non obstare consilia, frangi

[79] Stephanie Trigg has discussed cloudy face of Fortune in relation to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,* which highlights Chaucer's distinctive use of this image ('Cloudy Thoughts: Cognition and Affect in *Troilus and Criseyde*', in *Gender, Poetry, and the Form of Thought in Later Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth A. Robertson*, ed. by Jennifer Jahner, Ingrid Nelson, and Stephanie Trigg [Rowman & Littlefield, 2022], pp. 25-46.)

> robusta queque, et clarissima indissolubili nube fuscari.
> (*DCV* IX.XXVII.8-9)
> [But you, who hold high power, open your eyes and ears; and lest deadly sleep overtake you, watchful, behold […] recognise against what and how great Fortune's arrows your heart is set, and how human plans cannot withstand her power, how even the strongest thing can be broken and the brightest can be obscured by an indissoluble cloud.]

Thus, the Host's response to the *Tale* is not only a criticism of the tale's monotony but a sign that he is in danger of the very fall which Boccaccio warns his readers against.

Discontinuous reading

It is not only the Monk's listeners who struggle to take on board the cumulative weight of the tragic examples of history. The early readers of *De casibus*, also reflect this tendency. Like Boccaccio himself, who took a break from the text after finishing Book VII, the typical reader of *De casibus* tends to become fatigued and does not read the work in its entirety.[80] The annotations in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott. Lat. 2145 (Vo), which are frequent and extensive in Books II and III, start to tail off in Book IV and cease completely by Book VI. They return solely in the Prologue of Book VIII – Boccaccio's vision of Petrarch – and again in Book IX, Chapter 23, when a vision of the 'insignem poetam' Dante Alighieri appears leading a crowd of miserable individuals. These same places are marked again in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Urb. Lat. 451 (Vu). It is evident that the reader, who annotates consistently in Books II and III, having ceased reading, was interested by the names 'Dante' and 'Petrarca' in the table of contents, and writes them in the margin for easy future reference. Similarly, in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 6395 (Vl^2) there is a gap of approximately forty folios where no names are written down, until the name 'Petrarcha' written in the margins of the Book VIII Prologue.[81] The scribe of Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 2941 (Vl^1) is particularly engaged by Boccaccio's political and social authorial discourse. Chapters which the scribe annotates

[80] For another example of this kind of 'discontinuous' reading, see Huot, 'Medieval Readers of the "Roman de La Rose"', pp. 400–420.

[81] Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 6395, fol. 125v.

heavily include 'I.XVI. Paupertati applaudet' [The Author Praises the Poor], 'I.XIV. Contra Superbos' [Against the Proud], 'II.XXI. Infelices aliqui' [Some Unhappy Individuals], and 'III.I. Paupertatis et Fortune certamen' [A Dispute Between Poverty and Fortune]. The bracketed extracts are generally powerfully worded exhortations against particular social injustices or tyranny, and the scribe accompanies their brackets with short notes such as 'Contra principes hodiernos' [Against the princes of today] and 'Nota de fraude' [Note on fraud].[82] However, the scribe appears to become fatigued in Book V, and does not mark anything until Book IX chapter XXIV, around seventy folios later.[83] The same pattern is observable in Vp. which was copied and annotated in the last twenty years of the fourteenth century by the Venetian notary, Marco de' Rafanelli, and is considered by Zaccaria to be the most reliable manuscript of *De casibus*. Rafanelli who annotates very consistently in the early books, by Books VII, VIII and IX only sporadically reiterates names in the margins of chapters which feature multiple subjects such as 'IX.VIII. Concursus dolentium' [Gathering of the afflicted], 'IX.XX. Infortunati quidam' [Certain unfortunate individuals], and 'IX.XXIII Queruli plures' [Many complainers]. Both Vo and Vp begin with tables of contents and in Vo a reader has marked folio numbers to make the text even easier to navigate.[84] The majority of my sample manuscripts of *De casibus* feature annotations from scribes and readers which tail off towards the middle of the text and recur sporadically only in chapters of recognisable interest. Although manuscript annotations and marks cannot be taken as the only evidence of reading, Boccaccio's readers, by in large, are not reading his work in a sustained, chronological way, as he envisions in the Prologues to Books II and IV.

However, it would not be true to say, as Gaston does of the Monk, that Boccaccio is 'divided from his audience' in *De casibus*.[85] A pattern of engagement in manuscripts of *De casibus* is that annotators engage with the *auctor* and his exhortations more than with the narratives. In his Preface, Boccaccio acknowledges that his distinctive voice may move those whom previous historians have not:

Nec me terruit maiorum nostrorum in hos ingentia vidisse volumina, et illa novisse

[82] fols. 22v and 34v.

[83] fol. 149v.

[84] Vo, fols. 2r-5r.

[85] Gaston, p. 146.

styli suavitate, et pondere sententiarum meis literulis praeponenda: plurimum eum meminerim, nonnunque rudem notulam excitasse nonnullos, quos tonitrua movisse non poterant.

(*DCV* Pref. 4-5)

[The sight of the great volumes of our ancestors did not deter me, nor did the knowledge of the sweetness of their style and the import of their thought, which must be placed before my little letters, when I remember that I have stirred many people whom thunder could not move with my undeveloped jottings.]

This bears out in the manuscript tradition, both of *De casibus* and of John Lydgate's fifteenth-century translation of *De casibus,* the *Fall of Princes.* It has been observed by A. S. G. Edwards that the parts of *Fall of Princes* which are most often excerpted in compiled manuscripts and florilegia are Lydgate's authorial envoys rather than the historical narratives.[86] It has not been considered, however, that the same is true in manuscripts of *De casibus.* In the early manuscripts of *De casibus,* annotations most frequently occur in Boccaccio's authorial interjections and moral exhortations; the very sections which Boccaccio acknowledges, in the Prefaces to both Redactions, that he included in order to make his text more entertaining:

> Porro ne continua historiarum series legenti possit fastidium aliquod inferre, morsus in vitia, et ad virtutem suasiones inservisse quandoque, tam delectabile, quam utile arbitratus annectam.
>
> (*DCV* Pref. 9-10)
>
> [Moreover, lest a continuous series of stories should cause some boredom in the reader, I thought it appropriate to add admonitions to virtues by criticising vices, considering it both pleasing and useful.][87]

Rafanelli's annotation in Vp is a representative example of this. A common practice of Rafanelli is to write 'autor', or occasionally more detailed phrases like 'autor exclamat', or

[86] A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Influence of Lydgate's Fall of Princes c. 1440-1559: A Survey', *Mediaeval Studies*, 39 (1977), p. 431. Edwards notes that some of these envoys are particular popular, such as Lydgate's 'sonorous reflections on mutability (2.4460-4586)' which appears in six extant manuscripts (Edwards, p. 431).

[87] Translation by Ginsberg.

‘Indignat[ur] autor’ [The author is indignant] next to moments of passionate and rhetorical narration or interjection from Boccaccio, such as this section of ‘Concerning Marcus Tullius Cicero’:[88]

> O Deus bone, ubi indignatio iusta, ubi ignis edax, ubi fulmen?
> (*DCV* VI.XII.19-20)
> [O good God, where is your righteous indignation, where is the devouring fire, where is the lightning?]

This distinct interest in Boccaccio’s ‘inducements to virtue and dissuasions from vice’ is a common thread throughout annotated manuscripts of *De casibus.* Chapters which are annotated in more than one manuscript include ‘III.X. In legistas ignavos’ [On useless lawyers], ‘III.IV. In luxuriosos principes’ [On lustful princes], ‘I.XIV. Contra superbos’ [Against the proud], ‘II.XXIII. Auctor in fraudem’ [The Author on Fraud], and ‘III.I Paupertatis et Fortune certamen’ [A Dispute of Poverty and Fortune], which also features in two Venetian florilegia.[89] The sustained interest in Boccaccio’s social and moral exhortations suggests that they continued to be valuable to humanists in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[90]

We know from Petrarch’s intervention to Boccaccio in the Book VIII Prologue, that a large part of Boccaccio’s motivation in writing *De casibus* is for his name to be preserved. This process of memorialisation is reliant on the engagement of the reader. The endurance of Boccaccio’s name, and of *De casibus virorum illustrium*, is indicative of his success in doing this. The interdependency between writers and readers in the *De casibus* genre is powerfully conveyed by Gaston:

> Texts and readers become intertwined as part of one another’s history. Such relations

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[88] Vp: fols. 19r. and 84v.

[89] Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Lat. XI 59, and Lat. XIV 12.

[90] Hankins has pointed out the similarity between Boccaccio’s philosophy on poverty in *De casibus* and the writings of fifteenth and sixteenth century Italian humanists on civic wealth (James Hankins, ‘Boccaccio and the Political Thought of Renaissance Humanism’, in *A Boccaccian Renaissance: Essays on the Early Modern Impact of Giovanni Boccaccio and His Works*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), xvii, pp. 19–34.)

> can easily be structured by domination and self-effacement. On the one hand, as critics have long noted, interpretation can be a way for the heroic reader to assert mastery over the text. On the other, as this book has suggested, texts can also dominate their readers. Readers may even be counted among the forgettable, temporal people whom illustrious men consume in order to sustain their reputations […] Readers sustain texts and texts make up part of the lives of readers.[91]

As I hope I have demonstrated thus far, the dynamic which Gaston describes is one which Boccaccio is acutely attendant to in *De casibus*. In the manuscripts of *De casibus*, readers and scribes play a significant role in the future reception of the text and which passages are to be noted. From my examination of manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works, I have noticed that there are certain passages which are annotated repeatedly by different readers in the same manuscript, and in a variety of different manuscripts. A notable example is a passage of Book I chapter XI of *De casibus*, "Adversus nimiam credulitate" (Against excessive credulity), which follows the narrative of Theseus and warns readers of the dangers of trusting ill-advisedly. This passage, verses 4-9 of the chapter, is annotated with manicules, brackets, and notes in eleven of my sample of manuscripts.[92] The passage describes the foolishness of a credulous mind, and that a prudent man should not jump to conclusions or believe too readily. It concludes with the example of Theseus who, Boccaccio argues, should have known not to trust women, who are by nature 'unrestrained, inconstant, untruthful, and continually burn with unsatisfied passion', and ends with the proverb 'tractent fabrilia fabri' [Let carpenters use the tools of carpenters].[93] This passage is marked in both of the early authoritative manuscripts, Ott. Lat. 2145 (Vo) and Pal. Lat. 935 (Vp), as well as in the fourteenth century Redaction A manuscript, Pal. Lat. 970 (Vp[1]). In Vp[1], a reader brackets this section and writes several notes including 'Note that it is right to be a cautious and prudent man], 'note the habits of shameless women', and 'do not trust in dishonesty, shamelessness,

[91] Gaston, p. 174.

[92] These are Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ott. Lat. 2145 (Vo), Pal. Lat. 935 (Vp), Pal. Lat. 970 (Vp[1]), Vat. Lat. 2030 (Vl), Arch. Cap. San Pietro C. 133 (Vsp), Urb. Lat. 451 (Vu); Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 26.sin.6 (L); Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Lat. 1261 (E), Lat. 235 (E[1]); Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Lat. X 114 (Vz); and Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.3.46. See Appendix A for details of these manuscripts.

[93] 'muliebre genus effrene infidum mobile mendax, et insatiabili libidine semper urens (I. X. 7).'

lewdness.'[94] In Vp, Rafanelli marks this section with a note 'Audi contra feminas' (Pay attention against women).[95] The scribe of Redaction A manuscript, Modena, Lat. 1261 (E) marks this section with the note 'Of the most wicked women, Cretans are the worst paramours'.[96] A reader of Cambridge, Trinity College, 0.3.46 brackets the whole chapter and writes 'malicia mulierum' (the wickedness of women).[97] The section is also marked in manuscripts which are based on Vp's text, including Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 26.sin.6 (L) (which was copied by the humanist Tedaldo della Casa) and in Modena, Biblioteca Estense, Lat. 235 (E^1), in which the section is marked by two different readers, one who writes 'omnia huius capituli verba sunt aurea' [all the words of this chapter are golden] and another who writes 'nota bene'.[98] The same is true in manuscripts which are based on Vo; the section is marked in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.lat. 2030 (Vl) and Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Lat. X 114 (Vz), in which the reader reiterates Boccaccio's words 'muliebre genus effrene infidum mobile mendax, et insatiabili libidine semper urens' [women are, by nature, unrestrained, inconstant, untruthful, and continually burn with unsatisfied passion].[99] On the same page two other readers make note of the names 'Pasiphae' and 'Ariadne' and another hand recognises Boccaccio's use of the proverb 'tractent fabrilia fabri' [Let carpenters use the tools of carpenters]. These responses, in manuscripts which contain different versions of *De casibus* as well as manuscripts in the same textual group, suggests that this is a passage which several readers found valuable and convincing, but also that scribes, and readers, were influenced by annotations in earlier manuscripts in their own annotation practice. Boccaccio's message is augmented within a network of readership. These annotations are largely non scribal, indicating that readers of the text, as well as scribes, are engaging with multiple versions of the text.[100] It is also interesting in the cases of E^1 and Vz to note that different readers want to confirm their particular interest in a passage, even if it has previously been annotated. This imitative practice in manuscripts of *De casibus* demonstrates the powerful role that readers have,

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[94] Vp^1, fol. 35v.

[95] Vp, fol. 13r.

[96] E, fol. 16v.

[97] 0.3.46, fol. 8v.

[98] L, fol. 10r; E^1, fol. 9v.

[99] *De casibus*, I. X. 7; Vl, fol. 8v; Vz, fol. 9v.

[100] This is also evidenced by the large number of manuscripts which have been corrected by readers, to match the text of other phases or redactions of *De casibus*.

through interpretation and annotation, in influencing the success of a text, and which parts of that text are deemed valuable. It is also further evidence that readers of *De casibus* engage deeply with Boccaccio's authorial perspective.

On this front, Chaucer's Monk fails. Where Boccaccio's readers are deeply engaged by his manner of communication, Ramazani argues that for the Monk

> To tell tales is less a matter of communicating than of displaying a mass of things. No wonder the Host almost falls asleep.[101]

The Monk's *exempla* continue without pause, and without the authorial interjections which provide some relief or entertainment in *De casibus*, and with which readers were most engaged. In his reduced *De casibus*, Chaucer experiments with the limitations of the exemplary genre and the relationship between narrator (or *auctor*) and audience. Though Boccaccio advocates for abundant examples, it is his authorial voice and rhetorical 'speech-like' style which proves most successful in the reception and transmission of his text. Ultimately, the narrator matters equally if not more than the *exempla* themselves, and these tragic *exempla* on their own, dispassionately recounted by the Monk with no reprieve, are not enough to move his audience toward virtue or change. Deep engagement from his audience is what is needed to sustain the Monk's text and his own legacy.

The Host alludes to this failure, when he tells the Monk that there is no audience for the *Tale*.

> Whereas a man may have noon audience,
> Noght helpeth it to tellen his sentence
> (*MkT* 2801-2)

As Ferster observes, the rhyme of 'audience' with 'sentence' makes clear that 'without an audience, there is no meaning.'[102] Moreover, as Neuse and Schwebel observe, the Monk's failure is compounded and exemplified by the fact that his name seems doomed to be

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[101] Ramazani, 'Chaucer's Monk', p. 261.

[102] Ferster, p. 149.

forgotten.[103] He is first dismissed and left unacknowledged after the *Miller's Tale*. Then when the Host does call on the Monk to tell his *Tale*, he cannot remember his name:

> Wher shall I calle yow my lord daun John,
> Or daun Thomas, or elles daun Albon?
> Of what hous be ye, by youre fader kyn?
> (*MkT* 1927-31)

It is interesting to note that the first name which the Host tries out is 'John', the English Giovanni. Neuse makes the point that when the Host does address the Monk after his *Tale* as 'daun Piers by youre name' (l. 2792), we have no more reason to believe that this is his correct name than any of the others he has thrown out earlier.[104] Both Neuse and Schwebel draw comparison between the Monk and Boccaccio, who remains unnamed by Chaucer. The two things that Boccaccio hopes for, that he will convince his audience, and that his name will be remembered, the Monk ultimately fails at. In this light, Chaucer choice not to name Boccaccio seems even more significant. Both Neuse and Schwebel argue that the Monk is representative of Boccaccio, and that Chaucer, as both reader and *auctor*, takes on the power to make Boccaccio's name remembered (or not), playing the role of 'Lady Fame'.[105] Thus, the *Monk's Tale* confronts and tests the boundaries and contingencies of the relationship between author and audience in *De casibus*, including in the way in which Chaucer chooses not to memorialise Boccaccio as *auctor*. By doing so, he undermines Boccaccio's dearest ambition in writing his work.

By considering Boccaccio's distinctive authorial posture in *De casibus*, his expectations of his audience, and the way in which the framework of the *De casibus* genre influences the way in which he tells narrative, we can develop a broader understanding of Chaucer as a reader and imitator of Boccaccio's Latin works. I have thus far concluded that the Monk as a narrator fails in all the ways that Boccaccio seems to succeed, or hopes to succeed, but the picture is more complex than this. The manuscripts of *De casibus* show that Boccaccio's expectations, which Chaucer challenges in the *Monk's Tale*, are also divided

[103] Neuse, pp. 270-72. Schwebel, ''Trophee' and Triumph', p. 209.

[104] Neuse, p. 271.

[105] Schwebel, p. 209.

from the way his readers treated his work. Thus, there is both fulfilment and dissonance between Boccaccio's imagined reader and the interpretive practices that I have been able to demonstrate. As Boccaccio predicts, his readers are engaged by his moral exhortations. In fact, in annotated manuscripts, Boccaccio's authorial voice and opinion dominate the historical narratives which are the ostensible focus of the work. Yet, at the same time, the readers' encyclopaedic practice facilitates a more superficial and selective reading of the text, allowing readers to skip over *exempla,* rather than being 'continually hit with blows of impressive examples'.[106] As we have seen by the way readers use names (such as Petrarch and Dante) in the text, the structure and format of *De casibus* manuscripts, particularly the tables of contents and rubricated chapter titles, allows readers to create their own curated document of fall narratives, which can be navigated according to their individual interests.

In some ways, the Monk recreates this kind of encyclopaedic reading experience through the way in which he tells his tale. The narratives are not told in chronological order, but rather selected by memory, and they strip away a large amount of the exposition and emotional substance of their original source material. The tragedies also vary hugely in length, reflecting the disparate level of interest which readers have for different chapters of *De casibus.* Gaston points out that this aspect of the *Monk's Tale* was problematic for transcribers of the text, such as the scribe of British Library Lansdowne MS 815, who 'begins with rubrics for the tragedies of Lucifer and Adam, then continues applying rubrics to every single stanza—even when they supply nothing but "de eodem"/"de eadem" ("on the same")—up until partway through the tragedy of Cenobia, when the scribe finally gives up (ff. 207v–217r).'[107] She argues that:

> The process of working through the poem, of balancing memory and expectation over the course of the Monk's complex performance, inscribes its own timing onto this copy of the tale.[108]

We can consider that Chaucer's experience of reading *De mulieribus* and the *De* casibus, possibly with the use of the paratextual devices, like tables of contents which are common

[106] *De casibus*, Book II, Prologue, 3.

[107] Gaston, p. 163.

[108] Gaston, p. 164.

many fourteenth century manuscripts of these works, became an integral feature of the way in which he conceived of the genre. The Monk as the reader and recreator of *De casibus* tragedies, though he fails as an *auctor* in that he is not able to sufficiently wear down the stony hearts of his listeners, in many ways reflects accurately the process of reading, remembering and sharing these names and narratives. The Monk demonstrates the vital and unpredictable role of readers or listeners in the *De casibus* tradition because his own audience will not comply to the bounds set to them, just as ultimately Boccaccio's readers don't respond in the way he hopes and expects they will.

Chapter Three

De mulieribus claris and the *Legend of Good Women*: authors, readers and patrons

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the way in which Boccaccio curates his material to fit the exemplary framework of each of his compendia, and the intended audience. Through this process of narrowing and unifying, the author has the power to transform the narratives and reputations of their subjects. However, it is not only the author who has the power to shape the reputations of the subjects of history – the reader's role in this process can be equally significant. Nowhere is this author-reader relationship more dynamic than in Chaucer's dream vision, the *Legend of Good Women*. Like the *Monk's Tale*, the *Legend* draws on a wide variety of sources – to name a few; Ovid's *Heroides*, *Metamorphoses*, and *Fasti*; Guillaume de Machaut's *Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre,* and the *dits amoureux* of Machaut and Jean Froissart – the critical effect of which is that the influence of its primary generic model, Boccaccio, has been neglected. There are many resemblances in the critical responses to these Chaucerian compendia – scholars have labelled the *Legend* unstylish and dull, and – again like the *Monk's Tale* – many have argued that it is an abandoned project of which Chaucer grew tired, evidenced by the narrator's recurring interjectory comments indicating that he will make his accounts brief.[1] As in the case of the *Monk's Tale,* many of these criticisms of the *Legend* must be reconsidered through a serious acknowledgement of the influence of Boccaccio's Latin works and their shared concern with the power dynamic between author and audience.

We know that Chaucer read both *De mulieribus claris* and the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, and that Chaucer makes a habit of never giving 'credence' to his most frequently used *auctor* – Boccaccio. Though Julia Boffey and Edwards acknowledge that Chaucer used *De mulieribus* in the *Monk's Tale,* that 'the idea of a collection organized around principles related to gender has few precedents in medieval literature', and that *De mulieribus claris* is 'the most obvious' precedent for the *Legend*, they argue that its possible function as a model

[1] See, for example, *LGW* 613-15. On this subject see Robert Worth Frank, Jr., *Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 207-8.

for Chaucer's *Legend* cannot be certainly established since there are 'no evident traces of its influence in this work.'[2] That the *Legend* does not show direct verbal parallels, or give Boccaccio credence, certainly should not discourage us from looking for the influence of Boccaccio in the *Legend* – in fact it would be neglectful to do so, given what we know of Chaucer's translating practice, which is multi-textual and misdirecting. As Schwebel argues, in relation to Chaucer's use of Livy and Augustine in the *Legend*:

> If we persevere in identifying sources only when they are evident in verbal and plot parallels […] we will fail to notice those works that Chaucer engages in other, less positivistic ways, works that must be considered among Chaucer's literary influences. Chaucer may not always "yeve credence" (F 20) to "olde appreved stories" (F 21), but that does not mean he did not read them.[3]

The *Legend of Good Women* was written during a period, after his second visit to Italy in 1378, when Chaucer was engaging with Italian ideas about authorship, fame, and reading, and produced his most celebrated works.[4] This period produced the *House of Fame*, *Troilus and Criseyde,* and, after the *Legend of Good Women,* the *Canterbury Tales.* All of these texts play a role in understanding Chaucer's authorial position in the *Legend.* As in the previous chapter, my study considers Chaucer's physical and intellectual encounter with Boccaccian material, particularly the work which most resembles Chaucer's model, *De mulieribus claris.* As in the previous study I will make reference to my sample of manuscripts, which can be found in Appendices A and B.[5] In my discussion of the manuscripts of the Pavia ducal

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[2] Julia Boffey and Edwards, 'The *Legend of Good Women*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, Cambridge Companions to Literature, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 117-8.

[3] Schwebel, 'Livy and Augustine as Negative Models in the Legend of Lucrece', *The Chaucer Review*, 52.1 (2017), p. 45.

[4] There has been some debate as to the dating of the *Legend of Good Women*, and, as with the *Monk's Tale*, scholars have speculated that the legends and the Prologue may have been written at separate times. In *Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women* (1972) Robert W. Frank Jr proposes that Chaucer began the *Legend* as in 1386 'as an experiment in writing short narrative' (*Riverside Chaucer*, p. 797). Because of its reference to Anne of Bohemia ('whan this book ys maad, yive it the quene, / On my byhalf, at Eltham or at Sheene' [F 496–7]) we can date the F Prologue to before Anne's death in 1394 and after *Troilus* which was written between 1380-5 (see Boffey and Edwards, pp. 111-2).

[5] I have consulted the majority of these in person, but some (including the manuscripts in the Bibliotheque

library, I showed that the manuscript of *De mulieribus claris* dates from after editorial phase VI, evidenced by its last lines ‘ut potius alicuius in bonum vigeat opus, quam in nullius commodum laceratum dentibus invidorum depereat’, which Boccaccio did not add to *De mulieribus* until that phase.[6] If this is the manuscript which Chaucer read, then he saw Boccaccio’s dedication to Andrea Acciaiuoli. I will argue that the evidence of Chaucer’s engagement with Boccaccian ideas in the *Legend* adds credence to this theory and shows the dedication to be an important factor in the correspondence between *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women*.

Comparing *De mulieribus* and the *Legend of Good Women*

For many years, scholars have noted the undeniable similarity between *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women*, and some have proposed connections between the *Legend* and Boccaccio’s other Latin *compendia*: *De casibus* and *De genealogia deorum gentilium.*[7] In his 1882 study on the *Legend* and Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, Bech outlined the similarities he had identified between *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women,* which I shall summarise, with some elaboration, here:[8]

Nationale de France) I have accessed only in digitised form.

[6] ‘[…] in this way, the work will live for someone's benefit rather than perish, mangled by the teeth of envy, of service to no one (*DMC* Conc. 5).’

[7] At the turn of the twentieth century, Clarence G. Child, and later Edgar Finley Shannon, proposed Boccaccio’s *De genealogia* as the source of various unaccounted for details in the narratives of the *Legend of Good Women* (Child, ‘Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* and Boccaccio’s *de Genealogia Deorum’*, *Modern Language Notes*, 11.8 (1896), pp. 238–45; Shannon, *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), particularly pp. 228-258.) However, it emerged soon after, based on a study by John Livingston Lowes and two studies by Sanford Brown Meech in the 1930s, that Chaucer was more likely to have used the *Ovid Moralisé* and Ceffi’s Italian translation of the *Heroides*, though Chaucer may well have seen *De genealogia* as well. John Livingston Lowes, ‘Chaucer and the *Ovide Moralisé*’, *PMLA*, 33.2 (1918), pp. 302–25; Sanford Brown Meech, ‘Chaucer and the *Ovide Moralisé* – A Further Study’, *PMLA*, 46.1 (1931), pp. 182–204; and ‘Chaucer and an Italian Translation of the *Heroides*’, *PMLA*, 45.1 (1930), pp. 110–28. See also Clarke, *Chaucer and Italian Textuality* (esp. Chapter 1); and Desmond, ‘The *Translatio* of Memory and Desire in the *Legend of Good Women*: Chaucer and the Vernacular *Heroides*’, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 35, 2013, pp. 179–207.

[8] M. Bech, ‘Quellen Und Plan Der “Legende of Goode Women” Und Ihr Verhaeltniss Zur “Confessio Amantis”’, *Anglia*, *Zeitschrift Für Englische Philologie*, 5 (1882), p. 381. Walter Skeat also translates and summarises this argument in Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. by Walter W. Skeat, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), vol. 3, p. xxviii.

1. Both works exclusively feature stories about women, although each collection has a different qualifying adjective; Boccaccio's women are 'famous' and Chaucer's 'good'.

2. Both works feature predominately ancient women. Of the 106 women featured in *De mulieribus claris*, only 6 are from the medieval period.[9]

3. In both works, the stories of women follow each other without any kind of interconnecting framing device or commentary (unlike *De casibus*).

4. Both works feature an independent Prologue and some form of interaction with a patron.

5. Each author dedicates their work to a queen in their respective Prologues, although they both obscure this dedication; Boccaccio through the use of a lesser representative, Andrea Acciaiuoli, and Chaucer through the use of allegory.

6. The Prologues of both writers suggest that their works were composed as a result of a pleasant period of respite. Boccaccio describes his state as 'paululum ab inerti uulgo semotus et a ceteris fere solutus curis (*DMC* Ded. 1).' Chaucer's dream vision Prologue takes place in an Edenic setting.

7. Had Chaucer finished the *Legend* to the terms described in the Prologue, his last narrative would have concerned Alceste, his patron. This would have been an opportunity to exploit the allegorical reference to Anne of Bohemia. Boccaccio's last narrative concerns Queen Joanna of Jerusalem and Sicily.

Bech concludes from these similarities that Boccaccio's work provided the model for the form and setting of Chaucer's *Legend*. Similarly to the *Monk's Tale* and *De casibus*, the majority of Chaucer's legends can be found in *De mulieribus* (the only exceptions are

[9] On the chronology of *De mulieribus* see Kolsky, pp. 21-22.

Ariadne, Philomela, and Phyllis), even if the narratives themselves are sourced from elsewhere.

Since Bech's argument, various scholars have considered the relationship between *De mulieribus* and the *Legend of Good Women*. Although many have acknowledged that *De mulieribus* is a generic analogue for the *Legend of Good Women*, and the two texts have been included in several studies of late medieval and renaissance compendiums of women, a direct textual relationship between the *De mulieribus* and the *Legend* has often been challenged.[10] While Wallace acknowledges that *De mulieribus* is Chaucer's 'most obvious inspiration' for the *Legend*, he finds Petrarch's minor contribution to the catalogue of women sub-genre to be a closer analogue.[11] This is Petrarch's letter to Empress Anne of Bohemia, *Familiares* XXII.8, which contains a short treatise, *de laudibus feminarum* (in praise of women).[12] Wallace argues that both Chaucer and Petrarch write under the imminent threat of absolutist poetics – for Petrarch, the 'tirauntz of Lumbardye' to whom Alceste makes reference in the Prologue, and for Chaucer the increasingly irascible and dangerous Richard II.[13] By contrast, the setting of the composition of *De mulieribus* is fundamentally peaceful: 'paululum ab inerti vulgo semotus et a ceteris fere solutus curis' [I was able to isolate myself from the idle mob and was nearly care-free]. This comparison does not do justice to the many sites of correspondence between Boccaccio and Chaucer's collections of women, which are based both in the narratives and the paratexts of each collection.

The *Legend of Good Women* stages a poet and patron encounter, in the form of Cupid and his wife, Alceste. Cupid has been enraged by Chaucer's existing oeuvre, particularly *Troilus and Criseyde* and his translation of the *Romaunt de la Rose*, whose portrayal of women who are unfaithful in love is 'an heresy ayeins [Cupid's] lawe' (F 330; G 256).

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[10] For studies on compendia of women see McLeod; C. M. Meale, 'Legends of Good Women in the European Middle Ages', *Archiv Für Das Studium Der Neueren Sprachen Und Literaturen*, 229 (1992), pp. 55-70; and Eva Jones, 'Women's Historiography in Late Medieval European Literature: Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Christine de Pizan' (University of Rhode Island, 2013).

[11] Wallace, p. 340.

[12] See Francesco Petrarca, *Le Familiari*, ed. by Vittorio Rossi and Umberto Bosco, 4 vols (Florence: G. G. Sansoni, 1933). For an English translation, see *Letters on Familiar Matters: Rerum Familiarium Libri*, ed. by Aldo S. Bernardo, 3 vols (New York: Italica Press, 2005).

[13] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, pp. 338-9.

Mollifying her husband, Alceste suggests that in recompense for his crimes, Chaucer should write

> […] a glorious legende
> Of goode wymmen, maydenes and wyves,
> That were trewe in lovyng al hire lyves;
> And telle of false men that hem bytraien
> (F 483-6; G 473-6.)

Alceste's descriptor, 'glorious,' is the first echo of the influence of *De mulieribus claris*. There are other places in the Prologue of the *Legend* where Chaucer seems to respond directly to Boccaccio's work, particularly in the G text.[14] When Cupid tells Chaucer how much material there is for him to draw upon, he not only emphasises the number of books, both old and new, which Chaucer himself owns, indicating his eligibility for the kind of compilatory task which Boccaccio undertook, but also outlines many of the features of *De mulieribus claris*:

> Yis, Got wot, sixty bokes olde and newe
> Hast thow thyself, alle ful of storyes grete,
> That bothe Romayns and ek Greeks trete
> Of sundry wemen, wich lyf that they ladde,
> And evere an hundred good ageyn oon bade.
> This knoweth God, and alle clerkes eke
> That usen swiche materes for to seke.
> What seith Valerye, Titus, or Claudyan?
> What seith Jerome agayns Jovynyan?
> (*LGW* G. 273-281)

A hundred stories of the lives of women from Greek and Roman sources describes

[14] There is not scope in this chapter to dwell at length on the differences between the F and G Prologues of the *Legend of Good Women*. For more on this subject, see, for example, Wallace, pp. 355-57 and 373-4; Boffey and Edwards, pp. 115-6; and Michael St John, *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 177.

Boccaccio's collection almost exactly. The remit of a hundred women pre-empts the parameters of the Monk:

> Or ellis, first, tragedies wol I telle,
> Of whiche I have an hundred in my celle.
> Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
> As olde bookes maken us memorie,
> (*MkT* 1971-74)

For there to be as many as a hundred examples – although this promise is not delivered by Chaucer – reflects a Boccaccian methodology. *De mulieribus claris* features the narratives of 106 women, a quantity which was not often replicated by imitators of the work.[15] However, Cupid's assertion that out of a hundred women only one is 'bade' does not cohere with the famous women of Boccaccio's text, of which there are more negative than positive examples.[16] The revisions made to the G text bring the *Legend* even closer to the model of *De mulieribus.* As Wallace points out, there is in the G text 'much more talk of *auctors* in general', and Cupid has 'grown more bookish and orthodox in his thinking.'[17] This is reflected by Cupid's appeal to Chaucer to consult 'Valerye, Titus, or Claudyan', 'Jerome' and 'Jovynyan', which points to one of the principal traits of *De mulieribus* – its extensive use of classical and religious sources, including Jerome, Livy, Valerius, and Claudian. This preoccupation with *auctores* is reflected by the annotations of early readers of *De mulieribus,* which indicate a fascination with Boccaccio's historiographical and classical sources. For example, the scribe of the florilegium Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 42 (Vb), the *quattrocento* humanist and translator Ludovico Sandeo, makes many references in the margins to Pliny, Suetonius, and Plutarch, Valerius, and Justin, as well as to historians who had since written on the same figures after Boccaccio such as Flavio Biondo (Flavius Blondus) (1392-1463).[18] The focus on 'bokes olde and newe' in the Prologue of the

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[15] Kolsky notes that, aside from Christine de Pizan, most writers who adopt the famous women model reduce the number of biographies in order to introduce a more thematically driven and tight argument (p. 176).

[16] See Kolsky, p. 2.

[17] Wallace, pp. 373-4.

[18] Sandeo compiled this manuscript in 1476 and it contains a selection of sixty classical and humanistic rhetorical and historiographical excerpts, including Lactantius's D*e opificio Dei* (*The Workmanship of God*), Pliny's *De viris illustribus (Concerning Illustrious Men*)*,* Leonardo Bruni's *Vita Aristotelis* (*Life of Aristotle*),

Legend reflects the humanist function of *De mulieribus* as a repository of compiled information.

Authorial framing and humanist compendia

Another way in which the *Legend* reflects the influence of *De mulieribus claris* is Chaucer's transformation of his sources to fit within the framework of good women. In her study on catalogues of women, a tradition in which *De mulieribus claris* was a foundational influence, McLeod outlines the late-medieval cataloguer's interest in *auctoritas* and in citing authoritative historiographical and classical sources:

> When a cataloger mustered authorities to argue for a virtuous femineity, the catalog form neatly mirrored a tension between personal opinion and authoritative dictum, between content (the thesis of woman's virtue) and form (a catalog built from older texts that more often had argued different).[19]

McLeod shows that the blank, and ostensibly unoriginal, canvas of the catalogue allows authors to conceal their own opinion and reinterpretation of sources behind the shield of their form.[20] This is certainly true of Boccaccio and Chaucer in their respective compendia. Boccaccio has depicted many of the women who appear in *De mulieribus* in other works, each account adapted to fit the terms of the respective work's moral agenda or genre, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Many of the women from Chaucer's *Legend* appear in Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* as victims of love, as well as in Petrarch's *Triumph of Love,* and Dante's *Inferno.* While the Virgilian Dido appears in the *Amorosa Visione*, as a victim of love, the Dido of *De mulieribus* is an exemplum of chastity for widows. As I have already

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his translation of Plato's *Apology of Socrates* and Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* (ff. 162r-224v). The inclusion of *De mulieribus* shows that it was perceived to belong amongst classical and humanistic works, and encyclopaedic historiographical works, such as Pliny's *De viris,* and that Boccaccio's work remained useful and relevant to *quattrocento* humanist scholarship. Another example of readers associating *De mulieribus* with classical scholarship is Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, McClean 174, in which *De mulieribus* is bound together with an apocryphal compendium of Roman history which was thought to have been written by Boccaccio.

[19] McLeod, pp. 1-2.

[20] McLeod argues that the *LGW* 'surveys the relationship between a catalog and its compiler (p. 20).'

established with his account of Zenobia in the *Monk's Tale*, this is a practice of Boccaccio's which Chaucer was familiar with. Generally, the shared narratives of *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* take on a more historiographical tone in the latter, as Kolsky has observed:

> The *De mulieribus* is also more clearly a work of humanist inspiration: there is no division here into the numerically significant nine books of the *De casibus*. Instead, there is a more determined 'scientific' approach to the material, with less overt emphasis on the role of fortune and destiny.[21]

The content of catalogues or compendia must adapt to the rubric in which they are contained – whether it be the requirement of *claritas* or the pathos required in the unfortunate falls of *De casibus.* In the case of Chaucer's women, they are contained within the far more constraining framework of being *good* (however that word might be defined).

Perhaps the most significant way in which Chaucer reinterprets the women of his compendium is through the targeted use of *amplificatio* and *abbreviatio*. While some critics have attributed Chaucer's frequent self-conscious *abbreviatio* in the *Legend* to his boredom with his subject matter, Catherine Sanok has argued convincingly that the features of Chaucer's narrative technique in the *Legend* – his use of *abbreviatio*, his disregard for biographical accuracy, and the 'repetitive thematic similarity between the legends' – are influenced by the narrative features of hagiography:

> The saint's Life articulated its eschatological meaning through its conformity to the life of Christ and, in order to emphasize this typological pattern, individualizing features of a saint's biography could be suppressed while others could be invented or borrowed. The insistence on typological truth rendered both the abbreviation of material and a disregard for biographical accuracy acceptable, and it made the repetitive similarity between individual Lives at once inevitable and desirable.[22]

The influence of hagiography certainly plays a role in Chaucer's project, but these qualities

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[21] Kolsky, p. 86.

[22] Catherine Sanok, 'Reading Hagiographically: The Legend of Good Women and Its Feminine Audience', *Exemplaria*, 13.2 (2001), p. 340.

also have their hallmarks in the tradition of humanist encyclopaedic compendia. Sanok focuses on Alceste's generic request for a 'legende', but equally as important to Chaucer's construction of his narratives is Cupid's stylistic criteria for the legends:

> Let be the chaf, and *writ wel* of the corn
> (*LGW* G 529; my italics)

> 'For whoso shal *so many* a stroye telle,
> Sey shortly, or he shal to longe dwelle.'
> (*LGW* F 576-7; my italics)

Cupid's instruction from the G Prologue acknowledges that a selection process will be involved in the composition of the *Legend*, and that 'the corn' selected must be written well of. It is a set of guidelines which reflects exactly the process of humanist repurposing I discussed above. Cupid's instruction to 'sey shortly', like the responses of the Host and Knight to the *Monk's Tale*, seem to make reference to the lengthy nature of the compendium form, especially in Boccaccio's hands:

> Et ne more prisco apices tantum rerum tetigisse videar […] plius in longiusculam hystoriam protraxisse non solum utile, sed oportunum arbitrar […] que cum, ut plurimum, hystoriarum ignare sint, seri mone prolixiori indigent et letantur.
> (*DMC* Pref. 8)
> [To avoid the time-honoured custom of dwelling only superficially on events, I think it will be useful and appropriate to deal with the stories at somewhat greater length […] Moreover, since women are generally unacquainted with history, they require and enjoy a more extended account.]

Cupid's request for brevity directly contradicts, perhaps knowingly, Boccaccio's stylistic guidelines in *De mulieribus*.

Moreover, Cupid's instructions lay the groundwork for Chaucer's reinterpretation of his sources in the *Legend of Good Women*. Chaucer dramatizes readerly opposition in the form of Cupid, just as he dramatizes the potential criticism of *De casibus* in the form of the Knight and Host. In Book Five of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer shows himself to be very

preoccupied by the future reception of his 'litel bok':

> So prey I God that non miswrite me,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge;
> And red whereso thow be, or elles songe,
> That thow be understonde, God I biseche!
> (V.1795-8)

Chaucer's fervent hope is that his poem will be *understood.* His prayer is in vain, however, for Cupid demonstrates in the Prologue that he has misunderstood Chaucer's intention in writing *Troilus and Criseyde*, made obvious by his use of Criseyde as an example of one of Chaucer's greatest crimes against the religion of Love. Cupid's interpretation does not ring true for the reader of *Troilus and Criseyde,* though it might for the reader of the *Filostrato.* Cupid is not only a reductive reader, he demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the art of translation when, in the Prologue, he applies the sins of Chaucer's source material to Chaucer himself:

> Thow mayst it nat denye,
> For in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose,
> Thow hast translated the Romauns of the Rose,
> That is an heresye ageyns my lawe,
> And makest wise folke fro me withdrawe;
> (*LGW* G 253-57)

However, as Kiser observes, what Cupid is referring to is a speech made by Reason in Jean de Muen's original *Romaunt of the Rose*, which Chaucer himself did not translate. Alceste, a more perceptive reader than Cupid, defends Chaucer on that front:

> He hath nat doon so grevously amys,
> To translaten that olde clerkes written,
> As thogh that he of malice wolde enditen
> Despit of love, and had himself yt wroght.
> (*LGW* G 253-57)

Through his judgement of Chaucer based on his translations, Cupid sets a game with terms that Chaucer cannot win. Cupid's final instruction to Chaucer is that he draw his examples from those 'olde auctours', and he must do them 'reverence'. However, Cupid has demonstrated that any default in his source will also be applied to the translator, Chaucer. Under these kinds of pressures, adherence to Cupid's set framework of 'good women' is more important than ever. Cupid's inconsistent views on translation give Chaucer the permission to greatly abbreviate his source materials, and therefore the ability to change their meaning. Cupid's assessment of Criseyde demonstrates the power of 'injurious fame' – writing a nuanced and likeable character within a damning narrative cannot change that narrative, nor the literary reputation of that character. [23] The parameters of the *Legend of Good Women* offer Chaucer the opportunity to demonstrate the redemptive power of the translator and the author of a compendium. Chaucer uses far more controversial women than Criseyde to demonstrate this point. By positioning these women within the framework of 'good women', Chaucer tests the limits of this kind of compendium, whilst successfully passing off his work as obedient to his patrons. A representative example of this is Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*.

Chaucer's Dido

Chaucer begins the *Legend of Dido* with a laudatory tribute to Virgil:

> Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,
> Be to thy name! and I shal, as I can,
> Folwe thy lanterne, as thow gost byforn
> How Eneas to Dido was forsworn.
> (*LGW* 924-27)

However, as Rossiter observes, this is immediately followed by a reference to Ovid,

> In thyn Eneyde and Naso wol I take
> The tenor, and the grete effectes make.
> (*LGW* 928-9)

[23] Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, p. 79.

indicating that, as he has done once before in the *House of Fame*, Chaucer is going to conflate the narratives of the *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides*. However, Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*, is even less indebted to Virgil than the *House of Fame*. Boitani describes Chaucer's use of intertextuality in the *House of Fame* as 'a fairly clear strategy of hide and seek'.[24] Chaucer conflates the *Aeneid*, the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*, and his references to his sources are closer to obfuscation than citation. As Boitani observes, Chaucer 'does not point out that the description of Fame is indebted to Virgil and that of the House of Rumour to Ovid'.[25] When Chaucer does acknowledge his source material his intention is self-deprecatory; his text is limited so if the reader desires to know more they should consult 'Virgile in Eneydos' or the 'Epistle of Ovyde'. Chaucer's blending of the perspectives of Virgil and Ovid results in what Lisa Kiser describes as

> a ludicrous, hybrid version of the Dido/Aeneas story which manifests radical inconsistencies in point of view, as might be expected from such a hasty amalgam of two poets with very different sympathies.[26]

I propose, however, that there is something studied in Chaucer's 'amalgam'. Chaucer goes from an Ovidian perspective, declaring Aenas a 'traytour' (I.267) to excusing him with Virgilian *pietas*:

> But to excusen Eneas
> Fullyche of al his grete trespas,
> The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,
> Bad hym goo into Itayle,
> And leve Auffrikes regioun,
> And Dido and hir faire toun.
> (*HF* I.427-432)

Where it fits his purpose, Chaucer uses the evidence of 'the book' to justify Aeneas's actions.

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[24] Boitani, 'Old Books Brought to Life in Dreams', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, p. 61.

[25] Boitani, p. 61.

[26] Lisa J. Kiser, *Telling Classical Tales: Chaucer and the Legend of Good Women* (London: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 123.

This moderation is no longer necessary when Chaucer comes to tell Dido's narrative in the *Legend of Good Women*.

In the framework of the *Legend*, Dido becomes a 'good woman' and Aeneas a 'treacherous man', in order that they fit into Alceste's criteria. Rather than using Virgil and Ovid as opposing classical models, Chaucer undermines Virgil's narrative, and goes still further than Ovid in portraying Aeneas' treachery. Cupid's instruction to 'sey shortly' allows Chaucer to greatly abbreviate the *Aeneid*, and, unlike the *House of Fame* narrative, only retell the sections that serve his 'good women' framework. The first instance of this is his retelling of Aeneas' flight from Troy, where Chaucer baldly states: 'And by the weye Creusa he les.'[27] This is very different from his explanation of Creusa's death in the *House of Fame* which show Aeneas's regret at having been separated from Creusa and places emphasis on his inevitable destiny:

> And in a forest as they wente,
> At a turnynge of a wente,
> How Creusa was ylost, allas,
> That ded, not I how, she was;
> How he hir sought, and how hir gost
> Bad hym to flee the Grekes host,
> And seyde he moste unto Itayle,
> As was hys destinee, sauns faille;
> (*HF,* I. 175-88).

Chaucer's abbreviated and blunt line in the *Legend of Good Women*, implies a neglect and betrayal on Aeneas' part which are not present in the *House of Fame*. This abbreviation was undoubtedly inspired by Ovid's *Heroides*, in which Dido uses Creusa's death as further evidence of Aeneas' treacherous nature:

> omnia mentiris, neque enim tua fallere lingua incipit a nobis, primaque plector ego. si quaeras, ubi sit formosi mater Iuli – occidit a duro relicta viro!
> [You are false in everything – and I am not the first your tongue has deceived, nor am

[27] *LGW* 945.

I the first to feel the blow from you. Do you ask where the mother of pretty Iulus is? – she perished. Left behind by her unfeeling lord!][28]

Through his use of *abbreviatio*, Chaucer manages to imply this accusation (which builds upon the cumulative pattern of male betrayal in the *Legend*), whilst technically staying true to Virgil's narrative.

As well as omitting details from Virgil's narrative, Chaucer denies knowledge of others, even when they are blatant. The most prominent example of this is Chaucer's portrayal of the love scene in the cave. Whilst Virgil's cave scene is ambiguous and presided over by Juno, the goddess of marriage, he makes it clear that Dido is guilty: 'coniugium vocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam' [she calls it marriage and with that name veils her sin].[29] Chaucer removes Virgil's ambiguity and his judgement of Dido's guilt. Regarding the question of whether Dido and Aeneas had a witness to their marriage, Chaucer claims ignorance:

I not, with hem if there wente any mo;
The autour maketh of it no mencioun
(*LGW*, 1226-8).

Furthermore, there is no ambiguity in the *Legend* as to whether a marriage takes place. Aeneas kneels and swears 'so depe to hire to be trewe', and Dido '[takes] hym for husbonde and become his wyf.'[30] Chaucer's translation even includes wedding vows – Aeneas kneels, takes Dido 'For wel or wo', and 'For everemo, whil that hem laste lyf'.[31] Even at the moment of commitment, Aeneas vows 'as a fals lovere', reminding the reader of his position in the dichotomy of 'good women' and 'false men'. Whilst Ovid also validates the commitment Aeneas makes to Dido; 'certus es Aenea, cum foedere solvere naves, quaeque ubi sint nescis, Itala regna sequi? [Are you resolved none the less to go, and to abandon wretched Dido, and

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[28] Latin text and translation from Grant Showerman and G. P Goold, *Heroides And Amores* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 'Dido Aeneae', pp. 83-84.

[29] *The Aeneid,* Book IV. 172.

[30] *LGW* 1234-8.

[31] *LGW* 1235-36.

shall the same winds bear away from me at once your sails and your promises?], he does not go as far as Chaucer in proving their marriage to be legitimate.[32] Both Ovid and Chaucer include the emotive elaboration, which Virgil does not make, that Dido is pregnant: 'gravidam Didon' [Dido soon to be mother], 'I am with childe, and yeve my child his lyf.'[33] The selective and calculated way in which Chaucer uses his 'old books' in the *Legend of Dido* is bears the hallmarks of Boccaccian historiographical practice. It is reminiscent of the way in which Boccaccio reframes the narrative of Zenobia by implanting, or excising, incriminating plot details. This Boccaccian technique is even more evident in Chaucer's *Legend of Cleopatra*, which has its basis in two accounts of Cleopatra by Boccaccio.

<u>Chaucer's Cleopatra</u>

In the *Legend of Cleopatra*, Chaucer once again uses *abbreviatio* to redefine his female subjects' legacy. The *Legend of Cleopatra* is worthy of particular attention because of its position as the only narrative requested by Cupid, and because its source remains contested. Boffey and Edwards conclude only that 'there is no certain source.'[34] It was originally suggested by scholars, including Bech, that Chaucer had used Florus's *Epitome Rerum Romanorum* (*Epitome of Roman History*), a large reason for this being the reference in Chaucer to Cleopatra's 'purple sails', and to a suggestion from Bech that Chaucer had misread Florus's Latin, misapplying Cleopatra's magnificent attire (maximos cultus) to the stone coffin (solium) rather than to Cleopatra, and that Chaucer translated 'solio' as shrine.[35] This theory requires a healthy degree of conjecture and, furthermore, relies on the common claim in twentieth century Chaucerian scholarship that Chaucer is a poor Latinist, a hypothesis that is surely belied by his body of work, which contains many accurate translations from Latin sources.[36] Contrastingly, Edgar Finley Shannon had previously argued that 'the facts' of Chaucer's account of Cleopatra come from Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, although 'the composition' is entirely Chaucer's own,

[32] *Heroides*, 'Dido Aeneae', 9-12.

[33] *Heroides,* 'Dido Aeneae', 133; *LGW* 1323.

[34] Boffey and Edwards, p. 119.

[35] Bech, pp. 316-18.

[36] P. C. Ghosh merely allows that 'Chaucer might not have had Latin enough to make out what an average schoolboy could, but we must allow him to know his English' ('Cleopatra's Death in Chaucer's "Legende of Gode Wommen"', *Modern Language Review*, 26.3 [1931], p. 334).

for he must create in Cleopatra a character fitted to the company of "Cupid's Saints," who were, of course, faithful in love.[37]

Boccaccio's two accounts portray Cleopatra as guileful and faithless, and Anthony as lustful and foolish. For this reason, Shannon detects a 'bantering tone' in Chaucer's concluding lines:[38]

And this is storyal soth, it is no fable.
Now, or I fynde a man thus trewe and stable,
And wol for love his deth so frely take,
I preye God let oure hedes nevere ake!
(*LGW* 702-505)

Shannon proposes that Chaucer uses both of Boccaccio's accounts of Cleopatra, in *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*, just as he does with Zenobia in the *Monk's Tale*. However, Pauline Aiken reads these lines, specifically Chaucer's use of the word 'storyal' as a reference to another source: Vincent of Beauvais's *Speculum Historiale*.[39] Aiken contended that all of the key plot details of the Chaucer's Cleopatra appear in the *Speculum*. Aiken is right in saying that the majority of the fundamental plot details of Chaucer's Cleopatra can be found in the *Speculum Historiale*: both describe Anthony's sudden love for Cleopatra, his divorcing of Augustus's sister, Octavia, in order to marry Cleopatra which provokes war with Augustus, Augustus leading a large host of ships to meet Anthony, Cleopatra fleeing with a purple sail, Anthony taking 'his life by his own hand', Cleopatra attempting and failing to win Caesar's favour (although Chaucer's description is intentionally ambiguous in comparison to Vincent's), and finally Cleopatra laying herself next to Anthony in a perfumed mausoleum, and killing herself with venomous snakes. It is very likely that Chaucer read the *Speculum* – he references it in the Prologue to the *Legend* – and, as W.K. Wimsatt points out, the only one of his accounts which Chaucer could have found in the *Historiale* is that of Cleopatra.[40] However,

[37] Edgar Finley Shannon, *Chaucer and the Roman Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), p. 182.
[38] Shannon, p. 182.
[39] *Speculum Historiale*, Liber V, cap. LIII, *De Nece Anthonii & Cleopatra*. The Latin text can be found in Aiken, 'Chaucer's *Legend of Cleopatra* and the *Speculum Historiale*', *Speculum*, 13.2 (1938), pp. 232–36.
[40] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., 'Vincent of Beauvais and Chaucer's Cleopatra and Croesus', *Speculum*, 12.3 (1937), p. 377. One of the plot details for which no satisfactory source has been found is Chaucer's description of

I do not think it is the only source which Chaucer uses, and far from the most influential. These shared plot points represent only the skeleton of Chaucer's account, and every one of these details is also included in the two accounts of Cleopatra by Boccaccio, along with supplementary details which feature in Chaucer's account but not in the *Speculum*. Boccaccio's accounts also provide the impetus for the emotional and pseudo-moral drive of Chaucer's Cleopatra, and his use of *abbreviatio*, which correspond to a more significant debt.

A pattern that emerges between the account of Cleopatra in Chaucer's *Legend* and in Boccaccio's *De mulieribus* is that Chaucer often subverts Boccaccio's moral messages in order to make them seem favourable qualities in the characters of Anthony and Cleopatra. Boccaccio's account in *De mulieribus* frames Anthony's love for Cleopatra, and his pursuit for glory on her behalf, to be reckless and irrational:

> Ceterum cum insatiabilis mulieris in dies regnorum aviditas augeretur, ut omnia complecterentur in unum, temulento Antonio, et forsan a tam egregia cena surgenti, romanum postulavit imperium, quasi in manibus passe concedere fuisset Antonii; quod ipse, minime sui compos, minus oportune, suis romanisque pensatis viribus, se daturum spopondit. O bone Deus, quam grandis poscentis audacia nec minor spondentis stultitia! O liberalis homo! Tot seculis, tanta cum difficultate, sanguine fuso et in morte tot insignium virorum, tot etiam populorum, tot egregiis operibus, tot bellis vixdum quesitum imperium, postulanti mulieri, non aliter quam domuncule unius dominium, inconsulte, quasi evestigio daturus, concessit. Sed quid?
> (*DMC* LXXXVIII.20-22)
> [As the insatiable woman's craving for kingdoms grew day by day, to grasp everything at once she asked Antony for the Roman empire. Perhaps drunk or rising

Cleopatra, naked, descending into a pit full of snakes (other sources describe two, or an undetermined number, of snakes being brought to her). John S. P. Tatlock has compiled a list of similar descriptions, none of which relate to the history of Cleopatra, but demonstrate that it is an existing trope ('Notes on Chaucer: Earlier or Minor Poems', *Modern Language Notes*, 29.4 (1914), pp. 99-100). A source which has not been discussed is the description of Cleopatra's death in *De casibus virorum illustrium*. Boccaccio describes Cleopatra entering Anthony's tomb 'apertis venis (*DCV* VI.XV.17)' – 'apertis' meaning bared, uncovered or open, and 'venis' meaning veins, arteries or pores. In *De casibus*, Boccaccio also compares the embraces of the snakes to the lustful embraces of Cleopatra's life (VI.XV.20). It is feasible that Chaucer could have derived the detail of Cleopatra's nakedness from Boccaccio's description and the implicit sexuality of her death in *De casibus*.

from such a noble supper, Antony, who was not in full possession of his mental faculties, without properly considering his own strength or the power of the Romans, promised to give it to her, as if it were his to give. Good Lord, how great was the audacity of the woman who requested this! And the madness of the man who promised it was no less! How generous was this man who so rashly gave away to an entreating woman an empire which had just been gained after so many centuries, with such difficulty and bloodshed, through the death of so many great men and even peoples, and with so many noble deeds and battles, as if he wanted to give it away at once like the ownership of a single house! Why say more?]

In his description of Anthony's love for Cleopatra, Chaucer converts this folly into a passion of courtly love:

> But love hadde brought this man in swich a rage
> And hym so narwe bounden in his las,
> Al for the love of Cleopataras,
> That al the world he sette at no value.
> Hym thoughte there nas nothyng to hym so due
> As Clepatras for *to love and serve*;
> Hym roughte nat in armes for to sterve
> In the defence of hyre and of hire ryght.
> This noble queene ek lovede so this knyght,
> Thourgh his desert, and for his chyvalrye;
>
> As certeynly, but if that bokes lye,
> He was, of persone and of gentillesse,
> And of discrecioun and hardynesse.
> Worthi to any wyght that liven may;
> (*LGW* 599-612)

Chaucer's subversion of Boccaccio's condemnation paints Anthony as a figure of largesse motivated by so strong a love 'that al the world he sette at no value', rather than a man who rashly pursues that which will cause the death of many men. At every point in the narrative at which Boccaccio criticises Anthony's moral failures Chaucer replaces these with

exclamations of his virtue, employing the language of courtly romance and chivalry.

Chaucer also transforms Boccaccio's message through the use of tactically applied *abbreviatio*. An example of this is Chaucer's description of Cleopatra's beauty. In *De mulieribus*, Boccaccio writes:

> nulla fere, nisi hac et oris formositate vere claritatis nota, refulsit, cum e contrario avaritia crudelitate atque luxuria omni mundo conspicua facta sit.
> (*DMC* LXXXVIII.1-2)
> [She gained glory for almost nothing else than her beauty, while on the other hand she became known throughout the world for her greed, cruelty and lustfulness.]

Unable to include the negative qualities which Boccaccio lists, Chaucer focuses purely on her beauty using the language of courtly romance (these three lines represent the only description of Cleopatra's person in the account) and employs *abbreviatio* to avoid describing any further:

> And she was fayr as is the rose in May.
> And, for to make shortly is the beste,
> She wax his wif, and hadde hym as hire leste
> (*LGW* 613-15)

Why would it be 'beste' to 'make shortly' if not to obscure the truth of her character? Chaucer's choice to be 'make shortly' seems to be a subversion of Boccaccio's exasperated 'sed quid' [but why say more?]. Boccaccio also employs *abbreviatio* in his account of Cleopatra's wedding but with a different effect, namely to indicate moral condemnation and censure. He refrains from describing the detail of Anthony and Cleopatra's wedding, though he provides enough to suggest its excess:

> Quo leta munere cupidissima mulier adeo blande flagrantem complexa est, ut, repudiata Octavia, Octaviani Cesaris sorore, illam totis affectibus sibi uxorem iungeret. Et ut arabicas unctiones et odoratos Sabee fumos et crapulas *sinam*;
> (*DMC* LXXXVIII.15; my italics)
> [The greedy woman, happy at the gifts, embraced the ardent man so seductively that he

made her his wife with great love, after repudiating Octavia, the sister of Octavian Caesar. *I shall not discuss* the Arabian ointments, the perfumes of Saba, and the drunken revels.]

Notably, Chaucer cuts his own *Legend of Cleopatra* short at exactly the same point but uses Boccaccio's technique to different ends. Chaucer justifies this *abbreviatio* with a reference to the weightiness of the task of writing the *Legend*:

> The weddynge and the feste to devyse,
> To me, that have ytake swich empryse
> Of so many a story for to make.
> It were to longe, lest that I shulde slake
> Of thyng that bereth more effect and charge;
> For men may overlade a ship or barge.
> And forthy to th'effect thanne *wol I skyppe*.
> And al the remenaunt, *I wol lete it slippe*.
> (*LGW* 616-623; my italics)

Chaucer thus sidesteps the necessity to describe the sinful indulgences of the wedding, under the guise of conciseness and fulfilling the prerequisite of Cupid.

Chaucer's treatment of Dido and Cleopatra in the *Legend* is a compelling demonstration of the power that the authors of compendia possess to shape the narratives of their historical subjects, and in so doing, to reform their reputations. However, it is not only authors who have power over the reputations of subjects – readers also play a key role and the Prologue which precedes these narratives has vividly established this fact by staging an author's anxiety that their work will be misunderstood, through the figure of Cupid. I will now investigate the dynamic of readerly power further and discuss the role that readers and reception play in the compendia of Boccaccio and Chaucer.

From *auctor* to reader in *De mulieribus claris*

Just as in *De casibus*, Boccaccio constructs various kinds of readers in the prefatory material

to *De mulieribus claris*. He also outlines the ways in which he will address, and appease, certain kinds of readers, and what he hopes the impact of *De mulieribus claris* will be on them. Boccaccio's Prohemium indicates that his audience is both men and women:

> existimans harum facinora non minus mulieribus quam viris etiam placitura;
> [It is my belief that the accomplishments of these ladies will please women no less than men.]
> (*DMC* Pref. 8)

However, the question of whether many women did in fact read Boccaccio's text remains largely unresolved. Lombardi's study on the woman reader in *trecento* Italy observes that Boccaccio's dynamic interactions with women in his *corpus* (whether the 'over-characterized female beloved' of his early works or a 'more distant and generic female readership') are complicated by the fact that 'Boccaccio's documented public is male'.[41] We have one piece of evidence that Boccaccio's works may have been read by women during his lifetime, and, crucially, that he did not want them to read them – his letter to Mainardo Cavalcanti of 1373, ten years after the publication of *De mulieribus claris*:

> Quod inclitas mulieres tuas domesticas nugas meas legere permiseris non laudo, quin imo queso per fidem tuam ne feceris.
> (Epistle XXII [1373])[42]
> [I do not recommend that you permit your glorious women to read my domestic frivolities; in fact, on the contrary, I beg that you not do this, by your faith.]

Bocaccio's most significant intended female reader is his patron, Andrea Acciaiuoli. Daniels, whose work on Boccaccio's audience is invaluable, describes Andrea Acciaiuoli as 'an example of a 'passive' historical audience.'[43] Boccaccio had already written *De mulieribus claris* when he was invited to the court at Naples by Andrea's brother, Niccolò Acciaiuoli. As with *De casibus*'s dedication to Mainardo Cavalcanti, the dedication to Andrea was added to

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[41] Lombardi, *Imagining the Woman Reader in the Age of Dante*, p. 189.

[42] *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca, vol. 5.1: *Epistole e Lettere*, ed. by Ginetta Auzzas and Augusto Campana (Arnaldo Mondadori Editore, 1992), Epistle XXII (1373). My translation.

[43] Daniels, 'Boccaccio's Narrators and Audiences', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, p. 48.

De mulieribus in its fourth phase in June 1362.[44] In the dedication to Andrea, Boccaccio claims that he wrote *De mulieribus claris*, 'more for my friends' pleasure than for the benefit of the broader public'.[45] This distinguishes the project from *De casibus*, which was composed to 'benefit the state.'[46] It also gives us a clue as to the actual intended audience of *De mulieribus claris*, which is that it was written for the entertainment of Boccaccio's Latin-literate male friends, and that its professed audience of both men and women is a retroactive framing. Daniels' study concludes that 'there is little or no direct evidence of women reading *De mulieribus* in Italy in manuscript or print in the first century or so after its publication', although its presence in the aristocratic libraries of Montefeltro and Visconti makes it possible that it was read by noble women.[47]

However, the idea of a female audience serves a useful purpose for Boccaccio's narrative framing and moralising. Boccaccio constructs a 'fictionalized female audience' in his prefatory material, as well as addressing a real woman, Andrea Acciaiuoli. Andrea is presented as the ideal female reader, to whom Boccaccio can offer instruction for correct reading practice.[48] Boccaccio also uses a female audience as the object upon which he has framed his style and content. As I referenced earlier, in the Prohemium of *De mulieribus claris,* Boccaccio justifies the prolixity of the narratives with respect to his female readers, who are unfamiliar with history:[49]

Et ne more prisco apices tantum rerum tetigisse videar, ex quibus a fide dignis

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[44] This phase is represented by the manuscript Vu, a beautiful presentation copy of *De mulieribus*. See Appendix B.

[45] *De mulieribus*, Dedication, 1.

[46] *De casibus*, Prohemium, 1.

[47] Daniels, 'Boccaccio's Narrators and Audiences', p. 49. This is based on the lack of any reference to such in letters, journals, literary texts, or any kind of traces of reading or ownership in the manuscripts themselves. Daniels's study in *Boccaccio and the Book* focuses exclusively on Italy – it is, of course, very likely that Christine de Pizan read both *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* – both of which began to circulate in France at the end of the fourteenth century – and that she used them in her *Cité des Dames*.

[48] This is reminiscent of the Conclusion of the *Decameron,* in which Boccaccio justifies the length of his work with reference to his female audience: 'you have need of a lengthier form of address than those who have sharpened their wits with the aid of their studies.' See Daniels, 'Boccaccio's Narrators and Audiences', pp. 49-50.

[49] See Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book*, p. 8.

potuero cognovisse am, plius in longiusculam hystoriam protraxisse non solum utile, sed oportunum arbitrar; […] que cum, ut plurimum, hystoriarum ignare sint, seri mone prolixiori indigent et letantur.
(*DMC* Pref. 8)
[To avoid the time-honoured custom of dwelling only superficially on events, I think it will be useful and appropriate to deal with the stories at somewhat greater length, learning where I can from trustworthy authors […] Moreover, since women are generally unacquainted with history, they require and enjoy a more extended account.]

This is the opposite of what Boccaccio suggests in the preface of *De casibus* in which he worries that 'an unbroken succession of stories' might be 'tiresome to the reader', therefore, which prompts him to include his moral exhortations.[50] However, although the suggested audience is different, the methodology is largely the same – moral inculcation through lengthy narration. Despite his pretensions, the fact that his audience are women has had no true bearing on Boccaccio's form in *De mulieribus*, but the conceit provides a useful justification for his method.

Another way in which Boccaccio prescribes the outcomes of reading in *De mulieribus* is that he constructs the responses of hypothetical contemporary female readers to his narratives, in order to guide his reader toward the correct conclusion. The most notable example of this is his narrative of Dido (based on Justin's *Epitome* not on Virgil), which concludes with a rhetorical spat between the narrator and a series of imagined female respondents on the subject of widows remarrying:

Dicet arbitror aliqua, cum perspicacissime ad excusationes nostre sint femine: "Sic faciendum fuit; destituta eram, in mortem parentes et fratres abierant, instabant blanditiis procatores, nequibam obsistere, carnea, non ferrea sum". O ridiculum! Dido quorum subsidio confidebat, cui exuli frater unicus erat hostis? Nonne et Didoni procatores fuere plurimi? Imo, et ipsa Dido eratne saxea aut lignea magis quam hodieme sint? Non equidem.

[50] *DCV* Pref. 9-10.

(*DMC* XLII.16-17)
[Our women show great acuity in excusing themselves, so I believe that someone will reply: "I had to marry again: I had been abandoned; my parents and my brothers were dead; suitors were urgent in their flattery; I couldn't resist; I'm made of flesh, not iron." How ridiculous! Dido's only brother was an enemy to his exiled sister – on whose help could she depend? Did Dido not have many suitors? Was Dido made of stone or wood any more than the women of our time? Certainly not!]

Boccaccio introduces the fourth hypothetical female respondent who is '(in her opinion), more clever than the rest' and produces an argument based in Biblical teaching:

> "Iuvenis eram; fervet, ut nosti, iuventus; continere non poteram; doctoris gentium aientis: 'Melius est nubere quam uri sum secuta consilium." O quam benedictum! Quasi ego aniculis imperem castitatem, vel non fuerit, dum firmavit animo castimoniam, iuvencula Dido! O scelestum facinus! Non a Paulo tam sancte consilium illud datur quin in defensionem facinoris persepe tur, pius alligetur.
> (*DMC* XLII.22)
> ["I was young. As you know, youth is ardent; I could not remain continent. St. Paul says that it is better to marry than burn, and I followed his advice." How well spoken! As if I recommended chastity only to old women, or as if Dido had not been a young woman when she determined to remain chaste! How wicked it is that Paul's holy counsel should so often be dishonourably quoted in defence of a shameful act!]

This fictionalized debate creates a closed field for response from any female readers, including those who are educated. Boccaccio's moral message, that under no circumstances should the women of today remarry, is rendered absolute.

However, there is a fundamental problem here. These passages, though they suit the objective of *De mulieribus* which is to instruct and reform the Christian women of today, do not comfortably cohere with Andrea Acciaiuoli as patron of the text, as several scholars including Brown have noticed.[51] For example, Boccaccio mentions Andrea's two marriages

[51] Brown, p. xiv.

to Carlo d'Arto, Count of Monteodorisio, and Bartolomeo II of Capua, Count of Altavilla, and yet, as we have seen, his attitude toward widows remarrying is unforgiving and unyielding. It is not only in the Dido narrative that Boccaccio rails against remarriage, and seems particularly to critique the women of today, among which we must also place Andrea. This critique is strongly voiced in the narrative of Pompeia Paulina, wife of Seneca:

> Heu miseri, quo nostri corruere mores? Consuevere veteres, quibus erat pronus in sanctitatem animus, ignominiosum arbitrari, nedum septimas, sed secundas inisse nuptias; nec posse de cetero tales honestis iure misceri matronis. *Hodierne longe aliter*;
> (*DMC* XCIV.10-11)
> [Alas, what wretches we are! To what depths have our morals plunged! The ancients, who were naturally inclined to purity, used to regard a second marriage as disgraceful, much less a seventh; they also held that after remarriage it was wrong to permit such women to mingle with respectable wives. *The women of our day are quite different.*]

Brown suggests that contradiction 'was surely not Boccaccio's intention' and that it 'may indicate a certain haste or maladroitness on his part', or, and this may be closer to the truth, 'perhaps he did not expect that Andrea Acciaiuoli would actually spend much time reading the *Famous Women*.'[52] This discordance could perhaps have been smoothed out by a more obsequious dedication, but once again Boccaccio seems to fail in the etiquette of a patronee. Certainly, to a modern audience, it reads as an affront to his chosen patron that Boccaccio originally intended to dedicate the preface to 'Joanna, Most Serene Queen of Sicily and Jerusalem' but felt that it would be eclipsed by her reputation, and therefore settled upon Andrea.[53] The conclusion of *De mulieribus*, which follows the narrative of Joanna of Sicily, could also easily be read as a slight upon Andrea, as well as to all other women of Boccaccio's lifetime:

> In nostras usque feminas, ut satis apparet, devenimus, quas inter adeo perrarus rutilantium numerus est, ut dare ceptis finem honestius credam quam, his ducentibus hodiernis, ad ulteriora progredi; et potissime dum tam preclara regina concluserit

[52] Brown, p. xiv.

[53] *DMC* Ded. 1-2.

quod Eva, prima omnium parens, inchoavit.

(*DMC* Conc. 1-2)

[As is apparent, I have now come to the women of our time. But so small is the number of those who are outstanding that I think it is more honourable to end here rather than continue with the women of today – all the more so since this work, which began with Eve, mother of the human race, concludes with so illustrious a queen [Joanna of Sicily].]

We see here that in *De mulieribus*, written at a later stage than *De casibus*, Boccaccio has moved further toward the Petrarchan model of disdain for his own time. The sentiment of the Conclusion is further evidence that Andrea was not a consideration in Boccaccio's plans. Even with the amendments which Boccaccio made to the text after the text was dedicated to Andrea, she is not mentioned again in the conclusion as Mainardo Cavalcanti is in Redaction B of *De casibus.*

I would argue that the way in which Chaucer positions Alceste as patron of his work, particularly in the F Prologue, responds to this cognitive dissonance. In his initial reverent description of Alceste, having drawn strongly upon the marguerite tradition, Chaucer turns to another work of Boccaccio's, the *Filostrato*, to express the level of his devotion to his lady. He describes Alceste as 'the maistresse of my wit', and before whom he is merely a harp ready to be plucked:[54]

My word, my werk ys knyt so in youre bond
That, as an harpe obeieth to the hond
And maketh it soune after his fyngerynge,
Ryght so mowe ye oute of myn herte bringe
Swich vois, right as yow lyst, to laughe or pleyne.
Be ye my gide and lady sovereyne!
(*LGW* F. 89-94)

Unlike Boccaccio, whose dedicatee's life jars uncomfortably with the collection of lives presented to her, Chaucer positions his patron as his guide, and the driving force behind his

[54] See Wallace, p. 350.

Legend. In abject contrast to Boccaccio's model of patronage, Alceste functions both as patron and exemplary subject. In L. P. E. Parker's study on depictions of Alceste throughout history, he argues that Chaucer's 'most likely source' for the narrative of Alceste in the Prologue is Boccaccio's *De genealogia deorum gentilium*.[55] Boccaccio provides a very similar, and brief, account of Alceste to Chaucer's in the description of the labours of Hercules in Book XIII of *De genealogia*:

> Hastow nat in a book, lyth in thy cheste,
> The gret goodnesse of the quene Alceste,
> That turned was into a dayesye:
> She that for hir husbonde chees to dye,
> And eek to goon to helle, rather than he,
> And Ercules rescued hir, pardee,
> And broghte hir out of helle agayn to blis?
> (*LGW* F. 510-16; G. 498-504)
> [He [Hercules] also brought Alcestis, wife of Admetus, King of Thessaly, back to her husband. For they say that when Admetus was ill and had implored the aid of Apollo, he was told by Apollo that he could not escape death unless someone from those near and dear to him would undergo it. When his wife, Alcestis, heard this, she had no hesitation in offering her life for her husband's, and so Admetus was freed by her death. But he, deeply grieved for his wife, begged Hercules that, going down to the underworld, he would bring her spirit back to the world above, which was indeed done.]
> (*DGD* XIII.I.31)[56]

The two accounts concisely cover the same narrative points, and in the same order. Chaucer's original addition, as Parker observes, is the idea that Alceste turns into a daisy, an image

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[55] L. P. E. Parker, 'Alcestis: Euripides to Ted Hughes', *Greece & Rome*, 50.1 (2003), pp. 4-5.

[56] 'Alchistam Admeti regis Thessalie coniugem retraxit ad virum. Dicunt enim quod, cum infirmaret Admetus implorassetque Apollinis auxilium, sibi ab Apolline dictum est eum mortem evadere non posse, nisi illam aliquis ex affinibus atque necessariis suis subiret. Quod cum audisset Alchista coniunx non dubitavit vitam suam pro salute viri concedere. Et sic, ea mortua, Admetus liberatus est, qui plurimum uxori compatiens Herculem oravit ut ad inferos vadens illius animam revocaret ad superos, quod et factum est.' Translation by Parker, pp. 4-5.

likely inspired by the *Metamorphoses*.[57] If Chaucer's Alceste was drawn from *De genealogia*, this not only increases the scope of the relationship between Boccaccio's Latin works and Chaucer, but also strengthens the idea of Alceste as both patron and narrative subject. Based on the brief account of Alceste Chaucer provides, her example is entirely harmonious with the recurrent lesson of the *Legend*, which is the value of loyalty in love.

From *auctor* to reader in the *Legend of Good Women*

The distinction between the positioning of Boccaccio and Chaucer's patrons in *De mulieribus* and the *Legend of Good Women* is also reflected in their real readership. The feminist scholarship of the last twenty years has begun to consider female readers as an important part of the *Legend*'s intended audience, and to refute the idea that Chaucer's playful stance in the *Legend* was designed to wink at his male readers and hoodwink his female readers. This involves a consideration of Chaucer's actual readers as well as his 'implied', 'ideal' or 'fictional' readers (such as the Canterbury pilgrims and Cupid). Strohm suggests that the concept of the 'implied audience' will be most useful when it is contextualized and 'checked against what we actually know about the milieu and reception of the work.'[58] We can extrapolate from the tone of Chaucer's poetry that Chaucer's implied audience are 'generally receptive to Chaucer's jests, allusions, and manipulations of generic expectations', with the exception of wilful misinterpreters such as Cupid.[59] Strohm argues that based on the evidence of Chaucer's life-records and, most concretely, his naming of real people in his works - 'Scogan, Bukton, Vache, Gower, and Strode' - we can identify Chaucer's primary audience as consisting of 'a group of persons in and about the civil service of Richard II - knights,

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[57] It may be too bold to suggest that Chaucer's association of Alceste with a flower was influenced by Boccaccio's floral imagery in relation to his patron in the dedication of *De mulieribus*. This imagery relates both to Andrea's appearance and to her reading practice: 'uti viridarium intrans, eburneas manus, semotis spinarum aculeis, extendis in *florem*, sic, obscenis sepositis, collige laudanda.'[As on entering a garden you *extend your ivory hands towards the flowers*, leaving aside the thorns, so in this case relegates to one side offensive matters and gather what is praiseworthy]; 'ut, uti corpore leta iuventute ac *florida* venustate conspicua es, sic pre ceteris, non tantum coevis tuis, sed priscis etiam, animi integritate prestantior fias' [Just as you are outwardly remarkable for your joyous youth and *floral loveliness*, so you should surpass in spiritual excellence not only your contemporaries but even the women of antiquity.]

[58] Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Audience(s): Fictional, Implied, Intended, Actual', *The Chaucer Review*, 18.2 (1983), p. 140.

[59] Strohm, p. 142.

esquires, and clerks,' and people of a similar social standing to himself, a composition of audience also suggested by Pearsall and by R.T. Lenaghan, who describes Chaucer's audience as a 'Circle of Gentlemen and Clerks'.[60] The possibility of women being in Chaucer's audience was not covered in depth, aside from Strohm's comment that his audience included 'the lesser gentry - the knights, esquires, and women of equivalent rank, and especially those closely connected with the court'[61] until Richard Firth Green's, 'Women in Chaucer's Audience', which, like Strohm, underlines the importance of understanding of Chaucer's 'actual' audience and that 'the imaginative appeal of the implied audience may have distorted our understanding of the actual historical one.'[62] Green's assessment of Chaucer's 'actual' audience leads him to conclude that women were rarely a part of Chaucer's audience, and only in small numbers.[63]

However, there have been several scholars who have used the evidence of the text and of the cultural milieu of Richard's court to propose evidence of a female audience.[64] Sanok observes that hagiography was 'the only genre universally recommended to women in the late Middle Ages'.[65] Thus, 'Alceste's interest in hagiography corresponds so completely to cultural expectations for women's reading that the religious difference hardly registers.'[66] Nicola McDonald has argued that the narrative voice in the *Legend* 'identifies its public as

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[60] Pearsall, 'The "Troilus" Frontispiece and Chaucer's Audience', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 7 (1977), pp. 68–74; R. T. Lenaghan, 'Chaucer's Circle of Gentlemen and Clerks', *The Chaucer Review*, 18.2 (1983), pp. 155–60.

[61] 'Chaucer's Audience', *Literature & History,* 5 (1977), p. 31.

[62] Richard Firth Green, 'Women in Chaucer's Audience', *The Chaucer Review*, 18.2 (1983), p. 146.

[63] Green does temper this opinion and admits that 'the probability that there were some women, albeit in rather small numbers and perhaps only occasionally, in Chaucer's audience seems high' and that addresses to women 'are not difficult to find' in Chaucer's work (p. 150). Green also acknowledges that although 'the number of women at Richard II's court was probably proportionately very small, it was undoubtedly larger than at earlier periods (151).' On the presence of women at Richard's court see also Gervase Mathew, who argues that 'the presence of women of influence and standing' distinguished a new international court culture at the close of the fourteenth century (*The Court of Richard II* [London: John Murray, 1968], p. 1.)

[64] See, for example, the excellent essays in *The Legend of Good Women: Context and Reception*, ed. by Carolyn P. Collette, Chaucer Studies, XXXVI (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006).

[65] Catherine Sanok, 'Reading Hagiographically: The *Legend of Good Women* and Its Feminine Audience', *Exemplaria*, 13.2 (2001), pp. 324-5.

[66] Sanok, pp. 324-5.

predominately female', despite the trend of scholarship which identifies Chaucer's audience as predominately male.[67] McDonald notes that Chaucer 'makes subtle reference' to the *Legend* in the last verses of *Troilus and Criseyde*:

> Bysechyng every lady bright of hewe,
> And every gentil womman, what she be,
> That al be that Criseyde was untrewe,
> That for that gilt she be nat wroth with me.
> […]
> Gladlier I wol write, yif yow leste,
> Penolopees trouthe and good Alceste.
> (V.1772-75; 1777-78)

This reference also indicates that unlike Boccaccio, Chaucer seems to have a female audience in mind during the composition of the *Legend* and indicates, as Larry Benson suggests, that Chaucer worked on the *Legend* over a period of several years.[68] It also indicates Chaucer's pre-existing anxiety that readers will not respond well to the content of his text – the very response that he stages in the Prologue of the *Legend*. Whether or not Chaucer's real female readers were 'wroth' with him, his plan to correct his actions with a collection of 'trewe' women had already been formed. Just as Boccaccio has been preparing for the misogynistic diatribes of *De mulieribus* throughout his career, with works such as the *Corbaccio* and *De casibus*, Chaucer has been laying the groundwork for the *Legend*, both in the *House of Fame* and in the *Troilus*.

Echoing Boccaccio's authorial position in *De mulieribus*, there are several moments throughout the *Legend* when Chaucer directly addresses a female audience.[69] McDonald has astutely analysed these moments, but I think it important, also, to consider what kind of female reader Chaucer seems to address. A particularly striking instance is in the *Legend of*

[67] Nicola F. McDonald, 'Chaucer's "Legend of Good Women", Ladies at Court and the Female Reader', *The Chaucer Review*, 35.1 (2000), p. 22.

[68] Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 1059.

[69] McDonald identifies the following passages in the "Legend of Dido" (1254-9, 1263-4), the "Legend of Lucretia", (1879-85), the "Legend of Philomela" (l. 2387), "Legend of Phyllis", (ll. 2401-2, 2559, 2561) (pp. 23-4).

Dido:

> O sely wemen, ful of innocence,
> Ful of pite, of trouthe and conscience,
> What maketh yow to men to truste so?
> Have ye swych routhe upon hyre feyned wo,
> And han *swich olde ensaumples yow beforn*?
> Se ye nat alle how they ben forsworn?
> Where sen ye oon that he ne hath laft his leef,
> Or ben unkynde, or don hire some myscheef,
> Or piled hire, or bosted of his dede?
> *Ye may as wel it sen as ye may rede*.
> *Tak hede now* of this grete gentil-man,
> (*LGW* 1254-64; my italics)

Rather than appealing to a present audience, this passage seems to evoke the experience of reading a catalogue or compendium, in this case a compendium of faithless men. Rather than asking women to listen or hearken, it asks them to consider 'swich olde ensaumples *yow beforn*' and repeats the verb to 'se' three times. Simultaneously, Chaucer contrasts the physical experience of seeing, and the intellectual experience of reading - 'Ye may as wel it sen as ye may rede' - which evokes two kinds of intended female audience. The tongue-in-cheek warning at the end of the 'Legend of Phyllis' also evokes the experience of reading *exempla* as well as emphasising the intimacy of performance:

> Be war, ye wemen, of youre subtyl fo,
> Syn yit *this day* men may *ensaumple se*;
> And trusteth, as in love, no man but me
> (*LGW* 2559-2561; my italics)

This narratorial address applies to both the experience of reading and of listening. The reference to temporality, 'this day', reminds us of the moment of performance – you can imagine the audience's laugh at Chaucer's final line. This feeling of intimacy is also established at the beginning of the 'Legend of Phyllis', though these lines also invoke the authority of written *exempla*:

> By preve as wel as by autorite,
> That wiked fruit cometh of a wiked tre,
> *That may ye fynde, if that it like yow*.
> But for this ende *I speke this as now*,
> To tellen yow of false Demophon.
> In love a falser herde I nevere non,
> But if it were his fader Theseus.
> "God, for his grace, fro swich oon kepe us!"
> Thus may *these women* preyen *that it here*
> (*LGW* 2394-2402; my italics)

These addresses to women represent a motif in the *Legend* of women reading, listening to, and engaging with Chaucer's text.

'Alle vnder correccioun': The responses of readers

Thus far, I have discussed the ways that both *De mulieribus* and the *Legend of Good Women* stage the act of readers listening to and responding to their narratives, within the confines of the text, whether it be the dressing down of the rebuttals of his female readers by Boccaccio, or the playful appeals of Chaucer. This leads us to consider how real readers responded to these compendia of women, and whether early readers of *De mulieribus* responded to the text in a similar way to Chaucer. As Carruthers observes:

> Truly it is commentary and imitation which make a text an *auctor* – not the activities of its writer but of its readers […] And the revising process was not limited to the first author. Readers, in the course of familiarizing a text, became its authors too.[70]

It is clear that both Boccaccio and Chaucer were concerned by the possibility of the 'revising process' that their readers might perform. In Book III of *Troilus*, Chaucer's narrator calls upon the future readers, who are better versed in the ways of love than he, to correct where he

[70] Carruthers, pp. 263-4.

has fallen short:

> ffor myne wordes, heere and euery parte,
> I speke hem alle vnder correccioun
> Of ȝow that felyng han in loues arte,
> And putte it al in ȝoure discrecioun
> To encresse or maken dymynucioun
> Of my langage
> (III.1331-36)

Chaucer's suggestion that his readers might 'encresse' or 'maken dymynucioun' of his text, finds and almost exact echo in the last words of *De mulieribus claris*:

> Reliquis vero sic dictum sit: possibile esse et contigisse facile credam non nulla minus recte consistere. Decipit enim persepe non solum ignorantia rerum, sed circa opus suum nimia laborantis affectio. Quod si factum sit, doleo quesoque, per venerabile honestorum studiorum decus, equo animo quod minus bene factum est prudentiores ferant; et si quis illis pie caritatis spiritus est, *minus debite scripta augentes minuentesque corrigant et emendent*, ut potius alicuius in bonum vigeat opus, quam in nullius commodum *laceratum dentibus invidorum* depereat.
> (*DMC* Conc. 5; my italics)
> [To my other critics, I say that it is possible and I can easily believe it happened that some things were improperly included. Certainly, an author is often deceived both by ignorance of events and by an excessive attachment to his own work. If this is the case, I am sorry, and I ask on behalf of the venerable dignity of honourable studies that my readers tolerate with a wise and kindly spirit what does not been skilfully executed. If they are charitably inclined, *let them correct and amend the appropriate passages by addition or deletion*: in this way, the work will live for someone's benefit rather than perish, *mangled by the teeth of envy*, of service to no one.]

Like Chaucer, Boccaccio invites his reader to respond to and correct his text. When placing *De mulieribus* in dialogue with the *Legend of Good Women*, it is interesting to note that Boccaccio feels that the criticism levelled at his work would relate to the improper inclusion of certain subjects, and that the reader has permission to 'correct', 'amend', add, and delete

passages, or even accounts, of famous women. In fact, one reader of *De mulieribus* took Boccaccio at his word and did all of these things.

The owner and scribe of Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Barb. Lat. 42 (Vb), Ludovico Sandeo, creates his own compilation out of Boccaccio's compendium, seeming to value Boccaccio's narratives for their historical and encyclopaedic value rather than for their stylistic beauty. Sandeo writes at the end of the selection of *De mulieribus* chapters:

> haec sunt quae ex Boccatio de claris mulieribus ita transcurrenter excerpsi: volens igitur aliquis haec diffissius videre. Ad eundem recurrat quam ea ego succinte mihi ipsi collegi.
> [These are the excerpts I have gathered from Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* as I quickly transcribed them: Someone wishing to examine these more thoroughly should refer back to the same work from which I briefly compiled them for myself.][71]

Sandeo also follows Boccaccio's words and recommends some 'addition[s]' to the text. One of the reasons that Sandeo's engagement with *De mulieribus claris* is relevant to Chaucer's is that Sandeo shares Chaucer's instinct in the *Monk's Tale* of taking ownership of Boccaccio's text and adapting it to his own contemporary moment. Following the table of contents for the chapters of *De mulieribus* which he has excerpted, Sandeo lists other women who could have been included in *De mulieribus claris* and a short account of their deeds:

> Judith. Olophernem interfecit. [Judith. She killed Holofernes.]
> Vaschi. coniux regis Assueri. Ob inobedientia; ab eo repudiata. Sumpta hester in coniugem. [Vashti. Wife of King Assuerus. Because of disobedience, she was repudiated by him. Esther was taken as a wife.]
> Hester. Ab Assuero in conuigem sumpta est. Repudiata Vaschi. [She was taken by Assuerus as his wife. Vashti was repudiated.]
> Focianae mulieres. Preliantibus contra Thesalos maritis. Maximum pararunt ignem. Parat[us] si earum viri adverso marte certassent in ignem ruere. Illi victores in urbem reversi. [The women of Phocis. While their husbands were fighting against the

[71] Barb. Lat. 42 (Vb); fol. 224v.

Thessalians, they prepared a great fire. Having prepared it, if their husbands had engaged in battle against the enemy, they would rush into the fire. Those victorious, returned to the city.]

Laudatas coniuges salvas habuere:

Hersilia: sabina. Sabinarum raptu Romulo contigit et sabinos Romanis conciliavitur. [Hersilia: a Sabine woman. Romulus achieved the abduction of the Sabine women and through this, the Sabines were reconciled with the Romans.][72]

Sandeo concludes this supplementary list with a short account of Elizabeth Woodville (Dame Elizabeth Grey), the wife of Edward IV, indicating his desire to broaden and adapt the scope of Boccaccio's accounts, both with Biblical women, and admirable women of his own age.[73] It also demonstrates that Boccaccio's readers, his male readers at any rate, are empowered by his authorial stance to change and develop what he has begun in *De mulieribus*, in the same way that Chaucer does.

Sandeo's *De mulieribus* also demonstrates the power that the reader has to change the reputation of the women in Boccaccio's collection and reveals the fragility of the author's ability to reform the reputation of his subjects. One notable instance of this is Sandeo's response to Boccaccio's account of the final woman in his collection: 'Joanna Queen of

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[72] Vb; fol. 227v.

[73] '(nomine Elisabeth) Adoardi. nostro aevo Angliae regis. coniux. Inter clarissimas ponenda mulieres. Haec vidua. Nec rege digna marito. Ob sanguinis ignobilitatem, cum regis concupiscentia; euadere non posset. Ad vota[m] tandem regis descendit. Unitum imprimis donum ab eo petens quo concesso. Ait. Peto ò Rex. Postea quam in me libidinem tuam expleueris. Hoc culto me interficias (exernit non quae veste tegebat gladiolum). Hoc ni facies. Ego ipsa sanguinem meum effundam. Hac honestate visa Rex eam in coniugem accipit. Publice. Accersitus proceribus, et vir clarus quoque ea potitur. Ab aduentu Christi Mcccclxxvii (1477) […] ex ea tribus filiis et quatuor filiabus […] [(By name, Elizabeth) In the time of our king Edward of England, there was a wife among the most famous women who should be celebrated. This widow was not worthy of a husband as noble as the king, due to the lowliness of her birth. She could not escape the king's desire for her. Eventually, she succumbs to the king's wishes. Requesting a unique gift from him as a consequence, she says, "I beseech you, O King, after you have satisfied your desire with me, kill me in this manner (by a sword, not the garment that covers it). If you do not do this, I will shed my own blood." The king, considering her sincerity, takes her as his wife publicly. The nobles being summoned, the renowned man also claims her. From the beginning of 1477 AD, she bears three sons and four daughters to him […] (Vb; fol. 227v).] The transcription and translation are both mine. Some words towards the end of the account of Elizabeth Woodville are illegible.

Sicily and Jerusalem.' Sandeo does not include the final chapter in his recompiled version of *De mulieribus.* Moreover, Sandeo will not allow Boccaccio's flattering account of Joanna, the last narrative before Boccaccio's address to his readers, to remain unchallenged. He gives a title and subtitle (Ioanna Ierusalem & Sicilie regina nostro aevo illustris mulier. Etcetera) with a marginal note:

> huic mulieri Boccatius plurimas laudes attribuit, tamen mortua est incarcer[ata] prope Noceram. Privata regno. qr papa Urbanus investiunt quendam Karolum Ungariae regno eius que ista Ioanna adherebat fautrix. cuidam […] marito. Que creatus erat papa. Contra Urbanum. habuit quattuor maritos.[74]
> [Boccaccio attributed many praises to this woman, however, she died in prison near Nocera. She was deprived of the kingdom. Pope Urban invested a certain Charles with the kingdom of Hungary, and this Joanna supported him. There is mention of a certain husband. And the antipope who had been created was [opposed to] Urban. She had four husbands.]

Sandeo's note exposes Boccaccio's bias as a writer wanting to gain favour with a potential patron, not only with his praise of her in the Prologue but by ending his compendium with her and deeming her the only woman worthy of including from his age. Joanna of Naples is as condemnable, according to the moral framework of *De mulieribus*, as those women that Boccaccio censures in *De mulieribus.* Like Andrea Acciaiuoli, her life defies Boccaccio's opinions on the remarriage of widows, and she died in prison in 1382, though Boccaccio did not live to see this. Both Andrea and Joanna represent an attempt by Boccaccio to reform the reputation of two women whose *fama* (even in his own writings) has been far from constant.[75] Likewise, Joanna was a ruler for whom *fama* played an instrumental role, both during her lifetime and in her posthumous legacy. Boccaccio's account of Joanna is another example of the inconsistency between his attempts to ingratiate himself with contemporary patrons and the rigid Christian doctrine of his narratorial moral commentary in other chapters. Boccaccio frames Joanna's political and marital struggles as being the blows of fortune which her 'lofty and indomitable spirit' was able to overcome (*DMC* CVI.11). However, we

[74] Vb; fol. 224v. My transcription is based what can be read from Sandeo's text, which is faded in parts.

[75] On this subject see Elizabeth Casteen, *From She-Wolf to Martyr: The Reign and Disputed Reputation of Johanna I of Naples* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

see from Sandeo's collection that Boccaccio, like Chaucer in his attempt to defend Criseyde, was not able to convince some readers. Boccaccio's historical objectivity is called into question and his power as an *auctor* to use a catalogue to benefit someone's reputation and add glory to their name is undone by the power given to his reader, Sandeo, to amend and correct the record. We can see why Chaucer might have found a precedent in *De mulieribus* for the audacious reframing of the narratives of Dido and Cleopatra in the *Legend*.

Both *De mulieribus claris* and the *Legend of Good Women* illustrate, and yet undermine, the power of an *auctor* to shape history and legacy. In the *Legend*, Chaucer is able to reframe the narratives of Dido and Cleopatra, using the two strictures which confine him – to write of good and 'trewe' women, and to 'sey shortly'. However, the dynamic presence of readers in both texts introduces the threat that these authorial reframings will be undermined. Both texts demonstrate the complex negotiation that must be performed when dedicating an exemplary text to a patron. As we saw in the *Monk's Tale*, more often than not, the lessons of history are not well received by those who most need to hear them. Chaucer's reception of Boccaccio's efforts to reconcile his worldly ambitions with his moral convictions leads him to create a text in which his own female patron defines the very parameters of his writing. Moreover, Boccaccio's admonitory relationship with his imagined female reader, is transformed in the *Legend* into a narrator-reader relationship which is based on good humour, and an expectation of engagement. In the following chapter, we will see these negotiations of authorship, exemplarity, audience and patronage enacted in the compendious translations of Laurent de Premierfait and John Lydgate.

Chapter Four

De casibus virorum illustrium in translation: Laurent de Premierfait and John Lydgate

The scholarly instinct when discussing the *Monk's Tale* is often to proceed directly to John Lydgate's 1438 *Fall of Princes,* with a passing reference to Laurent de Premierfait as a French intermediary.[1] This chapter will resist that pattern by revisiting the significance of Laurent to the history of French vernacularisation, and, as Lydgate's source text, to English historiography. When discussing the trajectory of compendious history from Boccaccio to Chaucer to Lydgate, it is important to acknowledge that Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* was radically changed by Laurent, and that Lydgate's pseudo-*auctor,* 'Bochas', is the product of a confluence of authorial influences. Laurent produced two very different translations of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* one in 1400 and the other in 1409. I focus on the 1409 translation as it is the translation from which Lydgate produced the *Fall of Princes,* but also because it reveals significantly more about Laurent's individual style and his evolving ideas surrounding the translation of Latin texts and the writing of history in relation to audience. The first part of this chapter treats the transformation of Boccaccio's *De casibus* at the hands of Laurent, and the second part considers the confluence of sources which produce John Lydgate's adaptation of *Des cas*, the *Fall of Princes*.

Laurent de Premierfait, the translator

Laurent de Premierfait (c. 1380-1418), 'clerc du diocese de Troyes', was one of the most significant and influential translators of fifteenth-century France, and no fewer than 146 extant manuscripts of his works exist.[2] Laurent de Premierfait is an example of a vernacular writer translating Boccaccio almost contemporaneously with Chaucer and therefore represents a valuable comparison with him. Laurent garnered great renown in his own time as a poet and humanist through his translation of Greek, Latin and Italian texts, including

[1] I believe this is partly due to difficulty of access (there is only one edition of the 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* that of Patricia Gathercole, and it only covers the first book of nine), and partly to the length of Laurent de Premierfait's second translation.

[2] Patricia M. Gathercole, 'Fifteenth-Century Translation: The Development of Laurent de Premierfait', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 21.4 (1960), p. 365.

Boccaccio's *Decameron,* and two translations of *De casibus virorum illustrium.*[3] The first of these, which closely followed the original and was dedicated to Duke Louis of Bourbon, was produced in 1400, and another, more elaborative version, was produced in 1409 for Duke John of Berry.[4] In her discussion of fourteenth-century French translations of Boethius, Rita Copeland comments upon the rhetorical and 'contestative' nature of medieval hermeneutics and vernacularisation: 'a later translator raises a challenge to one or more earlier translations in the same language, so that the new translation rivals its linguistic forbears.'[5] By comparing Laurent's two translations of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* we can trace this 'contestative' process occurring within one *auctor*. Patricia Gathercole, who has conducted extensive research into Laurent de Premierfait's textual and translation practices, argues that Laurent de Premierfait was one of the first French writers to reflect deeply on the art of translation and to describe his own philosophy as a translator.[6] In the period of time between his first and second translation of *De casibus,* Laurent underwent a stylistic journey in his approach to translating Latin texts. There has been some critical dissent as to the quality of this earlier translation; Bergen deems it 'a comparatively complete and straightforward rendering', whilst Anne D. Hedeman finds it so close to the Latin as to be 'a mirror of Boccaccio' and ultimately declares it, 'a failure', largely because Laurent himself deemed it so.[7] When reflecting on the 1400 translation in the translator's prologue of his second attempt, Laurent observes that he had 'followed precisely and exactly the sentences taken from the author's own language, which is very subtle and artificial.'[8]

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[3] Laurent de Premierfait's translation of *De Amicitia* formed the basis for the English translation by John Tiptoft, 'Tulle de Amicicia in Englysh', printed by William Caxton in 1481. Tiptoft's translation of *De Senectute,* 'Tulle of olde age', may also have been based on Laurent de Premierfait. See Robert H. Lucas, 'Mediaeval French Translations of the Latin Classics to 1500', *Speculum*, 45.2 (1970), p. 236. For an excellent account of the production context of Laurent's two translations of *De casibus* see Armstrong, *The English Boccaccio*, pp. 42-65.

[4] *Lydgate's Fall of Princes Part I (Books I. and II.)*, ed. by Henry Bergen (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), p. xiii.

[5] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages*, p. 128.

[6] Gathercole, 'Fifteenth-Century Translation', p. 370.

[7] Bergen, p. xiii; Anne D. Hedeman, *Translating the Past: Laurent de Premierfait and Boccaccio's De Casibus* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008), p. 11.

[8] 'Comme doncques ja pieça je Laurens a l'enhortement et requeste d'aulcuns eusse translate de latin en François le moins mal que je peu un tres notable et exquis livre de Jehan Boccace des cas des nobles hommes et femmes, en la translation duquel je ensuivi precisement et au juste les sentences prinses du proper langaige de

Certainly, Laurent's 'word-by-word' methodology led to some problematic phrasing which he himself soon realised was obscure and inaccessible to the very audience he sought to reach, in fact, Gathercole argued that a person who did not know Latin would be 'incapable of understanding it.'[9] The following example from Zenobia's narrative shows the distinction in style between the two translations:

> eorumque nomine quod paternum fuerat occupavit imperium regioque
> (*De casibus*, VIII.VI, 6).[10]
> et ou nom d'iceulz elle occuppa l'empire paternelle.
> (*Des cas* (1400), VIII.VI, 24).[11]
> et […] ou nom des deux enfants occupa la seigneurie du royaume de leur pere.
> (*Des cas* (1409), VIII.VI, fol. 324r).[12]

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l'auteur qui est moult *subtil et artificiel*.' Gathercole, p. 89. Translation by Hedeman, p. 11. The terms 'subtil' and 'artificiel', derive from pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* and Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*; the author of the *Ad Herennium* designates a 'Direct Approach' and a 'Subtle Approach' when writing; the 'Direct Approach' uses 'straight-forward methods' to render its audience 'well-disposed or attentive or receptive', while the 'Subtle Approach' achieves these results 'covertly' (*Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, trans. by Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library, 403 [Harvard University Press, 1954], I.VII.11). Laurent clearly considered this to be a negative quality in his first translation. His use of 'artificiel' suggests that Laurent did not consider his first translation to follow 'Nature's smooth road', which Geoffrey of Vinsauf describes in his discussion of 'Ordering the Material'. Geoffrey of Vinsauf believed that when writing, 'the material's order may follow two possible courses', that of Nature or that of Art: 'Nature's smooth road points the way when "things" and "words" follow the same sequence, and the order of discourse does not depart from the order of occurrence (Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, trans. by Margaret F. Nims [Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1967], p. 18).'

[9] Gathercole, 'The Translator of Boccaccio', p. 270; and 'Fifteenth Century Translation', pp. 366-370.

[10] Where the Latin text differs between Redaction A and B of *De casibus*, I follow Redaction A using the text from an early printed edition (*Joannis Boccacii Certaldi De Casibus Illustrium Virorum Libri Nouem* [Gourmont & Petit, 1520]), as this was the Redaction Laurent used.

[11] Stefania Marzano, 'Édition Critique Du *Des Cas Des Nobles Hommes et Femmes Par Laurent De Premierfait* (1400)' (University of Toronto, 2008), p. 30. Marzano's thesis offers a critical edition of the 1400 translation of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. fr. 132, which is an invaluable resource. All quotations from the 1400 *Des cas* are from Marzano. Unless otherwise specified, all translations are mine.

[12] All citations from the 1409 *Des cas*, after Book I, are from Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 5193, one of the two earliest exemplars, along with Geneva, Bibliothèque universitaire, MS Geneva fr. 190. MS 5193 was

The phrasing of this sentence demonstrates one of the reasons for the difference in length between the two translations; 'l'empire paternelle' is much more concise than 'la seigneurie du royaume de leur pere', though less comprehensible for an audience unfamiliar with Latin. The difference in dissemination, and likely popularity, between the two translations is reflected in their extant manuscripts; approximately sixty-eight manuscripts of the 1409 translation survive, compared to only seven of the 1400 translation.[13]

<u>The retranslation of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*</u>

Where Boccaccio removed what he perceived to be unnecessary details from his second redaction, Laurent took the opposite approach.[14] During the period when Laurent began his 1409 retranslation, he was steeped in the art of classical translation, and his methodology had been transformed, as he had spent the previous few years translating Latin works, including Cicero's *De Senectute*, in 1405, and *Laelius de amicitia*, begun in 1406, and a reworking of Peter Bersuire's translation of Livy's *Ab urbe condita,* in 1408.[15] In the translator's prologue to the 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* Laurent communicates his reasons for re-translating Boccaccio's work, and his new perspective on what is required of a translator of Latin historiographical works into the vernacular. First, Laurent defends the right of any man to continue to improve his writings: 'this liberty to change something for the better is not given solely to a man to amend or correct his own work.'[16] Certainly, as I discussed in Chapter One, both Petrarch and Boccaccio felt they had licence to continue to correct their own work almost indefinitely. Laurent then goes on to laud Boccaccio and the importance of

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presented to Duke John the Fearless of Burgundy, while MS Geneva fr. 190 was presented to Duke John of Berry. Both are high-quality illuminated manuscripts. Patricia Gathercole believed that BNF F. 226 was the manuscript presented to Duke John of Berry. Quotations from Book I are from Gathercole's critical edition (*Laurent de Premierfait's Des Cas Des Nobles Hommes et Femmes, Book I*, ed. by Gathercole [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968]).

[13] Gathercole, p. 38. There were six different printed editions of Laurent's 1409 translation produced between 1483 and 1578, compared to two editions of the 1400 (Bergen, p. xiv.).

[14] For the changes which Boccaccio made between Redaction A and Redaction B, see Zaccaria, *Boccaccio narratore*, pp. 63-73.

[15] See Hedeman, p. 12.

[16] 'Et ceste licence de muer la chose en mieulx n'est pas donnee a l'omme pour seulement amender ou corriger sa propre œuvre […]' (Gathercole, p. 89).

his work; for its truth to be conveyed with clarity to French readers is of great importance. Moreover, Laurent extols the moral integrity of the work. Once understood and absorbed, the reader will learn to move their thoughts from the material to the transcendent:

> Je doncques selon le jugement commun en amendant se je puis la premiere translation du dit livre vueil senz rien condempner aultrefoiz translater le dit livre, afin c'est assavoir que de tant qu'il ier plus cler et plus ouvert en sentences et en paroles, de tant il delictera a lire et a escouter pluseurs hommes et femmes. Et par ce moien avec l'alde de la grace divine, aprés qu'ilz congnoistront plus a pleln la miserable condition et le tournant et muable estat des choses de fortune, ilz les reputeront moins ains les despriseront et de tant plus extimeront les choses divines et celestes qui ont vraye seurté et joye perdurable.
> [Therefore, according to common judgment, if I can amend the first translation of the said book, without condemning anything else, I desire to translate the said book again, so that it may be understood that the clearer and more open it is in sentences and words, the more it will delight many men and women to read and listen to it. And by this means, with the help of divine grace, after they shall recognise more fully the miserable condition and the changing and mutable state of worldly things, they will regard them less, indeed despise them, and they will esteem divine and heavenly things much more, which have true security and lasting joy.]
> (*Des cas*, Translator's Prologue)[17]

The motivation at the heart of Laurent's second translation is to 'delight' his reader, and to make his text more open and comprehensible, so that it can reach more people. Laurent argues that if his reader understands what they hear, they will be more likely to receive his message, and to set their thoughts on 'divine and heavenly things'. Laurent follows Boccaccio in curating his style to increase the enjoyment of his reader. However, whilst Petrarch and Boccaccio advocate for the power of eloquence, specifically Latin eloquence, as a tool for the inculcation of virtue, Laurent has firmly moved away from Latinate style, and towards a descriptive, and plain vernacular, by which virtue may be imparted through complete understanding. Laurent's position in his retranslation is akin to Dante's in *De vulgari eloquentia*, as Copeland observes, for Dante, 'the vernacular has its own nobility as a

[17] Gathercole, p. 89.

universal language, not because it resists historical and geographical difference, but because, in all of its diversity, it is enjoyed by all as a *natural* language.'[18] Laurent prioritises comprehension and clarity, and this is strongly reiterated in his 1409 preface. Laurent had now concluded that Latin books are only accessible and enjoyable to a select, highly educated few:

> […] les livres latins, dictez et escriptez par les philosophes, poetes et historians bien enseignez en toutes sciences humainnes, sont moult loing et desseuvrez de l'entendement que Dame Nature donne communement aux hommes.
> [Latin books, recited and written by philosophers, poets and historians well versed in all humanities, are too long and separated from the understanding which Lady Nature commonly gives men.]
> (*Des cas*, Translator's Prologue.)[19]

We see in this passage the connection between Dante's classification of the vernacular as a 'natural' language, with Laurent's belief that Latin is divorced from 'the understanding that Dame Nature commonly gives men'.[20] To remedy this 'great default', Laurent decided that these books should

> […] en leur translation soient muez et convertiz en tel langaige que les liseurs et escouteurs d'iceulx puissent comprendre 1'effect de la sentence senz trop grant ou trop long traveil d'entendement
> [in their translation be transformed and converted into such language that their readers

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[18] Copeland, p. 181. It is unknown whether Laurent had read *De vulgari eloquentia,* but he knew of Dante, and likely knew the *Divine Comedy* due to the influence of Christine de Pizan. Laurent's description of Dante in Book IX of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*, though erroneous, is the first biographical account of the poet in French. See Werner P Friederich, *Dante's Fame Abroad, 1350-1850; The Influence of Dante Alighieri on the Poets and Scholars of Spain, France, England, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States* (Chapel Hill, 1950), p. 60.

[19] Gathercole, pp. 89-90.

[20] 'Of these two kinds of language, the more noble is the vernacular: first, because it was the language originally used by the human race; second, because the whole world employs it, though with different pronunciations and using different words; and third because it is natural to us, while the other is, in contrast, artificial' (*Dante: De Vulgari Eloquentia*, trans. by Steven Botterill, Cambridge Medieval Classics [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], I.I.4).

> and listeners can understand the effect of the meaning without working too much or too long to understand]
> (*Des cas*, Translator's Prologue.)[21]

Laurent's design to remove the challenge of interpretation from his readers opposes what Petrarch and Boccaccio argued in relation to reading as a vehicle for moral improvement. In *De genealogia,* Boccaccio expresses his agreement with Petrarch's *Invective contra medicum* in which he advocates for the 'dulci labore' [delightful task] of interpreting 'obscure' poetry:

> ut ait *Contra medicum* in libro *Invectivarum III* Franciscus Petrarca. Nec, ut ipsi arbitrari videntur, carpere nequentibus invidetur «sed, dulci labore preposito, delectationi simul rnemorieque consulitur; cariora sunt enim, que cum difficultate quesivimus, accuratiusque servantur» [...] Si his obtusum ingenium est, inertiam suam, non poetas redarguant [...]
> (*DGD* XIV.XII.15)
> [As saith Francis Petrarch in the Third Book of his *Invectives* […] "Such majesty and dignity are not intended to hinder those who wish to understand, but rather propose a delightful task, and are designed to enhance the (61) reader's pleasure and support his memory. What we acquire with difficulty and keep with care is always the dearer to us;" […] if their minds are dull, let them not blame the poets but their own inertia.]

Laurent sets himself in opposition to this poetic model, choosing instead the road of clear and informative historiography – his readers shall acquire his teachings with ease, rather than difficulty.

In his study on the pedagogical practice of humanist educators in fifteenth-century Italy, Anthony Grafton describes how a teacher would deconstruct a Latin text:

> In the first instance, the teacher would paraphrase the classical document in question, line by line. Prose and verse, philosophy and history, all were ground up and repackaged as dry, if correct, Latin narrative. Only then would the teacher go through the same passages more slowly. On this trip he would identify historical individuals and

[21] Gathercole, pp. 89-90.

facts, explain myths and doctrines, and reveal the logic of tropes, using the many problems that came up as pretext for digression into every imaginable subject.[22]

This humanist educational practice is very similar to the approach which Laurent takes in his retranslation. Laurent seeks to provide geographical and historical context for places and names which Boccaccio cites without explanation:

> Je vueil principalment moy ficher en deux choses, c'est assavoir mettreen cler langaige les sentences du livre et les histoires qui par l'auteur sont si briément touchees que il n'en met fors seulement les noms. Je les assomeray selon la verité des vieilz historians qui au long les escrivirent.
> [I primarily intend to focus on two things, namely, to put into clear language the sayings from the book and the stories that the author only briefly touches upon, providing nothing but the names. I will expand upon them according to the truthfulness of the old historians who wrote about them extensively.]
> (*De cas,* Translator's Prologue.)[23]

Laurent makes note of the fact that *De casibus* assumes a level of existing knowledge, and functions in some areas as a list of names.[24] Laurent's phrase 'old historians' covers many bases. To supplement Boccaccio's text, Laurent draws upon a wide variety of material. He uses many classical texts, including Virgil's *Eclogues and Georgics,* Cicero's *De Senectute,* Seneca's *Epistulae morales de Constatia* and Justin's *Historiae Philippicae*, but also several medieval French texts including the *Roman de la Rose,* and Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae*. He also draws on others of Boccaccio's works: *De claris mulieribus* and, as previously mentioned, *De genealogia deorum gentilium,* the latter of which is Laurent's most

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[22] Anthony Grafton, 'The Humanist Reader', in *A History of Reading in the West* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), pp. 197-8.

[23] Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* p. 90.

[24] Orlemanski describes this practice in relation to the Chaucer's list of the names of wronged women in the *House of Fame,* lines 397–404: 'The time it takes to read the lines, their density of meaning, and their literary force depend upon how readers animate the stories coiled *in ovo* in the enumerated names. Briseis, Oenone, Hypsipyle, and Medea each claim only a single line of poetic "extension," yet each name has the power to conjure an entire narrative in its own right ('Scales of Reading', *Exemplaria*, 26.2–3 [2014], p. 216).'

frequently used source of information in *Des cas.*[25] Laurent is swift to clarify that he does not condemn Boccaccio, 'who in his time was a very great and famous historian', for this lack of explanation.[26] He does not believe that Boccaccio omits these details out of pride or haughtiness, but because these facts were so firmly placed in his own brain that he presumed the same of his educated readers. Thus, Laurent vows to supplement Boccaccio in those areas where it is needed, and overall to do this without deviating far from the original, following the humanist historiographical model which I described in Chapter One. Laurent's nod to Boccaccio, who 'in his time' was a great historian, lays the groundwork for his own intervention, a move which we will see imitated by Lydgate in the *Fall of Princes*.

As Gathercole surmises, Laurent's additions to *De casibus* 'may first be termed informative.'[27] As well as adding geographical and anthropological detail to his source text, Laurent often searches for exact numbers, such as dates, in order to make Boccaccio's statements more historically convincing.[28] As part of this mission of historicisation, Laurent also omits the names of several pagan gods from the original and replaces them with more worldly explanations.[29] For example, where Boccaccio describes Agamemnon defeating Mars and Neptune in *De casibus,* Laurent translates:

> Par ainsi Agamenon qui avoit eu grans victoires es batailles qu'il avoit fait sur terre, et qui en mer avoit vaincues les tempestes et les vens […][30]
> [Thus, Agamenon who had achieved great victories in battles that he had fought on the land, and who on the sea the storms and winds had killed.]

Laurent also elaborates on descriptions of classical characters,[31] and as his primary purpose is

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[25] Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* pp. 23-27.

[26] 'Et si ne vueil pas dire que Jean Boccace acteur de ce livre, qui en son temps fut tres grant et renommé historian, ait delessié les dictes histoires par ignorance' (The French text and translation are from Hedeman, pp. 13 and 254).

[27] Patricia M. Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait: The Translator of Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*', *The French Review*, 27.4 (1954), p. 248.

[28] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', p. 248.

[29] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', p. 251.

[30] Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* p. 195.

[31] See for example Laurent's Semiramis (I.18.26-27) (Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas des nobles hommes et*

moral and educational, he most frequently emphasises their 'psychological qualities', over description of their outward appearance. Laurent's sentences are lengthy, and he often uses the rhetorical techniques of *conduplicatio* (the repetition of one or more words to generate an emotional response) and *interpretatio* (repetition of a single idea in synonymous words). He also repeats words and names within a sentence, presumably as part of his effort 'to make his meaning fuller to the reader', although it often has an adverse stylistic effect.[32]

As a result of these educational additions and rhetorical devices, the 1409 retranslation is more than twice the length of Boccaccio's original. Where Chaucer abbreviates, Laurent amplifies a text which is already very long. Laurent's prolixity is the focus, and source of disdain, of many critics. Gathercole concedes that though Laurent succeeds in contextualizing Boccaccio's original and skilfully blending his additions into his text 'in the same style as that of the translated portions', overall, he 'sacrifices style to ideas':

> Since Laurent was concerned with the moral instruction of the reader, he neglects, on the whole, literary effect in translations and pays more attention to content than to form.[33]

Bergen, who was not so offended by the 1400 translation, finds that

> The chief effect of Laurence's remarkable capacity for making interpolations was only to impair the literary value of the original, however much it may have added to its interest for contemporary readers.[34]

Gathercole and Bergen are largely referencing the impact that these amplifications had on Boccaccio's carefully designed structure, which is based upon a variety of short and long accounts, and concise Latin style. Laurent's desire to amplify means that every character, and referenced name, receives the same length of treatment. However, although many contemporary critics condemn Laurent's paucity of style, his retranslation *did* add interest for

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femmes, p. 213).

[32] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', pp. 248-50.

[33] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', p. 251.

[34] Bergen, pp. xvi - xvii.

his contemporary readers and was undeniably a 'medieval success story' - it survives in around sixty-five manuscripts around the world, including many beautifully illuminated presentation copies.[35]

The popularity of the 1409 *Des cas* amongst the fifteenth-century French nobility, and its patron, Duke John of Berry, has caused many critics to argue that *Des cas*, and subsequently Lydgate's *Fall of Princes,* subvert and soften the political intent of Boccaccio's original. In his comprehensive study of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes,* Mortimer discusses some of the foundational criticism of Laurent's 1409 translation. Mortimer finds that many early critics categorize Boccaccio as a 'hot-blooded Mediterranean', and view 'his severe and incautious intolerance of the failings of princes as a product of his republicanism.'[36] Laurent de Premierfait, on the other hand, is seen as pusillanimous, and dependent on the good favour of his noble patron:

> Whereas Boccaccio's text is seen as 'a beacon to shake humanity from its indolence' […] Premierfait must tread more carefully.[37]

Following this line, Bergen asserts that 'Laurence was not much of an idealist or very distinguished intellectually.'[38] Where Boccaccio views contemporary princes as 'objects of hostility and scorn, for whom he had neither sympathy nor respect', Laurent writes with a view to 'serve and instruct', for 'the personal advantage of the princes'.[39] Although Laurent's preface confronts issues of corruption within the church, and the poor treatment of agricultural labourers, Bergen imagines that it is very probable that the Duke of Berry, like Lydgate's patron 'the good Duke Humphrey', received Laurent's cautious political messaging with 'serious and wholly detached interest'.[40]

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[35] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', p. 252. See Hedeman for a detailed account of this visual cycle.

[36] Mortimer, *John Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, pp. 16-17. Gathercole gives a more sympathetic impression of Laurent's political inclinations ('Laurent de Premierfait', p. 246).

[37] Mortimer, pp. 16-17; Max Förster, 'Boccaccio's De Casibus Virorum Illustrium in Englischer Bearbeitung', *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, 45. Heft 27 (1924).

[38] Bergen, p. xvii.

[39] Bergen, p. xvii-xviii.

[40] Bergen, p. xvi.

A textual study of Book VIII of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*

With these discussions of Laurent's identity and *modus operandi* as a translator in mind, I am going to focus in on Book VIII of Laurent's 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* specifically Petrarch's intervention and the Zenobia chapter. As is evident from the Prologue of Book VIII of *De casibus,* Boccaccio's identity and purpose as an historian and poet are intrinsically wrapped up with authority and the construction of his own legacy. These were also matters of concern for Laurent de Premierfait, and this is indicated by the changes made between his first and second translation of *De casibus virorum illustrium*.[41] A testament to Laurent's reluctance to be associated with his first translation is that he did not sign any of the manuscripts of it which still survive, whereas Bergen notes that many of Laurent's contemporary readers believed the 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* to be an original work.[42] There are some revealing linguistic hints in Book VIII which indicate a shift in Laurent's attitude and positioning within the text as an *auctor* as well as a translator. There begins to be a blurred line between Laurent and Boccaccio's authorship, and this is never more complex than in the opening scene of Book VIII, in which Laurent is writing from Boccaccio's perspective, conversing with himself about the act of writing *De casibus virorum illustrium.* The first-person narrator, and the continued repetition of 'Jehan Bocace', allows Laurent's voice to permeate as if he himself were addressing Giovanni Boccaccio. One such instance of authorial interpolation occurs when Laurent translates Boccaccio's inner monologue, in which Boccaccio recounts to himself his initial purpose in writing *De casibus,* although he has now lost confidence in his ability to complete his task:

> Je croy Jehan Bocace que tu desires alongir tes jours et ton nom par la renommee que tu penses acquerir pour la perfection de ton livre en quoy tu descripts *en petit et bas*

[41] Part of this shift in authority in Laurent's identity as a translator takes place in the visual elements of the manuscripts of his 1409 translation. Anne Hedeman has conducted a detailed analysis of the visual cycle of Laurent's works, and the ways in which the ducal illuminated manuscripts represent a subtle shift in the authority of Laurent as a translator between his first and second translations. Hedeman observes that: 'the only existing illustrated version of this translation dating from Laurent's lifetime reinforces the notion of transparency, as its single illustration, placed before Boccaccio's Prologue, seems to show Laurent and Boccaccio together presenting *their* book to a noble (Hedeman, p. 19).' By contrast the visual cycle of the 1409 *Des cas,* which Laurent supervised and curated, paints a very different picture of Laurent's authorship.

[42] Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* p. 28; Bergen, p. xiv.

langaige les desrochemens des nobles anciens hommes.

(*Des cas* VIII.I; fol. 311v.)

[I believe, Giovanni Boccaccio, that you wish to prolong your days and your name through the renown that you think to acquire through the completion of your book in which you recount, in brief and low language the misfortunes of ancient noble men.]

Where Boccaccio has used the phrase 'novis literulis' [new letters],[43] translated as 'nouvelle lettretes' in 1400,[44] Laurent has adapted in his retranslation to 'petit et bas langaige'. It is common for Laurent to radically change, or even omit, phrases from his first translation that are so close to the Latin that they are oddly phrased in French, such as 'nouvelle lettretes'.[45] Here, however, Laurent has not only moved away from Latinisms in his language, but also seems to have superimposed his own vernacular language onto Boccaccio's Latin. A more subtle shift in authority occurs at the end of Laurent's account of the Petrarch intervention, when a chastened and re-invigorated Boccaccio returns to his desk:

damnata detestabili opinione mea, in vetus officium reassumpsi calamum.

(*DCV* VIII.I.31)

[Having condemned my detestable opinions, I took up my pen again to resume its duty.]

In his 1400 translation, Laurent writes:

Ma maudicte opinion condampnee, je prins ma plume en son ancian office.[46]

A small indication of Laurent's increased ownership over his 1409 retranslation is that he changes 'son' [its] to 'mon' [mine], and reiterates the heart of his endeavour - 'to write the falls of unfortunate nobles':

Je comdannay la mauvaise opinion que je avoie de non plus labourer, et prins arriere

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[43] *De casibus,* p. 187.

[44] Marzano, p. 283.

[45] For more examples of this see Gathercole, *Premierfait's Des cas,* pp. 30-31.

[46] Marzano, p. 285.

> ma plume pour proceder a *mon* ancien office, de escripre les cas des nobles maleureux.
> (*Des cas* VIII.I; fol. 314r.)
> [I condemned the wicked opinion that I had of not working more and took my pen up again in order to proceed with my former office, to write the falls of unfortunate nobles.]

Boccaccio's renewed intention, and the taking up of the pen represents a new beginning, and it is at this moment that Laurent's authorial voice rises to the surface. Just as before, Laurent's presence as an *auctor* permeates in moments of authorial ownership and intention.

As discussed above, one of Laurent's most frequently used forms of *amplificatio* is added clarification of names, places and concepts which go unexplained in Boccaccio. I would argue that this explanatory detail goes further than merely educating the reader or listener of the text, and often contributes a deeper meaning, provoking further thought from the reader. A representative example of Laurent's amplification occurs in Petrarch's speech to Boccaccio in Book VIII on the value of renown, and its ability to preserve the reputation of ancient men beyond their death; he lists the names of such remembered men:

> Hec brevissimum mortalis vite tempus facit amplissimum et quasi vita alia defunctorum posterati meritos testatur honores. Hac agente tamquam presentes Mosem, Aristotelem, Vergilium, Aphricanum, Catones. Aliosque cognoscimus, laudamus, et colimus.
> (*DCV* VIII.I.11)[47]
> [Renown makes our too brief span of mortal life ample, and as if she gave us another life, she testifies to the merits of the deceased by the honours of posterity. It is by this means that we recognize, praise and honour Moses, Aristotle, Virgil, Scipio Africanus, the Catos, and others, just as if they were present.]

Laurent's retranslation cites the same names, but with added descriptive detail:[48]

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[47] Text is from *Joannis Boccacii Certaldi De Casibus Illustrium Virorum Libri Nouem* (Gourmont & Petit, 1520), p. 187.

[48] 1400: 'Ceste renommee fait le tresbrief temps de la vie mortelle estre treslong. Renommee tesmoingne a la

> Le bien de renommee fait tant que nous avons congnoissance du saint prophete Moyse, et de aristote princes des philozophes, et de virgile le tresgrant des poetes latins, et du glorieux et vaillant duc Scipion African, et des trois nobles Catons, et des aultres anciens homes, lesquelz nous louons et honnorons mesmement apres leur mort.
> (*De cas* VIII.I; fol. 312v)
> [The merits of renown do so much that we have knowledge of the holy prophet Moses, and of Aristotle prince of philosophers, and of Virgil the greatest of Latin poets, and of the glorious and brave Scipio Africanus, and the three nobles Catos, and of other ancient men, who we praise and honour in the same way after their death.]

Where Boccaccio has reeled off a list of names, which he believes potent enough for his reader to understand their significance, Laurent uses the rhetorical technique of *definitio* (a brief and pointed summary of the characteristic quality of a person or thing) to demonstrate why these names have survived, contributing to the capacity to memorise them, almost like a Greek epithet.[49] The way in which Laurent has restructured the sentence follows the advice of the *Rhetorica Ad Herennium* - that one should leave the most powerful part of the phrase until the end, because it is most likely to be remembered - only after he has emphasised the significance and renown of each of these ancient men does he remind his audience that they are all dead, and yet are due the same praise and honour as when they lived, perhaps even more.[50]

This amplification technique is enacted to even greater effect in the conclusion to Laurent's account of Zenobia. Boccaccio's account ends with a sequence of binary statements reflecting Zenobia's change in Fortune, from sovereignty to degradation. One of these statements compares the fortune of Zenobia to two other female rulers, Semiramis and Dido:

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gent avenir les bien desservies honneurs des hommes mors, comme par une autre vie. Par ceste renommee faisant nous congnoissons Moises, Aristote et Virgille, Scipion Auffricain, les Catons et les autres, et les louons et les honnourons (Marzano, p. 284).'

[49] Interestingly, in Redaction B, Boccaccio changes this section to add some details to the names and exchanges Virgil for Homer (*DCV* VIII.I.12).

[50] *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, III.X.18.

> Quid multa dixerim? Que se bellicis immixta, quandoque Semiramidem, quandoque Didonem predicaverat, nunc Zenobie nomen, si possit, deleatur exoptat.
> (*DCV* VIII.VI.15)
> [What other examples may I mention? She who, of late, involved herself in war-like affairs, and extolled at one time Semiramis, and at another time Dido, now, if it were possible, longs for the name of Zenobia to be erased.]

Laurent's treatment of this sentence is perhaps the most powerful moment in his retranslation of the Zenobia chapter:

> Il n'est mestier que je dye plus de choses pour monstrer le changement de fortune envers Zenobia, car Zenobia, qui par saigement soy entremettre des armes se avoit aucunes foiz monstree estre ainsi vaillante et caute come fut la noble Semiramis, royne de Babiloine, elle vouldroit maintenant, s'il povoit estre, que son nom fust effacé; Zenobia, par continuellement vivre et par saigement seigneurier aux hommes aprés la mort de son mari, avoit monstré soy estre ainsi continuant et saige come fut la noble Dydo, royne de Cartage, elle vouldroit maintenant, s'il povoit estre, *que son nom fust effacé et hors de la memoire des hommes*.
> (*Des cas* VIII.VI; fol. 325r.)
> [I needn't say more to show the change in Fortune against Zenobia, for Zenobia, who by wisely taking up arms had shown herself on several occasions to be as valiant and well-advised as noble queen Semiramis of Babylon. She would wish now, if it were possible, that her name be erased; Zenobia, by continuing to live and by wisely ruling over men after the death of her husband, had shown herself to be as constant and wise as the noble Dido, queen of Carthage, now would wish, if it were possible, that her name be effaced from the memory of men.]

Laurent never assumes that his reader or listener will know the ancient figures whom he references, though Dido's story has already been recounted in the text. Laurent's use of *definitio* demonstrates exactly why Zenobia's *character* is related to Semiramis and Dido, more than that they are all ancient, female queens. Zenobia is comparable to Semiramis because she is valiant, well-advised and noble, and to Dido, because she continued to rule with constancy and wisdom, despite the death of her husband, as Dido does in Boccaccio's

account of her in *De casibus.*[51] Another moment which could easily be passed over as mere rhetorical doubling, is Laurent's repetition and expansion of Boccaccio's phrase 'nunc Zenobia nomen, si possit, deleatur exoptat'.[52] Laurent's translation, on the other hand, draws particular focus to this moment, repeating:

> […] elle vouldroit maintenant, s'il povoit estre, que son nom fust efface […] elle vouldroit maintenant, s'il povoit estre, que son nom fust effacé et hors de la memoire des hommes.
> (*Des cas* VIII.VI; fol. 325r.)

Laurent's use of the word 'effacé', which means 'to efface', 'destroy' or 'drain of colour', evokes a more physical, iconoclastic destruction than Boccaccio's term, 'deleatur', which means to scrape a word from a manuscript with a knife. This is particularly resonant in combination with the manuscript illumination in the two earliest versions of *Des cas,* which depicts Zenobia, humiliated, and processing in Aurelian's Triumph. It also exposes a tension at the heart of Boccaccio's historiographical philosophy. The amplification that Zenobia would desire her name to be 'effaced from the memory of men', cannot help but remind Laurent's audience of Petrarch's intervention to Boccaccio which has occurred so recently, and their shared desire, that through the writing of history they may increase the longevity of their own names and those of their historical subjects:

> ut, tanquam preteriti labore suo profuere nobis, sic et nos nostro valeamus posteris, ut inter peremnia nostrum scribatur nomen ab eis, ut famam consequamur eternam;
> (*DCV* VIII.I.26)
> [And just as those who came before us were of use to us, so will we be of advantage to those who come after. Then our name will be written among the immortals; then we will have eternal fame;]

Zenobia's desire that her name and reputation be forgotten is intrinsically at odds with

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[51] Laurent de Premierfait gives a full account of Semiramis in *Des cas* which is not present in *De casibus.* It is very similar to the account of Semiramis in *De mulieribus claris,* which Laurent may also have translated.

[52] This is a moment where Hall's translation is misleading – this line is translated as 'If it had been possible, *Fortune* would have destroyed the name of Zenobia (*Downfall of the Famous*, p. 196).'

Boccaccio's ideals as a historian. Thus, in many ways, Laurent's amplification provokes a deeper and more intertextual contemplation in his audience and adds poignancy to the story of Zenobia.

Another way in which Laurent de Premierfait utilizes *amplificatio* to direct the response of his fifteenth century audience is by re-contextualising Boccaccio's original. I argue that Laurent's efforts to make his text accessible to his audience often draw upon Petrarchan and Boccaccian humanist historiography, and at times, make it more coherent. Firstly, Laurent amplifies the presence of Christianity in the text. The union of Christianity with 'ancient pagan learning' in Petrarch's philosophy is not always a consonant one, particularly in works such as *De viris illustribus,* where Petrarch's focus is predominately on inculcating the virtues of a classical pagan culture that existed before and without Christ.[53] As Witt argues:

> Petrarchan humanism, based on the assumption of the compatibility of Christianity with ancient pagan culture, could only survive by its readiness to shift back and forth between pagan and Christian contexts and by effecting occasional verbal reconciliations that could not sustain close inspection.[54]

Perhaps in response to the cognitive dissonance, which we can recognise in Boccaccio's depiction of the ideals of Petrarchan historiography, Laurent exerts a Christianizing influence on Boccaccio's text, particularly in areas where Boccaccio's Petrarchan arguments ring hollow. An instance of this occurs in Petrarch's second exhortation about the value of preserving the renown of men through the practice of writing history, because it is a worthy use of God-given talent. However, the names that Petrarch uses to demonstrate this point are all names of ancient pagans:

> Sic nos inter multiplices Scipiones Affricano primo, inter Catones Censorio, inter Quintios Cincinnato, inter Stoicos Platoni, inter Peripateticos Aristotili, inter poetas Homero aut Maroni, si note aliud dignum non sit, fingendo dignitatis superaddimus aliquid phantasia.

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[53] See Mommsen, 'Petrarch's Conception of the "Dark Ages"', pp. 226-42.

[54] Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients*, p. 291.

(*DCV* VIII.I.23)

[Thus, among the numerous Scipios, we add something by imagination to Africanus the first, among the Catos to Censorius, among the Quintii to Cincinnatus, among the Stoics to Plato, among the Peripatetics to Aristotle, among the poets to Homer or Virgil, if nothing else worthy is noted.]

Boccaccio's assertion, voiced by Petrarch, that, through seeking eternal fame for these ancient pagans 'we may appear to have served God and not vices', does not 'sustain close inspection.'[55] Seemingly to remedy this, Laurent inserts the names of illustrious Christian figures into Boccaccio's list:

> Tous les sains apostres de dieu sont bons et renommez, mais entre eulx tous nous suracroissons perrogative de dignite a Saint Pierre et a Saint Pol. La perrogative de auctorite entre tous les empereurs vaillans et saiges nous suradioustons aucune chose a la dignite de cesar, entre les roys de france nommez Charles nous suracroissons la dignite a Charles, le filz Pepin, pour la tresgrant renommee que tous les vaillans hommes dessusdictz gaignerent par leurs bons merites et oeuures vertueuses.
> (*Des cas* VIII.I; fols. 313r-v.)
> [All the holy apostles of God are good and famous, but among them all we increase the pre-eminence of dignity of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The privilege of authority, among all the worthy and wise emperors we overly add some things to the dignity of Caesar, among the kings of France named Charles we increase the dignity of Charles, the son of Pepin, for the very great renown that all the aforesaid worthy men gained through their good merits and virtuous works.][56]

By including Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Laurent rationalizes the pseudo-Petrarch's argument and bridges the gap between his conclusion and the *exempla* which he uses to demonstrate it. Moreover, by including Charlemagne, a more recent illustrious figure and one claimed by the

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[55] 'ut videamur hac in peregrinatione mortali Deo et non vitiis militasse (*DCV* VIII.I.26).'

[56] Laurent's list of *exempla* bears similarity to Les Neuf Preux [The Nine Worthies], made famous in the early fourteenth-century poem 'Les voeux de paon' [The Vows of the Peacock], by Jacques de Longuyon. The Nine Worthies are grouped in sets of three; three pagans (Hector, Alexander, Julius Caesar); three Jews (David, Joshua, Judas Maccabeus) and three Christians; (Arthur, Charlemagne, Godfrey of Buillon). See *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer*, ed. by Douglas Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

French, Laurent broadens the potential of the contemporary historian to forge legacies which are not yet fixed, as well as classical figures whose fame is already long established. We can see here the development in the historiographical agenda of Petrarch (or Boccaccio's perception of Petrarch) and Laurent. As discussed in Chapter One, Petrarch's historiography is centred on the glorification of Rome, and the emulation of Roman character.[57] Laurent has a vested interest in positioning the French Charlemagne as part of a continuation of the classical imperial tradition.[58]

Laurent further contextualises Boccaccio's Latin for his audience through the use of heightened, chivalric language.[59] As Gathercole observes, due to the moral focus of Laurent's retranslation, when he amplifies figures within the text, 'he gives little outward description of classical characters but stresses rather their psychological qualities.'[60] Gathercole uses the phrase 'psychological qualities', but they are perhaps better described as exemplary, for the language is not strikingly interior or reflective. In both of his translations of *De casibus,* Laurent employs the language of Romance and chivalry to describe these exemplary qualities, and by doing so translates Boccaccio's desire to elicit moral change in his reader into a linguistic and cultural context which his audience, and courtly patron, can relate to. In his retranslation of the Zenobia chapter (and to a certain extent, in his 1400 translation), Laurent uses chivalric language to describe Zenobia's qualities as a leader – she is measured according to moral and social standards that are recognisable to Laurent's French courtly audience. For example, in the section in which Zenobia assumes the realm of her husband, Odenathus, after his death, Boccaccio describes her thus:

> Zenobia vero virili predita animo
> (*DCV* VIII.VI.6)

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[57] Petrarch had a political agenda to restore the Papacy from Avignon to Rome. See Unn Falkeid, *The Avignon Papacy Contested: An Intellectual History from Dante to Catherine of Siena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017); and Witt, 'The Rebirth of the Romans as Models of Character'.

[58] See Janet L. Nelson, Courts, Elites, and Gendered Power in the Early Middle Ages: Charlemagne and Others (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[59] This kind of chivalric diction has very different stylistic predicates than humanistic Latin, which I will discuss in more depth in my thesis. See Erich Auerbach, 'The Knight Sets Forth', in *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[60] Gathercole, 'Laurent de Premierfait', p. 250.

[Zenobia, truly possessed of a manly spirit.]

To be 'virili' or 'virtutis' is a conventional descriptor for a powerful woman, and would be considered a high compliment, particularly with the repeated emphasis that Zenobia is not merely masculine in physical strength but in spirit. However, earlier in *De casibus*, Boccaccio censures women undertaking the roles of men in society in his exhortation 'In mulieres'.[61] Therefore, as I discussed in Chapter Two, Boccaccio's description of Zenobia being 'endowed with manly spirit', may not be completely complementary.

By contrast, in both his translations, Laurent emphasises Zenobia's womanhood, in combination with a description worthy of the most noble knight:

> Zenobia, garnie de preu couraige,
> (*Des cas*, VIII.VI. [1400])[62]
> [Zenobia, adorned with honourable courage.]

> la royne Zenobia come femme garnie de prouesse et de vaillant couraige,
> (*Des cas,* VIII.VI. [1409]; folio 324r.)
> [Zenobia the queen, like a woman adorned with wisdom and valiant courage.]

'Preu' or 'prouesse' is a polysemic word, signifying a variety of chivalric qualities, from wisdom to bravery; the Anglo-Norman Dictionary defines it as 'a generic term used to express the idealized positive characteristics of an individual, frequently a knight'.[63] In this way, it functions as an appropriate linguistic and cultural translation of Boccaccio's 'virili'. However, it is complicated by the use of 'garnie' in both translations, which feminizes Laurent's conventionally masculine and knightly descriptors. Likewise, when Zenobia is defeated by Aurelian, where Boccaccio once again likens her to a man, 'virtute mulieris virili preposita sexui',[64] which, in his 1400 translation, Laurent renders as 'devant mise au sexe de

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[61] *DCV* I.XVIII.1.

[62] Marzano, p. 292.

[63] 'pruesce.' *Anglo-Norman Dictionary (AND² Online Edition)*, Aberystwyth University, https://anglo-norman.net/entry/pruesce.

[64] Qui qua[m]vis Victoriarum plurium Gloria eſſet inſignis: hanc tanta Animi voluptate ſuſcepit, ut no[n] dedignare[]t, virtute mulieris virili p[re]poſita ſexui, exea ingenti cu[] pompa ductitare Triumphu[].Cui ipſa

Zenobia la vertu de femme vaillant',[65] and receives further chivalric treatment in his second translation:

> Aurelian qui en triumphe mena la royne Zenobia, il eut principal regart a vertu d'elle femme preux et vaillant, et non mie a son sexe. Ceste Zenobia qui alla devant le chariot triumphal de Aurelian luy donna moult glorieux renom et grant honneur**,** car ja soit ce que la royne Zenobia femme chevalereuse, forte et saige en armes, belle de corps richement vestue et attournee de pierres precieuses, et estrainte en seps dor fust femme de fort et grant vigueur, toutesfoiz si tost qu'elle fut chargee du faisseau que fortune luy donna, elle fut constrainte de soy arrester sans aller plus ca ne la.
> (*Des cas* VIII.VI; fol. 324v)
> [Aurelian who led Zenobia the queen in triumph, he had the greatest regard for the physical strength of this valiant and worthy woman, not at all common to her sex. This Zenobia who went in front of the triumphal chariot of Aurelian, gave him most glorious renown and great honour, now indeed the queen Zenobia, a woman knightly, brave and wise in battle, beautiful in body, richly dressed and adorned with precious stones, and was bound in stocks of gold, she was a woman of bravery and great strength, however, she was very soon weighed down from the burden that fortune gave her, she was forced to rest herself without going further in any direction.]

Boccaccio's characterization of Zenobia as possessing a manlike spirit, implies to some degree that her defeat by Aurelian has returned her to the low status which as a woman she should occupy. Laurent's description of Zenobia, who is 'knightly', 'brave', 'wise' and 'beautiful', a woman 'of bravery and great strength', weighed down by 'the burden that fortune gave her', and ultimately defeated, augments the pathos of Boccaccio's account.

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currum p[re]cedens plurimum claritatis adtribuit. Nam bellatrix mulier & formoſa gémis honuſta adque Aureis copedibus vincta qua[m]vis robuſti vigoris exiſteret […]

[65] 1400 translation: 'Lequel Aurelian, combien qu'il fust noble de pluseurs victoires, toutevoie il receut ceste victoire avec sigrant delectacion de couraige que il ne doubta pas mener son triumphe d'elle avec grande pompe (devant mise au sexe de Zenobia la vertu de femme vaillant): auquel Aurelian celle Zenobia, alant devant son chariot, donna moult de renom. Car Zenobia, femme batailleresse et belle, hourdee de pierres precieuses et liee en seps d'or, combien qu'elle fust de forte vigueur, elle traveillant soubz le faisseau de Fortune, fut aucuneffoiz constraintte soy rester (Marzano, p. 292).'

The stylistic changes which Laurent makes to Boccaccio's Latin in his account of Zenoba, and their connection to Laurent's literary landscape, lend meaning to his account of Zenobia. In another passage rich with chivalric language, in which Laurent describes Zenobia's noble leadership of her men in the battle against Aurelian, he uses the phrase 'en besoignant de la main' [with the skill of her hand],[66] which may have been borrowed from the *Livre de chevalrie* by Geoffroi de Charny (c. 1306-1356).[67] The phrase appears in a passage, advising 'What Young Ladies Should Wear' which strongly relates to Laurent's chivalric characterisation of Zenobia:

> One should leave to noble ladies and damsels these rich adornments, the wearing of which suits them so much better than it does men, for by the goodness and beauty and fine behaviour to be found in them, together with such adornments as are mentioned above, which suit them well, they receive recognition. These rich ornaments should be left to them. Therefore, for those who have the will to rise to great achievement, *how can they better adorn themselves than by being equipped for it by all the good qualities*? They can do so by being men of worth, wise, loyal, without arrogance, joyful, generous, courteous, expert, bold, and active, and of good conduct toward all others […] (my italics)[68]

The idea that a chivalrous man should 'adorn' himself with 'all the good qualities', aptly sets a precedent for Laurent's description of Zenobia as 'garnie de prouesse et de vaillant couraige'. Furthermore, it lends double meaning to Laurent's description of Aurelian's Triumph; Zenobia who has begun the tale adorned with the knightly qualities of a man, ends it burdened by the conventionally feminine 'rich adornments' described by Geoffroi de Charny, and which Aurelian has imposed upon her. These extracts powerfully demonstrate the ways in which Laurent uses elaborative stylistic techniques to reproduce the complex material of Boccaccio's Latin in the vernacular, and with the cultural lens of early fifteenth-

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[66] *Des cas,* f. 324r.

[67] Although only two manuscripts of the *Livre de chevalrie* survive, this does not indicate that it was little known. It is very likely to have been used by the Ordre de l'Étoile [Company of the Star], see Craig Taylor, *Chivalry and the Ideals of Knighthood in France during the Hundred Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 15.

[68] Geoffroi de Charny, Richard W. Kaeuper, and Elspeth Kennedy, *A Knight's Own Book of Chivalry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), p. 104.

century French courtly society.

Another way in which Laurent de Premierfait adapts, amplifies and challenges his source material is through the use of intertextuality. Because Laurent's retranslation is so long, and there is no critical edition or translation of any part other than Book I, it is very rare for scholars of Boccaccio and Lydgate to compare or do any detailed close reading of the text. For example, in her otherwise excellent chapter '"Stable in study": Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and Duke Humphrey's Library', Summit offers a mistaken theory relating to Lydgate's mention of Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* (Concerning the solitary life) in Book VIII, arguing that it 'almost certainly refers to a book in Humphrey's library and its insertion here could well have been directed by Humphrey himself', as it is 'not mentioned by Boccaccio or Laurent'.[69] However, though it is not mentioned in Laurent de Premierfait's 1400 translation, *De vita solitaria* is mentioned in the 1409 retranslation, and Lydgate's translation of that moment is, in fact, less radical than Laurent's. Petrarch's *De vita solitaria,* and his related work *De otio religioso,* advocate for an active, or intellectual leisure, 'otium', based on the teachings of writers such as Seneca, and the Church Fathers.[70] Laurent elaborates on a part of Petrarch's speech to Boccaccio in which he wonders if he has misguided Boccaccio through his teachings on idleness (*DCV* VIII.I.8):

> "Dy moy Jehan Bocace se tu as entendu si rudement la recommendacion d'oysiveté et de vie contemplative dont j'ay parle en ung mien livre qui est intitule le livre de la vie solitaire, ou quil je recommande oysivete qui est la vie des homes contemplatifz, cest assavoir des philozophes, et des bons crestiens que vivent selon jesucrist. As tu dy je si rudement entendu la recommandacion que j'ay faicte de oysiveté, que tu deusses ensuiure, et paresce, la quelle oysiveté contient labour mes le de contemplacion. Certain est Jehan Bocace que en mon livre de la vie solitaire j'ay principalement admonneste chacun homme quil emploiast ses forces en choses louables en vertueuses." (*Des cas* VIII.I; fol. 312 r.)

[69] Jennifer Summit, '"Stable in Study": Lydgate's Fall of Princes and Duke Humphrey's Library', in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), p. 214.

[70] Francis Petrarch, *The Life of Solitude*, trans. by Jacob Zeitlin, 2nd edn (University of Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1978); and Unn Falkeid, '*De Vita Solitaria* and *De Otio Religioso*: The Perspective of the Guest', in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, p. 113.

["Tell me, Giovanni Boccaccio, if you have understood thus crudely the recommendation of leisure and of the contemplative life about which I have spoken in my book which is entitled, the *Book Of the Solitary Life*, in which I recommend idleness which is the sustenance of contemplative men, to know of these philosophers, and of good Christians who lived according to Jesus Christ. You have, I tell you, so crudely understood the recommendation that I have made about leisure, that you must follow, and sloth, of which leisure contains more work than contemplation.

It is assured, Giovanni Boccaccio, that in my *Book of the Solitary Life,* I have firstly reprimanded every man who uses his strengths in praiseworthy and virtuous things."]

Though *De vita solitaria* is implied by Boccaccio's reference to the 'teaching' of Petrarch which might cause him to 'prefer idle leisure to commendable labour' (*DCV* VIII.I.8), Laurent makes the reference explicit, and further than this, he proves that he has read Petrarch's work, understood it, and understood how it might be *misunderstood*. According to his *modus operandi*, Laurent elucidates what is quite an opaque passage in the Latin, specifying that there is a differentiation in Petrarch's philosophy between the idleness (oysiveté) of a contemplative life which is conducive to the practice of philosophers and Christian man, and sloth (paresce) which serves nothing and no-one.[71] Laurent's suggestion that Boccaccio has 'crudely' understood Petrarch's text offers a subtle challenge to Boccaccio as a historian, whose work relies on his ability to read and understand multiple historical accounts. In the conclusion to this section Laurent once again contributes a sophisticated and intertextual amplification to Boccaccio. The figure of Petrarch in *De casibus* concludes his argument on idleness,

An oblitus es quod ad laborem nascitur homo?
(*DCV* VIII.I.8-9)
[Have you forgotten that man was born to work?]

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[71] For the influence of the concepts of Otium [Leisure] and Acedia [Sloth] in the fourteenth-century, see Gregory M. Sadlek, 'Otium, Negotium, and the Fear of Acedia in the Writings of England's Late Medieval Ricardian Poets', in *Idleness, Indolence and Leisure in English Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia In Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960).

It is a straightforward conclusion which is easily understood; where Boccaccio has chosen sloth, he must instead choose labour. Laurent changes Petrarch's words:

> "Or me dy Jehan Bocace pour quoy te gis tu en ton lit, as tu oublie le commun proverbe que l'omme est ne en choses corporelles ou en espirituelles."
> (*Des cas* VIII.I; fol. 312 r.)
> ["Now tell me, Giovanni Boccaccio, why you lie in your bed - have you forgotten the proverb that man is not in material things but rather in spiritual things."]

The sentiment which Laurent attribute to Petrarch recalls one of the key motivations behind his retranslation, which he expressed in his preface - that if he can elucidate Boccaccio's work it will elevate the minds of its readers from a focus on 'le tournant et muable estat des choses de fortune' [the fickle and changeable condition of the matters of fortune' to 'joye perdurable' [enduring happiness].[72] By reiterating this motivation here, Laurent validates his own authorial perspective with the voice of "Petrarch". Further than implying that Boccaccio has misread *De vita solitaria*, Laurent shows that he has understood Petrarch better. John Lydgate, on the other hand, though he keeps Laurent's reference to *De vita solitaria,* largely omits the interest and tension that Laurent contributed:

> The book I-maad of lyffe solitarye,
> Remembre theron, the which in sekirnesse
> Techeth the weie of vertuous besynesse,
> Bi and bi, who list reede eueri lyne,
> Of contemplacioun moral and dyuyne.
> (*Fall* VIII.I.108-112)

Rather than suggesting that Boccaccio has misunderstood *La vita solitaria,* Lydgate's Petrarch merely reminds Boccaccio of the text's existence, and claims that the text will teach him the way of 'vertuous besynesse'.

Through these comparative examples, I have sought to demonstrate that, though historically criticised, Laurent de Premierfait's commitment to elucidate Boccaccio's text and

[72] Gathercole, *Des cas,* p. 89.

his French chivalric mode combine to create a work of educational vernacular humanism, which holds an important place in the canon of fifteenth-century vernacular translation. There is still much valuable work to be done on *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes,* particularly its adaptation of Boccaccio's Italian republican politics to a French monarchical society. Laurent de Premierfait's text also occupies a transitional position in the development of the *De casibus* tradition, which is most frequently discussed in the context of tragedy rather than history.[73] Laurent considered Boccaccio to be a historian, and Laurent's work, which in the libraries of French nobleman was kept in the company of Latin histories, was also considered a work of history.[74] However, *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* in John Lydgate's hands becomes a 'tragedy', largely due to the influence of Chaucer's *Monk's Tale.* The next section of this chapter will analyse how John Lydgate combines Laurent de Premierfait's vernacular humanism and plain style with Chaucer's 'bewailling' mode in the *Monk's Tale,* and the influence of his patron Duke Humphrey, to write his longest work, the *Fall of Princes.*

John Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*

It is unknown whether John Lydgate encountered Laurent de Premierfait's 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* in his visit to Paris, or whether it was recommended to him by his patron Duke Humphrey of Gloucester (who had read Boccaccio's *De casibus*), but he received his commission whilst Duke Humphrey was occupying the position of Lieutenant and Warden of England, between April 1430 and January 1432.[75] Although the *Fall of Princes* is, at 36,365 lines, likely the longest poem in the English language, Lydgate omits a significant amount of Laurent's additions and elaborations. However, he also turns to several other sources to supplement his text, notably the perceptible influence of Ovid, as well as

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[73] See Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy*; and Budra.

[74] In the library of John the Fearless, Laurent's *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Arsenal 5193) was kept in a collection with 'an encyclopedia, hagiographic texts, and most notably, books of French, biblical, and ancient history.' In the inventory of the library of Duke Philip the Good, we see that *Des cas* was kept alongside 'two other copies of Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes, one copy of Boccaccio's *Des cleres femmes*, four copies of the *Miroir historial*, numerous French writings about the Romans, and French translations of ancient histories: four copies of Livy, two of Valerius Maximus, the *Romuleon*, and three versions of the history of Troy, including one that incorporated a genealogical tree of France' (Hedeman, p. 3).

[75] Schirmer, p. 209.

additional mythological detail from Boccaccio's *De genealogia deorum gentilium*. To my knowledge, Alessandra Petrina is the only scholar to argue definitively that 'it is almost certain that the French version […] was not Lydgate's only source', insisting that Lydgate 'certainly glanced at Boccaccio [Boccaccio's *De casibus*] more than once, besides availing himself of a number of other sources'.[76] Scholars such as Guyda Armstrong have qualified this statement, conceding that the *Fall of Princes* is 'in some ways a return to Boccaccio after the digressions of Laurent', and therefore it is worth considering that Lydgate, like Chaucer translating Boethius, used both Latin and French in his translation,[77] particularly as we know that Duke Humphrey did own a manuscript of Boccaccio's *De casibus.*[78] In Lydgate's hands, Laurent's French prose is arranged into decasyllabic verse, structured in seven line, rhyme royal stanzas, with exception of the seven instances in which Lydgate adopts the *Monk's Tale* octave (*ababbcbc*).[79] Another significant stylistic modification Lydgate makes is to change Laurent's first-person narration, which in many ways allows Laurent to assimilate Boccaccio's authorial persona, to a third-person narrator. This change enables Lydgate to develop an independent authorial or 'translatorial' persona which is independent from the figure of the *auctor,* 'Bochas'.

In his comprehensive edition of *Fall of Princes* – the favoured, and only, edition of the work for over a hundred years – Bergen argues that Lydgate's attitude to the conditions of his work is distinct from both Boccaccio and Laurent:

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[76] Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), p. 295.

[77] Copeland discusses this common practice of medieval translation in relation to Chaucer's *Boece,* for which Chaucer used both Boethius' Latin, Nicholas Trevet's commentary and Jean de Meun's French translation (Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], p. 143).

[78] Armstrong, *The English Boccaccio*, pp. 71-2. Humphrey donated a copy of Boccaccio's *De casibus* to Oxford University, but it has never been found. On this see Mortimer, pp. 32-3; and David Rundle, 'Manuscripts Once Owned (or Otherwise) by Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester', 2010 <https://bonaelitterae.wordpress.com/david-rundles-research-projects/the-library-of-humfrey-duke-of-gloucester/>.

[79] Mortimer, p. 279.

> Although always ready to counsel and advise, and, when he considered it necessary, to admonish, he was never rude, like Boccaccio, nor servile, like Laurence, but wrote throughout as a man of the world, an aristocrat and courtier […][80]

Though Bergen sees Lydgate as being less 'servile' than Laurent, nonetheless it cannot be denied that Lydgate evades the political nature of Boccaccio's text even more cautiously than Laurent de Premierfait. Lydgate's position, writing in the 1430s, begins this process already. Though he has the example of Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* to follow*,* Lydgate does not contribute any contemporary examples to Laurent de Premierfait's text, meaning that the most recent history Lydgate records is eighty years in the past; contemporary to 'Bochas' but not to Lydgate.[81] As I showed in Chapter Two, contemporaneity significantly contributes to the affective power of *De casibus* and the *Monk's Tale;* Boccaccio wants the princes of his age, 'our princes', to see themselves in the rulers depicted, recognise 'their own insecurity', and 'take counsel for their own profit'.[82] Likewise, the *Monk's Tale* is 'energized' by the inclusion of the "modern instances".[83] Thus, Lydgate's decision to keep his *Fall* strictly historical goes a long way toward softening the effect of any admonishing tone which he may adopt. This effect is heightened by Lydgate's use of the third person, which Armstrong describes as a further step of historicisation from Laurent, and from Boccaccio.[84] For example, as Armstrong observes, the appearance of Adam, which is described by Boccaccio in the present tense, shifts to the past tense in Laurent,

> L'un de ces vieillars, c'est assavoir Adam, me arraisonna et dist […]
> [One of these elderly men, namely Adam, addressed me and said][85]

And is transferred even further into the past by Lydgate:

> And *oon of first* at his comyng –
> Oure fadir Adam – sodenly obreide,

[80] Bergen, *Lydgate's Fall of Princes Part I (Books I. and II.)*, p. xx.

[81] Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, p. 334.

[82] *De casibus*, Prohemium, 8-9. Translation from Ginsberg, p. 194.

[83] Wallace, p. 299.

[84] Armstrong, pp. 85-6.

[85] Gathercole, p. 96.

And to myn aucto[ur] euene þus he seide,
(*Fall* I. 479-81)

As Wallace surmises: 'Lydgate's *Fall* is dead on arrival as a critique of princely excesses.'[86] Wallace also makes a comparison between Lydgate's attitude in the *Fall of Princes* and Petrarch's in *De viris illustribus,* setting them against the example of Boccaccio and Chaucer, and arguing that Lydgate is even more encumbered than Petrarch because he has a contemporary 'mighty man' who 'wields a pen and scraper at his side' – Lydgate's patron, Duke Humphrey:

> Petrarch writes in a way that contemporary princes find congenial while managing to keep them out of the compositional process; Boccaccio engages the same *signori* in open ideological warfare. Lydgate, however, lets the lunatic-in-chief run his asylum. Rather than functioning as an instrument to curb and dissuade the excesses of the great, Lydgate's *Fall* becomes a kind of general handbook or encyclopaedic advice manual for rulers and governors.[87]

That Lydgate's *Fall* was not in danger of offending any 'rulers' or 'governers' is reflected by its popularity amongst the aristocracy. Pearsall notes the fact that a large proportion of the extant manuscripts of the *Fall* are 'prestige productions of the kind that would have been admired rather than read.'[88]

Lydgate's aristocratic patron, Duke Humphrey, has an instrumental role in one of the most significant changes which Lydgate makes the *De casibus* model – the addition of moralizing envoys to many of the narratives. According to Lydgate, these were a requested feature from Duke Humphrey.[89] Similarly to Laurent de Premierfait, the weight of his illustrious patronage necessitated a particular attitude in Lydgate's retelling of Boccaccio's original vision. This shift is indicated by the change from 'illustrious men and women', to

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[86] Wallace, p. 334.

[87] Wallace, p. 334.

[88] Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p. 250. See also Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 40. For a survey of the illustrated manuscripts of the *Fall*, see Catherine Reynolds, 'I codici inglese' in *Boccaccio visualizzato*, pp. 271-280.

[89] *Fall* II.141-161.

‘princes’, in Lydgate’s title. The tone of the *Fall of Princes* is advisory, directed at a prince who is, according to the poem, already exemplary in his position, as described by Lydgate in the *Prologue* to the *Fall of Princes.* The ‘Duc off Gloucestre’ is a noble ruler, and protector of the Church, who has an unprecedented understanding of language and is dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge. Lydgate twice describes Duke Humphrey’s admirable mastery over sloth, through study:

> His corage neuer doth appalle
> To studie in bookis off antiquite,
> Therin he hath so gret felicite
> Vertuously hymsilff to ocupie,
> Off vicious slouthe to haue the maistrie.
> Reedyng off bookis bryngith in vertu,
> Vices excludyng, slouthe and necligence,
> Makith a prynce to haue experience,
> To knowe hymsilff, in many sundri wise,
> Wher he trespasith his errour to chastise.
> (*Fall* I. 395-9; 416-20)

By Lydgate’s description of him, Duke Humphrey does not need the moral teaching which the *Fall of Princes* offers, in fact he has already read ‘the noble book off this Iohn Bochas’ (423) and it is ‘in his opynyoun, / Off gret noblesse and reputacioun’ (424-5); he already reads books which ‘bryngith in vertu’ and exclude vice, and his books enable him ‘to knowe hymsilff’. Significantly, Humphrey has ‘maistrie’ over sloth, the sin which Boccaccio most frequently applies to his intended readers, as I discussed in Chapter Two. Duke Humphrey is already awake to the instability of Fortune - unlike Harry Bailly, or Andrea Acciaiuoli, he has no need of the exempla of history. In many ways, he is to Lydgate’s narrator what Petrarch is to Boccaccio in the Book VIII preface. This impression is reinforced in the conclusion of the Book II Prologue, when Lydgate describes how his lord has requested that he include an envoy at the end of each tragedy:

> To noble pryncis lowli it directe,
> Bi othres fallyng thei myht themsilff correcte.
> (*Fall* II.153-4)

The references to 'othres', 'thei', and 'themsilff' make it plain that it is not Humphrey who might relate to, or benefit from, these remedies. Moreover, Lydgate commits from the outset of his poem to being 'vndir the wyngis of his [Duke Humphrey's] correccioun':

> I shal procede in this translacioun,
> Fro me auoidyng al presumpcioun,
> Lowli submyttyng eueri hour & space
> Mi reud language to my lordis grace,
> (*Fall* I.438-441)

Lydgate's deference to, and willingness to be amended by, a prince certainly represents a distinct attitude from that of Boccaccio, who chose to dedicate his text to Mainardo Cavalcanti because 'no emperor, king, prince, or pope' was worthy of it.[90] As Bergen recognized, in relation to Duke Humphrey and Duke John of Berry, 'it is an irony of Boccaccio's fate that the translations of his *De Casibus* should have been dedicated to two such men'.[91]

Lydgate the historian

For Boccaccio and Petrarch, the writing of history is advanced and made more potent by the implementation of a stirring and beautiful rhetorical style. Only by cultivating a personal style and using it to record the lives of historical figures, can the historian ensure eternal fame for himself and others. Laurent, though he is invested in the use of rhetorical ornamentation,

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[90] Bergen, p. x.

[91] Bergen, p. xvi. Lydgate's favourable painting of his patron does not accord with reality. Bergen describes Duke Humphrey as being as 'equally egoistic, avaricious, untrustworthy, intriguing and dissolute' as Duke John of Berry, Laurent de Premierfait's patron. Pearsall provides a similar picture, and he also questions the common characterisation of Humphrey as 'the first humanist patron of letters in England', 'instead of what he was, an erratic, unprincipled and attractively unsuccessful politician who dabbled in letters partly because he saw in them a way to prestige and profit (*John Lydgate,* p. 224).' For more on Lydgate's relationship to his patron, see Petrina, *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-Century England*; and Summit, '"Stable in Study"'.

does not privilege eloquence as being an essential component for the writing of history in the vernacular. As with Boccaccio and Laurent, the moments when the reader or listener receives most insight into Lydgate's identity as the translator of a historiographical work, occur in the paratextual material, particularly the prefaces. However, compared to Boccaccio and Laurent, the presentation of Lydgate's identity and style as a translator and historian is full of contradiction. As the translator of an already translated work, Laurent's theories on the subject of translation were bound to be of great interest to Lydgate.

The Prologue to the *Fall of Princes* begins with a description of Laurent de Premierfait, or 'Laurence',

> He that whilom dede his diligence
> The book of Bochas in Frensh to translate
> Out of Latyn, he callid was Laurence.
> (*Fall* I.1-3)

This introductory description of 'Laurence' marks the beginning of Lydgate's characterisation of Laurent as a deferential translator. Lydgate then gives a summary of Laurent's 'Translator's Prologue' beginning with Laurent's conception of the translator as an amender, a role which he likens to that of the potter, who breaks and remakes his vessel:

> Selon raison et bonnes meurs l'omme soy excerçant en aucune science speculative ou aultre puet honnestement muer son conseil ou propost de bien en mieulx, attendue la mutation des choses et des temps et des lieux. Et aussi puest un potier casser et rumpre aulcun sien vaissel, combine qu'il soit bien fait, pour lui donner aultre forme qui lui samble meilleur.
> (*Des cas* fol. 6r.)
> [According to reason and good morals, in applying himself to some field of knowledge, whether speculative or otherwise, a man may appropriately change his mind or improve his plans, taking into account that things and times and places do change. And in this way a potter may break and shatter a vessel he has made, however well-made it might be, in order to give it another form which he finds better.][92]

[92] Translation from Guyda Armstrong, *English Boccaccio,* p. 58.

For Laurent, this metaphor grants him licence not only to amend his original translation, but also to adopt a new method of translation for his second attempt which gives ‘another form’ to Boccaccio’s original, ‘taking into account that things and times and places do change’. For Lydgate, the image allows him to strengthen his position as the re-maker of *De casibus virorum illustrium* in English. In his translation of the pot metaphor Lydgate emphasises even further the connection between a potter, who is a ‘man of craft’, and the poet, or clerk, who crafts, compiles and renews:

> In his prologe affermynge of reson,
> Artificeris hauynge excercise
> May chaunge and turne bi good discrecion
> Shappis, fourmys, and newly hem deuyse,
> Make and vnmake in manye sundry wise,
> As potteres, which to that craft entende,
> Breke and renewe ther vesselis to a-mende.
>
> Thus men off crafft may off due riht.
> That been inuentiff & han experience,
> Fantasien in ther inward siht
> Deuises newe thoruh ther excellence;
> Expert maistres han therto licence
> Fro good to bettir for to chauge a thyng,
> And semblabli these clerkis in writyng,
>
> Thyng that w*as maad of auctors hem beforn*,
> Thei may off newe fynde and fantasie,
> Out of old chaff trie out ful cleene corn,
> *Make it more fressh and lusti to the eie*,
> Ther subtil witt and ther labour applie,
> With ther colours agreable off hewe,
> Make olde thynges for to seeme newe.
> (*Fall* I.8-28; my italics)

Lydgate increases the autonomy of the craft of poetry further with the verbs which he uses to express this process of breakage, compilation and renewal; Lydgate's 'men of craft' are granted license to invent, fantasize and devise. As Larry Scanlon observes: 'While ostensibly stressing fidelity to the antecedent, these lines actually give the translator an almost unlimited latitude for innovation.'[93] Lydgate adds to this metaphor the adage that the translator should 'Out of old chaff trie out ful cleene corn', an analogy which he also uses in the *Troy Book*, and which further fortifies his own position as the producer of 'ful cleene corn' from Laurent's 'old chaff'.[94] The translator should transform his material such that it is 'more fressh and lusti to the eie', and painted with 'colours agreable off hewe' - thus are 'olde thynges' made to 'seeme newe'. Lydgate's reinterpretation of Laurent's Prologue encompasses an unusual combination of the practical, the aesthetic and the figurative: the translator's role is described with the language of making, 'crafft' and 'labour', but the effect produced is expressed through the language of perception - the text shall be made 'lusti *to the eie'* and 'for to *seeme* newe'.[95] The practical role of the writer to preserve and to govern perception is one which Lydgate continues to emphasise throughout the *Fall of Princes*.

In addition to the influence of Laurent, Lydgate was also influenced by Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*. The most frequently discussed influence of the *Monk's Tale* on the *De casibus* tradition is that Lydgate classifies the *Fall of Princes* a 'tragedie', when Boccaccio's and Laurent de Premierfait's texts are by self-definition, works of history. This transition from history to tragedy in the *De casibus* tradition is undoubtedly indebted to Chaucer's Monk's opening remarks that he will:

> biwaille in manere of tragedie
> The harm of hem that stoode in heigh degree,
> (*MkT* 1991-92.)

[93] Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 330.

[94] *Troy Book* I.147-55.

[95] See Scanlon, pp. 330-31.

On the subject of his adopted mode in the *Fall*, or how he will 'dresse his style' Lydgate decides that he will 'sette eloquence aside, and in this book bewepen and compleyn'. He reiterates this intention in the conclusion to his Prologue:

> And for the mater abraid on heuynesse,
> Off fressh colours I took no maner heede,
> But my processe pleynli for to leede,
> As me sempte it was to me most meete
> To sette apart all rethoriques sueete.
> (*Fall* I.449-445)

Like Chaucer's Monk, Lydgate, chooses a heavy mode to suit his heavy matter – that of bewailing. Interestingly, as part of this choice he will also set 'all sweet rethoric' aside, not for the sake of clarity, as prioritised by Laurent, but for the sake of propriety. Lydgate's Prologue indicates that tragedy is incompatible with a rhetorical style. This is certainly an unusual interpretation on Lydgate's part; it could be read as a conventional expression of humility, and that is certainly part of it, except that here it is expressed as a stylistic choice rather than a necessity. I would suggest that this is a far from seamless combination of Laurent's comprehensible and plain style, and the Monk's 'tragic' mode, which converge in Lydgate's intention to write tragedies, which would conventionally be in the rhetorical high style, plainly. Lydgate's desire to write 'pleynli' also relates to the idea of historical truth, as Kenneth Graham points out, 'plain' and 'true' are almost synonymous in the late medieval period.[96] Thus, in the Prologue to the *Fall*, Lydgate seems to be torn between multiple different ways of writing history; whether it should be with 'colours agreable off hewe', in the style of Petrarch and Boccaccio, treated 'pleynli' in the style of Laurent, or 'bewailed', in the style of the Monk.

Alongside Lydgate's stylistic confusion, there is another factor to take into account; the reader themselves. While Boccaccio's intention is to stir the tyrannical princes of his age by whatever means necessary, Lydgate has a specific and problematic reader to whom he must direct his text – the illustrious patron of the *Fall of Princes*, Duke Humphrey of

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[96] Kenneth J. E. Graham, The Performance Of Conviction: Plainness And Rhetoric In The Early English Renaissance (London: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 1.

Gloucester. With the distinction between Boccaccio and Lydgate's intended audience in mind, I want to examine the complications and ambiguities which arise when mode and audience do not align, using Book II Chapter 10 of the *Fall of Princes*, which treats the story of Dido, Queen of Carthage, as a case study.

Lydgate's Dido and the Envoy to Widows

In Chapter Three, I analysed Chaucer's *Legend of Dido* which portrays an amalgam of the Dido of Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Heroides*. I also discussed Boccaccio's treatment of Dido in *De mulieribus claris* and her status as an exemplum for the widows of Boccaccio's day. Here, I will discuss Book II, chapter X of the *Fall*, 'Dido, queen of Cartage', and its accompanying envoys – a revealing episode for a number of reasons. First, it is an example of Lydgate grappling with the tension, which I have noted above, between the modes of poetry and history, heightened by the presence of two powerful narratives concerning Dido, which we might think of as "poetic" and "historical". Virgil's Dido was perceived as a false account by Petrarch and Boccaccio, and this poetic slandering of a woman 'whom he knew died out of zeal for chastity and the preservation of widowhood' performed by 'the most learned and excellent poet of all' was a source of perplexity and displeasure for them, one which Boccaccio tried to justify in *De genealogia*.[97] At the core of both Dido narratives is Dido's identity as a widow, which Desmond argues 'becomes the definitive marker for the medieval reader', whether it is the chaste widowed Dido who would rather die than remarry, or the widowed Dido who has a relationship with Aeneas.[98] We can see these dual accounts rubbing against one another in Lydgate's account. Furthermore, Lydgate's Dido and the envoys which accompany it embody a conflict between Lydgate's style, his role as a writer of exemplary history, and his audience, particularly the illustrious patron of the *Fall of Princes*, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, and has yet to be discussed in detail in accounts of the *Fall*.

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[97] See Petrarch *Seniles* IV.5 and *DGD* XIV.XIII, 'Poets are not Liars', 12-18, in which Boccacio argues that, while Virgil knew the true Dido story, with poetic license he used her as a warning of the sexual threat that widows represent, and of the importance of resisting temptation. For more on Boccaccio's Dido, see Desmond, *Reading Dido*, pp. 58-73.

[98] Desmond, p. 58.

Boccaccio based his accounts of Dido in *De casibus*, *De mulieribus*, and *De genealogia* on what is known as the "historical" Dido narrative, which he encountered in Justin's *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*.[99] In the *Epitome,* Dido flees to Libya with a select group of followers following the murder of her husband, Acerbas. When Iarbas, king of the Maxitani, demands Dido's hand in marriage she initially rejects him, but her people, for fear of their lives, compel her to accept. In the accounts of Boccaccio and Laurent, which are identical apart from Laurent's characteristic repetition, these nobles have heard about Iarbas's desire to marry Dido, but rather than reveal the whole truth to her – for they are afraid of the threat the king represents – they claim that he merely seeks a visitor from her court who could teach him the ways and the customs of the Tyrians, but that they have been unable to find such a person. Dido responds with conviction, according to what she believes to be the moral duty of the citizen:

> "Certes," dist elle, "mes tresbons citoiens; puis qu'il est ainsi comme vous dictes, nous doncques endurerons voluentiers non pas seulement aller demourer avec ce roy estrange, mais nous endurerons pacienment vivre entre les bestes sauvaiges et entre quelconques nacion de gens barbares; mais aussi, mes tres bons citoiens, s'il est chose convenable de mourir pour le bien et la santé d'entre vous si comme je croy estes aussi tous prestz; car certainement le citoien est mauvaiz qui ne veult souffrir aucuns dommaigez privez pour le commun prouffit."
> (*Des cas,* fol. 62v.)[100]
> ["Certainly", she said, "my most excellent citizens, since it is thus as you say, we will not therefore willingly suffer only to go to remain with this foreign king, but we will suffer patiently to live among the savage beasts and among any possible nation of barbaric peoples; but also, my excellent citizens, it is agreeable to die for the good and the salvation of all of you, as I believe you are also all ready to do. For truly, indeed, the citizen who is not willing to suffer any personal damage for common profit, is wicked."]

The nobles then reveal Iarbas's true intention to Dido, and she realises that her fate has been determined by her own argument. Thus, Boccaccio recounts, Dido recognises that her duty as

[99] Desmond, p. 23.

[100] For the Latin, see *DCV* II.X.25-26

a citizen and her vow of chastity are in conflict, and she resolves that she will indeed 'go to her husband' after the period of three months, though not in the way that her people expect.[101] Lydgate's account in the *Fall* does not include the deception of Dido's councillors, but rather expands her moral directive to the citizens of Carthage, combining it with an eloquently expressed commitment to chastity, and transforming it into a personal and emotive piece of oratory:

> "Nay rather deie," quod she, "than tassente
> To his desirs, which thyng God forbeede,
> Or fro the centre off my chast entente
> For to remeue, outher in thouht or deede, —
> Which were disclauredre to al womanheede.
> To condescende for any manacyng
> To breke my vow for plesaunce off a kyng.
>
> Touchyng manacis maad to this cite.
> For to destroie it with his grete myht,
> Withoute cause or title off equite
> To grounden hym a quarell ageyn riht,
> Onli for he is blyndid in his siht
> With froward lust my chast auow tassaile,
> Beth riht weel seur how he theroff shal faile.
>
> Yiff ye wer bold and manli off corage,
> For comoun profit your cite to defende,
> And to withstonde his vicious outrage.
> To trete with hym ye wold nat condescende.
> (*Fall* II.2059-76)

Lydgate includes, where it is not present in Boccaccio or Laurent, a focus from Dido on the king who seeks to wrong her, repeatedly mentioning that her people should relay her final message to the king who would seek to assail her 'chaste beute', and 'widwes chastite'.

[101] *DCV* II.X.28.

This pattern is repeated in Dido's next speech to her people, at the climactic moment when she ascends the funeral pyre to sacrifice herself for her chastity. Again, Boccaccio and Laurent's treatment of this scene is extremely similar:

> "Mes tresbons citoiens, je vous commande a Dieu, je m'en voys a mari ainsi comme vous le m'avez conmandé." Et tantost apres Dido se coucha sur l'espee que elle avoit paravant prinse, et par ainsi mourut en gardant honnesteté et chasteté, et souilla de son sang innocent toutes les choses qui estoient a l'entour d'elle.
> (*Des cas* fol. 63v.)[102]
> ["My excellent citizens, I commend you to God, I send myself to my husband, just as you commanded me to do." And immediately after, Dido fell upon the sword which she had previously seized, and in this way she died, safeguarding her dignity and chastity, and stained all her surroundings with her innocent blood.]

Lydgate's version of this scene, particularly Dido's brief moment of direct speech, is greatly expanded and rhetorically amplified:

> "Farweel my freendis, farweel for euermore!
> Onto my lord myn husbonde I mut gon,
> To hym, I meene, that was my lord off yore:
> For off husbondis, God wot, I haue but on;
> Praieng you to reporte euerichon
> Afftir my deth, how Dido off Cartage
> I-ioyned was but onys in mariage.
>
> Seith to the kyng, which hath you manacid,
> Mi chaste beute that he wolde assaile, —
> Go, tellith hym how that I am pacid,
> And off his purpos how that he shal faile.
> His manacyng shal hym nat auaile.

[102] For the Latin see *DCV* II.X.29-30.

And seith how Dido deied for the nonys.
For she nat wolde be weddid mor than onys.

And into fir, that brente cleer and briht.
She ran in haste, there is no mor to seyne,
Sauff with a knynff in euery manys siht
Ful sodenli she roff hir herte on tweyne.
(*Fall* II.2115-2142)

The extended direct speech in Lydgate's translation offers a more personal portrayal of Dido's character, and dramatic oratorical delivery, making the scene more stirring. Despite his contention that he will 'sette apart all rethoriques sueete', Lydgate's verse in this passage is rich with rhetorical device – the anaphora in the first line, 'farewel my friends, farewell for euermore', the imperative phrases 'Go, tellith hym how that I am pacid'– and there is a unified focus throughout the passage on Dido's quality of 'trouthe', emphasised by the reduplication 'For she nat wolde be weddid mor than onys', a less than subtle repudiation of the Virgilian Dido. Lydgate also creates the impression of a story which is to be told and repeated: instead of solely addressing her citizens, Dido asks for them to relay her story to the king who seeks to marry her. As in her other speech, the focus is shifted onto the man who has wronged her. I would argue that this refocused perspective is part of Lydgate's reproduction of Ovidian style - the *Heroides,* and certainly Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women,* are framed by the idea of the wronged woman, and equally importantly, the false man who has perpetrated the misdeed. Dido's desire for her death to be recounted, and for Iarbas to know he has been thwarted enacts this framework effectively:

Seith to the kyng, which hath you manacid,
Mi chaste beute that he wolde assaile, —
Go, tellith hym how that I am pacid,
And off his purpos how that he shal faile.
His manacyng shal hym nat auaile
(*Fall* II.2122-26)

Lydgate also draws significant attention in Dido's final speech to the detail of Boccaccio's narrative which most opposes the Virgilian or Ovidian narrative: that Dido 'i-joyned was but

onys in marriage'. Her reference to herself as 'Dido of Cartage' in the third person adds to the powerful effect that Lydgate has created of her constructing her own story. The focus on how her life, and death, should be reported is reminiscent of Chaucer's accounts of Dido, both in the *House of Fame* and the *Legend of Good Women,* in which the matter of posthumous reputation is a matter of great concern, as I discussed in Chapter Three.

Lydgate's nods to the Ovidian/Chaucerian Dido are reinforced on various other occasions. In fact, Lydgate's adoption of an Ovidian oratorical style opens the door to a plurality of narrative in the Dido tradition. Boccaccio's role as a historian in *De casibus* is to condense the multiple sources of history into his chosen framework which has unity and a moral consistency. The Petrarchan motif of the historian as *compilator* and unifier of diverse historical material is a dominant feature in Lydgate's description of 'Bochas' in his Prologue:

> This seide Bochas, auctour off this book,
> Which off stories hadde gret intelligence.
> Summe he leffte and summe also he took, —
> *Such as he leffte was off no necligence*,
> Supposyng and demyng off credence,
> Alle the stories which that comoun be.
> Other knew hem also weel as he.
>
> And lest that folk wolde haue had disdeyn,
> Thynges comoun to put in memorie,
> Therfore Bochas thouhte it was but veyn,
> To his name noon encres off glorie,
> *To remembre no cronycle nor historic,*
> *But tho that wern for ther merit notable,*
> *Auctorised, famous and comendable*.
> (*Fall* I.141-154; my italics)

However, despite this assurance, Lydgate appears hesitant to commit fully to Boccaccio's chosen version of events, preferring to provide a comprehensive, if divided, account. Lydgate uses Dido as a point of reference several times throughout the *Fall of Princes,* but only in his full account of her does he use Boccaccio's narrative. Every other mention of Dido also

mentions Aeneas (Lydgate even quotes the opening lines of the *Aeneid* in Book IV) even in Book II, where the Boccaccian Dido narrative appears:

> As olde cronycles make mencioun
> Remembryng also thunkyndli gret outrage
> Bi Eneas doon to Dido off Cartage
>
> Record I take of Virgile Mantuan,
> That wrot the armys & prowesse of the man
> Callid Eneas, whan he of hih corage
> Cam to Itaill from Dido of Cartage
>
> Dido the firste that bilte that cite
> And made touris & the stronge wall,
> Which was betrasshed falsly of Enee,
> Afforn remembred the fires funerall,
> (II.985-7; IV.67-70; V.2621-24)

Lydgate's use of 'Virgil Mantuan' recalls the opening of Chaucer's *Legend of Dido*: 'Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan, / Be to thy name!' (*LGW*, 924-5), as do the references to Aeneas's behaviour as a 'gret outrage' and that Dido was 'betrasshed falsly'. Another indicator of Lydgate's allegiance to the Ovidian/Virgilian narrative, which Chaucer adapts in the *Legend*, is his choice to call Dido's husband 'Sicheus' throughout, which is his name in Virgil, Ovid, and Chaucer, even though both Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait use the name Acerbas (though both mention that other sources call him Sicheus).

These intertextual allusions are brought to a head in the conclusion to the main section of the Dido narrative, which is all original material, and in which Lydgate openly makes reference to Ovid's Dido, but states that he has chosen to follow the more favourable account found in 'Bochas':

> Touchyng Dido lat ther be no striff:
> Thouh that she be accusid off Ouide,
> Afftir Bochas I wrot hir chast[e] liff,

For me thouhte it was bet tabide
On hir goodnesse, than thyng reherse in deede,
Which myhte resowne ageyn hir womanheede.
(*Fall* II.2150-56)

Although it is ostensibly a defence of Dido against the 'large' language of Virgil, the acknowledgement of these multiple accounts introduces an equivocal note to the narrative. Accordingly, the story ends on a discomfortingly ambiguous conclusion:

Ther shal for me be maad no rehersaile
But as I fynde wretyn in Bochas;
For to say weel may moche more auaile
Than froward speche, in many dyuers cas.
(*Fall,* Book II, 2164-67.)

In other words, if one can select from diverse accounts the most exemplary, then that is preferable to a narrative 'which myght resowne ageyn hir [Dido's] womanheede'. Lydgate signposts the process of selecting material for exemplary history. This self-conscious narrative multiplicity is one of Lydgate's hallmarks as a translator and historian, or, as Maura Nolan suggests 'a literary critic':

> In fact, the *Fall of Princes* ultimately does not work very well as a simple collection of moralized exempla; indeed, it fails at its task of moralization at key junctures, not least because Lydgate is himself a kind of literary critic, a poet who reads multiple versions of the stories he reproduces and attempts to do justice to them all, despite the contradictions and inconsistencies by which they are surrounded.[103]

Nolan's study of 'Ovidianism in the *Fall of Princes*' does not mention Lydgate's account of Dido, although it fits these parameters in a very interesting way – it is an example of Lydgate being 'burdened by an awareness of the impossibility of reducing all history to a single

[103] Maura Nolan, '"Now Wo, Now Gladnesse": Ovidianism in the "Fall of Princes"', *ELH*, 71.3 (2004), p. 531.

moral', a burden which leads him to offer an oppositional moral conclusion which is unique in the *Fall of Princes.*

The contradictory tone of the narrative is continued in the two envoys to Lydgate's Dido chapter. Following his Dido narrative, Boccaccio includes an additional short chapter titled "In laudem Didonis" or "In Praise of Dido", which Laurent and Lydgate also translate. Although Boccaccio ends certain chapters with exhortations toward a particular virtue, Dido's is the only narrative in *De casibus* which merits an additional chapter dedicated to *praising* its subject. 'In Praise of Dido' reiterates the exemplary nature of Dido's character. The chapter ends with the hope that Dido will be an inspiration to 'lascivientibus matronis' [licentious wives], so that 'we may also be able to see the virtue of married chastity increased by your merit.'[104] Laurent's translation changes this moral to specify that widows, in particular, may find moral instruction in Dido's actions:

> […] nous puissons veoir que par tes merites soit accreue l'onneur de la chastete des femmes vesues et aultres quelzconques.
> [we can see that through your merits, the honour of the chastity
> of widowed women and any others will increase.][105]

The emphasis of Laurent and Boccaccio's chapters is most prominently upon Dido's premature death and virtuous sacrifice of her young life. Laurent, in particular, underscores the physical act of Dido's death, describing her 'sang vermeil' [vermillion blood].[106] Both Boccaccio and Laurent describe Dido's soul flying from her body to the glory of the afterlife:

> tu ne as pas voulu si lo[n]guement viure co[m]me tu pouoies selo[n] le cours de nature, mais tu as mieulx aime do[n]ner a la mort les ans de ta jeunesse, q[ue] plus longueme[n]t viure et finer tes jours en ho[n]te, ne q[ue] ordoier ton ferme et saint p[re]pos de chastete p[ar] la diffame de luxure q[ue] jamais n'est effacie […]et pour acq[ue]rir ces tiltres et louenges tu as tire ton sang vermeil et cler de ta poectrine, ton

[104] *DCV* III.XI.3: 'honestatem etiam matronalis pudicitie auctam tuo merito videre possimus.'

[105] *Des cas*, fol. 63v.

[106] *Des cas* fol. 63v.

esperit est volle hors de ton corps et alle en la vie telle co[m]me les dieux pauant te auoie[n]t aprestee selon tes grans merites et bienfaiz.
[you did not desire to live as long as you could have according to the course of nature, but you preferred to give the years of your youth to death than to live
longer and to finish your days in shame, nor to sully your death and holy purpose of chastity through the shame of lechery which is never effaced […] and by acquiring these titles and praises you have drawn your clear and vermillion blood from
your chest, your soul is flown out of your body to such a life as the gods have made ready for you according to your great merits and good deeds.]
(*Des cas,* fol. 63v.)[107]

Lydgate's translation has a distinctly different emphasis and tone to that of Boccaccio and Laurent, removing the vivid descriptions of Dido's death. The dominant sentiment in Lydgate's envoy, repeated in some form in every stanza, is admiration of Dido's pureness and her rejection of 'all vicious lustis' (2186). Lydgate's language is courtly, conventional and considerably less specific about the nature of Dido's sacrifice and its motivation. This is the first indicator of Lydgate separating himself as a translator from the moral message of the "historical" Dido narrative. The ending of each stanza, which Lydgate has derived from Laurent's final sentence describing Dido as an *exemplum* to widows, provides the path into Lydgate's final and most conclusive rejection of the Boccaccian moral framework, in the form of his second envoy. Each stanza of the first envoy ends with the ballade refrain: 'With liht off trouthe alle widwes tenlumyne' (II. 2177; 2184; 2191).

Lydgate's second envoy to the Dido narrative, 'Lenvoye direct to wydowis of the translatour', which is based on neither Boccaccio nor Laurent de Premierfait, also ends with a repeated refrain, but one with a completely opposing message to the previous envoy, explicitly directing the 'Noble Matrones' who read his text not 'to folwe Dido, that was queen of Cartage':

Noble matrones, which han al suffisaunce
Off womanhed, your wittis doth vp dresse,
How that Fortune list to turne hir chaunce,

[107] For the Latin see *DCV* II.XI.3.

Beth nat to rakell off sodeyn hastynesse,
But ay prouideth in your stabilnesse,
That no such foly entre your corage
To folwe Dido, that was queen off Cartage.
(*Fall of Princes*, II. 1999-1205).

Both Edwards and Mortimer have noted the importance of the envoys in the *Fall of Princes* as a marker of Lydgate's response to the narrative of his source material, and a vehicle to 'point out didactically the moral implications of particular parts of the narrative to the reader.'[108] Mortimer also observes that the envoys are 'exactly the parts of the poem where Lydgate's hands are least tied by the constraints of fidelity to any anterior text'.[109] However, neither Edwards nor Mortimer mentions the 'Envoy to Widows' which is an unprecedented moment in the *Fall,* and the only instance when Lydgate goes directly against the explicit moral of the text. As we have seen throughout his account of the main Dido narrative, Lydgate seems to be grappling to find his perspective on both the "historical" Dido which Boccaccio presents and the moral conclusion to be drawn from this *exemplum*. Evidently, Lydgate does not want to conclude his narrative with a directive toward widows that they should never re-marry. There could be several reasons for this – the first possibility is that Lydgate himself is morally and religiously opposed to the idea of suicide, for any reason, likely influenced by Augustine's *City of God,* and its discussion of Lucretia, in which Augustine is unquestionably clear that 'suicide is a sin for those who worship the one true God'.[110] Interestingly, Lydgate does not include a similar guidance at the end of his own treatment of Lucretia in Book III of the *Fall* – following Boccaccio, the Envoy evades the subject of suicide and focuses on 'Noble Pryncis', advising them to govern their people prudently.[111] Lydgate also renounces responsibility for the Lucretia narrative by emphasising how unworthy his account is in comparison to Chaucer's in the *Legend of Good Women*: 'Men wolde deeme it presumpcioun & veynglorie' for Lydgate to follow Chaucer's 'legende

[108] Edwards, 'The Influence of Lydgate's Fall of Princes c. 1440-1559: A Survey', *Mediaeval Studies*, 39 (1977), p. 425

[109] Mortimer, pp. 212-3.

[110] Augustine, *City of God,* p. 55.

[111] *Fall*, III. 1009- 1148. Interestingly, Lydgate also references Chaucer's account of the Virgilian Dido in this passage.

souerayne'.[112] Despite this, Lydgate stipulates that he must treat of Lucretia because his patron has requested it specifically, further distancing himself from the ownership of that narrative.[113]

In the case of Dido, it may be that the additional weight of Laurent's 'In Praise of Dido', and Laurent's specification that Dido is an exemplum for widows, drove Lydgate to offer an opposing perspective. In the 'Envoy to Widows', Lydgate frames suicide as a sin of rashness, and interestingly seems to characterise it as a new trend, describing the impulse toward suicide as 'the serpent off newfangilnesse'.[114] Perhaps Lydgate particularly reacted against the emphasis which both Boccaccio and Laurent place on the untimely ending of Dido's young life, for Lydgate emphasises that his message is for those widows 'yong and old off age'.[115] In addition to ideological, or religious opposition, I propose another motivation for Lydgate's writing of the 'Envoy to Widows', which is that to present a strong message toward all widows that they should not remarry, is not entirely harmonious with the patronage of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, who himself had a complicated relationship with widowhood. Lydgate finds himself in a similar position to his *auctor* Boccaccio writing *De mulieribus claris* for Andrea Acciaiuoli. Humphrey's first wife Jaqueline De Bavière had been married previously, and she went on to marry again after her marriage to Humphrey was annulled by the Pope.[116] Duke Humphrey also played an instrumental role in passing a parliamentary bill which forbade Henry V's widow Catherine of Valois from remarrying without the consent of the then six-year-old king Henry VI. Lydgate, having received the patronage of both these women, would have been intimately aware of these connections.[117] More broadly, the *Fall of Princes* was predominately disseminated in royal and aristocratic

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[112] *Fall* III.973-1001.

[113] For an excellent discussion of Lydgate's 'depoliticised Lucretia' see Mortimer, pp. 61-78.

[114] *Fall* II. 2231.

[115] *Fall* II. 2218.

[116] C. Marie Harker, 'The Two Duchesses of Gloucester and the Rhetoric of the Feminine', *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 30.1 (2004), 109–25; and Petrina, *Cultural Politics*, pp. 120-127.

[117] See Anne Crawford, 'The King's Burden? - The Consequences of Royal Marriage in Fifteenth-Century England', in *Patronage, the Crown and the Provinces in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Ralph Alan Griffiths (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1981), pp. 33–56; and Petrina, pp. 281-2.

circles,[118] in which it was not uncommon for women to remarry.[119] With this readership in mind, I would argue that Lydgate's choice is not merely moral but strategic. Lydgate cannot afford to be as arresting as Boccaccio, or Laurent in his exemplary guidance. The fragile and contradictory framework which is produced by having Duke Humphrey as the patron of a work whose purpose is to enumerate the moral failings of princes, is upheld by maintaining a careful separation between Humphrey and the illustrious subjects of Lydgate's text. We can conclude that Lydgate felt that the moral zeal of Laurent's 'In Praise of Dido' on its own would represent too much cognitive dissonance for his patron and aristocratic readership. These stakes are even more heightened by the fact that the addition of envoys in the *Fall of Princes* was a feature requested by Duke Humphrey. Given this, it is interesting, and ironic, that Lydgate's heightened rhetorical style in the main Dido narrative means that he is even more successful than Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait at moving his audience to sympathise with Dido's plight. In the Dido narrative and its two envoys, Lydgate almost seems at war with his own mission in writing the *Fall of Princes*; his pathetic style and his relationship to his princely patron are stretching at the seams to be reconciled.

I think it likely at this juncture, a section of the *Fall* requiring adaptable and diplomatic handling, that Lydgate turned again to Chaucer for poetic guidance, but this time to another one of the *Canterbury Tales*. It is surprisingly rarely noted that Lydgate's 'Envoy to Widows' has a precedent in Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*, although its execution is very different.[120] The desire to complicate the moral conclusion of his texts is one which Chaucer finds himself drawn toward on more than one occasion. A notable example is *Troilus and Criseyde,* whose cryptic conclusion caused the printer Wynkyn de Worde to feel the need to resolve Chaucer's text with three unambiguously misogynistic stanzas, supposedly

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[118] Of the thirty-four MSS of the complete work which survive, Pearsall argues that the majority are 'prestige productions of the kind that would have been admired rather than read (Pearsall, *John Lydgate,* p. 250).' However, as I've noted earlier, the envoys were more widely read than any of the rest of the text of the *Fall.*

[119] For more on medieval practices of remarriage and widowhood see Katherine Clark Walter, *The Profession of Widowhood: Widows, Pastoral Care, and Medieval Models of Holiness* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018), p. 392.

[120] See Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers,* pp. 24-26. Lerer describes Lydgate 'writing like the Clerk' in the *Fall of Princes.* Lerer's argument discusses Lydgate's imitation of 'the genealogy of laureation', and how Lydgate creates a rhetorical dynamic of poetic inheritance from Chaucer to himself, just as Chaucer does with Petrarch in the *Clerk's Tale.*

contributed by 'The auctour'.[121] Similarly, the Envoy to the *Clerk's Tale* has long been a cause of confusion for scribes, readers, and scholars, both in its relation to the *Tale* and in its authorial voice. The Hengwrt and Ellesmere manuscripts presents different evidence for the point at which the *Clerk's Tale,* that is, the narrative told in the Clerk's voice, ends. The Hengwrt manuscript places the line 'Here is ended the tale of the clerk of Oxenford' before 'Lenuoy de Chaucer', and again at the beginning of the Host's rhyme royal response writes: 'This worthy Clerk whan ended was his tale'. The Ellesmere manuscript goes straight from the main body of the *Tale* into 'Lenuoy de Chaucer', and then only after 'the murye wordes of the Hoost', does the scribe write 'Heere endeth the tale of the Clerk of Oxenford'.[122] This disparity of endings could be put down to scribal error, or they could, as Chickering points out, demonstrate the scribe's 'genuine puzzlement' as to where to place the Clerk's Envoy and the Host's jocular comment that he wishes his wife could have heard the *Tale*.[123] Another matter of ongoing disagreement is the question of the narrational voice of the Envoy – namely, is it a continuation of the Clerk's voice, Chaucer's voice, or something in between? In relation to Lydgate's 'Envoy to Widows', these particulars of narrative voice and the Host's response are significant for two reasons; first, if Lydgate reads the Envoy as being Chaucer's authorial intervention, rather than a continuation of the voice of the Clerk, which is itself a translation of the voice of Petrarch, then it offers a source of inspiration for the role of English translator as questioner and re-interpreter of a Latin authority. Secondly, the Host's stanza, and its place as part of the moral conclusion to the *Tale*, is in many ways a staging of the response of a patron to a commissioned work, a further reason that Lydgate might have looked to the *Clerk's Tale* as inspiration for his Envoy.

The *Clerk's Tale* Envoy plays a very similar subverting role to that of the 'Envoy to Widows' in relation to the Dido narrative. It is a composition of Chaucer's which has no basis in Petrarch, and it contributes a satirical advisory conclusion to an exemplary moral tale, which is directed toward a female reader. As Lerer observes, in this way it challenges

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[121] C. David Benson and David Rollman, "Wynkyn De Worde And The Ending Of Chaucer's *Troilus And Criseyde*", *Modern Philology*, 78.3 (1981), p. 276. In these three additional stanzas, De Worde brings Criseyde's betrayal to the fore, and contextualises it as being typical of the inconstancy of women throughout history (Benson and Rollman, p. 275-77).

[122] See Howell Chickering, 'Form and Interpretation in the "Envoy" to the "Clerk's Tale"', *The Chaucer Review*, 29.4 (1995), p. 352.

[123] *Clerk's Tale*, 1212b-1212g.

the traditional conventions of the envoy, and the moral guidelines raised by the *Tale*, and 'makes an ostensibly exemplary story into an occasion not for understanding but debate.'[124] Stylistically it is different to any other part of the *Tale* – the rhyme scheme changes from rhyme royal to decasyllabic ababcb, and Chaucer makes innovative use of repeated rhyme sounds.[125] As Chickering observes Chaucer selects twelve words ending in 'ence' of which eight are typical wifely virtues: 'pacience', 'prudence', 'diligence', 'silence', 'innocence', 'reuerence' 'eloquence' and 'dispence' (*ClT* 1177-1212). However, invariably these words are satirically subverted in the following line, as the persona of the Envoy, be it Chaucer or the Clerk, indicates to 'Ye Archewyues' how they can assail their husbands' defences, and not allow themselves to be cowed, as is the 'pacient and kynde' Griselda (1195; 1187). Lydgate's 'Envoy to Widows' adopts a mock advisory tone akin to Chaucer's, though his satire is less artful and more direct. Rather than subverting conventional wifely virtues, as Chaucer does, Lydgate advises the 'Noble matrones' which he addresses that they should preserve their 'variant brotilnesse' (II.2210). Lydgate also imitates Chaucer's *double entendre*-filled advice that wives, whether they be 'fair' or 'foul', should find friends, and 'do thy travaille':

> If thow be fair ther folk ben in presence
> Shewe thow thy visage and thyn aparaile
> If thow be foul *be fre of thy dispence*
> *To gete thee freendes ay do thy trauaille*
> Be ay of chiere as light as leef on lynde
> And lat hym care, and wepe, and wrynge and
> waille!
> (*ClT* 1207-12; my italics)

> Lat al your port *be void off displesaunce*;
> *To gete freendis doth your besynesse*,
> And beth neuer withoute purueiau*n*ce:
> So shal ye best encresen in richesse, —
> In on alone may be no sekirnesse;

[124] Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers*, p. 33.

[125] See Chickering, p. 358.

To your herte beth dyuers off language,
Contraire to Dido, that was queen off Cartage.
(*Fall* II.2220-26)

The comparison between 'To gete thee freendes ay do thy travaille' and 'To gete freendis doth your besynesse' is striking, though Chaucer's playful sexual innuendo is converted by Lydgate into more staid courtly advice. Lydgate also adopts a similar kind of repeated rhyme pattern to the *Clerk's Tale* Envoy, interestingly employing the same rhyme sounds as he uses in the first Dido Envoy. Throughout his first and second envoys, Lydgate ends each line with the French sounds 'aunce' and 'esse', exchanging the repeated rhyming refrain of 'With liht off vertu/trouthe alle widwes tenlumyne', for the repeated sound of 'age' to rhyme with 'Cartage' in the 'Envoy to Widows'.

Lydgate's Dido and its envoys are representative of the problems which he is navigating more broadly in the *Fall of Princes.* Despite his commitment to a 'pleyn' style, in the main Dido narrative, we can see Lydgate's desire to move his reader with powerful oratory and the impressive strength of Dido's character. However, when it comes to the Envoy, where Lydgate's authorship and individual moral position is more exposed, he turns once again toward the stylistic artistry of Chaucer and produces a kind of inverted or antithetical exemplarity in order that his matter and his reader, specifically Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, remain harmonious. Over the course of this chapter, I have considered the way in which Boccaccio's *De casibus* is transformed by two translators, Laurent and Lydgate. The compromised position of both these translators, in relation to their patrons, makes for a far from seamless translation of Boccaccio's perspective in *De casibus*. However, both have something valuable to show us about the way in which authorial style and audience interact in the genre of exemplary history. Laurent's desire to elucidate Boccaccio's material leads to some stylistic infelicities, which Petrarch and Boccaccio would not have approved of, but it also heightens characterisation of figures such as Zenobia and provides the reader with valuable context. Lydgate's divided perspective on the mode by which history should be told – whether 'biwailled' like the Monk, told with colours of rhetoric like Boccaccio, or portrayed 'pleynly' like Laurent – produces fraught, yet powerful, accounts such as Dido's.

Conclusion

This thesis was originally conceived as a sources and analogues linguistic analysis, in order to ask the question: how are the style and language of Boccaccio's Latin compendia translated in the style and rhetoric of Chaucer's historiographical works, and that of other Boccaccian interlocutors? In this I followed the valuable work undertaken by scholars such as Peter Godman and Piero Boitani, and the discoveries which emerged from linguistic comparison have been instructive for this project. However, I found that the specificities of language and comparing translation with source became a less significant element of the influence of Boccaccio's Latin works, and of humanist historiography more broadly, on Chaucer. I was drawn to the practice of scholars such as Neuse, Gaston, Schwebel and Wallace who have considered Chaucer not solely as an imitator, or even as a translator, but as a writer who challenges and experiments with his sources. Chaucer is a poet whose reading, and the ideas and preoccupations which that reading generates, is at the heart of everything he writes, even if this influence is not directly traceable in his language. I have arrived at the conclusion that when it comes to Chaucer, it would be a narrow assessment to presume that Chaucer has read anything in a narrow way, even if the evidence of his direct use of these texts is limited.

Over the course of the preceding chapters, I have addressed several neglected areas of study in relation to early humanist compendia and their afterlives. In Chapter One, I provided an overview of the literary and cultural landscape out of which Boccaccio's Latin works emerged. Chaucer's reception of the *tre corone* is intertextual – he understands the connections between them, where they differ from each other, and places them in dialogue with each other within the same works. Therefore, establishing the relationship between Boccaccio and the most significant guide for his Latin works, Petrarch, was essential to contextualising Chaucer's reception of Boccaccio's ideas. In this chapter, I showed that while Boccaccio emulates Petrarch and his poetic and historiographical principles, he is also innovative in the way he writes history. I proposed that Chaucer responds specifically to the novel elements of Boccaccio's Latin compendia: the inclusion of contemporary figures, which makes the exemplarity of his narratives more affecting and pressing, and the creation of a compendium of exemplary women.

My discussions of Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women* demonstrated that these two works challenge the frameworks of Boccaccio's Latin compendia using the same process of dramatization and interrogation. Both *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* are shaped to reach a particular audience and, in both texts, Boccaccio expresses a specific hope as to what the effect on his readers will be. In the case of the *De casibus*, Boccaccio uses the weighty and copious examples of history to impress upon the stony hearts of his intended readers, individuals in a high position on Fortune's wheel. However, Boccaccio fears that his readers will be overwhelmed by the breadth of his project and he implores them to continue to read attentively and to pay heed to his warnings. In *De mulieribus*, Boccaccio uses the examples of pagan women to firmly stipulate to the women of his day 'what to follow and what to flee'. The inclusion of contemporary women, both his actual patron Andrea Acciaiuoli and his prospective patron, Joanna of Naples, complicates the unity of his compendium, introducing a disjunction between the timeless moral teaching he wants to impart and the demands of his worldly situation. Both *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* stage a dynamic vision of the author in dialogue with his subjects and with his future readers. The Dantean-inflected dream vision style of *De casibus* represents the figures of history appearing before the eyes of the author and interacting with him. The passionate moral exhortations, delivered with Boccaccio's 'tender breath', speak directly to the rulers of his day.[1] It is clear to see why Chaucer's imitation of this framework found its place in the 'metapoetic' liveliness of the *Canterbury Tales* and its audience of 'quyting' pilgrims.[2] In *De mulieribus claris* we see Joanna of Naples, a real woman associated with Boccaccio's social circle, and an object of his professional ambition, become a historical subject. This complex negotiation is juxtaposed with harsh moral judgements on the deficient behaviour of 'today's women', with whom the author stages admonitory dialogue. This dialectic does not stand up to scrutiny, as I demonstrated in my discussion of Ludovico Sandeo's 'edition' of *De mulieribus claris,* in which he corrects the historical record regarding Joanna. In the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer adopts the models of these audience-focused texts and trials Boccaccio's ideas in front of audiences who expose the tensions inherent in Boccaccio's compendia.

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[1] *De casibus*, Prohemium, 6-7.

[2] Orlemanski, 'The Heaviness of Prosopopoeial Form', p. 126. My argument on this subject was indebted to Richard Neuse, pp. 248-9.

By treating the *Monk's Tale* as one of Chaucer's 'literary bastards' and extracting it from the context of the Canterbury pilgrimage, one is liable to miss one of the most significant ways that it relates to its model, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, namely its exploration of the subjectivity of reader-response and the discomfort which can accompany moral didacticism. My study returned to critiques that have dogged the *Monk's Tale* – its employment of pathos and its monotony – and showed how these qualities should be seen in the context of a broader picture of engagement with Boccaccio's distinctive historiographical mode.

Correspondingly, in dialogue with *De mulieribus claris* in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer constructs the figure of the God of Love, a reader who willfully misinterprets his previous work, imposing a simplistic moral framework onto a nuanced figure such as Criseyde who defies exemplarity or straightforward moral conclusions. Thus, Chaucer creates a compendium in which his female subjects are defined by the framework in which they are contained ('Good Women') and the aspects of their narrative which would belie this criterion are reformulated or excised, as I showed in my analysis of the *Legend of Cleopatra* and the *Legend of Dido*. Chapter Three also showed how Chaucer's artificial conditions of patronage in the *Legend* (although they may have reflected a real-life circumstance) offer a correction to the uncomfortable model of dedication in *De mulieribus claris*. Through the prescriptive conditions of the God of Love, and the fame and virtue of Alceste, Chaucer explores what it might mean to write a compendium of women commissioned by an exemplary woman at its outset.

My thesis has also shown the value of considering Chaucer reading *De casibus* and *De mulieribus* together, reflecting the way they are often compiled in manuscripts such as Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C 133. The fact that Chaucer draws his account of Zenobia from both of these texts is a significant, but often overlooked, detail in his reception of Boccaccio. It shows that Chaucer understood the different demands of Boccaccio's two compendia, and how the content and style of historical narratives must be adapted to fit the framework they inhabit. In my analysis of the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend* I have concluded that this understanding plays a central role in the style and construction of Chaucer's own compendia.

My study of Laurent de Premierfait in Chapter 4 offered a comparison of someone

reading *De casibus virorum illustrium* at a very similar time to Chaucer, but choosing to translate it closely, not once but twice. Laurent's 1409 *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* exposes the challenges of Boccaccio's mode in a different way to Chaucer, and reflects Laurent's discomfort with the idea of an audience-centered work which is not clearly communicable to the readers he wants to reach because of its erudition and presumption of existing knowledge. I have shown, for the first time, the ways in which Laurent's French shifts the emphasis of Boccaccio's accounts, and sheds new light on certain themes, as I observed in my analysis of Laurent's Zenobia. My thesis has sought to re-establish Laurent de Premierfait, not only as an important interlocutor in our understanding of Boccaccio's early reception, but a significant figure in the trajectory of English historiography through Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*. My study of Laurent and Lydgate's stances as translators and historians exposes the shared concerns between all interlocutors in this network of writers. All of the authors I have considered in this thesis grapple with what Grudin describes as 'the manifest tension between discourse and its receivers', and all of these authors seek novel ways to negotiate (or, in Chaucer's case, interrogate) this tension.[3] We see in Petrarch, Boccaccio, Laurent, and Lydgate, the unresolvable conflict between the moral integrity of the historian and the patrons overseeing their fame-generating enterprises.

My methodology of combining a comparative literary study with a consideration of paratexts and codicology has shown that the existing theories relating to Chaucer's material encounter with Boccaccio's Latin works – such as the hypothesis that Chaucer read a mutilated anonymous manuscript – are insufficient. Although we will probably never know exactly how, and with what kind of manuscript, Chaucer engaged with these works, I have demonstrated that we can use the existing manuscripts to illustrate the tradition of Boccaccio's works in the late fourteenth century and speculate on the form Chaucer was most likely to encounter. Based not only on the verbal echoes but also the powerful thematic resonances between the compendia of Chaucer and Boccaccio, I have proposed that Chaucer saw both *De mulieribus claris* and *De casibus virorum illustrium* in their full form. In doing so, I have moved forward the starting point at which previous scholars have considered Chaucer's engagement with these texts. The evidence of the 1426 Pavia library inventory records of *De mulieribus* and *De casibus*, paid due attention for the first time in my thesis,

[3] Grudin, p. 140.

reveal valuable context and generate further insight into our speculations of Chaucer's reading in Italy. The record indicates that the manuscript of *De casibus* is a Redaction A text which lacks the dedication to Mainardo Cavalcanti,[4] while the manuscript of *De mulieribus* is likely to have contained the dedication to Andrea Acciaiuoli. If these were the manuscripts that Chaucer read, it would explain the vastly different settings of the *Monk's Tale* and the *Legend*, and Chaucer's construction of patronage in the *Legend*. This provides a fruitful comparison with Laurent de Premierfait's reception of *De casibus*, as he also read a Redaction A manuscript which contained an appended dedication to Cavalcanti.

My study of the manuscripts has largely focused on readers' annotations, but there is more to consider. Future studies on the provenance of some of these manuscripts, and their dissemination, must be undertaken. There is also more work to be done on the readers of *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* and the *Fall of Princes* which was not within the scope of this project, but would be a fruitful continuation of my findings relating to the manuscripts of *De casibus virorum illustrium*. I must also acknowledge that, although I was able to consult the manuscripts most pertinent to this study, there are many more manuscripts of Boccaccio's Latin works which I would have liked to include to create a more comprehensive survey of early reader engagement.[5] However, this was not possible due to the restrictions of the pandemic, time, and resources. With hindsight, there are also features of these manuscripts which I would have attended to more carefully, had I known at the time of my archival research what I now know, and so I look forward to returning to them for future studies.

A commonplace in studies of the *De casibus* tradition, particularly in relation to Laurent de Premierfait and Lydgate, is to disparage the length of these compendia, at which our modern sensibility baulks. I hope I have shown the value of considering how the compilers, scribes, and annotators dealt with these encyclopaedic volumes, implementing navigational, memorialising and excerpting practices, and the new perspective which this provides for our consideration of the transmission and influence of these texts. My thesis has

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[4] Comparable manuscripts would be Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 970, a fourteenth-century Redaction A manuscript of *De casibus,* which contains a table of contents and was owned by Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna, or Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Conv. Soppr. G, 4, 1111 (F).

[5] A recent, and impressive, example of a survey of this kind is Clarke's 'Chaucer's Italian Books: A Study in Virtual Materiality', *Studi Sul Boccaccio*, 51 (2023), pp. 361–94.

demonstrated that considering the materiality of Boccaccio's Latin compendia provides invaluable context for Chaucer's reception of these works, from which future scholarly studies can build. By locating Chaucer within the landscape of other early readers of Boccaccio, both illustrious and anonymous, we gain a new and enriching perspective on Chaucer's Italian ventures, and on works which have confounded his critics.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Below is a sample of the twenty-eight manuscripts of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium,* which I consulted for the purposes of this project. *A* or *B* indicates to which redaction they belong, along with their abbreviated titles from *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vols. IX and X, and Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340-1520*, Italian Perspectives, 19 (London: Legenda, 2009).

Cambridge, Cambridge University Library	Ll.2.8 (*A*) [Ca[1]] Ff.5.42 (partial)	XV XVI
Cambridge, Trinity College Library	0.3.46 (partial)	XV
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Plut. 26 sin.6 (*B*) [L] Pluteo 52. 29 (*B*) [L[1]] Pluteo 66.10 (*B*) [L[2]]	XIV XIV XV
Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale	Conv. Soppr. G, 4, 1111 (*A*) [F]	XIV
London, British Library	Harley 3565 (*A*) [Lo]	XIV- XV
Modena, Biblioteca Estense	Cod. Lat. 235 (O, 5, 21) (*B*) [E[1]] Cod. Lat. 1261 (K, 5, 42) (*A*) [E]	XIV XV
Oxford, Bodleian Library	Lincoln College Lat. 32 (*B*) [O[1]] Laud Misc. 721 (extract)	XV XV
Padova, Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile	Cod. 148 (b, 7) (extract)	XV
Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale de France	6069 M (*A*) [P[1]]	XV
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Ott. Lat. 2145 (*B*) [Vo] Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C. 133 (*A,B*) [Vsp]	XIV XIV

	Ott. Lat. 2184 (*B*) [Vo^{1}]	XV
	Pal. Lat. 935 (*B*) [Vp]	XIV
	Reg. Lat. 895 (*A*) [Vre]	XV
	Urb. Lat. 451 (*B*) [Vu]	XV
	Pal. Lat. 970 (*A*) [Vp^{1}]	XIV
	Vat. Lat. 2030 (*B*) [Vl]	XIV
	Vat. Lat. 2941 (*B*) [Vl^{1}]	XV
	Vat. Lat. 6395 (*B*) [Vl^{2}]	XV
	Chig.L.VII. 264 (*B*) [Vch]	XV
Venice, Biblioteca Marciana	Lat. X, 114 (3654) (B) [Vz]	XV
	Lat. XI, 59 (=4152) (extract)	XV
	Lat. XIV, 12 (=4002) (extract)	XV

Appendix B

Below is a sample of twenty-nine manuscripts of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, which I consulted for the purposes of this project.

Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum	McClean 174 [CaF]	XIV-V
Cambridge University Library	Ll.2.8 [Ca^{1}]	XV
Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana	Pluteo 52 29 [L]	XV
	Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{I} (autograph) [L^{1}]	XIV
	Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{II} [L^{2}]	XIV
	Pluteo 90 sup. 98^{III} [L^{3}]	XIV
London, British Library	Add.Mss. 28811 [Lo]	XV
	Harley 4923 [Lo^{1}]	XV
	Harley 6348 [Lo^{2}]	XIV

Oxford, Bodleian Library	Canonici class. lat. 93 [O]	XIV
	Canon. misc. 58 [O^1]	XIV
	Digby 78 [O^2]	XIV
	Lincoln College 32 [O^3]	XV
Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale De France	Lat. 6069, N [P]	XV
	Lat. 6069, O [P^1]	XV
	Lat. 6069, P [P^2]	XV
	Lat. 6069, Q [P^3]	XV
	Lat. 9676 [P^5]	XV
Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Arch. Cap. S. Pietro C 133 [Vsp]	XIV
	Barberiniano Lat. 42 [Vb]	XV
	Capponiano 2 [Vc]	XV
	Palatino Lat. 870 [Vp^1]	XV
	Reginense Lat. 895 [Vr]	XV
	Urbinate lat. 451 [Vu]	XV
	Vat. Lat. 2031 [Vl]	XV
	Vat. Lat. 2032 [Vl^1]	XV
Venice, Biblioteca Marciana	Marciano lat. X 56 [Vz]	XV
	Marciano lat. X 57 [Vz^1]	XV
	Marciano lat. X 254 [Vz^2]	XV