
The Library of Alice Chaucer,
Duchess of Suffolk:
A Fifteenth-Century Owner of a
"Boke of le Citee de Dames"

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At the end of the *Treasury of the City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan writes,

I thought that I would multiply this work throughout the world in various copies, whatever the cost might be, and present it in various places to queens, princesses, and noble ladies. Through their efforts, it will be... circulated among other women.... Seen and heard by many valiant ladies and women of authority, both at the present time and in times to come, they will pray to God on behalf of their faithful servant Christine, ...wishing they might have known her.¹

As Charity Canon Willard observes, Christine accurately predicted her own subsequent fame and her audience which would span centuries.² Indeed, the rolls of this readership reveal generations of women of achievement and distinction, many of whom Willard has identified as patrons and owners of Christine's work: Isabeau of Bavaria, Anne of France, Isabel of Portugal, and Margaret of

¹ *A Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor. The Treasury of the City of Ladies*, trans. Charity Canon Willard (New York: Bard Hall Press/Persea Books, 1989) 224.

² Charity Canon Willard, *Christine de Pizan. Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea Books, 1984) 211-212.

Austria, among them.³ These and many other women who owned works by Christine de Pizan, Willard points out, played a significant role in the social and political life of their time.⁴

To this list of distinguished women can be added the name of Alice Chaucer, a fifteenth-century English book owner who possessed a copy of at least one of Christine's works. Although earlier scholarship has afforded us only brief glimpses, in recent years Alice Chaucer has emerged as a notable figure in her own right, a capable administrator and landholder who played an influential role in contemporary English politics, and the owner of a significant library. Her books, which seem to have been assembled through active commissions and inheritance, offer information of value for medieval literary history. It is in this context that the following analysis situates Christine's work within this significant collection of a fifteenth-century English book owner.

Until recently historical accounts have provided only limited information about Alice Chaucer. Granddaughter of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, and daughter of Thomas Chaucer (d. 1434), a noted soldier, statesman, and literary connoisseur of his time,⁵ Alice

³ Among Willard's abundant publications in this area are "Anne de France, Reader of Christine de Pizan," in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Century: Visitors to the City*, ed. Glenda McLeod (Lewiston, Queenston, and Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991) 59-69; *Christine de Pizan. Her Life and Works* (New York: Persea, 1984); "The Manuscript Tradition of the *Livre des trois Vertus* and Christine de Pizan's Audience," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 27 (1966): 433-444; "Margaret of Austria", in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. Katharina Wilson (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987) 350-362; "The Patronage of Isabel of Portugal," in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) 306-320.

⁴ Willard, "Anne de France," 59.

⁵ *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sidney Lee (London: Smith, Elder and Co. 1894) 4: 167-168 (Hereafter cited as *DNB*). See Also Albert C. Baugh, "Kirk's Life Records of Thomas Chaucer," *PMLA* 47 (1932): 461-

was betrothed at about ten years of age, and perhaps married to Sir John Phelip, or Philip, who in 1415 died in battle in France.⁶ Shortly after his death she married (as his second wife) Thomas Montagu, fourth Earl of Salisbury, a noted military leader, ambassador, and literary patron.⁷ Approximately two years following the death of her husband Thomas Montagu in the siege of Orleans (1428), she married William de la Pole, Earl, and later Duke, of Suffolk (d. 1450), whose military prowess and political talents led to his becoming the major advisor to Henry VI and one of the most powerful men in the English realm.⁸ The son and heir of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk, John de la Pole, second Duke of Suffolk (d. 1492), was born in 1442.⁹ Fortunately, this general framework has been significantly amplified by recent scholarship, most notably that of Rowena E. Archer and Carole M. Meale.¹⁰ For

515; Martin B. Ruud, *Thomas Chaucer*, Research Publications of the University of Minnesota, Studies in Language and Literature 9 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1926); and Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk (I)," *PMLA* 27 (1912): 188-207.

⁶ *DNB* 11: 395, and Carole A. Metcalfe, "Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk, c. 1404-1475," B.A. diss. University of Keele, 1970, 14-15.

⁷ G.E. C[okayne], *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland and Great Britain and the United Kingdom Extant, Extinct or Dormant*, New Edition, rev. by the Hon. Vicary Gibbs et al., 13 vols. (London: Saint Catherine Press, 1910-1959) 11: 393-395; hereafter cited as *CP*. See also *DNB* 13: 655-658.

⁸ *CP* 12.1: 443-448; *DNB* 16: 50-57.

⁹ When she was in her thirties, Alice bore a son, John, the de la Pole heir. She may also have had another son and a daughter. See *CP* 12.1: 448-49; *DNB* 16: 27-28; Metcalfe 19-20.

¹⁰ Of particular note are two important articles: Rowena E. Archer, "How ladies... who live on their manors ought to manage their households and estates": Women as Landholders and Administrators in the Later Middle Ages," in *Woman Is a Worthy Wight. Women in English Society c. 1200 - 1500* (Gloucester and Wolfeboro Falls, NH: Alan Sutton, 1992) 149-181; and Carole M. Meale, "Reading Women's Culture in Fifteenth Century

instance, Alice, who had inheritances from her parents and her husband Thomas Montagu,¹¹ brought to her new husband, William de la Pole (c. 1430), not only wealth, but also important family connections with the Beauforts.¹² Extant records suggest that Alice as Countess and later Duchess of Suffolk, was a significant presence at court; she wore the robes of the Garter on several occasions and was also presented with the order's insignia¹³ and "held principal place of honor about the person of the queen," Margaret of Anjou.¹⁴ She may also have attended the coronation of Edward IV, brother

England: The Case of Alice Chaucer," *Mediaevalitas: Reading in the Middle Ages*, eds. Anna Torti and Piero Boitani (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996) 81-101. Information about Alice Chaucer can also be found in Rowena E. Archer and B.E. Ferme, "Testamentary Procedure with Special Reference to the Executrix," *Medieval Women in Southern England*, Reading Medieval Studies 15 (Reading: University of Reading, 1989) 3-34; J.A.F. Thomson, "John de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk," *Speculum* 16 (July 1979): 528-542; Metcalfe, "Alice Chaucer"; and Henry Alfred Napier, *Historical Notices on the Parishes of Swyncombe and Ewelme in the County of Oxford* (Oxford: James Wright, 1858).

¹¹ Thomas Chaucer's mother, Phillipa Roet Chaucer, and Katherine Roet Swynford (d. 1403), the mistress and, later, wife of John of Gaunt (*CP* 7:415-416), were sisters. Thus Alice was a cousin of the powerful Beauforts (Napier 68). In addition, Alice's mother, Matilda, or Maud, was the daughter and co-heir of Sir John Burghersh (d. 1391), and was also the "great-niece and ward of Joan, Lady Mohun of Dunster, a formidable dowager prominent at Richard II's court" (K. B. McFarlane, "Henry V, Bishop Beaufort and the Red Hat, 1417-1421," *English Historical Review* 50 [1945]: 333). See also *CP* 12.1:447; 7:198; *DNB* 4:167-168; and Ruud 61-62.

¹² See Metcalfe 14-15; *CP* 12.1:447; *DNB* 38:208-211; McFarlane, "Henry V" 332-334; and John Watts, *Henry VI and the Politics of Kingship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 158-160.

¹³ Metcalfe 35. See also *DNB* 16:55 and *CP* 12.1:447.

¹⁴ Napier 63.

of her daughter-in-law Elizabeth.¹⁵ It is also generally accepted that Alice traveled to France on at least two occasions, once with her husband Thomas Montagu to attend the wedding of John de Trémouille, and once with William de la Pole to escort Margaret of Anjou, the bride of Henry VI, back to England.¹⁶

Documents by William de la Pole indicate that he held his wife in high esteem, naming her “his sole executrice,” entrusting her with the care of his soul as well as of his lands and goods, and proclaiming that “above al the erthe my singuler trust is moost in her.”¹⁷ Similarly, in a letter written just before his death, the Duke of Suffolk demonstrates his respect for her intelligence and wisdom when he charges his son to adhere to her advice in all matters:

alwey, as ye be bounden by the commaundement of God to do, to love, to worshepe youre ladye and moder, and also that ye alwey obey her commaundements, and to beleve hyr councelles and advises in alle youre werks, the which dredeth not, but shall be best and trestest to you. And yef any other body wold stere you to the contrarie, to flee the councill in any wyse, for ye shall fynde it nought and evyll.¹⁸

In both instances, Archer points out, the Duke exercised good judgment, for as dowager Duchess, Alice retained and managed

¹⁵ Napier 97.

¹⁶ *DNB* 13:657; *DNB* 16:52. On Alice’s interest in French literature and her trips to France, see Meale, “Reading” 93.

¹⁷ *North Country Wills, Being Abstracts of Wills Relating to the Counties of York, Nottingham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmorland, at Somerset House and Lambeth Palace. 1383-1558*, ed. J. W. Clay, Surtees 116 (Durham: Andrews; London: Bernard Quaritch, 1908) 51. See also Archer and Ferme, “Testamentary Procedure” 4; and Archer, “How ladies...” 154.

¹⁸ *The Paston Letters*, ed., James Gairdner, 6 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1904. Rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973) 2:142-143. For a modernized version, see Napier 88-89.

great wealth, holding a number of manors that “compares favorably with the [approximately] 270 manors held by the Duke of York, who was said to be the richest landowner in England in the 1450’s.”¹⁹ Widowed again at forty-five with “a jointure in all the de la Pole estates, in accordance with the marriage settlement of 1430,” Alice exercised “powerful maintenance of the estate,” with the attendant tasks of litigating over land disputes and overseeing properties and revenues. As evidence of Alice Chaucer’s administrative ability, Archer points out the Duchess’s successes in preserving her lands and securing her revenues, noting in particular “her personal receipt of revenues, her authorizing of disbursements, appointing officials, seeing to a perpetual memorial for her late husband, and consulting her council in a year when she divided her time between her Suffolk home at Wingfield and the capital.”²⁰ An able administrator who seemed “always to be alert to her own estates, managing her revenues, even when challenged by others,” the widowed Duchess pursued this path for a quarter of a century.²¹

Alice’s intelligence and personal strength seem to have been bolstered by political skill, for having withstood the attacks against her husband and herself and ultimately his imprisonment and murder, she gained wardship of her son and maintained her extensive Oxfordshire lands in addition to recovering those of her husband. She also weathered the difficult partisan struggles after 1450, and especially after 1455.²² While playing an active role in asserting claims of the family, moreover, the Duchess of Suffolk was a prominent figure in local affairs and in East Anglian politics, with her impact at times stronger than that of her son, over whom

¹⁹ Metcalfe notes that Alice was able to lend sums of money to Henry VI and Edward IV, as had two of her husbands before: Sir John Phelip and the duke of Suffolk (25-27).

²⁰ Archer, “How ladies...” 153-155.

²¹ Archer, “How ladies...” 154-56; and Archer, “Rich Old Ladies...” 23.

²² See Metcalfe 40-42; Thomson 529; Napier 81; Watts 275-6 and 289; and Roger Virgoe, “The Death of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 47.2 (March 1965): 489-502.

she seems to “have had considerable influence.”²³ Indeed, J.A.F. Thomson maintains that she probably negotiated the marriage between her son, John de la Pole, and Elizabeth Plantagenet, daughter of Richard of York, with the Duke himself.²⁴ These activities indicate that among Alice’s attributes were common sense and wisdom, perhaps combined, as the contents of her library suggest, with some education.²⁵ Another judgment on Alice Chaucer’s mental acuity is offered by her contemporary Margaret Paston, who warned her own son to take along counselors when he encountered the Duchess, who, Margaret assured him, “is sotill and hath sotill counsell with here.”²⁶

Alice’s religious inclinations are also well documented. During her married life and as a widow, Alice practiced many benefactions, among them the church, almshouse, and school at Ewelme.²⁷ In addition, her striking alabaster tomb reflects both her powerful worldly status and her piety:²⁸ On the bier, surrounded with shields bearing the heraldic devices of her ancestors and husbands, reclines

²³ Thomson 530-539; Metcalfe 43; Archer, “How ladies...” 154-156.

²⁴ The marriage took place in 1458. Elizabeth was the daughter of Richard Duke of York and Cecily Neville (*CP* 12.1:450). And although Alice is blamed by Napier for allying herself and her son with the waxing house of York rather than the waning house of Lancaster (93-96), Thomson argues that Alice was politically astute in establishing this alliance (529).

²⁵ Metcalfe 55-58.

²⁶ *Paston Letters* 4: 221; see also Archer, “How ladies...” 169. The semantic field of ‘sotil,’ of course, includes “intelligence,” “skill,” “ingeniousness,” and “craftiness.”

²⁷ See, for example, Napier 54-56; and Metcalfe 48-52.

²⁸ For descriptions of the tomb, see Alfred T. Humphreys, *A Short Guide to Ewelme Church together with some brief notes on the Almshouse, School, Manor and Advowson, and the De La Pole family* (Wallingford: Printed by W.D. and A. Jenkins, 1926) 30-34; Napier 102-103; and Jennifer Sherwood and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Oxfordshire* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 595-600.

the effigy of the Duchess with a “mantle of estate” a ducal coronet, and the order of the garter on her arm; below lies a *memento mori*, a shrouded cadaver. Alabaster angels support the Duchess’ pillow and a lion lies at her feet. That the tomb figure is clad in a simple gown and wears a ring on the right hand, it has been suggested, indicates she was a vowess.²⁹ A rosary lies by her right side.

Surviving documents provide an unusual record concerning Alice Chaucer’s books; in particular, a letter, a 1466 inventory, and evidence of book ownership and literary patronage provide information for reconstructing at least a portion of her library. The most striking of these texts, an undated letter signed “Alyce,” evidences her personal interest in her books. Written “at myn Inne the xxiiij day of Janyver,”³⁰ this missive requests William Bylton, ostensibly a member of her household, “yef my books be in myther closette by grounde, yt ye woll put them in some other place for takyng of harme.”³¹

A second document, an inventory of goods moved from Wingfield, the Duchess’ Suffolk residence, to Ewelme and “delivered [the]

²⁹ Humphreys 33. Citing a paper by Patricia Callum, Felicity Riddy explains, “Vowesses were often but not always widows; they took a vow of chastity before a bishop and wore the veil, mantle, and ring that betokened their status but, according to Callum, were not required to give up their property or to live in seclusion” (“Women Talking about the Things of God,” in *Women and Literature in Britain. 1150-1500*, ed. Carole M. Meale, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1996]) 123, note 50.

³⁰ For a discussion of Alice’s London “Inne,” the “Mannor of the Rose” in Suffolk Lane “in the parish of Saint Laurence Poultney,” see Meale, “Reading” 84; and John Stow, *A Survey of London. Reprinted from the Text of 1603*, intro. and notes by Charles Lethbridge Kingsford, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871) 1: 237; 2: 322. This dwelling was purchased by the Duke of Suffolk in 1446 and belonged to his heirs until 1506.

³¹ Bodleian Library, Ewelme Muniments 7, A. 48 (1). For a transcription along with a facsimile engraving of the signature, see Napier 99.

tenth day of September in the sixth year of King Edward the Fourth" (1466), itemizes household goods including tapestries, bedding, clothing, priests' vestments and chapel fittings, and twenty-one books.³² Of these volumes several are directly connected with the religious service: "a masse boke cou[er]ed w[ith] white lethur w[ith] a latoun clasp [i.e., 'laton' or brass clasp]³³ and þe oþer broken"; three "Antifeneres," one with "þe legende þerynne"; two large "graills"; "a boke for Rectors cou[er]ed in white lether closped w[ith] latoun"; two "lectornalls cou[er]ed w[ith] white lether and clasped w[ith] lato[u]n"; "a collectall boke cou[er]ed w[ith] white lether tasseld w[ith] grene silk closped w[ith] lato[u]n"; three "processionals"; "a large boke of p[ri]ked songe bounden [and] cou[er]ed in Rede lether and closped w[ith] lato[u]n".³⁴ In addition to these service books, the inventory also lists the following works, some not easily identifiable: "a frensh

³² Bodleian Library, Ewelme Muniments 7, A. 47 (3). For printed transcriptions of this list, see Napier (126-128); S.W.H. Aldwell, *Wingfield, Its Church, Castle, and College* (1925; rpt. Athens, GA: The Wingfield Family Society, 1994) 18-20; and Meale, "Reading..." (84-90), which is the most accurate rendering. In connection with flaws in early transcriptions and for discussions of this list, see Richard Firth Green, "Lydgate and Deguileville Once More," *Notes and Queries* 223 (April 1978): 105-106, and Meale "Reading" 83-84, note 9.

³³ For the 'laten' or 'laton' clasp, see Napier 126; and Christopher Wordsworth and Henry Littlehales, *The Old Service-Books of the English Church* (London: Methuen, n.d.) 274-76.

³⁴ Wordsworth and Littlehales offer the following definitions: The 'antiphoner' or 'antiphonale' contains 'music for the canonical hours' (104-107), whereas the 'grail' or 'grayle,' has the gradualls, that is, "scriptural music accompanying the mass" (207). The 'legenda' or 'passionale' includes "lives and martyrdoms of saints" (155-156). The 'lectionary' records readings (26-30). The 'colectall' or 'collect book' contains only "certain portions of the service [collect and chapter]," but might also include a calendar, psalter, and hymn book (123-128). 'Processionals' were small books with "rubrics, texts, and music used in the procession" (165). The book of 'priked song' would contain non-Gregorian music or plainsong (313). For additional discussions of these terms see Napier 127-128, and Meale "Reading" 84-85.

boke of þe tales of philisphers cou[er]d in black damask boosed and clasped w[ith] silu[er] [and] gilt,” perhaps Guillaume de Tignonville’s translation, *Ditz de Philisophius*,³⁵ “a quar[e], of a legende of Raggehande”;³⁶ “a frensh boke of temps pastoure,”³⁷ which contains “divers stories in the same”. This last work, according to Meale, is Christine de Pizan’s *Dit de la Pastoure* (c. 1403).³⁸

The inventory also contains some familiar titles: for instance, “a boke of latyn of þe morall Institucion of a Prince” with twenty-seven chapters, which is both covered in and clasped with red leather. Although this work has sometimes been identified as the *Regimine Principum*, written for Philip III by the Augustinian friar Aegidius or Egidio of Colonna, also known as Giles of Rome (d. 1316), it is more probably the thirteenth-century *De moralia principis institutione* by the French Dominican Vincent of Beauvais (d. 1264).³⁹ Both these mirrors for magistrates offer advice to the

³⁵ Napier suggests that this may be a work of Dionysius Carthusianus (128); however, Meale’s identification of this book as the French translation, originally made for Charles VI of France is convincing (“Reading” 87).

³⁶ According to Napier, a “quire, quarterna,” that is, “sheets of paper folded and stitched together” (128). This detail may suggest the copying of texts, perhaps in the Duchess’s household.

³⁷ Meale’s transcription (“Reading” 128). Napier prints “temps pastome” (128).

³⁸ Meale, “Reading” 87-89. For *Le Dit*, see *Oeuvres poétiques de Christine de Pisan*, ed. Maurice Roy, 3 vols (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1886; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprints, 1965) 2:223-294.

³⁹ Vincentii Belvacensis, *De Morali Principis Institutione*, ed. Robert J. Schneider (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995). See also Napier 128; and Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers. Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) 140. Meale argues that John Courteys, an Oxford cleric, brought the text to Ewelme, where Alice had it copied (“Reading” 98-100). Among the extensive record of books provided by Susan Hagen Cavanaugh are a

king or ruler on moral and ethical values and private and public conduct.⁴⁰ These and similar works were popular throughout the Middle Ages and appear among the possessions of both men and women of the time: Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI had a copy of the *Regimine Principum* of Aegidius (London, British Library Royal 15. E. vi), and Eleanor de Bohun bequeathed a *Regimine Principum*, probably by Aegidius, to her son Humphrey.⁴¹

striking number of manuals for princes (“A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300-1450,” diss. University of Pennsylvania, 1980).

⁴⁰ Aegidius’s manual contains three sections: the first centers on the ways in which the prince should conduct himself, focusing on virtues and desirable practices; the second addresses the ways in which the prince should direct his family and household; and the third considers the ways in which the prince should govern the state. Unlike many other mirrors for magistrates, Nicholas Orme observes, Aegidius’s work considers the education of children (*From Childhood to Chivalry. The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530* [London and New York: Methuen, 1984] 90-97).

⁴¹ Daughter of Joan FitzAlan and Humphrey of Bohun, co-heir of the Bohun fortune and library, and wife of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester (d. 1397), Eleanor de Bohun (d. 1399) bequeaths in her will a large number of books. See, for example, John Nichols, *A Collection of All the Wills Now Known To Be Extant of the Kings and Queens of England, Princes and Princesses of Wales, and Every Branch of the Blood Royal, from the Reign of William the Conqueror to That of Henry the Seventh Exclusive* (London: Nichols, 1780) 181-83. See also V.J. Scattergood, “Literary Culture at the Court of Richard II,” in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne (London: Duckworth, 1983) 35; and Orme 96-97. Susan Hagen Cavanaugh includes Joan FitzAlan’s bequest (111) and a striking number of manuals for princes throughout “A Study of Books...”

The relevance of Aegidius’s work and others like it to the fifteenth-century is also evidenced by Hoccleve’s *Regement of Princes* (1411), written for Prince Henry, later Henry V. In this work Hoccleve draws heavily on the *Regimine principum*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, *Hoccleve “Works: the Regement of Princes and Fourteen Poems*, EETS e.s. 72 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1897) xv; xix. Note, too, that Christine de Pizan composed a mirror of princes, *Le Livre du corps de Policie* (1404-1407),

Vincent of Beauvais' treatise, Robert Schneider observes, constituted part of a larger plan "on the status of the prince and the entire royal court and on the administration of the commonwealth and the governance of the whole realm." Vincent's goal was to recommend principles of private and public conduct to those in positions of authority: "princes, knights (*milites*), counselors and ministers, bailiffs and provost, whether residing at court or administering in the king's territories." The *De morali principis institutione* addresses fostering wisdom in governance, leading one's "people both morally and politically," selecting worthy counselors and officials, managing the finances of the household and the state with prudence, cultivating virtue and being vigilant against vice, and being well versed in both sacred and secular literature as a supplement to lived experience.⁴² Clearly, these principles had applicability for all in power, including Alice, Duchess of Suffolk. Of the ten extant manuscripts of the *De morali*, four were written in England in the fifteenth century.⁴³

Another title in the inventory, "a frensh boke of quaterfilz Emond" (i.e., *Les quatre fils Aymon*, or *Renaut de Montauban*), was a popular epic work from the cycle of rebellious vassals and feudal wars.⁴⁴ Consisting of 14,000 to 29,000 verses in rhymed French versions, it recounts the adventures of Renaut and his three

directed toward the dauphin, Louis de Guyenne, and dedicated to Charles VI (*Le Livre du corps de policie*, ed. Robert Lucas [Geneva: Droz, 1967]).

⁴² Schneider, *De morali principis* xx-xlvi.

⁴³ Cambridge, Trinity College B. 15. II (John Curteys's copy from which, Meale argues, Alice Chaucer had a copy made ["Reading" 99-100]); The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek 72 J 53; Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson C 398; and Oxford, Merton College 110 (Schneider, *De morali principis* xlvii-lxix).

⁴⁴ *La chanson des Quatre fils Aymon*, ed. Ferdinand Castets (Montpellier: Coulet, 1909; rpt. Geneva: Slatkine, 1974). *Renaut de Montauban. Edition critique du ms. de Paris, B.N. fr. 764 (R)*, ed. Philippe Verelst (Ghent: Rijksuniversiteit te Gent) 1988.

brothers, the sons of Duke Aymon of Dordogne, one of Charlemagne's vassals. Despite some fabulous elements like the wondrous horse Bayard and the necromancer Maugis, the work has a serious purpose, turning on questions of divided loyalties and ultimately penance and redemption when Renaut finally chooses the religious life and is martyred and miraculously exonerated. Notable, too, is the fact that the Duchess of Ardennes, who is loved and revered by her husband, Aymon, and her sons, plays a significant role, offering sage counsel and serving as a moral fulcrum for her family. A prose version of this work also appears in folios 155r to 206v in BL MS Royal 15. E. vi, a collection bearing the arms of Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI.⁴⁵ A further index of the work's appeal to fifteenth-century readers is the English prose version, *The Four Sonnes of Aymon*, printed by William Caxton "at the desire of John, Erle of Oxenforde."⁴⁶

Significantly, the 1466 inventory also includes "a frensh boke of le Citee de dames," which has usually been identified as *Le Livre de la cité des dames*, but sometimes as the companion work, the *Trésor de la cité des dames*, known also as *Le Livre des trois Vertus*, both completed by Christine de Pizan in 1405. The first of these works traces the achievements of admirable women; the second offers

⁴⁵ The manuscript is believed to have been a wedding gift to Margaret of Anjou from John Talbot, first earl of Shrewsbury. For manuscript descriptions, see George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections* (London: Printed for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1921) 2: 177-179; H.D.L. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Longmans, 1883), 1: 471-487; *Le Rommant de Guy de Warwik et de Herolt d'Ardenne*, ed. D.J. Conlon (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971) 16-21; Francis Teague, "Christine de Pizan's *Book of War*," in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth through the Nineteenth Century: Visitors to the City*, ed. Glenda McLeod (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991) 25-41. On the manuscript and on connections between Margaret d'Anjou and Alice Chaucer, see Meale, "Reading" 93-96.

⁴⁶ William Caxton, *The Foure Sonnes of Aymon*, ed. Octavia Richardson, EETS e.s. 44, 45 (London: Trübner, 1885) vii.

advice for women in the world.⁴⁷ Two extant manuscripts of *The Livre de la cité des dames* can be traced to fifteenth-century England: BL Harley 4431,⁴⁸ containing several of Christine de Pizan's works, and BL Royal 19. A. XIX. The second has been linked to Richard Duke of York because it bears the house of York's fetterlock and white rose badges."⁴⁹ Observing that this manuscript might have been obtained on one of the Duke's frequent trips to France, and noting that Richard "was married to a woman who was herself a notable book collector, Cecily Neville," Meale asks, "Could the book, with its apt dedication to women of all social classes, therefore have been acquired for her?"⁵⁰ In support of Meale's observations, it can be added that Cecily herself spent time in France.⁵¹ Moreover, the fact that Elizabeth, a daughter of Richard Duke of York and Cecily Neville, was married to John de la Pole and was consequently Alice Chaucer's daughter-in-law, raises some questions about possible connections between the Duchess of Suffolk's "boke" and that of the Duke of York. A third manuscript also offers insights concerning the possible contents of Alice's "boke of the Cite des dames," which may have included both the *Livre de la cité des dames* and the *Livre des trois Vertus*, as does

⁴⁷ Meale postulates that Alice Chaucer may have obtained a copy of this work during her 1444/45 visit to France ("Reading" 95).

⁴⁸ On this manuscript, which was presented to Isabeau of Bavaria and owned subsequently by the Duke of Bedford's second wife, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, see Sandra Hindman, "The Composition of the Manuscript of Christine de Pizan's Collected Works in the British Library: A Reassessment," *British Library Journal* 9.2 (Autumn 1983): 93-123; and Meale, "Reading" 89-90.

⁴⁹ Maureen C. Curnow, "The *Livre de la Cité des Dames* of Christine de Pizan," diss. Vanderbilt University, 1975, 522-523; Meale, "alle the bokes" 135; and Meale, "Reading" 95.

⁵⁰ Meale, "alle the bokes" 135.

⁵¹ Meale "alle the books" 135. On Cecily in France, see Charles Ross, *Richard III* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981) 3-5; and *CP* 12.2: 909.

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France fr. 1177, which was copied and illustrated in Bruges for Louis de Bruges, Lord of Gruthuyse (d. 1492), who had been a guest of Edward IV in England and had also extended his hospitality to Edward in troubled times.⁵²

Yet another volume brought to Ewelme in 1466 was “a boke of English in paper of þe pilgrimage t[ra]nslated by daune John. lydgate out of frensh”. One part of the thirteenth-century Cistercian monk Deguileville’s popular trilogy -- *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, *Pèlerinage de l’âme*, *Pèlerinage Jesus Christ* -- this work is generally identified as *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*. This 24,832-line allegory comprising both poetry and prose traces the narrator’s spiritual voyage and spiritual growth, beginning with birth and ending with death.⁵³ This work is of particular interest in that Lydgate is credited (in BL Stowe 952) with translating it for Alice’s husband Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury. In this connection, Richard Firth Green has argued that the book listed in the inventory, which is covered in “blak lether w[ith]owte bordes,” cannot be the original presentation copy destined for the Earl of Salisbury (d. 1428), and that Alice must have had another copy made.⁵⁴ In regard to this commission, too, Meale points out the

⁵² Given that both the *Cité des dames* and the *Trésor de la cité des dames* were not completed until 1405, this volume cannot be linked to Alice’s father-in-law, John Montagu, third earl of Salisbury (d. 1400), who had encountered Christine de Pizan in France and brought some of her work back to England.

⁵³ See Frederick J. Furnivall and Katherine B. Locock, eds., *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man Translated by John Lydgate A.D. 1426, from the French of Guillaume de Deguileville, 1330, 1355*. 3 vols. EETS, e.s. 77, 83, 92 (1899-1904; rpt. as one volume New York: Kraus, 1973). See also Henry Noble MacCracken ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*. (Part I. The Lydgate Canon and the Religious Poems) EETS, o.s. 107 (London: Kegan Paul, French, Trübner, 1911 (for 1910) xxiii; hereafter cited as *MPI*).

⁵⁴ BL MS Stowe 952 states, “Pilgrimage de monde y^e pilgrimage of y^e world translatyd out of frenche into englyshe by John Lydgate monke of bery at y^e Commandement of y^e earle of Salisbury” (qtd. in Green, “Lydgate and Deguileville” 106). Correcting the inaccuracies of earlier

difficulty of ascertaining “whether a husband might make such a commission for himself or for the couple.”⁵⁵ Here it should be noted that at least two other women are linked with translations of Deguileville’s works. In the first instance, Geoffrey Chaucer’s “ABC,” or “Priere de Nostre Dame,” a translation from one of the prayers in the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, was, according to Speght, composed for Blanche of Lancaster, mother of Henry IV.⁵⁶ The second of these works, Hoccleve’s *Complaint of the Virgin*, a translation of one of the poems in the *Pèlerinage de l’âme* (1353-58), Deguileville’s account of the soul’s adventures in the afterlife, is dedicated (San Marino, The Harry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery H.M. III) to “ma dame de Hereford,” presumably, Joan FitzAlan, dowager Countess of Hereford (d. 1419). It has been further proposed that Hoccleve may have translated all fourteen Deguileville poems and, perhaps the entire *Pèlerinage de l’âme*, for Joan FitzAlan, Countess of Hereford.⁵⁷

transcriptions, Green prints, “a boke of English in papir of þe pilgrymage translated by daune Iohn lydgate out of frensh couered with black lether withowte bordes.” “Green contends that such an “unpretentious volume” would not have been the “original presentation copy,” the most probable explanation being “that the original copy of the verse *Pilgrimage* (if, in fact, it was ever actually presented) passed out of Alice’s possession on Salisbury’s death in 1428, and that she had merely had a simple paper copy of it made for her own use” (“Lydgate and Deguileville” 106). See also Meale, “Reading” 87-88, note 22).

⁵⁵ Meale, “alle the bokes” 135 and “Reading” 91-92. See also Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the Fifteenth Century*, trans. A. E. Keep (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961) 60-61, 120-22.

⁵⁶ *Riverside Chaucer* 637-640; 1076. Note that Jeanne Krochalis indicates that the “ABC” was for Anne of Bohemia, wife of Richard II, but offers no supporting evidence (“The Books and Reading of Henry V and His Circle,” *Chaucer Review* 23 [1988]: 50-77).

⁵⁷ Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollanz, eds., *Hoccleve “Works. The Minor Poems”*, EETS o.s. 61 and 73 (1892 and 1897. Revised reprint in one volume. London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970) lxxiii, and 1-8. See also M.C. Seymour, ed., *Selections from Hoccleve* (Oxford:

In addition to these volumes brought to Ewelme, Alice Chaucer's library seems to have included other books as well; other books may well have remained at Wingfield, and certainly there must have been additional volumes in her family home, where she spent much of her adult life, and where Thomas Chaucer is said to have entertained the local and regional gentry, many of whom had literary connections.⁵⁸ In this context, it must be remembered that one of the works long associated with Alice Chaucer is *The Virtues of the Mass*, which, according to the note in Oxford, St. John's College 56, Lydgate composed "ad rogatum domine Countesse de Sulthefolchia".⁵⁹

Clarendon Press, 1981), xiv-xv, and 1-7. Fourteen poems from Deguileville are incorporated into a 1413 prose translation of the *Pèlerinage de l'âme*. These poems, usually attributed to Hoccleve, appear in Furnivall, *Hoccleve. Regement... and Fourteen Poems*.

Joan FitzAlan was the widow of Humphrey de Bohun (d. 1372/3), Earl of Hereford, Essex, and Northampton (*CP* 6: 473-474 and 1: 243-244). On Humphrey de Bohun's extensive literary holdings, see Cavanaugh 108-109. After Joan FitzAlan's death, her grandson, Henry V, purchased books from her estate (Cavanaugh 346).

⁵⁸ Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk (I)," *PMLA* 27 (1912): 190-192; Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 59-61; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) 162-163.

⁵⁹ MacCracken, *MPI*: 87-115. Moore suggests that the Countess of Suffolk could be "either the wife of the second or third earl" ("Patrons (I)" 203-204). However, although the wife of Michael de la Pole (d. 1415) was still alive in 1423, she is said to have become a nun in 1419/1420 (*CP* 12.1:443), and most scholars concur that the countess is Alice Chaucer.

This 83-stanza exposition on the parts of the mass⁶⁰ begins with a description of the symbolism of the priest's vestments:

Ye folkys all, whyche haue deuocioun
To here masse, furst do your besy cure
With all your inward contemplacion,
As in a myrroure presentyng in fygure
The morall menyng of that gostly armure,
When that a preest,...
Arayeth hymself, by record of scripture,
The same howre when he shall go to masse.⁶¹

Intended for domestic use, this work, Walter Schirmer observes, "interprets the meaning of the gradual prayer *Judica me Deus* by paraphrasing the forty-second psalm," introducing stanzas with sections of Latin text.⁶² The explication of the mass concludes with the *virtues*, or *merita*, that is, "sayings ascribed to [the] Lord, the evangelists, apostles and ancient fathers ...," which "attribute to the fact of hearing a mass a variety of advantages, spiritual and temporal..."⁶³ Because of the sophisticated level of this work, Pearsall argues, the Countess of Suffolk was more advanced than readers of more popular works like "How to hear Mass" in the

⁶⁰ The work for the Countess of Suffolk may have included, in addition to the *Virtues of the Mass*, two shorter poems: "An exortacion to Prestys when they shall sey theyr Masse," which precedes *The Virtues* and "On Kissing at *Verbum caro factum est*," which follows it. See, for instance, Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 176.

⁶¹ MacCracken, *MPI*: 87, Stanza 1.

⁶² Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 176.

⁶³ Thomas Frederick Simmons, *The Lay Folks Mass Book: or, The Manner of Hearing Mass with Rubrics and Devotions for the People, in Four Texts, and Office in English according to the Use of York from Manuscripts of the Xth to the XVth Century*, EETS, o.s. 71 (London: Trübner, 1879) 367-371; Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 176-177; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 258-259.

Vernon MS.⁶⁴ In connection with *The Virtues of the Mass*, too, Julia Boffey notes that Bodleian Library Hatton 73 “preserves a copy of Alice Chaucer’s commission ...and inscriptions which document association with ‘Queene Margaret’,” and other women readers.⁶⁵

Another work associated with the de la Pole family is BL Arundel 119, which contains Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* (c. 1420-22), the arms and crest of William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk appearing at the beginning of Book I.⁶⁶ With its use of history from the Theban epic to provide “examples of moral and political action,” the 4,716-line *Siege of Thebes*, Pearsall notes, can be viewed as “a true mirror for Princes,” one that concludes with “a condemnation of war prophesying peace and concord.”⁶⁷ Concerning the Suffolk arms and crest in the Arundel manuscript, Meale considers whether the Arundel manuscript may have been “a joint commission undertaken by husband and wife” rather than on “her husband’s initiative alone.”⁶⁸ Since Alice commissioned *The Virtues of the Mass*, she

⁶⁴ Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 258-258.

⁶⁵ Julia Boffey also observes that Lydgate’s religious verses are designed as reading aids to extend the comprehension of those with limited Latin by a strong desire to follow the liturgy” (“Lydgate’s Lyrics and Women Readers,” in *Women, the Book and the Worldly. Selected Proceedings of the St. Hilda’s Conference, 1993*, vol. 2, eds. Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995] 142-144).

⁶⁶ On the manuscript, see C. E. Wright, *English Heraldic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1973) 20; Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, eds., *Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes*, 2 vols. EETS o.s. 108 and 125 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1911 and 1925; rpt. New York: Kraus, 1981) 125: viii, 37-42; and Meale, “alle the bokes” 135.

⁶⁷ Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 155-6. See also Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*, 2: 37-42.

⁶⁸ In such instances, Meale convincingly argues, it is “difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the activities of a married couple”; even if “heraldic devices within a MS suggest joint ownership, for instance, ‘in a family library,’ they offer little in the way of positive evidence of the impetus informing patronage or acquisition” (“alle the bokes” 135).

may also, Pearsall suggests, have “instigated” the commission for Lydgate’s translation of Deguileville’s *Pilgrimage*, although the patron was ostensibly her husband Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury. Similarly, she may “also have played a crucial role in the production of the Arundel manuscript, containing perhaps the best extant text of the *Thebes*.”⁶⁹ Not only does external evidence invite the linking of Alice Chaucer and Lydgate’s work, but the *Siege of Thebes* has an additional dimension of interest in that it claims to be one of the *Canterbury Tales* with Lydgate as a pilgrim, employing imitation, allusion, and direct reference to pay tribute to Geoffrey Chaucer, “Floure of Poetës/ thorghout al breteyne”.⁷⁰

In addition to these works, might Alice’s library have contained other works inherited from her father and husbands, works she may have commissioned either on her own or in conjunction with her husbands, or works she may have had copied for herself? For instance, would there have been manuscripts containing shorter poems like the lyrics attributed to William de la Pole?⁷¹ Might there also have been copies of poems by Charles d’Orléans (d.1460), whose warden (from 1432 to 1436) and friend was William de la Pole, after the date of Suffolk’s marriage to Alice (c. 1430/32).⁷² And would Alice have inherited, after the death of her husband

⁶⁹ Meale, “alle the bokes” 135. See also Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 162.

⁷⁰ *Siege of Thebes* 1:3 (line 40).

⁷¹ Henry Noble MacCracken suggests that the love poems were composed for Alice. (“An English Friend of Charles of Orleans,” *PMLA* 26 [1911]: 142-180). On doubts concerning this attribution and on Suffolk’s French Bible, see, for example, J.P.M. Jansen, ed., *The “Suffolk” Poems: An Edition of the Love Lyrics in Fairfax 16 Attributed to William de la Pole* (Groningen: Rijksuniversiteit te Groningen, 1989) 14-21. On the Duke of Suffolk’s taste for music and poetry, see Meale, “Reading” 96-97.

⁷² See MacCracken, “An English Friend” 142-180, (line 2); Robert Steele and Mabel Day, eds., *The English Poems of Charles d’Orléans*, EETS o.s. 215, 220 (London: Oxford, 1941, 1946.) Rpt. 1970) 1: xiii; and Mary-Jo Arn, ed. *Fortunes Stabilines. Charles of Orleans’s English Book of Love: A Critical Edition* (Binghamton, NY: MRTS, 1994) 25 and 41.

Thomas Montagu in 1428, some of the writings of her father-in-law, John Montagu, whose verse Christine praised, or perhaps some of Christine's verse, which the third Earl of Salisbury is reported to have brought from France to England (c. 1396)?⁷³

It is likely that the library at Ewelme would have included a copy of Lydgate's "On Thomas Chaucer's Departyng" and "To his Lady Dere," which are generally associated with the Chaucers. Traditionally believed to be composed for Alice's mother, Matilda, as Shirley contends, this poem has occasioned considerable discussion because of added lines, beginning with "Devynayle par Pycard" at the bottom of folio 251 b in BL Additional 16516. These enigmatic eight lines (nine, if one counts the title or heading) have provoked considerable discussion over the years, one of the more recent being M. C. Seymour's suggestion that the poem was dedicated to Alice Chaucer.⁷⁴

⁷³ J.C. Laidlaw, "Christine de Pizan, the Earl of Salisbury and Henry IV," *French Studies* 36 (April 1982): 129-143. Additionally Thomas's father, John Montagu (d. 1400), who, according to Christine de Pizan in *Lavision-Christine*, appreciated poetry and was himself a poet, although his poems are no longer extant. Indeed, John Montagu brought Christine's son to England, ostensibly as a companion to his own son Thomas (*DNB* 13:652). Meale observes that a connection between Alice Chaucer's husband Thomas Montagu and Christine's son, Jean, may have been the basis for their interest in Christine's writings ("Reading" 93). See also *CP* 11: 391-93, and P.G.C. Campbell, "Christine de Pisan en Angleterre," *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 5 (1925): 659-670.

⁷⁴ Discussing "my maistir Picard" in connection with Hoccleve's "Balade to Edward, duke of York" (1411), Seymour writes, "This Thomas Pycard... is mentioned in the Old Hall manuscript (Additional 57950) as an early fifteenth-century composer of mass music used by the royal household and is author c. 1424 of a rhymed acronym for Alice (born c. 1404), daughter of Thomas Chaucer (Additional 16165 fol. 248)." Seymour, however, does not decipher the acronym (*Selections from Hoccleve* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981], 126-127). In electronic correspondence received by this writer dated 22 October 1997, Stephen Reimer summarizes the principal scholarship regarding this puzzle: <Stephen.Reimer@UAlberta.CA> "Pycard Reprise": Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371-1449): A Bio-bibliography*. English Literary Studies

In MacCracken's edition, "My Lady Dere" consists of fifteen eight-line stanzas, the fifteenth of which is entitled "Lenuoye." The "Devynayle" follows immediately after, and MacCracken begins new numbering,⁷⁵ printing the poem as follows:⁷⁶

Devynayle p[ar] Pycard
Take þe seventeþ in ordre sette 1
 Lyneal of þe ABC,
First and last to-geder knette
 Middes e-ioyned with an E,
4 And þer ye may beholde and se
 Hooly to-gidre al entiere
 Hir þat is, wher-so she be,
 Myn owen souerayne lady dere. 8

Given the linking of the poem with Alice Chaucer, the following is a possible solution to the anagram. Beginning with the apparent title or heading, "Devynayle par Pycard," the seventh letter is 'Y'. If the first and last letters of "ABC" (i.e., 'A' and 'C') are also the first and last of the anagram to this point (that is, 'AYC'), 'Y' is in the middle ("middes" - line 4). A final 'E' (line 4) would then "join" or complete the series, rendering the sequence 'AYCE'. If to this one adds the letter that is éfirst and lasté (line 3) in 'Lyneal' (l. 2), the name becomes 'ALYCE', the same form as the signature used by the Duchess of Suffolk in correspondence and a "dede and graunt"

Mongraphs 17 (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Press, 1997) 21; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 162; Green, *Poets* 220.

⁷⁵ MacCracken includes the following notes on the two poems attributed to Lydgate: "My Lady Dere"- "Amerous balade by Lydgate made at þe departyng of Thomas Chauciers on the þe kynges ambassade into Fraunce" (*The Minor Poems of John Lydgate* (Part II, Secular Poems) EETS o.s. 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934) 420-424; hereafter cited as *MP* 2. See also "On the Departing of Thomas Chaucer." "Balade made by Lydgate at þe Departyng of Thomas Chaucyer on Ambassade in-to France" [BL MS Additional 16165 , leaves 248 to 249 back] MacCracken *MP* 2: 657-659).

⁷⁶ *MP* 2: 424.

dated “the thirde day of October in the xjth yere of our soveraigne lorde Kyng Edward the iijth”.⁷⁷ In addition, the first and last letters of “ABC” are also, of course, Alice Chaucer’s initials.⁷⁸

Conspicuously absent from the books thus far associated with Alice are works by her grandfather, a subject of common interest for Lydgate and Thomas Chaucer.⁷⁹ It is true that some of the manuscripts of Geoffrey Chaucer’s works can be traced to owners with connections with Thomas Chaucer or Alice Chaucer, who may have been literary executors for Geoffrey. Close examination of the extant Chaucer manuscripts, wills, and surviving references to manuscript owners would shed some light on this matter. Richard Sotheworth (d. 1419), for example, stated in his will that he was leaving John Stopyndon (d. 1447) “quendam librum meum de Canterbury Tales,” the earliest mention of a *Canterbury Tales* manuscript, though one that has since disappeared. Malcolm Richardson, who has discovered links between Stopyndon and Thomas Chaucer, maintains that Sotheworth, too, must have known Thomas Chaucer.⁸⁰ Similarly, at least one owner of a *Canterbury*

⁷⁷ Bodleian DD Ewelme a.7, A. 46, A. 48 (1-3); and *A Descriptive Catalogue of Ancient Deeds in the Public Record Office* (London: Printed for H.M. Stationery Office by Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890-1915) 5: 95-96 [A. 11118].

⁷⁸ For other solutions to the anagram, see MacCracken, *MP* 2:424; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 188-89, note 5. For another word puzzle presented to a medieval woman, see the colophon to John Walton’s translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*, which contains an acrostic spelling “Elisabet Berkeley” (John Walton, trans., *Boethius: De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. Mark Science, EETS o.s. 170 [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1927] xlviii-lvi).

⁷⁹ Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 161-162; Moore, “Patrons (I),” 190-192; John H. Fisher, “A Language Policy for Lancastrian England,” *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1173.

⁸⁰ Malcolm Richardson, “The Earliest Owners of *Canterbury Tales* MSS and Chaucer’s Secondary Audience,” *Chaucer Review* 25 (1990): 18; 27.

Tales manuscript (BL Sloane 1685), Sir Thomas Neville, was closely associated with the Duchess of Suffolk.⁸¹

Another puzzle related to the inventory of books brought from Wingfield to Ewelme is the “legende of Raggehande.” Most probably this unidentified “quire”⁸² contained a text or texts connected with a *legenda aurea* or *legenda sanctorum*, which appear in so many medieval wills,⁸³ including those of Alice’s cousins Anne Neville (d. 1480), Countess of Stafford and Duchess of Buckingham,⁸⁴ and Cecily Neville (c. 1415- 1495), the Duchess of York and the mother of Elizabeth de la Pole, Alice Chaucer’s

⁸¹ Charles A. Owen, Jr. *The Manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 40. See also M.C. Seymour, *A Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts*. 2 vols. Vol. 1: *The Canterbury Tales* (Aldershot, England: Scholar Press; Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997), 2: 143-146; and J. M. Manley and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940) 1: 489, 509. Additionally, the name “Anne neuill” appears in the *Troilus* manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 61. Aage Brusendorff identifies her as the granddaughter of John of Gaunt (*The Chaucer Tradition* [London: Humphrey Milford, and Copenhagen: V. Pio. Povl Branner, 1925] 19-23). See also Margaret Galway, “The ‘Troilus’ Frontispiece,” *Modern Language Review* 44 (1949): 161. A notable bibliophile, Ann Neville, Countess of Stafford and Duchess of Buckingham (d. 1480), was a cousin and contemporary of Alice Chaucer. M.C. Seymour, on the other hand, identifies the owner as the Anne Neville (d. 1492), who was the daughter of Richard Beauchamp (*Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts*, 1: 60).

⁸² Napier prints “quair,” which he glosses as “quire,” although the more accurate transcription seems to be “quar[e]” (see, for example, Meale, “Reading” 86).

⁸³ See, for example, the numerous references to such works throughout Cavanaugh’s “A Study of Books Privately Owned: 1300-1450.”

⁸⁴ *CP* 12.2: 389.

daughter-in-law.⁸⁵ Might the “legende of Raggehande” be a misreading of a “legende Radegunde,” the sixth-century queen and poet who, as a nun, founded a convent known for scholarship, its nuns devoting hours each day to study?⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ann Neville, Countess of Stafford and Duchess of Buckingham (*CP* 12.2:389), and Cecily Neville, Duchess of York (*CP* 12.2:909), were the daughters of Joan Beaufort (d. 1440) and Ralph Neville, Earl of Westmorland. Joan’s mother was John of Gaunt’s mistress and subsequently his wife, Katherine Roet Swynford, the sister of Phillipa Roet Chaucer. Anne, Duchess of Buckingham, bequeathed a *legenda sanctorum* in English to her daughter-in-law, Lady Margaret Beaufort (Nicholas Harris Nichols, ed. *Testamenta Vetusta* [London: Nichols, 1826] 356-357), and Cecily, Duchess of York (d.1495), left among other religious works a *Golden Legend* (John Gough Nichols and John Bruce, *Wills from Doctors’ Commons*. Printed for the Camden Society [Westminster: John Bowyer Nichols and Sons, 1863], 2-3). See also Karen K. Jambeck, “Patterns of Women’s Literary Patronage: England, 1200 - ca.1475,” in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1996) 239-241.

Eleanor de Bohun (d. 1399), Duchess of Gloucester (*CP* 5: 728), left to her eldest daughter, Anne, later Countess of Stafford (d. 1438), a collection of saints’ lives: “un livre beal & bien enluminee de legenda aurea en Frauncois” (N[ichols], *A Collection of All the Wills* 181-183). See also Krochalis 52.

⁸⁶ See, for example, the “vie Seint Radegonde” in Cavanaugh 1: 78. Radegund, as Joan Ferrante points out, was an “accomplished poet” whose purpose in establishing a convent was to assist other women; she possessed “the zeal of a mind inclined towards the progress of other women” (*To the Glory of Her Sex. Women’s Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997] 30-31; 17-18). For additional information on St. Radegund, see also David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) 366; and Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, eds. and trans., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992). Meale also believes the work to be a saint’s life, although she adopts the traditional interpretation of “Ragge hande” as “a style of irregular or uneven handwriting”; see also her discussion of “solipelle” (“Reading” 86).

Whatever this “legende” may prove to be, evidence adduced from Alice’s inventory, the church at Ewelme, and her tomb indicates that she, like others of her time, took a significant interest in certain saints. Most striking here is the Church of St. Mary’s at Ewelme, which she established along with her husband William de la Pole.⁸⁷

Inside the fifteenth-century Ewelme Church are figures of the Virgin Mary and St. Catherine with her wheel, popular figures of devotion during the Middle Ages. Notably, St. Catherine, whose wheel was the badge of the Roet family, seemed to have special significance for Alice, who used the Catherine wheel as one of her seals.⁸⁸ Known for her ability to debate, St. Catherine may well have been an inspiration for Alice, who, Margaret Paston warned, was a formidable opponent.⁸⁹ Additionally, in the Church, painted above Alice’s tomb, are scenes from the Annunciation⁹⁰ and representations of John the Baptist and Mary Magdalene, who,

⁸⁷ For descriptions of the tomb see Humphreys 30-34; Napier 102-103; and Sherwood and Pevsner 595-600. It should be noted, too, that many women who could afford to do so planned their own tombs. See, for example, Jennifer C. Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (London and New York: Longman, 1992) 162-163; and Leslie Abend Callahan, “Signs of Sorrow: The Expression of Grief and the Representation of Mourning in Fifteenth Century French Culture,” diss. City University of New York, 1996. 217-218.

⁸⁸ Napier 99-100.

⁸⁹ In Osbern Bokenham’s version, Katherine refuses marriage with the emperor Maxence because she is the bride of Christ. After she eloquently defends her position and deters the emperor, he arranges a debate between her and fifty of his best trained “clerkys.” Katherine, who has been trained in the seven liberal arts, adroitly silences them, speaking “wyth-owte rhethoryk, in wurdys bare / or argumentatyf dysceptacyoun” (ll. 6763-4). The line numbers correspond to Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ed. Mary S. Serjeantson, EETS o.s. 206 (London: Oxford University Press, 1938) 172-201.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Jacobus of Voragine, *The Golden Legend*. trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 1: 196-201.

medieval writers emphasize, because of her unqualified devotion to Jesus as well as His special love for her, was the first to see the resurrected Christ. Given her role as the first messenger of the salvation attached to the Resurrection, Mary Magdalene was particularly emblematic of God's mercy to women.⁹¹ St. Anne is a final figure in the constellation of saints associated with Alice Chaucer. Among the inventoried items at Ewelme is a "Tapyte of the story of Seynt Anna,"⁹² whose faith led to her becoming the mother and earthly moral guide of the Virgin Mary.⁹³

Lydgate, of course, composed works on the saints dedicated to some of Alice Chaucer's contemporaries. The *Invocation to St Anne* (1427-1430), and perhaps a lost life of St Anne, is dedicated to "my Ladie Anne Countasse of Stafford," who is identified as the daughter of Eleanor de Bohun and Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of

⁹¹ Mary Magdalene was also "ranked with the apostles of the church," and was believed to hold an exalted place among women (Helen Meredith Garth, *Saint Mary Magdalene in Mediaeval Literature* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950], 80-99). Notably, it was the *Life of Mary Magdalen* that Isabel Bouchier, Countess of Eu, had requested Osbern Bokenham to write because of her "of pure affeccyoune ... a synguler deuocyoune" to the saint (ll. 5065-5068). See Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* 136-172. Isabel Bouchier, Countess of Eu (d. 1484), was the sister of Richard of York and the aunt of Alice Chaucer's daughter-in-law, Elizabeth (*CP* 12.1: 181).

⁹² Bodleian Library, Ewelme muniments 7, A. 47 (2).

⁹³ Napier 125. See also Pamela Sheingorn, "Appropriating the Holy Kinship: Gender and Family History," in Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, eds., *Interpreting Cultural Symbols: Saint Anne in Late Medieval Society* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1990) 176-178; and Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs* 7 (1982): 762-768; rpt. in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1988) 149-187. On Alice's tapestries, see Meale "Reading" 97-98.

Gloucester.⁹⁴ These saints held a particular attraction for many medieval women; indeed, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and St. Catherine of Alexandria are the first inhabitants of Christine's *City of Ladies*.⁹⁵

It is tempting to speculate on the linkages between Alice Chaucer's life and her books, the known works being serious texts concerning religion, philosophy, and governing. Even the *Quatre fils Aymon* illustrates the issues of loyalty, with the mother as an exemplary figure. And Archer convincingly argues that the Duchess of Suffolk's practices reflect Christine de Pizan's advice on practical matters.⁹⁶ The contents of Alice Chaucer's library, moreover, conform to the recommendations of Christine de Pizan's *Prudence*: "The lady willingly will read books inculcating good habits, as well as studying on occasion devotional books. She will disdain volumes describing dishonest habits or vice never allowing them in her household. She will not permit them in the presence of any

⁹⁴ See MacCracken, *MP* 1: 130-133. Anne, Countess of Stafford (d. 1438), had inherited, along with her family's fortune, her mother's *Legenda aurea*. Anne's husbands were Thomas, Earl of Stafford (d. 1392); Edmund, Earl of Stafford (d. 1403); and William Bourchier (d. 1426) (*CP* 12.1: 181 and 5:176-178). She was also the mother-in-law of Isabel Bourchier (d. 1484), Bokenham's patron (Bokenham, *Legendys* 136-172; Moore, "Patrons (II)" 87-89). Similarly, Lydgate dedicated his *Legend of St Margaret* (MacCracken, *MP* 1: 173-192) to "My lady March," identified as Anne Stafford Mortimer, Countess of March (d. 1432), the wife of Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March (d. 1424/25), and the daughter of the dedicatee of his *Invocation to St. Anne* (*CP* 8:452-453). On these women and others for whom Lydgate composed see Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 154-155, and 190; Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 164-169; Boffey, "Lydgate's Lyrics" 139-149; Meale "alle the bokes" 137; Jambeck 237-238.

⁹⁵ Christine de Pizan, *City of Ladies* 217-222.

⁹⁶ Archer "How ladies..." 157. See also Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies or the Book of the Three Virtues*, trans. S. Lawson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950) 130; and *Medieval Woman's Mirror of Honor* 170.

daughter, or relative, or lady-in-waiting.”⁹⁷ The list of books brought from Wingfield to Ewelme, Meale observes, indicates that “Alice Chaucer was familiar with a variety of books” and that she “required books as a matter of daily routine.”⁹⁸ Indeed, the inventoried description of Alice’s leather-covered volumes evokes the “twenty bookes, clad in blak or reed” (l. 294)⁹⁹ so prized by Geoffrey Chaucer’s clerk in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Whether one of Alice Chaucer’s manuscripts contained the *Livre de la cité des dames* or the *Trésor de la cité des dames*, or both, the evidence demonstrates that Alice’s life reflects many of the principles set forth by Christine de Pizan in these works: concerns for virtue, reputation, morality, ethics, and active participation in worldly affairs. Here, it must be acknowledged that the fact of owning a book does not necessarily imply reading that book. In this case, however, there is one telling detail provided by the inventory. In contrast to the “masse boke cou[er]ed w[ith] white lethur w[ith] a lato[u]n closp and þe oþer broken,” is the “frensh boke of le Citee de dames cou[er]ed w[ith] rede lether[e] clasped w[ith] lato[u]n newe”. The new brass clasp indicates a repair, suggesting that someone has both used the book and cared for it.¹⁰⁰

Much that is known of Alice Chaucer’s life echoes the recommendations set forth in both the *Cité des dames* and the *Trésor de la cité des dames*. Certainly, the values set forth by Christine de Pizan are reflected in the successful practices exemplified by the life of the Duchess, one of the “valiant ladies and women of authority” toward whom Christine directed her work.

⁹⁷ Christine also recommends saints’ lives and cites *Proverbs* 31:10-31 (*A Medieval Woman’s Mirror of Honor* 93, 174).

⁹⁸ Meale, “alle the books” 134.

⁹⁹ General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*. *Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd ed. Ed. Larry D. Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

¹⁰⁰ Note, too, that the “4 claspes of laten” listed in the inventory (see, for example, Napier 128) suggest that in the Duchess’s household book repairs were on-going.

In fact, many of the books in Alice's collection indicate a concern for introspection and self-examination as well as for social and ethical considerations. The pervasive character of Alice's books, all of which aim at edification and moral purpose, indicates that she held Christine's work in high esteem. Indeed, Alice's collection of books offers a flickering insight into Christine's fifteenth-century audience and the reception of her work. These books also indicate that Alice Chaucer participated in the tastes of her time, in all probability sharing her literary interests with other readers, perhaps her husbands and perhaps book owners with whom she came into contact, like Cecily, Duchess of York, and Queen Margaret of Anjou. Further investigations of connections between Alice and other book collectors and readers of the time would certainly add to the steadily increasing knowledge of relationships among medieval readers and book owners. And further inquiries into manuscripts associated with Alice or her husbands also hold the promise of leading to additional discoveries concerning not only Alice Chaucer's library, but also new information on the transmission of works by Geoffrey Chaucer and those of Christine de Pizan.

Western Connecticut State University



Dancing Woman

Cologne Cathedral