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Through the Grapevine:

Classical Fame in Geoffrey Chaucer and Gavin Douglas

Many people are familiar with the stories of the Siege of Troy, Hercules's strength and Narcissus' vanity. Classical myths and sagas can be seen as part of the most widely recognised stories of our world. They still serve as inspiration for art, films and new stories today. The past two millennia have seen no decline in the renown of these tales and their writers, as can be seen for instance in Geoffrey Chaucer's description of the Classical authors in his *House of Fame* (1379-80, ll. 1153-1156): "How hit was writen ful of names/ Of folks that hadden grete fames/ Of olde tyme, and yet they were/ As fressh as men had writen hem here". This text shows not only references to classical authors, but many other references to classical literature as well, as does *The Palice of Honour* (c. 1501) by Gavin Douglas, who is often labeled a Scottish Chaucerian. Douglas earned this title chiefly by writing the *Palice of Honour*, which resembles Chaucer's *House of Fame* in many ways (Gray, 149). Although the relationship and similarities between these two texts have already been widely discussed (Priscilla Bawcutt, 120; David Parkinson), far too little attention has been paid to the Classical *authorities* used by both authors. In this thesis, the term *authorities* will be used to signify the use of sources, references or *truths*, used by authors to illustrate, enlighten and empower their stories. The purpose of this thesis is to give an account of the classical authorities used in Geoffrey Chaucer's *House of Fame* (1378-80) and Gavin Douglas's contemporary *Palice of*

Honour (1501). In particular, this thesis will compare the use of authorities as regards of Fame, since fame is a very important concept in both the Classical mythology and medieval texts. Moreover, fame can be closely linked to the use of authorities as it can be argued that by using authorities, the authors' fame and their texts are preserved.

This thesis takes a philological approach, i.e. it is based on written historical sources, both the medieval and the Classical texts, in combination with the socio-historical context, aiming to explain the authorities used by the authors. For this study close-reading was used to discover the information needed to write this thesis.

As regards to structure, this thesis first gives a brief overview of the lives of Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340–1400) and Gavin Douglas (c. 1474-1522), followed by a synopsis of the *House of Fame* and *The Palice of Honour*. Furthermore, the use and significance of authorities is being discussed. The next part describes the meaning of Fame in Classical and Medieval literature, and finally the use of references will be evaluated.

Geoffrey Chaucer

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the life of Geoffrey Chaucer. Chaucer was born in 14th century London, which was, like the rest of Europe, primarily divided into three different estates: the nobility, the church, and the commoners. However, this social system started to change during the century when a successful middle class became a large part of society (Stephen Greenblatt, 213-14). Chaucer was born into this middle class as a son of a successful wine merchant (Martin Crow and Virginia Leland xi). Michael Stapleton points out that the presence of merchants from France and Spain must have had a positive effect on Chaucer's early knowledge of French and Latin (158). Moreover, it can be argued that as a son of a merchant, Chaucer received a good education. He most likely attended the school of St. Paul's Cathedral, where he probably acquired his vast knowledge of

Greek and Latin Classics like Virgil, Claudian, Ovid and Homer (Crow and Leland xiii). Adding to this education, Chaucer became a page in the household of Prince Lionel, which, according to Stapleton, broadened his horizon even more (157). Chaucer remained associated with the court for the rest of his life, being among others a soldier, an esquire of the king's household, a member of diplomatic missions, a member of Parliament and in a close relationship with John of Gaunt, who was his patron and brother-in-law. His work for the king made him travel through Europe, seeing mostly France, Spain and Italy (Crow and Leland xi). It has been suggested that his visits to Italy made him familiar with the works of Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante (Crow and Leland xv).

According to Stapleton (158), Chaucer's literary works can be divided into three periods. The first period is influenced by French literature and features works like *The Book of the Duchess* (c. 1368-72) and his translation *The Romaunt of the Rose* (1385-86). The second period is influenced by Italian literature, mainly of Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante. This period features longer poems like *The Parliament of Fowls* (1380-82), *Troilus and Criseyde* (c. 1385), and also includes *The House of Fame*. Moreover, Chaucer probably translated the philosophical work of Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* in this period, a work that treats philosophical thoughts on Fortune. The third and last period is devoted to *The Canterbury Tales* (1388-1400).

Chaucer died in 1400 and was buried in Westminster Abbey, allegedly the first to be buried in the 'Poets Corner'. However, Crow and Leland point out that Chaucer was only buried in the Abbey for his tenancy and membership of the parish, and not yet for the renown of his poetry (xxii).

The House of Fame

The House of Fame is a poem of 1080 lines, written in the dream vision format. The poem contains three books, of which the third one is allegedly unfinished (Larry Benson, 1990). The dream vision format is characteristic of Chaucer's second period. According to the definition provided by Abrams, a dream vision is

a mode of narrative widely employed by medieval poets: the narrator falls asleep, usually in a spring landscape, and dreams the events he goes on to relate; often he is led by a guide, human or animal, and the events which he dreams are at least in part an *allegory* (Abrams, 86).

The House of Fame can be seen as a perfect illustration of a dream vision; the protagonist falls asleep -- although not in spring, but on "The tenth day now of Decembre" (Chaucer l. 63) -- and dreams about his journey to the House of Fame, guided by an eagle. The entirety of the House of Fame with all its features and people can be seen as an allegory. According to Abrams, an allegory is the narrative technique that adds symbolic meaning to a person, object or image, next to their existing, literal meanings (7).

Chaucer's poem begins with the dreamer discussing the nature of dreams. He prays to the Holy Cross that every dream ever dreamt will be a good one "For never sith that I was born,/ Ne no man elles me befor,/ Mette, I trowe stedfastly,/ So sonderful a drem as I" (Chaucer, ll. 59-62). He calls upon the "God of Sleep", probably meaning the Greek God of dreams Morpheus, to be able to "to telle aryght,/ Yf every drem stoned in his myght" (Chaucer, ll. 79-80).

In his dream, he finds himself in the temple of Venus, in which the story of Virgil's *Aeneid* is recorded; after the siege of Troy, Venus encourages her son Aeneas to flee. He takes his father on his back and escapes the burning city, losing his wife Creusa on the way. He

sails with his father and son towards his destined land Italy. However, Juno, who hates Troy, tries to sabotage this journey by letting Aeolus, God of Wind, shipwreck the party. Venus prays to Jove to save her son and Aeneas subsequently arrives safely in Carthage. The queen of Carthage, Dido, falls in love with Aeneas and makes him “hyr lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord” (Chaucer l. 258). The story does not end well for the queen when Aeneas breaks her heart to leave for Italy: “For he to hir a traytour was;/ Wherefore she slow hirself, allas!” (Chaucer ll. 267-68). Chaucer excuses Aeneas for his betrayal of Dido recounting the fact that Mercury, messenger of the Gods, had reminded Aeneas of his destiny in Italy. Aeneas leaves and, when overtaken by yet another storm, meets a prophetess, descends to hell to see his deceased father and Dido. The synopsis ends when Aeneas arrives and succeeds in Italy, assisted by Venus, “The whiche I preye alwey save us” (Chaucer, l. 466). The dreamer leaves Venus’ temple, and finds himself in some sort of desert, not seeing any living creature but a giant golden eagle flying towards him.

When the eagle takes up the dreamer in his claws and flies back into the air, the dreamer is stunned with fear, until the eagle comforts him: “For also wis God helpe me,/ As thou noon harm shalt have of this;/ And this caas that betyd the is, Is for thy lore and for thy prow./ Let see! Darst thou yet loke now?” (Chaucer ll. 576-80). The eagle explains that by always writing in honour of love, the dreamer proved his devotion to Venus and Cupid. Jove’s reward is that he is taken to The House of Fame. To understand the meaning of the House of Fame, the eagle explains that “Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken” (Chaucer l. 765). Moreover, speech and sound can be compared with a stone thrown into water: the circle it creates will create infinite circles, as every “voys, or noyse, or word, or soun” (Chaucer l. 819) will create circles until they reach the House of Fame. They fly so high they can look at the Galaxy and the “Milky Wey”, until they hear “The grete soun,/ (...) that rumbleth up and down/ In Fames Hous, full of tydynges,/ Bothe of feir speche and chidynges,/ and of fals and soth compouned”

(Chaucer ll. 1025-29). The noise is so loud that the dreamer grows afraid again, but the eagle soothes him and leaves him to explore the palace.

The dreamer discovers that the House of Fame is built on rocks of ice, and he wonders about this “feble fundament” (Chaucer l. 1132). In this ice he sees names written, some already half melted away, symbolising their -- fading -- fame. He sees the names of Classical authors “As fressh as men had writen hem here/ The selve day ryght, or that houre” (Chaucer ll. 1155-57). The dreamer marvels at the magnificent beauty of the House of Fame, which seems completely made of beryl. Entering the Hall of Fame, he sees a throne made of one single ruby, on which Lady Fame, a noble creature with many eyes, ears and tongues is seated. The hall is built on large pillars, on each a famous author of the Siege of Troy. The dreamer witnesses several bands of people making a claim to Lady Fame; some want fame, some not, some want to be renowned for nothing, some even for roguery. Some she grants their wish, while others get exactly the opposite. Aeolus, God of Winds, uses his two trumpets to blow her ruling into the world. The dreamer truly learns the nature of Fame, as he observes her being as fickle as her figurative sister Fortune in her verdict, for he knows “good fame ech deserved,/ Although they were dyversly served” (Chaucer, ll. 1545-46). He remarks that “Sufficeth me, as I were ded,/ That no wight have my name in honde” (Chaucer, ll. 1875-77) and goes to another big house resembling a cage entirely made of twigs, with many entrances and holes to let out sound. Inside it is very crowded and noisy and many people are gossiping. Stories are told and many times retold. When they try to fly out of the house, truth and lies battle each other, until they become inseparable. The stories pass Lady Fame’s verdict and Aeolus blows them into the world. The (unfinished) book ends when the dreamer goes to another part of the hall, where he sees “A man of gret auctorite” (Chaucer, ll. 2158).

Gavin Douglas

Born into an ambitious family, it can be argued that Gavin Douglas was always meant to become a powerful man. His family was one of the most dominant in Scotland at the time and filled many high offices, which sometimes created difficult relationships with other noble families (Douglas Gray, 149) due to jealousy, causing Douglas to have problems in his career (“Gawin Douglas”). From an early age, Gavin Douglas was destined to serve the church. He enjoyed his education at St. Andrews where he grew familiar with Classic literature like Aristotle, Ovid, Virgil (Bawcutt, 111-112) and humanism (Gray, 149). His position as churchman brought him offices as dean, parson, provost and eventually bishop (Bawcutt, 109).

Douglas’s works show many references to the Bible, which can be ascribed to his life as a churchman. However, according to Bawcutt, his “works were not theological at all, but very secular”. She suggests that Douglas did not turn his back on theology altogether, but consciously left it out of his literary works due to some disagreements he had with some theories associated with late medieval theology (109). He particularly had a strong attraction to ancient poetry, history and rhetoric (Bawcutt 125), i.e. the Classics. Moreover, Douglas was interested in humanism, making him believe that intellectualism and accomplishments were more characteristic of one’s social status than status by birth (Gray 149).

Douglas had an interesting and successful life, holding many high offices and having powerful acquaintances, both intellectual and political (Gray 149). At the end of his life, he became involved in matters of state, resulting in his exile in London after conspiring with the Anglophile party. He died in London of the plague in 1522 (Edwin Morgan 197).

As a writer, Douglas never lost the mark of being a “Scottish Chaucerian”. As mentioned before, this title is mostly due to his *Palice of Honour* which is very similar to Chaucer’s *House of Fame* (Gray, 149). However, Douglas is mostly known for *The Eneados* (1513), which is a bulky translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, showing Douglas’s attraction to

Classic literature. This text is a very accurate translation of the traditional text, and Douglas was one of the first authors to translate an original piece into a vernacular language, in this case the Scottish dialect (“Gawin Douglas”).

The Palice of Honour

Like Chaucer’s *House of Fame*, *The Palice of Honour* is a dream vision, full of allegories, written in Older Scots (David Parkinson). Like *The House of Fame*, the text can be seen as a perfect illustration of a dream vision, where the protagonist falls asleep in May and dreams about his journey to the Palace of Honour, guided by a nymph. Douglas's 2169 lines long poem starts with the description of the beautiful way in which Nature awakes in spring. The narrator is grateful for the dawn, because it saves him from the terrible dream he has been having during the night, the dream he recounts in the poem.

When the dream starts, the dreamer finds himself in a horrifying desert with a river; “Rynnand overhed, blud red, and – impossybyll/ That it had byn a ryver naturall – (Douglas, ll. 140-41). The dreamer is terrified he will die in this land, and turns to Fortune to curse her fickle wheel: “I wepe, I wale, I plene, I cry, I plede:/ Inconstant world and quheil contrarius!” (Douglas, ll. 171-72). When the dreamer hears a loud sound, he hides in a hollow tree where he discovers that the sound comes from the company of the Queen of Sapience, Lady Minerva. The dreamer lets the procession pass whilst hiding in his tree, but comes out when two outcasts appear behind it; Sinon and Architefel. They say that the Court of Sapience is travelling through the wilderness to reach the Palice of Honour. They leave and the dreamer sees the court of Venus, Goddess of Love, and Diana, Goddess of Hunt and Chastity appear, and climbs back into his hollow tree. When they pass, the dreamer hears something else and wonders about sound; how fish are moved by sound, since sound is air, and air moves water. This theory resembles the one of Chaucer's eagle, but Douglas extends it by adding the

movement of water. The sound the dreamer hears belongs to the court of Love, led by Venus -- again -- and her blind son Cupid and is accompanied by the most beautiful music ever heard, although the dreamer confesses he knows nothing about music. The description of music however, proves Douglas to have had a vast knowledge of music theory. In this court, Mars, God of War, also has a place, “every invasybill wapyn on hym he bare:/ His luke was grym, his body large and square” (Douglas, ll. 553-54). Many love stories mark this court, such as the story of Aeneas and Dido, Paris and Helena, and Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde. When they pass the dreamer, he suddenly feels bold and sings a song from his tree, accusing Fortune of giving him this doomed faith, and Venus of being inconsistent. Venus is insulted, and when she wants to punish him he insults her even more by stating that he wants another judge, “For ladyis may be jugis in na place” (Douglas, l. 695). He grows very afraid of his destiny, and fears Venus’ punishment will be transformation like many examples in the classics -- mainly described by Ovid -- and the Bible.

While the dreamer awaits his sentence, the Court of Rhetoric appears, accompanied by “Historyis gret in Latyne tounge and Grew” (Douglas, l. 797) and sweet and pleasant music. Although the dreamer does not know why, he feels safer. Authors like Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Boethius, Petrarch and Boccaccio travel in this court, as well as “Goffryd Chaucere, as *A per se*, sance pere” (Douglas, l. 919). Calliope, a muse, asks Venus what bothers her, and she explains how the dreamer is guilty of “Sclander, dispite, sorow and wallaway/ To me, my sonne and eike my court for ay./ ‘He has deservit deth – he salbe dede” (Douglas, ll. 950-52). Calliope acts as the dreamer’s lawyer and convinces Venus to have pity. Venus consents and tells the dreamer he will be freed if he sings her another song, this time of praise. He agrees and Venus’ court leaves while the dreamer is left with the court of Rhetoric, where he offers Calliope his services. She replies: “Than scho me hes betaucht in keypyng/ Of a swete Nympe, maist faythfull and decore.” (Douglas, ll. 1070-71). They all depart and make a

journey across various landscapes, European cities, and rivers across the world. Eventually, they stop in a meadow with “All kind of herbis, flouris, frute and grane” (Douglas, l. 1148) where Calliope calls for Ovid whom she addresses as "the clerk of Register" opposed to "Venus' Clerk" in *The House of Fame*. Ovid recounts different stories from the *Metamorphoses*. After Virgil has also made an appearance, the court departs again and travels into unknown realms, terrifying the dreamer.

The dreamer and his nymph arrive at a horrifying hillside, with paths everywhere, yet only one that reaches the top. The nymph comforts the fearful dreamer by saying: “To me thow art commit, I sall the keip” (Douglas, l. 1333). She urges him to look down at the world where he sees a shipwreck. The nymph explains that this signifies faithfulness, only the faithful will find something to hold on to. In the shipwreck, this means literally a piece of wood so the faithful do not drown. The nymph promises the dreamer she will make him a better writer by what she is going to show him, and when he looks up he sees the Palace of Honour “Quharein abondyt every thingis gude” (Douglas, l. 1415). He has never seen something this marvellous and is unable to describe it. The palace is --like the House of Fame-- made of beryl. They find Venus again, this time a benevolent version of her (Parkinson). Before her stands a mirror, in which the dreamer sees all action of mankind. First, he sees many Biblical stories, such as Samson’s fight against the Philippines, and the tower of Babylon. Next, Classical stories are shown such as the Siege of Thebes, Paris’ judgement of Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, and the story of Aeneas starting where Chaucer’s story ceased; He sees how Aeneas searched for his father in the underworld, and was reminded of his destiny. Aeneas went to Italy and slew his enemy so that Rome could be built. When Venus notices the dreamer she welcomes him. The dreamer offers his services as a repayment of his song sung in the hollow tree. Venus accepts and entrusts him with the translation of Virgil’s *Aeneid*; Douglas’ most famous work. The dreamer notices Sinon and

Architefel failing to get into the palace. The nymph explains they are not allowed, because they are not virtuous. Next they stop at a large golden gate, where the nymph warns him: “List thou se farlyes, behald thaym yondir, lo;/ Yit study not over mekil a dreid thow vary” (Douglas, ll. 1870-71). He learns this the hard way when they enter a new hall, where the God Honour is sitting, who probably symbolises a moralised version of Mars, or even a version of the Christian God (Parkinson). When the dreamer marvels too long at his beauty, he is suddenly knocked on the ground and the nymph has to save him from his death. She explains to him that in the palace, virtue remains and earthly renown does not last. She asks him to follow her again and he trips, the shock waking him from the dream, after which he “Cursand the feildis with all the fare coullouris,/ That I awolk oft wariand the quhyle” (Douglas, 2102-3).

Authorities

Nowadays, there are very strict rules on how to use other people’s works. Based on the idea of intellectual ownership, using someone else’s words or ideas is considered plagiarism. As can be seen extensively in this thesis, when rewriting an argument, authorship must be acknowledged to avoid fraud. However, Morgan points out that today plagiarism implies easy theft, which was not how imitation was perceived in the Middle Ages (198). According to Gerald Bruns, plagiarism as we know it now did not exist at the time when Chaucer and Douglas wrote their pieces, and “imitation [was not supposed to be] an insult but a tribute” (116-117). The use of authorities was the medieval way of referencing sources, without actually mentioning the original author. Simpson endorses this theory by stating imitation to be the reproduction of a piece -- often classics --, whereby the original version would be an inspiration for a rewritten and moulded version (A72). Moreover, Ann Rigney argues that it was seen as an art to let a text match with as many Classical texts as possible, trying to create

as many variants of the same text as possible (97). Authors would thus adapt and pass on the original texts instead of stealing them; ideologically having the original authors' authority (Bruns 119). Effectively, in the Middle Ages this often meant the retelling of a text -- sometimes within another text -- with some additions. This could mean another diction, the adding of the authors' own opinions and insights or the emphasising of certain parts within the text, leaving it hard to distinguish "differences between interpretation and invention, imitation and originality, translation and *poiesis*, one text and another" (Bruns 120).

Quintilian argues that this adding to a story or, as can be said, adding originality to an existing story started out by accident within the copying of works, as was done with manuscripts in the Middle Ages (qtd. in Bruns 114-115). This can be seen in the different interpretations of Chaucer and Douglas of the text of Virgil. In Chaucer's text, Aeneas is as a betrayer and a traitor to Dido, and therefore responsible for Dido hanging herself. Douglas however, sees Aeneas manily as a hero, and deems Chaucer's depiction "fals" and "forsworn" (Bawcutt, 116). Arguably, translating the *Aeneid* gave Douglas enough reason to idealise Aeneas. According to Rigney, imitation of the Classical sources and ideals ended with the Romantic period, when individual creation, originality and deviation from the standard format of imitation became popular and well appreciated (97).

Authorities in the act of reproducing, or copying someone else's work is what this thesis is built on. This thesis looks solely at Classics authorities. As mentioned earlier, Simpson argues that the Classics were the most used sources for imitation, as can be seen by both texts that are used for this thesis, reproducing the classics extensively.

As Marcelle Cole argued in her lecture, Chaucer and Douglas could easily copy Classical stories without having to explain them. Both authors were likely to assume that their readers -- or listeners -- were to know these tales. Their texts would therefore benefit from this because they would be perceived as works with great authority as it indicated their knowledge

of the Classics and their ability to create an ‘original’ text out of it (Marcelle Cole). Although both Chaucer and Douglas lived in a society which was mostly based on Christianity, it can be argued by the vast amount of referencing the Classics, that they were still perceived as both relevant and important. Chaucer and Douglas therefore used the classics not only to give their texts more authority and value; they also used them to be moral and recognisable examples.

Fame

In both Classic and Medieval literature, there are many different interpretations of Fame. According to Koonce, Fame and Fortune are always closely intertwined (42). Fortune is widely discussed in Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, the book that Chaucer translated from Latin. Fortune is known for having a fickle wheel, her will is completely random. Fortune is thus, according to Benson, “alluring and false” (394). The definition of Fame has changed throughout the years. In the Classical as well as the medieval literature, it had a broader definition than it has today, where it mostly means being talked about, and being *famous*. The Oxford English Dictionary provides the extensive meaning of Fame stating it to be “that which people say or tell; [a] public report, common talk; a particular instance of this, a report, rumour” (fame, n.1), showing fame to also have negative connotations such as rumour and gossip. Consequently, Sylvia Frederico argues that fame has many different faces. On the one hand, it can create long-lasting renown; on the other hand, stories can be altered by others and therefore become something untrue, which makes fame “not necessarily desirable” (144). Virgil once said that “once started, nothing is swifter than fame” (In Koonce, 36). According to Boccaccio, the origins of Fame lay in Earth’s wrath against the Gods, who are immortal. Earth created Fame as a means to stand up against death, because Fame was able to protect the names, deeds and reputations of the deceased by keeping them

present through Fame (in Koonce, 35). It can thus be argued that by having both positive and negative connotations, even the meaning of Fame seems to be as fickle as Fortune.

In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; Lady Fame is introduced as the woman who lives in a great palace between the earth, seas and the universe, where there are always sounds of news and rumours, true and false. Lady Fame sees everything and collects news from everywhere (Ovidius, 12.39-64). Chaucer's description of the House of Fame seems to be quite literally inspired by Ovid's depiction. The Lady Fame, also known as Goddess Fama in Roman mythology, does not have a very positive role in the *Metamorphoses*. When Ovid describes the myth of Hercules, it seems Fama is partly responsible for his death, spreading -- untrue -- rumours of adultery to Deianira, Hercules' wife, who consequently wants to kill the woman who is responsible for this adultery but accidentally kills her own husband Hercules instead (Ovidius, 9.134-170). Contrastively, another part of the book speaks of Fama as the prophetess of truth (Ovidius, 15.3), obviously being contradictory to earlier descriptions of her only spreading rumours. This adds to the argument of Fame's definition being very broad. At last, Ovid stresses that Fame cannot be earned or chosen, but it is laid upon one, even if it is unwanted (Ovidius, 15.854). This is shown by Lady Fame in *the House of Fame*, who assigns Fame utterly random.

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil describes Fame as a creation of Mother Earth, and states her to be:

a swift-footed creature, a winged angel of ruin, A terrible, grotesque monster (...) and for every eye she has also a tongue, a voice and a pricked ear. (...) Loud speaker of truth, hoarder of mischievous falsehood, equally. (...) In great glee, announcing fact and fiction indiscriminately (Virgil, 4.97).

He recounts Fame's part in the tragedy of Dido, who found herself alone with Aeneas in a cave. Afterwards rumours were spread through Carthage, leading to the queen's downfall and

eventual suicide (Virgil, 4.96). Virgil also describes how Fama's news is *blown* into the world.

The medieval perception of Fame is derived from the Classical meaning, although it is somehow "Christianised". According to Koonce, the Christian moral is portrayed through the personification of Fame (7). Where she particularly was the personification of rumour and gossip in the Classics, medieval authors made her a symbol of earthly fame and renown, mostly in a positive way (Koonce, 38). It can be argued that the positive connotations of the definition of fame are probably mostly in agreement with the earlier described use of authorities; by referencing Classical sources, Chaucer and Douglas -- among others -- are keeping Classical authors and their works alive, famous and renowned.

Classical Fame in *The House of Fame*

Both Douglas and Chaucer illustrate their texts by making references to a vast amount of Classical authors and stories. As can be derived from the title, Fame has a very important role in Chaucer's *House of Fame*. Chaucer uses different ways to incorporate Fame in his poem; first, the personification of Fame, second, the concept of Fame described throughout the poem, and lastly, indirect fame by the use of many Classical authorities.

By personifying Fame, Chaucer makes sure his readers understand the -- or his -- meaning of fame. The description of Lady Fame and her surroundings are very precise and elaborate, making her the centre of attention and someone who cannot be ignored or to read past. As mentioned before, Lady Fame resides in Fame's House, "full of tydynges/ Bothe of feir speche and chidynges/ And of fals and soth compounded" (Chaucer, 1027-29). She is judge in a court-like setting, where people can make a request regarding Fame, which she sometimes honours, and sometimes rejects. Moreover, she is assisted by the mythological God of Wind; Aeolus, who has two trumpets, one "hyt is cleped Clere Laude,/ With which he

wont is to heraude/ Hem that me list ypreise be” (Chaucer, ll. 1575-77) and another “That highte Sklaundre in every toun,/ With which he wont is to diffame/ Hem that me liste, and do hem shame.” (Chaucer, ll. 1580-82). As can be seen, Aeolus is meant to blow Fame’s verdict into the world, having the power to spread the stories Fame has decided are to be spread. As mentioned earlier, Lady Fame plays a role in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in which Fame’s words are *blown* into the world, spreading the rumours of Dido’s dishonour. It can be argued that Chaucer used this description and evolved it, giving Aeolus actual trumpets to literally *blow* stories into the world, a gold one for positive sounds, and a black one for negative. As can be seen, Chaucer combined a few Classical features of Fame to create this new scene; first, Virgil’s Lady Fame blowing news into the world; second, the notion that Lady Fame has different faces, and is able to deliver good and bad news, as well as true and false messages; and third, the fact that Aeolus, being the mythological God of Wind, is able to control sound. According to Philip Hardie, *The House of Fame* shows the first appearance of these two trumpets (624), suggesting that Chaucer was the first to bring all these factors together, creating a new aspect of Lady Fame.

Lady Fame’s appearance is another aspect that can be traced back to the Classics. As quoted earlier, Virgil describes Fame as a monstrous creature, having many eyes and for each eye a tongue, a voice and a pricked ear. In *The House of Fame*, the dreamer sees Fame as “a gretter woner yit,/ Upon her eyen to beholde;/ But certeyn y hem never tolde/ For as feele eyen hadde she/ As fetheres upon foules be” (Chaucer, ll. 1378-82). As can be seen, Chaucer almost literally copied Virgil’s description. However, Chaucer’s Lady Fame is a “goddesse/ In nobley, honour, and rychesse” (Chaucer, ll. 1415-16), and the dreamer is dazzled by her magnificent appearance, instead of being terrified as he probably would have been by seeing Virgil’s monstrous creature. It can be argued that this difference is a clear example of the

transition the meaning of Fame had already made between the Classical period and the Middle Ages, as Chaucer transformed Fame to being something almost entirely positive.

The last aspect of Chaucer's personification of the House of Fame, where Lady Fame resides and, according to the eagle "Ys set amyddys of these three,/ Heven, erthe, and eke the see" (Chaucer, ll. 845-846). As mentioned before, this location of the palace is (quite literally) moulded after Ovid's description in the *Metamorphoses*, where it is to be set in the centre of the world, where all three factors of the universe; land, sea and sky come together, creating a space where Fame can keep an eye -- or eyes -- on every single thing that happens (Ovidius, 7.39-63).

The changing meaning of Fame can be seen by Chaucer's description of the concept through his poem. According to Koonce, the only thing that threatens Fame is Time. This is exemplified by the dreamer's account on the icy rocks around the palace: "Tho sawgh I al the half ygrave/ With famous folks names fele" (Chaucer, ll. 1135-36). Conversely, many names are barely visible anymore, after all, "What may ever laste?" (Chaucer, l. 1147). However, as mentioned before, the names of "folks that hadden grete fames/ Of olde tyme" (Chaucer, ll. 1154-55), remain perfectly visible on the hillside, possibly indicating that, according to Chaucer, time has no effect on the Classical texts. Moreover, claiming their infinite renown on this hillside, it can be argued that Chaucer acknowledges their authority and associates their names with the concept of Fame as it was known in the Middle Ages.

Another way in which Chaucer praises his authorities can be found in the description of the Hall of Fame, where Lady Fame sits on her throne. The room seems to be supported by pillars, each occupied by a different author as:

the gret Omer;/ And with him Dares and Tytus,/ Before, and eke Lollius,/ And Guydo
 eke de Columpnis,/ And Englyssh Gaufride eke, ywis;/ And ech of these, as have I
 joye,/ Was besy for to bere up Troye. (Chaucer, ll. 1466-72).

It can be argued that this metaphor shows Chaucer's perspective on Fame, and perhaps on the earlier described process of writing in the Middle Ages. Seemingly, the Hall is built on the shoulders of these authors, signifying that, without the influences of great authorities, Fame is unable to exist, seemingly meaning their fame needs to be passed on, as writers such as Chaucer and Douglas did.

The last way in which Chaucer incorporates Fame into the text is in an indirect way, by referencing Classical authors. As stated before, Chaucer uses many Classical sources to illustrate and empower his poem, for example when he lets the eagle quote philosophical teachings of Boethius to the dreamer. The fact that Chaucer quotes Boethius to present his case is no coincidence, since Chaucer -- as mentioned before -- translated this Classical work into Middle English. Moreover, Chaucer often refers his readers to the original authors, for example when he advises his readers to "Rede Virgile in Eneydos/ Or the Epistle of Ovyde" (Chaucer, ll. 378-79) if they want to read more on Dido's misfortune in the *Aeneid*. Moreover, when he mentions the many examples that can be given for woeful love and betrayal, like Demophon and Phyllis, Achilles and Briseyda, and Theseus and Ariadne he refers his readers to the original texts. Using this way of literally referencing, Chaucer directly acknowledges his sources and it can be argued that he does this to illustrate his -- professional -- admiration.

Conclusively, Chaucer has a more positive attitude towards Fame than his Classical predecessors. Although he does acknowledge her fickleness, for example by describing the House of Gossip accompanying the House of Fame, he mainly emphasises the positive role that fame and renown have on the authors that are present in the House of Fame.

Classical Fame in *The Palice of Honour*

Unlike Chaucer, Douglas does not personify Fame. The two texts are often compared because of their similar structure and the quest of a protagonist towards a Palace. However, at first sight, it would seem the texts are not very similar when it comes to Fame. Nevertheless, the two texts show many similarities. First, like Chaucer, Douglas makes use of indirect fame through referencing Classical authors; and second, Douglas depicts Fame as a concept that can be passed on by skilful poets.

Like Chaucer, Douglas refers to many Classical authors in his poem. However, Douglas's referencing is much more dense than Chaucer, and often more concise, resulting in a bulky text full of brief intertextual notes to the Classics. Moreover, Douglas references more often without clearly stating the original authority. It can be argued that due to his upbringing, Douglas was so familiar with the Classics that he was comfortable using them closely knit together. The largest list of authors in *The Palice of Honour* is made when the Court of Rhetoric appears. The Court of Rhetoric is clearly the most distinguished courts of all, and according to Amsler, being the best of all former courts combined "with a synthesis of poetry and honor which is both constant and adorned" (193). It can therefore be argued that the authors listed within this court are the ones Douglas most appreciated. The dreamer sees "the gret Latyn Virillyus,/ The famus father poet Ovidius,/ Ditis, Daris, and eik the threwe Lucane." (Douglas, ll. 898-900), along with Bruni, Claudian, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Dunbar, and many more. According to Bawcutt, most references made by Douglas can be traced back to Ovid (113). As stated before, many of these references are in-text without clear mentioning of the name, for example when the dreamer is terrified of his coming punishment by Venus. He fears she will transform him "As in a bere, a bair, ane oule, ane ape." (Douglas, ll. 741). He illustrates his fear by recounting three different stories of the *Metamorphoses*. It can be argued that by appreciating these authors, Douglas passes on their fame.

After Calliope, muse of epic poetry, saves the dreamer from his punishments, she assigns him to one of her nymphs, who teaches the dreamer how to be a better poet through their travels. He learns to see the honour and beauty of things at the same time, and learns how to translate this into writing. Seemingly, Douglas's dreamer learns how to write appreciatively, as does the Queen of the Court of Rhetoric, Calliope;

For sche of nobillis fatis hes the stere/ Till wryt thair worschyp, victory and prowes/ In
kyngly style, quhilk dois their fame encres/ Clepyt in Latyne *heriocus*, but were/ Cheif
of al wryt lyk as scho is maistres. (Douglas, ll. 875-79).

It can be argued that at the end of the poem, the dreamer has learned how to write proper poetry and moreover, how he can make "fame encres". Venus entrusting him with the translation of the *Aeneid* at the end of the poem seems to prove this, as well as Douglas indirectly creating renown for Virgil again.

One of the differences between use of authorities between Douglas and Chaucer is that Douglas's references stay very brief and concise, which makes his text very dense and full of a variety of authorities. For example, Douglas refers to the sixth book of the *Aeneid* in less than nine lines (ll. 1637-46), while Chaucer covers the fourth book in over 300 lines (143-467).

Discussion

As this is a bachelor thesis, a number of important limitations have to be considered. The current study has only examined the influences of Classical literature, in particular Fame, on Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Douglas' *The Palice of Honour*. Other similarities in the use of authorities between the two texts have not been discussed, although both texts depend heavily

on authors such as Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Moreover, the -- very interesting -- relationship of Classical and Christian references by both authors has not been studied. This is particularly interesting since Douglas' background is very theological, and *The Palice of Honour* rests, according to Parkison, on the balance between Christianity and Paganism, as can be seen by the many linkages Douglas makes between Classical and Christian references, for example when he combines the Classical story of Niobe, described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* with the Biblical story of Lot's wife in Genesis (Douglas, ll. 752-3). Further work needs to be done to establish whether this will result in differences between the two texts, and if this is only due to Douglas' particular background, or that historical context also plays a part. Moreover, according to Bawcutt, Douglas did not make a distinction between the importance -- or fame -- of Classical, Biblical or contemporary authors (111). A further study could assess the balance between different authorities used, and whether Chaucer and Douglas differ on this subject.

Lastly, many textual references to Classical Literature are being made in the two texts. Both Chaucer and Douglas use vast amounts of literary styles which originate from Classical authors that are not being reviewed in this thesis. It would be interesting to compare findings from this thesis with findings from a more textual research.

Conclusion

This paper has given an account of the Classical authorities that are used in Geoffrey Chaucer's *The House of Fame* and Gavin Douglas' *The Palice of Honour*, and was mainly focused on Fame. The purpose of the current study was to identify the ways in which both authors used the authorities and to compare them. This study has shown that both authors heavily depend on Classical references in their poems. It was also shown that both poets transformed the Classical -- negative -- notion of Fame into a mere medieval notion which is

particularly focused on the positive aspects of Fame. These similarities between the texts confirm Douglas' status as a Scottish Chaucerian.

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