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Introduction: the home life of information

Glenn D. Burger and Rory G. Critten

> Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
> 'Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous',
> For herberwynge by nyghte is perilous.
> Wel oghte a man avysed for to be
> Whom that he broghte into his pryvetee.
> <div align="right">(I. 4330–4)</div>

The cynical response of Chaucer's Cook to the *Reeve's Tale*—where the Cambridge clerks, John and Alayn, conspire to have sex with the miller's wife and daughter in his own bedroom—sets the scene for the Cook's own aborted story of Perkyn Revelour and his riotous *meynee*.[1] Both narratives emphasise the permeability and thus the vulnerability of the late-medieval household, not only as a physical structure but also as a group of disparate individuals bound together through the experience of cohabitation: husbands, wives, children, lodgers, guests, servants, and apprentices. With its London setting and its representation of the contemporary guild practice of apprenticeship, the *Cook's Tale* offers a particularly pointed reflection on the importance of regulating admission to the household and on the responsibility of its male head to maintain order under his roof.[2] Thus Perkyn's master resolves to eject Perkyn from the household in order to prevent his other servants from being infected by Perkyn's bad example, reasoning that it is better to throw out a rotten apple than to let it rot his whole store: 'Wel bet is roten appul out of hoord / Than that it rotie al the remenaunt' (I. 4406–7).

But the *Cook's Tale* also foregrounds the dancing, singing, music, gambling, and love-making that go on in and about the house, and thus it focuses our attention, more ambiguously, on the household as a location in which personal 'solas' might be found. Recreational pastimes are not forbidden entirely by Perkyn's master, who waits almost until the end of his unruly apprentice's contract before

abandoning him. What the *Cook's Tale* suggests, therefore, is that the late-medieval bourgeois household could be a site of individual negotiation as well as of social discipline, of creative volubility and improvised exchange as well as of regulated interaction. Perkyn was, we are told, 'snybbed [rebuked] bothe erly and late' (I. 4401) on account of his misbehaviour: what is most odd about him might be his incorrigibility, not his waywardness. Finally, the domestic atmosphere of dialogue and debate adumbrated in the *Cook's Tale* is shown to be conducive to particular forms of knowledge. The proverb about the rotting apple that comes to Perkyn's master's mind as he is looking through his papers speaks to his predicament not only as a householder but also as a victualler, a man whose job it is to store and bring forth good food for a hungry clientele. Straddling a border zone between materiality and abstraction, and between the vagaries of individual experience and social authority, the localised deployment of such proverbial wisdom by Perkyn's master encapsulates the complexity, instability, and uncertainty of knowledge transmission within the urban mercantile household.

There are, of course, many other tales in the *Canterbury Tales* where the household is a privileged space for knowledge transmission, consumption, and, at times, production. Indeed, one could argue that the household, as much as the matter of woman, is integral to the structures—social as well as aesthetic—that undergird the Canterbury project. More often than not, such transmission is facilitated (or blocked) by the proper (or improper) management of forms of companionate married relations. In the first instance we might think of Cecilia's ability to convert Valerian to a higher form of spiritual marriage in the *Second Nun's Tale*, or, more ambiguously, of Dorigen's proof in the *Franklin's Tale* of the value of female virtue as she exemplifies the precepts of contemporary conduct literature by remaining obedient to husbandly authority at all costs. We might also call to mind how lay attempts to incorporate authoritative textual knowledge into the 'middling' married household are comically mocked through the learned debate of Chaunticler and Pertelote that opens the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, or satirically undercut in January's wilful misrepresentation of his lust for May's body in the *Merchant's Tale* as the ennobling desire to benefit from the sacrament of marriage.

Perhaps the fullest, most complex representation of knowledge production within the married household occurs in Chaucer's own tale of *Melibee*. Here too, the potential vulnerability of the household—and with it, masculine honour and the integrity of the

male head of the household—is exposed when three of Melibee's 'olde foos' break into his house one day after he has gone out to the fields. Melibee's enemies beat his wife, Prudence, and wound his daughter, Sophie, 'with fyve mortal woundes in fyve sondry places […] and leften hire for deed and wenten awey' (VII. 968–72). While Melibee initially calls upon his professional male counsellors in order to decide how to avenge himself, reproducing a traditional authoritative model of advice literature, Prudence intervenes in private to reject this mode of action as unwise. The rest of the long prose narrative consists of an extended conversation between husband and wife, with Prudence, by means of extensive quotation from a wide variety of textual sources, guiding Melibee to arrive at the kind of practical wisdom that will address the specificities of his current situation in a way that will allow him to take effective and ethical action in the world.

In contrast with the tepid reception that *Melibee* has received in modern criticism, the tale was popular among Chaucer's medieval audience, who found in the tale a useful collection of authoritative citations, as Seth Lerer has shown.[3] Whether or not the carefully staged dialogue between Melibee and Prudence echoes actual conversations between husbands and wives in gentry, mercantile, or aristocratic homes of the period is thus not so much the point here. What is especially interesting—and what connects this allegorised account of the deployment of prudential wisdom to the *Cook's Tale*—is how *Melibee* captures the centrality of the aristocratic, bourgeois, and gentry married household unit to late-medieval sociality, as well as the increasingly complex and crucial entanglements of such households in both the consumption and the production of knowledge.[4]

The chapters collected in this book examine how the range of household experience that we have been discussing might foster the propagation of particular kinds of knowledge. When late-medieval householders reach for a means of understanding their world, on what kinds of information do they fall back, and how does their engagement with that information transmute it into usable knowledge? As we have seen, when Perkyn's master transports the proverb about the rotten apple into his own situation, he revives and personalises an old adage. So too Chaucer's *Melibee* encourages us to think again about how such an active consumption of knowledge occurs within the late-medieval household and what that might signify. The chapters in this collection are interested in defining the contexts of recollection in which

information circulated in and between households and in the synergies that such contexts promoted. Our title insists on the energising plurality of the *knowledges* generated through such interactions. Contributors to *Household Knowledges* pose the question: in what ways could the late-medieval household act as a sorter, user, and disseminator of different kinds of ready information, from the traditional and authoritative to the innovative and newly made?

The scope of the materials treated by our contributors is broad. While a number of authors concentrate on advice texts, including treatises on conduct, housekeeping, medicine, or agriculture, others address canonical literature, comic writing, and scripts for student plays. Several contributors also attend to the crucial role played by non-textual, material elements in the transmission and development of household knowledges and to the important role played by non-humans in shaping how knowledge is developed and experienced by men and women in the late-medieval home. What unites our contributions is a series of related interests: in the reception within the late-medieval household of texts, objects, and ideas generated beyond it; in the active and thoughtful incorporation of these external elements into everyday domestic life; and in the retransmission of adapted forms of information—of specific pieces of household knowledge—back out into the world beyond the home.

Our engagement with household knowledges builds upon what is by now a well-developed and diverse body of scholarly work—archaeological, art-historical, historical, and literary—on the late-medieval household. Initially, for many scholars, as for the popular imagination, the royal household and other great aristocratic households in the period provided the obvious starting point for any investigation of the late-medieval home. As C. M. Woolgar notes in his study of the great household in late-medieval England:

> the way in which a household was conducted was a formal expression of lordship and a political statement. Its magnificence and splendour could be quite deliberately stupendous; likewise its size. This was a society in which display, lavish hospitality, prestige and social competition were all important, in which such distinctions came to be carefully weighed, nuances closely regarded and the overwhelming detail of ceremony recorded for posterity.[5]

Such households became the object of emulation, and, just as aristocrats imitated the royal style of living in their own great households, so too the gentry modelled their far more modest

establishments on those of their aristocratic betters. Woolgar goes on to note that, by the end of the fifteenth century, there were probably between 1,000 and 2,000 households of vastly differing means that aspired to live in the style of the great household.[6]

Without denying the importance of the great household as a model for elite social organisation in the period, other scholarship has sought to widen the range of investigation to include urban bourgeois and peasant households, and to tease out the specificities of gentry households and points of difference between them and the great households of the aristocracy.[7] The Household Group at the University of York's Centre for Medieval Studies (UK) and its team publications have provided a major impetus for recent new research. In *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850– c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body*, for example, while the first group of essays (titled 'The Public Household and Political Power') largely focuses on royal and noble households, subsequent sections range much more widely to include urban bourgeois, gentry, and peasant households. As the titles of these sections indicate—'The Moral Household', 'Household Economics: Money, Work, and Property', and 'The Material Household'—these collected essays not only examine other social strata but also take up a wider range of issues relating to everyday domestic experience, such as the gendered nature of household spaces, the role of households in controlling the body, urban vernacular housing, household consumption, women and household work, household objects, male householders, and single women's homes.[8] Other volumes of essays arising out of conferences organised by the York Household Group also reflect an interest in everyday domestic life within the urban, gentry, and peasant home.[9] The extant scholarship articulates a highly nuanced and multiple understanding of late-medieval households, including such subjects as the physical structures of the late-medieval household and the lifestyles that these structures promoted; the demography of the household, whose members might be linked through blood or other connections, such as apprenticeship; the development of the household as an idea, in particular in relation to marriage and child-rearing, and to developments in civic law; the household as the location of work and recreation; and the household as a site of personal memory.[10]

As late-medieval household studies have expanded beyond the great house model, so new opportunities have been laid open for literary and cultural studies to address the multiple roles of the

household and its social implication. Middle English romance has proved a particularly rich site for investigating what D. Vance Smith has so suggestively termed 'the Middle English household imaginary'.[11] Smith's work on the deeply rooted concern with assets management that characterises this genre draws on developments in romance studies, which have for some time been engaged in exploring the productive intersections of class and gender in these texts.[12] In particular, the work of Felicity Riddy has yielded fresh insight both into romance reading and into the construction of gendered and classed identities in bourgeois and gentry homes via the literate, lay culture that centred on the late-medieval home.[13] Most recently, the capacity of individual romances to implicate their readerships in both regional and national household networks has been studied by Michael Johnston and Raluca Radulescu.[14] Drawing on the recent re-invention of manuscript scholarship, these studies bring together methodologies that have often been kept separate, combining literary, historical, social, palaeographical, and codicological enquiry in order to arrive at more precise understandings of the significance of Middle English romances for the readers of the household books in which they frequently circulated.[15]

Alongside the genre of romance, advice literature and conduct texts also provide a cultural terrain for the cultivation of household identities in this period. Seth Lerer has considered the anthologisation of Chaucerian texts in household collections and their uses for household instruction in bourgeois and gentry homes in England, and Rory G. Critten has shown how, in the case of one particular medieval book, Middle English conduct texts and romances might be played off against each other in order to arrive at a fresh conception of late-medieval bourgeois ethics.[16] Looking further afield, Kathleen Ashley has examined why Books of Hours appear to be the texts of choice for recording family history during the late-medieval and early modern periods in France and England, and, in a series of articles, Roberta L. Krueger has examined the role of class and gender in constructing bourgeois and aristocratic identity in key fourteenth-century French conduct texts such as *Le Menagier de Paris*, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour-Landry*, and Christine de Pisan's *Livre des Trois Vertus*.[17] Both Lynn Staley and Carolyn P. Collette have argued for a particular interest on the part of Charles V of France (r. 1364–1380) and his court in the married household as a model for state relations, thereby emphasising a correlation between the head of the household and the sovereign.[18] Building on these studies and expanding the range

of such conduct literature to include the *journées chrétiennes*, or daily guides for Christian living, and literary narratives such as the Griselda story, as well as secular counsel from husbands, fathers, and clerics, Glenn D. Burger has recently argued for consideration of the married gentry and bourgeois household as a privileged space in late-medieval culture for the 'invention' of the good wife and of modern forms of heterosexuality.[19]

The chapters collected in *Household Knowledges* consider the dynamic relationship between the domestic experience and the modes of cultural expression that this experience generated. They are especially interested in the connections between the individual household and the wider world. In this 'age of the household', as David Starkey has pointed out, home was not so much a microcosm of the world as its fundamental constitutive unit, 'the central institution of society'.[20] In a society so made up, the household attained considerable representational value. It could be understood not only as a tangible reality but also as an idea via which issues of broad cultural importance might be approached and reformulated. Thus the cohabitation of men and women in secular lay households led to home becoming the scene for a range of attempts to reset the balance of power between the sexes, for example. Concurrently, it led to the revival of the classical analogy of the household as a model of the state, with a ruler's relationship to his people understood in terms of the husband's relations with a wife.[21] On a smaller scale, but no less significantly, individual households could structure the interface between the individuals they comprised and the wider world, transmuting the cultural goods that they received from beyond their four walls into products more apt to suit their needs and providing the conditions of composition for those materials that they originated.[22]

The bulk of the chapters compiled in this volume treat artisanal, mercantile, or gentry households in England in the later medieval period. Nevertheless, with the aim of facilitating a broadening of the perspective on the connections maintained by the late-medieval home, several contributors to the volume extend this Anglo-centric scope to include consideration of texts written or circulating on the continent, or look forward to the medieval inheritance enjoyed by the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The collection opens with Glenn D. Burger's chapter, 'Knowledge Production in the Late-Medieval Married Household: The Case of *Le Menagier de Paris*'. Presenting itself as a collection of useful practical material and moral advice collected by an old

husband for his young wife, the *Menagier de Paris* (c. 1394) offers a masterclass on the modes of domestic knowledge consumption, processing, production, and retransmission that we have sought to delineate in this Introduction. While the majority of criticism on this text has focused on its more tightly structured first section, which anthologises a range of popular exempla relating to ideal conduct within the home, Burger expands his perspective on the work to include its looser second section, which sets an allegorical poem, *Le Chemin de povreté et de richesse*, alongside a mix of culinary, horticultural, and husbandry texts. Considering the whole text in this fashion, Burger is able to show how the instruction offered by the husband develops out of a lesson on the correct sorting and interpretation of a pre-established canon of advice texts to include a demonstration of the creative work of adaptation and reformation that precedes the application of authoritative precepts in a given, local context. Focusing for example on the additions and corrections made to the culinary recipes compiled in the *Menagier*'s second section, Burger illustrates how the husband models the grafting of information gathered from practical experience onto traditional forms of knowledge in order to ensure the recipes' usefulness and agreeability in the particular household environment that he shares with his wife. On this reading, the *Menagier de Paris* is revealed to be not only a vital repertory of information pertinent to the running of a late-medieval household but also a manual including instruction in the best ways to use, perpetuate, and proliferate household knowledges as such.

The topic of marital advice-giving and its figuration in continental conduct literature is also broached in Elliot Kendall's contribution to the volume, 'Knowing Incompetence: Elite Women in Caxton's *Book of the Knight of the Tower*'. Kendall examines William Caxton's translation of the *Livre du chevalier de la Tour-Landry* (1371), the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* (1484), picking out the social conservatism of Caxton's *Book*, which, in contrast to the *Menagier*, situates women in a clearly subservient position within their households and vis-à-vis their husband's knowledge and authority. Kendall's study constitutes an object lesson in the principle that knowledge does not always equal power: the learning that Caxton serves up to his women readers directs them towards a recognition of the supposed limitations to their competence and confines their potential influence over their household's members to the more thorough inculcation of these limitations (this is what it means to 'know' the incompetence to which the title of Kendall's

chapter refers). At the same time, Kendall is alert to the complex strategies deployed in the *Book* with the aim of making this unprepossessing deal palatable. Reading the *Book* against itself, Kendall uncovers tensions at the heart of its conception of companionate marriage regarding, for example, the place of violence within the household. This subtle re-reading of the *Book of the Knight of the Tower* thus highlights aspects of the text liable to have provoked resistant reactions among the audience of Caxton's translation, which, owing to the print publication of his text, will necessarily have been bigger and more varied than that of the manuscripts of the French original.

The politics of cultural reception are central to Myra Seaman's study of three comic texts compiled in two late fifteenth-century household books. In her chapter, 'Renovating the Household through Affective Invention in Manuscripts Ashmole 61 and Advocates 19.3.1', Seaman participates in an ongoing reassessment of these books and related codices that sees them less as testaments to an aspirational mindset among their readers—that is, as part of an attempt to assume the lifestyles and prestige associated with some of the texts that they compile—than as part and parcel of the complex ethical universes constituted by individual medieval homes. Drawing on affect theory and object-relations theory, Seaman shows how the particular configuration of people, animals, and things in *The Hunting of the Hare* (compiled in Advocates 19.3.1), *Sir Corneus*, and *The Debate of the Carpenter's Tools* (both compiled in Ashmole 61) generate new lessons on the spirit of empathy and tolerance as well as on the sense of shared responsibility on which the success of the household must depend. Thus, rather than offering a brief escape from the moralising and devotional works alongside which they are compiled, these comic works offer a route towards the renovation of the home and of the complex assemblage of agents that it comprises.

Seaman's theoretical approach to the household assemblage is paralleled by the historicist treatment of this subject by Elisabeth Dutton, whose chapter considers early modern academic drama performed at St John's College, Oxford. In 'The Christmas Drama of the Household of St John's College, Oxford', Dutton begins by describing the college household materials on which such performances drew, adopting a productively broad definition of this category that includes the people working, studying, and teaching at St John's, as well as their immediate neighbours in town; the college's domestic furnishings, such as tables, paintings, and

candles; the matter covered there in lectures; and the university's own medieval foundations. Working first from a text now known as *The Christmas Prince*, a richly informative but often overlooked account of the 1607–1608 Christmas festivities at St John's, Dutton describes the financing of the St John's plays as well as the practicalities associated with their staging and rehearsal and with the sourcing of actors. Both in the productions performed as part of the *Christmas Prince* celebrations and in the earlier and later examples of St John's college drama that Dutton examines, the college play emerges as a means of reaffirming and celebrating the local, collegiate culture as well as constituting an interface with the outside world across which people and ideas might move both into and out of the college household.

Household entertainment—more specifically, household music—also constitutes the focus of Sarah Stanbury's chapter, 'Household Song in Chaucer's *Manciple's Tale*', which treats the lost 'soundworld' evoked in the Chaucerian text. Whereas criticism of the last poem in the *Canterbury Tales* has typically focused on what it has to say about the vexed relationship between language and power, Stanbury affords new attention to the intermingled melodies of birdsong and 'minstralyce', or musical instruments, that filled Phebus's house prior to his crisis. The chapter presents a richly nuanced understanding of this atmosphere, discussing topics ranging from Chaucer's enhancement of the musical interest of his tale as he discovered it in his sources, to the musicality of the poet and his peers, the shifting relationship between poetry and music in the fourteenth century, and the late-medieval practice of keeping—and caging—songbirds. The polyphonous world in which the notes of Phebus's harp, lute, cittern, and psaltery once blended with the song of the untransformed crow contrasts sharply with the silence of the broken instruments and the tight-lipped eloquence conjured at the end of the tale in the Manciple's re-narration of his mother's urging to 'thenk upon the crowe' (IX. 362). If, as Paul Strohm has suggested, Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* to imagine an alternative community after he had lost his home in London, then, Stanbury argues, the *Manciple's Tale* might be viewed as a poignant record of the vibrant household world filled with music and song whose loss the poet lamented.

The interest in matters of text transmission and reception that is touched upon by Kendall in his commentary on the print life of *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* and developed in Seaman's chapter on Ashmole 61 and Advocates 19.3.1 assumes

central importance in the collection's four final chapters. These contributions each treat an individual household book or group of household books, considering not only the home cultures that such manuscripts shaped and reflected but also the connections that might be detected between these books, their readers, and the world beyond the individual home.

In 'Field Knowledge in Gentry Households: "Pears on a Willow"?' Nadine Kuipers offers a broad perspective on the tradition of agricultural and estates management literature in England that affords special consideration to the books in which works belonging to this tradition circulated. Examining texts dating from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries, Kuipers determines that, whereas the earliest agricultural texts would seem to have little to do with the practicalities of farming, treating instead the legal or administrative aspects of landownership, or offering instruction in the French and Latin necessary to participate in the written culture of landowning, later texts demonstrate an increasing interest in practical matters. This interest would culminate in such sixteenth-century manuals as Fitzherbert's *Boke of Husbandry* (1523), which contains long descriptions of farming tools for the uninitiated gentleman farmer. In the period directly before the introduction of the early modern manuals, there flourished a kind of hybrid agricultural and estates management text that gestured towards practicality as well as serving other social and aesthetic purposes. Kuipers examines the circulation of a selection of these texts in manuscript household books and discusses the ramifications of their compilation alongside works belonging to other genres, principally romances and conduct texts. The end result of Kuipers's enquiry is a renewed sense of the vast (and, currently, largely unrecognised) potential of medieval English agricultural and estates management literature on the one hand, and, on the other, a fresh appreciation of the complex ethical and aesthetic values cultivated by users of late-medieval household books.

The re-use of practical literature in household contexts is a topic also picked up by Michael Leahy in his chapter, 'Domestic Ideals: Healing, Reading, and Perfection in the Late-Medieval Household', which considers the transmission and reception of John of Arderne's treatise on the delicate matter of treating anal fistula, the *Practica de fistula in ano* (1376). Leahy points out that Arderne's appeal was unlikely to have been restricted to the medical practitioners who are known to have possessed copies of his work: the author-surgeon's sensitive depiction of

the power dynamics of the medieval household and his deploy-ment in his writing of features deriving from the chronicle and romance traditions implicate a broader, less specialised reader-ship. That Arderne's work met with such an audience is indicated by the inclusion of a Latin text of the *Practica* alongside two less specialised Middle English texts dealing with the matter of self-care and the apparently miraculous properties of rosemary in an early fifteenth-century compilation, London, British Library MS Additional 29301. This manuscript presents an interesting mix of perspectives on the matter of healthy living, adumbrating the tensions that might exist between members of the household, who favoured their own homegrown cures, and professional medical practitioners. More importantly, however, as Leahy argues, such a constellation of texts enabled the readers of the Additional manu-script to imagine the household as an idealised realm of bodily control and perfect living. In this way, the texts collected in the book display a domestic aesthetic where everyday health regimes are re-presented as elevated and culturally significant practices.

Whereas Additional MS 29301 is an impressive parchment manuscript, complete with gold leafing, decorative borders, and arresting illustrations, the book that constitutes the focus of Raluca Radulescu's chapter—now Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38—is less immediately impressive. When this paper household manuscript has been addressed in scholarship, it has been found remarkable for its representative qualities as a marker of the devo-tion and 'modest' intellectual accomplishments typically assumed to belong to the provincial gentry audience with whom so many fifteenth-century household books can be associated. In her contri-bution to the volume, 'Macrocosm and Microcosm in Household Manuscript Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38', Radulescu takes issue with this point, arguing that the inclusion of two popular texts in the Cambridge book—the penitential romance, *Roberd of Cisely* and *Pety Job*, a Middle English retelling of the Lessons of the Dead—indicates the connections existing between the 'micro-cosm' of the Leicestershire household associated with the manu-script and the 'macrocosm' comprising national developments in political poetry that linked expressions of penitence with assertions of royal power. Indeed, Radulecu points out, the particularly Job-like portrayal of king Roberd in the Cambridge text of the poem suggests that the poem was selected, or doctored, in response to the contemporary vogue for Job-like portrayals of royalty. The 'provin-cial' household audience of Cambridge MS Ff.2.38 is thus shown to

be well connected with cultural developments taking place concurrently in the metropolitan London milieu.

  Finally, the propensity of medieval household books to demonstrate the external connections of the household, as well as its internal tastes and priorities, is examined in Rory G. Critten's contribution to the volume, 'The Multilingual English Household in a European Perspective: London, British Library MS Harley 2253 and the Traffic of Texts'. To date, scholarship on Harley 2253 has sought to determine how this fourteenth-century book might have served the interests and priorities of a small group of West Midlands families with which its scribe can be identified. While acknowledging the usefulness of this context for understandings of the manuscript, Critten argues that Harley 2253 also demonstrates the connections pertaining between such insular audiences and a pan-European network of textual transmission. His chapter explores the relative connotations of Latin, French, and English across the texts compiled in Harley 2253 and demonstrates that the shifting associations of French in particular both enabled and inflected the cross-Channel traffic of texts. Most importantly, Critten shows that native English facility in French and Latin meant that the main scribe of Harley 2253 and his readers could conceive of themselves not only as passive recipients of texts from beyond England but also as active participants in the transfer of texts into and throughout the continent. The volume thus closes with a reconsideration of the household not only as a storehouse, but also as a productive cultural unit in and of itself.

Notes

1 Citations from Chaucer are by line number from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

2 On this last point, see Neil Cartlidge, 'Wayward Sons and Failing Fathers: Chaucer's Moralistic Paternalism—And a Possible Source for the *Cook's Tale*', *Chaucer Review*, 47 (2012), 134–60.

3 See Seth Lerer, ' "Now holde youre mouth": The Romance of Orality in the Thopas-Melibee Section of the Canterbury Tales', in M. C. Amodio (ed.), *Oral Poetics in Middle English Poetry* (New York: Garland, 1994), pp. 181–205.

4 For further useful discussion of *Melibee* within the married household context, see Carolyn P. Collette, 'Heeding the Counsel of Prudence: A Context for the "Melibee"', *Chaucer Review*, 29 (1995), 416–33. See too Glenn Burger, *Chaucer's Queer Nation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 172–3.

5 C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 1. On the great household, see too Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household 1250–1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), and, more recently, Theresa Earenfight (ed.), *Royal and Elite Households in Medieval Europe: More Than Just a Castle* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

6 See Woolgar, *The Great Household*, p. 5.

7 For an early example of work on these topics see, David Herlihy's foundational *Medieval Households* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985). See also Peter Fleming, *Family and Household in Medieval England* (New York: Palgrave, 2000).

8 See Cordelia Beattie, Anna Maslakovic, and Sarah Rees Jones (eds), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850–c.1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

9 See Isabel Davis, Miriam Müller, and Sarah Rees Jones (eds), *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); and Maryanne Kowaleski and P. J. P. Goldberg (eds), *Medieval Domesticity: Home, Housing, and Household in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

10 For a review of research on these topics conducted by members of the York Household Group, and for useful lists of further reading, see Sarah Rees Jones, Felicity Riddy, Cordelia Beattie, Charlotte Carpenter, Matthew Holford, Lara McClure, Sarah Williams, Jayne Rimmer, Jeremy Goldberg, Bethany Hamblen, Isabel Davis, Rachel Moss, Wanchen Tai, Bronach Kane, and Kate McLean, 'The Later Medieval English Urban Household', *History Compass*, 5 (2007), 112–58.

11 D. Vance Smith, *Arts of Possession: The Middle English Household Imaginary* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

12 See, for example, the work of Harriet Hudson, 'Middle English Popular Romances: The Manuscript Evidence', *Manuscripta*, 28 (1984), 67–78; 'Construction of Class, Family, and Gender in Some Middle English Popular Romances', in Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (eds), *Class and Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 76–94; and 'Linear or Nuclear? Family Patterns in Some Middle English Popular Romances', *Publications of the Medieval Association of the Midwest*, 12 (2005), 26–51.

13 Among several important studies, see Felicity Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 66–86; 'Middle English Romance: Family, Marriage, Intimacy', in Roberta L. Krueger (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 235–51; and 'Looking Closely: Authority and Intimacy in the Late Medieval Urban Home', in Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (eds), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 212–28.

14 See Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Raluca Radulescu, *Romance and its Contexts in Fifteenth-Century England: Politics, Piety and Penitence* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013).

15 On the taxonomy of late-medieval household manuscripts, see Julia Boffey, 'Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden. B. 24 and Definitions of the "Household Book"', in A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie, and Ralph Hanna (eds), *The Medieval English Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths* (London: The British Library, 2000), pp. 125–34.

16 See Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 85–116; and Rory G. Critten, 'Bourgeois Ethics Again: The Conduct Texts and the Romances in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Ashmole 61', *Chaucer Review*, 50 (2015), 108–33.

17 See Kathleen Ashley, 'Creating Family Identity in Books of Hours', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 32 (2002), 145–65; and Roberta L. Krueger, 'Intergeneric Combination and the Anxiety of Gender in *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 33 (1993), 61–72; 'Christine's Treasure: Household Economies in the *Livre des Trois Vertus*', in Barbara Altman and Deborah McGrady (eds), *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 101–14; and 'Identity Begins at Home: Female Conduct and the Failure of Counsel in *Le Menagier de Paris*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 22 (2005), 21–39.

18 See Lynn Staley, *Languages of Power in the Age of Richard II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); and Carolyn P. Collette, *Performing Polity: Women and Agency in the Anglo-French Tradition, 1385–1620* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

19 See Glenn D. Burger, *Conduct Becoming: Good Wives and Husbands in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). See too Anne-Marie De Gendt, *L'Art d'éduquer les noble damoiselles: Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry* (Paris: Champion, 2003).

20 David Starkey, 'The Age of the Household: Politics, Society, and the Arts, c. 1350-c. 1550', in Stephen Medcalf (ed.), *The Later Middle Ages* (New York: Homes and Meier, 1981), pp. 225–90.

21 Besides the studies by Staley and Colette, cited above, see too the discussion of the importance of marriage symbolism in defining a king's authority in Margaret D. Carroll, *Painting and Politics in Northern Europe: Van Eyck, Bruegel, Rubens, and Their Contemporaries* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), pp. 22–3.

22 For an example of how these patterns of transmission and adaptation might work in practice, see Rory G. Critten, '*The Secrees of Old Philisoffres* and John Lydgate's Posthumous Reputation', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 19 (2016), 31–64. This essay charts the passage of the *Secrees*, which has traditionally been attributed to Lydgate, across a variety of household contexts.