Mutable, associative, and ugly

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Oceanic feelings in Middle English literature and medieval natural science

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Diverse kinds of writings address the sea in the late Middle Ages. Commercial, legal, and related documents reveal how people thought of the sea, travelled on it, items associated with shipping and its practices, and so on. Some works about the ocean turn to past sources instead of present events and reiterate or adapt Greek and Roman authors, the Bible and its commentaries and interpretations, and more. There are also chronicle accounts that include substantial amounts of information about travel and other topics, including warfare at sea, some of which rely on ancient authorities and others of which are based on more recent events. Medieval missionaries and pilgrims describe their encounters with the ocean and smaller bodies of water. In addition, late medieval natural philosophy frequently considered the sea. The scientific writings of the Venerable Bede, Isidore of Seville, Robert Grosseteste, the encyclopaedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the historian Gerald of Wales, and others engage with the ocean in multiple complex ways. Part of the intention of this chapter is to provide a sense of the array of writings on the ocean in the late Middle Ages, but it also aims to draw attention to scholastic science’s important ways of thinking about the ocean.¹

Medieval literature provides another particularly rich source of ideas about the sea. In this chapter, I examine various kinds of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English literature on the subject of the sea alongside scientific works. Britain, an archipelago of islands, was not of course the only European entity to consider the ocean in its different discourses, but it loomed large in the minds of its writers in works from highly wrought court poetry to less explicitly literary writings. Of particular interest is Geoffrey Chaucer, a portion of whose life and works might fairly be called oceanic. King Edward III appointed Chaucer controller of the customs tax on the realm’s lucrative exports, including wool, a position Chaucer held for 12 years from 1374 until 1386, and he was soon assigned to other customs positions. He voyaged overseas to Spain, France, and Italy several times in his life.² In terms of his works, he is best
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known today for his *Canterbury Tales*, an accumulation of diverse genres and story types, but he wrote many other kinds of poems, from the long romance of *Troilus and Criseyde* to dream visions and short lyrics, and he wrote and translated prose. In these texts, he writes about the sea’s commercial, legal, strategic, and other characteristics, and with some frequency he refers to scientific philosophy and its ideas about the sea. He also translated works into English that include maritime observations, such as Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy*, a major source of medieval knowledge of various kinds (especially the role of fortune in the cosmos), and he composed a description of the workings of an astrolabe for his ten-year-old son Lewis, a treatise that also contains material on the ocean. Whether or not Chaucer and other Middle English writers explicitly have recourse to scientific authorities, together these two bodies of work reveal some of the diverse ways of thinking about the ocean in this time period, despite the fact that the literary, scientific, martial, and economic writings about the ocean differ in style, tone, and subject matter. One difference, for instance, is that literature regularly employs the sea as a metaphor, taking up its characteristics and transferring them to human psychological states, men’s and women’s moral quandaries, characters’ impressions of the world around them, and so on. This might be a difference in degree rather than kind, however, since all oceanic discourses at some point have recourse to metaphorical language.

In order to provide focus to the diverse material on the sea in late medieval England, this chapter’s principal topics are the passions attributed to the ocean and the feelings to which the sea gives rise. The works, from the literary to the scientific, often pay attention to a range of affects. By the term *affect*, I refer to what is now commonly called *affect theory*, which seeks to understand the characteristics of emotions, sensations, sentiments, and so on in different time periods. The study of affect analyses emotions in terms of which ones were considered significant to a society’s and to individuals’ definitions of themselves and which not, which feelings were considered actual emotions, and which ones deemed something else such as thoughts, and so on. The preferred term *affect* in the history of emotions moves the focus away from simply noting the feelings of historical figures and literary characters, and toward the ability of internal or internal-external states to transform people, situations, and communities due to their historical, interactive, and dynamic properties. Medievalists have developed some of the key ideas about affect. Barbara Rosenwein’s work is central in this respect. Her books and articles – sometimes on medieval culture and sometimes on other time periods – seek to ‘problematize the feelings of the past, addressing their distinctive characteristics’. Writers on medieval culture continue to make good use of Rosenwein’s and others’ ideas. One recent anthology, *Feeling Things: Objects and Emotions Through History* brings affect theory together with the study of material culture in order to examine emotions associated with objects, ‘both […] the tactility of the object – its shape, form, substance, and size – and […] the reciprocal ways in which contact with an object conditions feelings in human subjects’. The current chapter has a similar aim in its examination of the ocean in relation to affect. Whether described in concrete and scientific ways or in literary and metaphorical ones, the sea is described in affective terms and frequently causes emotions; conversely, emotions are often articulated in oceanic terms.
One key characteristic of oceanic feelings in late medieval discussions relates to the sea’s mutability. It is perhaps not surprising that medieval authors depict the sea as stormy and volatile, calm and tranquil, and everything in between, but the sea’s fundamental inconsistency is one of its defining qualities in the Middle Ages. Writers note that the sea expands and contracts with the tides, and its boundaries are further complicated because it transitions into bays, inlets, rivers, and smaller bodies of water. Indeed, late medieval scientists were interested in how the sea transmuted into other substances such as the air because the universe was believed to be made up of four elements – earth, water, fire, and air – each with its own properties and qualities, and each interacted with the others and with additional entities such as the humours. The sea is therefore not only changeable, but is defined by being an associative entity, extending to other bodies of water, to landmasses large and small, to the elements, and impinging on humans and their activities, vessels, and concerns.

The mutable and associative qualities of the sea are central to the feelings attributed to it and to which it gives rise. Those feelings are themselves changeable as one might expect; they typically depend on immediate situations and events, and they frequently extend or transition into other emotional states. The sea’s affects transform the bodies – human and otherwise – with which it associates into similarly mutable beings that can change in strong, distinct, and unmistakable ways. The sea’s affects and the affects it causes in other bodies can also be ambiguous, complex, abstruse, and themselves associative, often mutating into other less clear emotions. This affective range of the ocean, from powerful and unequivocal to indeterminate and discomforting, organizes the following discussion. I first note instances in the various kinds of discourses about the sea that depict these emotionally stronger tempestuous feelings, and I then address the more oblique and less intelligible affects.

The sea in British literature of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries can be isolating, as tempests overwhelm and drown characters, and the sea leads to, or is accompanied by, melancholy. In a sense, the ocean can evoke ‘repulsive’ emotions as Alain Corbin has said of the seashore in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. It is sometimes connected with romantic love, but a love that can be futile. On the other hand, the emotional connotations of the sea can also be dramatically positive. Love can thrill like the sea. The ocean can give rise to feelings of calm and benignity associated with not having to worry about anything. These strongly negative and positive emotions are feelings that are intelligible and recognizable according to what William Reddy, one of the first writers on affect theory, has called ‘emotional regimes’. Reddy describes these structures of feeling as ‘[t]he set of normative emotions and the official rituals, practices, and emotives that express and inculcate them; a necessary underpinning of any stable political regime’. He further defines an ‘emotive’ as like a linguistic performative in that an emotional instantiation is not an inert result but can bring about change in the world. The sea’s powerful emotions tend to align with established late medieval understandings of fear, sadness, melancholy, love, desire, and tranquillity. Narrators, characters, and writers of non-literary material make observations about the ocean that fit within conventions of courtly love, with how people from the different estates were thought to behave and should behave, accepted ideas about the natural qualities and behaviours of things, for instance.
As Reddy, Rosenwein, and others also point out, a society has multiple ‘emotional regimes’ and ‘emotional communities’, and the feelings of those associated with some groups can differ from the dominant, generally acknowledged, and condoned affective utterances. Reddy says that emotives can be recognized and reinforced by a prevailing political or social entity and ‘seized [...] in the service of various high-level goals’, but they can also ‘have repercussions on the very goals they are intended to serve’, and they ‘may be more or less successful’ in creating change. Some of the most interesting emotives that might not align with dominant and recognized late medieval cultural norms are what Sianne Ngai has called ‘ugly feelings’. Ngai’s book on the subject of ‘ugly feelings’ studies ‘affective gaps and illegibilities, dysphoric feelings, and other sites of emotional negativity’. Her focus lies in ‘[m]oods like irritation and anxiety [...] defined by a flatness or ongoingsness’ and ‘less dramatic feelings like envy and paranoia’, which can also ‘have a remarkable capacity for duration’. As opposed to the dominant and habitually reinforced emotions, ‘ugly feelings’ are not easily identifiable yet, according to Ngai, they may reveal more about what is happening emotionally and culturally within a society, especially underrepresented parts of it. The second section of this chapter, therefore, turns to focus on writings in which the sea possesses and gives rise to ambiguous feelings that are not as negatively or positively powerful, or expressive of traditional emotions, but instead shows feelings that are more ‘ugly’. In terms of the ocean, these are not the passion and ravishing feelings of great desire, nor even feelings of the repulsive, despairing, and drowning kinds, but instead show emotional valences that are multiple, mixed, and not so clear. In both the natural science of the time, and in literary works by Chaucer and others, the sea can appear as mildly untrustworthy and a sign of human tendencies toward foolishness. It can be unsettling, associated with worry of a mildly irking sort, and it can even have a kind of ‘flatness’ allied with a lack of care; in the aquatic terms used, a person or situation can merely ‘drift’, ‘glide’, and ‘flote’/‘flete’. The ocean comes to signify a lack of emotional and epistemological clarity.

The tempestuous sea

The cosmos in the Middle Ages was comprised of objects that connected to each other through all scales from the large, such as the air or sky, to the minute, such as insects and jewels. The sea was believed to be a particularly volatile element among these objects, as it partakes of the qualities of water, is vast with many local variations, and is also changeable because of its susceptibility to other forces. Medieval science addressed the sea within the cosmos in encyclopaedias, geographical writings, and more specialized studies of phenomena such as tides. In all of them, the sea features as a dynamic body that encircles the earth but also has local characteristics. As an introduction to the range of ways the sea was apprehended, and its mutability and associative nature, one of the major sources for later medieval knowledge about the world, Isidore of Seville’s early seventh-century Etymologiae, is especially important. The Etymologies is an encyclopaedic compilation of classical and early medieval learning along with Isidore’s sometimes fanciful histories of words. Many later writers drew on its authoritative lore for ideas about the universe, the earth, the trivium and quadrivium,
the seven liberal arts, and so on. Book VIII, *De mundo et partibus*, begins by naming the sea as one of the principal parts of the universe along with the heavens, air, and earth, and, like the other elements, ‘it is in eternal motion’. The sea, along with the land, gives rise to rain clouds, and winds disturb it. Isidore soon after begins his chapter on the sea by drawing attention to its ‘congregate’ qualities, describing it as ‘a general gathering of waters’. He speculates that it is called ‘mare’ because of its bitterness (‘amarus’) and ‘aqua’ because it is flat (‘aequaliter’). Its size does not vary, he says, because it is so immense that rivers adding to it do not change its volume in a noticeable way. Its associative qualities include its bitterness absorbing fresh water from rivers, the clouds in turn taking in some of its water like the wind, which also ‘carries away part of the sea’, and caverns through which the ocean’s water flows back to the source of the rivers. He also says that it ‘has no specific color’ because it changes with the quality of the winds. Sometimes it is golden, sometimes muddy, and sometimes black. He continues by lingering on the fact that the sea has a multitude of names because it borrows from the lands near it. It is called ‘Gallic, Germanic, Scythian, Caspian, Hyrcanian, Atlantic’, and more, raising the question of whether the ocean is one entity or multiple ones. Subsequent chapters describe the Mediterranean and its parts, and the Red Sea, before continuing with a description of tides and straits.

Where Isidore is neutral in a sense about the sea’s mutable and associative nature, commercial writings sometimes depict the sea in emotionally and morally negative terms. The ocean is depicted as potentially – and often – perilous to trade, and the fiscal opportunities it affords can endanger the soul. In some ways representative of this tradition is a fifteenth-century English rutter, likely the earliest of its kind to survive in Europe, which is a set of navigational directions probably based on one or more seaman’s records aboard a vessel. The rutter contains plain navigational information about the coasts of England, Ireland, and the continent, detailing features such as landmarks, wind directions, and sea floor qualities. The whole intent of its instructional lists for a boat pilot, and potentially other readers, is to assist in safe travel around England, and to Europe and back.

Middle English writers of literature also depict ships and sea commerce in some detail and, like the rutter, they frequently draw attention to its dangerous qualities, but they can be more emotive. One of Chaucer’s many references to sea trade occurs within the ‘Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale’ in the *Canterbury Tales*, his story of deceptive learned men who trick others and who are themselves undone by the appearance of transmuting metal into gold. Some of the people one of his canons dupe appear to be merchants, or people who are familiar with the challenges merchants face. One of them says that ‘A marchant, pardee [by God], may nat ay [always] endure,/Trusteth me wel, in his prosperitee./Somtyme his good is drowned in the see,/And somtyme comth it sauf unto the londe’. Chaucer also depicts the Shipman in the General Prologue of the *Canterbury Tales* as someone adept at navigating the tricky tides, currents, anchorages, inlets, and ‘daungers’ of the sea, but perhaps the greatest threat comes from the Shipman himself. He is well armed on the pilgrimage, he regularly steals wine from the merchants who hire him, he has killed many at sea so that ‘By water he sente hem hoom to every lond’, and he does not care at all about having a moral conscience.
Boece, Chaucer’s translation of Boethius’ Consolation of Philosophy, contains scientific descriptions of the sea that emphasize its changeability in strongly emotive terms. Boece describes the stars as holding above the waves and drowning their flames by being ‘iplowngid’ (plunged) in the sea.\textsuperscript{19} The sea’s ‘rage’ and ‘manaces’ are in part attributed to its varying temperatures, ‘commoeynege [exciting] or chasynge upward hetre fro the botme’.\textsuperscript{20} The sea’s fundamental nature is that it is sometimes calm ‘with smothe watter’ and sometimes ‘horrible with wawes [waves] and with tempestes’.\textsuperscript{21} One strait in the Aegean Sea is described as ’boylynge’ because the sea ‘ebbeth and floweth, and somtyme the streem is on o [one] side, and somtyme on the tothir’\textsuperscript{22} Elsewhere, ‘Ofte the see is cleer and calm without moevynge flodes, and ofte the horrible wynd Aquylon [the North wind] moeveth boylynge tempestes, and overwhelveth [agitates] the see’.\textsuperscript{23} Tempests are prominent in the Boece and in Chaucer’s other writings and other authors, and they evoke similarly formidable feelings. A natural phenomenon and a metaphor, in the Boece the wind ‘beten the strondes of the see’ into ‘quakynge floodes’.\textsuperscript{24} Elsewhere in the same work, the ‘see of fortune’ torments people, and the dreamer implores the ‘governour’ of it all to ‘restreyne the ravysschyngen flodes’, with ‘ravysschynge’ possessing an interesting range of meanings, including the modern-day sense ‘ravishing’ but also stealing, abduction, and rape.\textsuperscript{25} Melancholy had a dominant position in medieval discourses along with the other humours, and the sea is often associated with melancholy in the Boece via metaphors of drowning. The narrator at the start is weeping in bed at his misfortunes with the muses about him, and Lady Philosophy observes how he is ‘dreynt’ (drowned) ‘in overthrowynge depnesse’.\textsuperscript{26} Lady Philosophy comforts the dreamer in the Boece, drying his tears with the folds of her gown because his eyes ‘weren fulle of the wawes of my wepynges’.\textsuperscript{27} She seems well suited to understand and counsel him since even she ‘in the byttere see of this lif, be fordryven with tempestes blowynge aboute’.\textsuperscript{28}

Most memorable among powerful metaphors of the sea is the aural one in another work by Chaucer, the House of Fame. The dream vision poem describes the House of Fame, within which all the speech on earth is repeated and multiplied, truth and falsity conflated. It is said to sound like the ‘betynge of the see […] ayen [against] the roches holowe [notched].\textsuperscript{29} Whan tempest doth the shippes swalowe’. The noise can be heard a mile away. Chaucer’s translation of Boethius further adapts the natural and scientific aspect of the sea into a metaphor when it says that neither the ‘rage ne the manaces of the see […] ne schal not moeve’ the measured and humble man.\textsuperscript{30} This ethical quality extends to a condemnation of trade because in the first Age of Man, humans never participated in merchants’ activities:

no gest ne straunger ne karf yit the heye see with oores or with schipes; ne thei ne hadden seyn yit none newe stroondes to leden marchandise into diverse con-
trees. Tho [Then] weren the cruele claryouns ful hust [hushed] and ful stille.\textsuperscript{31}

Chaucer’s lyric poem ‘The Former Age’ expresses similar sentiments when it says there were no ships at the start of time for merchants to fetch ‘outlandish ware’.\textsuperscript{32} The House of Fame’s allusions to vessels in trouble and shipwrecks appear in many other Middle English works, and ships are customarily allied with perils that can have
devastating effects on people and objects. The grisly aspects are rendered physically and emotionally. The alliterative poem ‘Patience’ by the same poet as Sir Gawain and the Green Knight contains a high degree of technological detail about ships when it renders the story of Jonah and the whale. At one point, Jonah boards a ship, and the poem delineates the tackle, sails, windlass, bow line, ‘gyde-ropes’, and more.33 Later, when the ship encounters a great storm, the same level of specificity arises as the crew throws items overboard and desperately bails water to try to save the vessel. The anonymous poem known as ‘The Pilgrims Sea-Voyage’ from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century depicts similar desperation when it describes pilgrims sailing from Sandwich, Winchelsea, Bristol, or other locations in England to Santiago de Compostela in Spain. It details the crew hauling up and furling sails, the pilgrims meanwhile fearful: ‘Theyr hertes begyn to fayle’.34 The ship under way, the boatswain starts to tend to the passengers, commanding the cook to prepare beer and a meal, and the steward to serve it. The pilgrims however are suffering too much and ‘have no lust to ete’.35 They keep ‘theyr bowlys fast theym by’.36 Some ask for hot malmsey to restore their health while others eschew their boiled or roasted dinner and eat only ‘saltyd tost’.37 The owner commands makeshift cabins be built for their cover, but some passengers do not even get a sack of straw for sleeping, instead having to make do in their clothes. An individual speaker appears in the last verse of the nine stanza poem to say he or she would be as happy to be in a wood ‘Without mete or drynk’ as on the boat,38 especially because he or she has to sleep near the bilge-pump: ‘A man were as good to be dede/As smell therof the stynk!’39 Chaucer’s earliest poem, The Book of the Duchess, also a dream vision, recounts how King Ceyx and the others aboard a ship are drowned because of a tempest so that, bleakly, ‘never was founde […]/Bord ne man, ne nothing elles’.40 The terror of shipwrecks is also evoked in surprising locations as in the mock-heroic ‘Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ about Chauntecleer, Pertelote, and the fox. Chauntecleer tells the story of two men who plan to voyage over the sea but who are delayed because the wind is ‘contrarie’.41 They have to wait until it changes, at which point one of the men dreams that a voice warns him against sailing. His friend however ignores the warning, and while at sea, his ship’s bottom is ‘rente,/And ship and man under the water wente/In sighte of othere shippes it bisyde,/That with hem seyled at the same tyde’.42

Chaucer’s most sustained oceanic treatment is the ‘Man of Law’s Tale’, a story that conflates a saint’s life with a romance about a Roman emperor’s daughter, Constance. Based on a French source, it was a very popular story in the late Middle Ages, told and retold in a variety of places. The tale evokes divine protection while Constance exists on the ocean. The sea’s real and dramatic dangers account for a great deal of its strong pathos, but the powerful feelings the sea causes in the narrative do not so much work, in Reddy’s terms, as emotives that transform her or other characters around her, as they work to alter the direction of the narrative. The oceanic vastness and the sea’s chaotic nature serve together as a kind of randomizing device in the ‘Man of Law’s Tale’ because the sea redirects the story toward chance and fate. First, the ocean in the tale, as in other Middle English works, is an isolating factor; Constance’s boat is all alone on the sea. At two main moments in the tale, she is forced into a rudderless boat, within which she survives for several years at sea, sometimes with her infant
son. The Prologue evokes a ‘bareyne yle stondynge in the see’. When Constance is first exiled, she is put in a rudderless vessel in Syria, sails ‘Yeres and dayes’ through the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) and out the Strait of Morocco (as it was often then called). Chaucer’s narrator asks who saved her during all this time, who ‘kepte hire fro the drenchyng [drowning] in the see’, who withheld the ‘foure spirites of tempest’, and who fed her? In each case, he summons up biblical precedent to account for her assistance. The answer is given that the Saviour’s care keeps her from ‘harm’ when she ‘in the salte see/Was put allone and dampned for to dye’. At another point in the narrative, God keeps her from ‘shame/In salte see’ when she is threatened with rape as, landing once on a shore, he drowns her attacker.

Commercial, martial, and fearful aspects of the sea combine in several Middle English works. The anonymous fifteenth-century poem The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye joins the emotionally wrought aspect of the ocean as an isolating element with an explicitly defensive posture involving ‘the narowe see’ that separates England from its enemies and competitors in trade, particularly Spain and Flanders. The ocean makes up half of England’s important attributes: ‘Kyng, shype and swerde and pouer of the see’. The poem details the necessity of merchants from Flanders to pass through the strait between Dover and Calais (an English possession at the time) in order to reach Spain and vice versa, and points out the significance of trade in English wool and tin for both countries before going on to describe the importance of the ocean for England in relation to Portugal, Normandy, Scotland, Prussia, the Genoese, Venice, Florence, Brabant, and elsewhere. The narrator of the poem appeals to his audience’s patriotic feelings when he asks what good it is if others have more liberty in ‘our sea’ than ‘we’ have in theirs. Some 150 years before Shakespeare’s John of Gaunt describes the sea as a wall or moat, the Libelle pictures it positively as follows:

Kepe than the see abought [about] in speciall,  
Whiche of England is the rounde wall,  
As though England were lykened to a cite  
And the wall environ [all around] were the see.  
Kepe than the see, that is the wall of Englond,  
And than is Englond kepte by Goddes sonde [dispensation].

Like the ‘Man of Law’s Tale’, the ocean’s isolating characteristics are a sign of God’s providence; they are rendered positively if only England’s people would ‘keep’ the sea. The voice of the poem is urgent in its appeal. The same political and fiscal urgency appears in places in Chaucer’s other works. The Merchant in the General Prologue, for instance, uses the same language as the Libelle when he says he wants the sea between ports in Holland and in Suffolk ‘kept for any thyng’ safe from piracy and for trade.

Warfare at sea is also of an extreme, dramatic nature in that it brings the horrors associated with sea travel together with the slaughter of medieval battle. Chaucer briefly mentions that the knight in the Canterbury Tales has fought in many wars, some causing death, and Chaucer includes the fact that he was involved in one on the ‘Grete See’. His most sustained description of a sea battle in the ‘Legend of
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Cleopatra’ dwells on the specific ways men can put each other to death. A dream vision and a collection of tales, the *Legend of Good Women* includes the ‘Legend of Cleopatra’, which narrates the story of the great love she shared with Anthony. The narrator of the legend says he will not repeat the events in the lives of Cleopatra and Anthony, nor the wedding celebrations between them, saying metaphorically that ‘men may overload a ship or barge’, but the tale then goes on to detail at length the great sea battle of Actium. It is typical of a medieval work to describe ancient events in present terms, so when Octavian’s naval forces encounter those of Anthony and Cleopatra, the audience gets realistic descriptions of contemporary sea warfare. Each force tries to attack their enemies with the sun at its back, each fires large guns, each employs ‘the grapnel’ to draw opponents to its side and ‘sherynge-hokes’ to cut rigging ‘lyke a sithe [scythe]’. As the fighting gets into close quarters, the narrative becomes more intense as men battle each other as they would on land, which was common in medieval sea warfare. Men use poleaxes on each other, one tries to take cover behind the mast but is forced out, and his opponent ‘dryveth hym overbord’. They use peas to make decks slippery, quicklime to blind and sting their enemies, and they slash with ‘strokes […] as thikke as hayl’. While the battle is ferocious, its savagery is important as a symbol for Anthony and Cleopatra’s desire to remain together. When they are forced into defeat and Cleopatra’s vessel is parted from Anthony’s, in Chaucer’s version, Anthony immediately ‘for dispeyr out of his wit he sterte [went]/And rof [stabbed] hymself anon thourghout the herte’. Cleopatra, directly upon return to Egypt, flings herself into a pit of serpents. While the tale is graphic about the sea battle, its drama is directed toward the effects it has on the couple’s passionate relationship.

It is important, however, not to overemphasize the negative effects associated with the sea when, because of its changeable nature, it also could be calm and its effects beneficial to those who come in contact with it. It often has positive attributes in the *Boece* where it could be ‘horrible with wawes and with tempestes’, even ‘boylynge’ ones, but it can also appear as gentle, ‘cleer and calm without moevynge flodes’, making people glad when it is like that. In that work, even its storms can be advantageous because they ‘torneth upward sandes’ to reveal ‘richesses’. Ultimately, Chaucer’s translation of the Boethius says that ‘stable feyth’ can hold the world’s ‘chaungynges’ and ‘contrarious qualites of elementz’. This includes the sea that, although ‘gredy to flowen’, ‘constreyneth with a certein eende his [its] floodes, so that it is nat leveful [permitted] to streche his brode termes [boundaries] or bowndes uppon the erthes (that is to seyn, to coveren al the erthe)’. The ultimate cause of ‘al this accordaunce [and] ordenaunce of thynges is’ that everything is ‘bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see’.

Indeed, the sea could give rise to both negative and positive feelings in the same work. In the *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, a poem by an anonymous contemporary of Chaucer’s, it is as though the sea’s mutability is also transferred to the changeability of its emotional effects. It includes an extended description of preparing to sail over the sea from Sandwich to Brittany in terms that echo the realistic descriptions found in chronicles on sea battles and navigational texts such as the rutter and the poem the *Libelle*. It details the stocking of ships, horses being secured with trusses and other
ropes, sails, portholes, anchors, and the practices involved when sailing, including the use of a compass. Arthur’s great army sets out at night on the ocean but, out of ‘drede’ of sailing at night, they slow down. Meanwhile, Arthur is secure in a richly decorated cabin, and he goes to sleep ‘with the swogh [swaying] of the se’ to dream an allegorical vision, but even though his royal cabin offers a brief respite from the fear of sailing at night, his dream begins with a ‘dragon, dredful to behold,/Come drivand [driving] over the deep to drenchen his pople’. Chaucer’s translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* also describes the sea as changeable, a peril and also a benefit. Its mutability is that it is ‘never […] so stille/That with a litel wynde’ it will not ‘Overwhelme and turne also’ as though it had gone mad with waves. The narrator of the *Romaunt* depicts love as frequently paradoxical and like the sea, both ‘A swete perell in to droun’ and two lines later ‘A wikked wave [wave], awey to were [wear]’. Charybdis in the translation is equally paradoxical: ‘perilous,/Disagreable [unpleasant] and gracious’. Chaucer is apt to exploit these senses of the ocean as having mixed emotional effects and qualities. His book-length romance *Troilus and Criseyde*, which centres on the poignantly ironic contradictions of love, evokes the sea at the beginning of the poem when we learn that Troilus’ love for Criseyde makes his heart fear so much that it sails ‘streight unto the deth’. These and other references to the ocean and love in the poem accord with conventional descriptions of love’s power to incite hope and despair so much so that the whole world seems to embody the bifurcated nature of love. The poem also draws on the philosophical discussions of the nature of the world such as in the *Boece* in attributing to love the power to ‘govern’ earth and sea. The famous emotionally fraught *Canticus Troili* of Book III, in which Troilus sings of the ironies of love, shows love as able to bind together nature’s opposing forces, including the elements. Among them is the ocean ‘that gredy is to flowen’, which love ‘Constreyneth’ its ‘flodes that so fiersly they ne growen/To drenchen erthe and al for evere mo’. The song is one of the finest expressions of courtly love, and it is not outside of convention in the finely calibrated tragedy that is *Troilus and Criseyde* when Troilus’ second song near the end of the poem shows the obverse side of love, again using oceanic references. Troilus equates his heart to a boat that has no guiding star since he has lost Criseyde and, like the *Romaunt of the Rose*, his complaint evokes Charybdis. Troilus, bereft of light, ‘evere derk in torment, nyght by nyght,/Toward my deth with wynd in steere [astern] I saille; […] if that I faille/The gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,/My ship and me Caribdis wol deuoure’. Even the narrator of *Troilus* is affected at points in the poem by the despair of its hero, opening Book Two for instance by calling on the elements to help the narrative get better: ‘Owt of thise blake wawes for to saylle,/O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere [begins to clear]’. He likens his project to a boat that has such heavy work because of his weak knowledge or skill, and because Troilus’ ‘disespeir’ is its sea and ‘tempestous matere’, so that the narrator is scarcely able to ‘steere’ the poem’s course.

The ocean can, therefore, be emotionally positive as well as negative; sometimes it appears in images as simple as the sun warming the sea or lovers waiting for the sun to go down into it so that the light will darken. But it could also be quite strange. One of the oddest and more extended poetic descriptions in Middle English literature of a
large body of water occurs in the romance *Kyng Alisaunder* from about 1400. A marine interlude in the poem serves as a turning point in the narrative recounting Alexander's various activities. The episode combines the world of marvels with a certain practicality, even a scientific curiosity, on the part of its hero. Alexander's natural philosophy transforms his initial horror at the cannibalistic practices of the tribes of Gog, Magog, and Taracounte to a satisfactory solution. Alexander, aghast at what these creatures eat, prays in 'Sarsynes wyse' to learn how he might defeat them. He subsequently travels to a location between Egypt and India, and he encounters a people who live on an island in a large body of water that is submerged at high tide, called 'Meopante'. The people there have gates made of willows and tree bark that they close when the water comes, and they construct their houses from 'butumay' (bitumen), a clay so strong that no water can penetrate it and 'jrne [iron] ne steel ne metal to-dryve'. Alexander lives there for half a year, viewing the fishes' hiding places and the habitation of aquatic monsters, which chase each other for food. He learns the underwater origins of the winds, the extent of 'þe marches of þe cee, jwys [in truth],/From helle al to Paradys', and he uses several thousand ships to gather the clay. He returns to the cannibal tribes and uses the bitumen to enclose a sea called Calpias (perhaps the Caspian) so that the creatures of Taracounte cannot sail out and rob others. Employing pillars of steel a hundred feet long and the bitumen from Meopante, he stops up a crucial strait. The tribes cannot escape because the only way out is over mountains that reach to the sky; they await Doomsday when they will return.

To conclude this discussion of the tempestuous affects of the sea, it should be noted that Chaucer could also parody the dramatic emotions associated with the ocean or that were commonly articulated in oceanic terms in his day. Troilus' and others' intense melancholy or euphoric happiness had, by Chaucer's day, already become something of a cliché, an 'emotional regime' so recognizable that Chaucer and his audiences were willing to see it parodied. Even though the comic beast fable, the 'Nun's Priest's Tale', recounts the sorry story of the man who does not heed his friend's advice and is drowned at sea, the exemplum is in the mouth of the overly defensive rooster Chauntecleer who might be using the story in part to avoid the herbs that his wife Pertelote has recommended to him. The mock-heroics and mock-scientific discussion the two birds have continue after their disagreement when Pertelote and Chauntecleer's other wives 'bathe' in the dust about him. Chauntecleer sings 'murier than the mermayde in the see', Chaucer then referencing the authority on mermaids, Physiologus. The high philosophy is in stark contrast to the rooster's 'singing'. Soon the fox will appear, so Chauntecleer's song is also ironically apt because it will almost lead him to destruction. Chauntecleer is too affective, too intent on his masculine prowess, to notice the impending danger.

**Adrift**

The sea's 'ugly feelings' and the less strong, more ambiguous emotions to which it gives rise are prevalent in scientific and literary writings of the period. These maritime phenomena are not so much tempests but instead involve a different set of dynamics, for example, of oceanic surfaces and depths, which suggest obfuscation and
hidden forces. Some emotions shade between clearly significant and uglier ones. The emotive force of these odd affects that are more difficult to place can be transformative of characters and ways of thinking about the world as much as the more powerful ones, but they are not always consistent. Tides, for instance, have mutable and associative qualities that are particularly strong. Tides appealed to medieval philosophers and others because they present a remarkable — if somewhat paradoxical — example of perpetual change. The moon and the sun in the sky affect the sea, and local features of the lands and relations between them further complicate its movements, obscuring the systematicity. The moon and sun also have causal relations to nearly every other element in the cosmos, continuity among them occurring all the way to human bodies and psyches. Bede, writing in the first quarter of the eighth century, describes the effects of the moon on tides in his work on temporality, *The Reckoning of Time*, in which ‘more marvellous than anything else is the great fellowship that exists between the ocean and the course of the Moon’.76 It has been said that Bede is intent on explaining the divine regularity of the universe, so it is all the more remarkable that he sees local variation in tides in his native Britain. His theory is that ‘though the tides are driven by the Moon, whose sway is exercised over all the Earth, their ultimate expression is eccentrically local’.77 Some variations are due to interactions with the wind, but others are simply because of location.

Gerald of Wales’ twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica* also concentrates on tides, describing them as active, varied, and connected to human emotions. He describes the Irish Sea as ‘being agitated by opposing currents’ and ‘almost always troubled’.78 He goes on to note the particular characteristics of tides in a variety of locations, characteristics that, like Bede, seem as though they might be based on observations or accounts of actual tidal phenomena. An explicit connection between the tides and human emotions is made in his description of Ireland because of the common effect of the moon. Gerald writes:

> Indeed, the moon is the entire source and cause of motion in liquids, so that it not only regulates the waters of the ocean, but, in animal life, influences the marrow in the bones, the brains in the head, and the juices of trees and plants.79

Just as the tides can be affected by other planets and local variation, so too can everything in the world be continuous with the forces driving them.

Tides in Robert Grosseteste’s thirteenth-century *Questio de fluxu et refluxu maris* are even more complicated, especially in terms of their associative qualities: they have their general cause on Earth, and the specific cause is that each of the four elements shares in the processes of rarefication and condensation. Water and air are more susceptible to these processes than the others. Grosseteste, like his predecessors, concentrates on the moon and, to a lesser extent, the sun, as the principal causes of tidal change, but he is novel in that he posits that it is actually the moon’s rays that bring about rarefication and condensation. His explanation indicates some of the complexities in accounting for the tides and their activities, as well as showing the ways they can affect other things, including people. The moon ‘exercises the greatest control over moist and cold bodies. Thus certain people are called lunatics because, when the
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moon wanes, they suffer a diminution of the cerebrum, since the cerebrum is a cold and moist substance’.80 The moon’s light stirs up vapours in the water and, because it is salt and therefore has ‘heaviness and viscosity’, traps the vapours and causes ‘swelling’.81 There are then eight specific reasons why the tides increase and decrease, and there are three kinds of seas – those that have tides, those that do not, and those that have small ones – so the reader can begin to see that all these cosmological forces can cause many different kinds of effects all the way to the cerebrum not only in cases of madness but also in less clear psychological and emotive effects. Grosseteste’s and others’ scientific ideas about tides appear in diverse kinds of works. Chaucer’s Tretise on the Astrolabe contains multiple calculations for when there will be a flood tide or ebb tide, whether a tide will be high or low, and so on.82

Bartholomaeus Anglicus’ De proprietatibus rerum contains information about tides, and it is worth lingering on this work because it was possibly the most popular late medieval encylopaedia, it was a book that was important for many authors, and its science reveals a lot about the more equivocal, problematic feelings about the ocean. Bartholomaeus, a Franciscan, composed On the Properties of Things in 1240 (probably in Paris), drawing from over 100 sources. His explicit intent is to provide information about things including God, angels, humans, and all the things of the universe to a person who does have the common knowledge or easy access to it in books.83 John Trevisa translated the work into English at the end of the fourteenth century, and it was first printed in England in the late fifteenth century. It is used and cited in chronicle histories, biblical commentaries, penitential works, sermons, bestiaries, travel writings, and poetry, including Chaucer’s. Bartholomaeus addresses water and the sea in Book 13. De proprietatibus rerum on water is largely based on earlier sources, especially Isidore of Seville, although Bartholomaeus greatly expands on Isidore. Bartholomaeus does not follow Grosseteste’s description of the action of light on the sea, instead describing how light reflects off water, how its rays are refracted within it, and how it magnifies items.84 He goes on to describe different kinds of waters (wells, rivers, lakes, and fishponds), famous biblical and classical bodies of water, etymologies, and so on. The sea is so changeable, associative, and positive and negative in terms of effects to the point that it becomes ‘ugly’. Its characteristics and its effects, including ‘emotive’ ones, often fall outside of clearly definable and valued effects.

The contradictory nature of sea is the first characteristic Bartholomaeus describes. The sea ‘resteþ nevere of mevynge til þe overe [upper] syde þerof be even’.85 This image can be read as an idea akin to balance – the possibility of equilibrium – but it also suggests the expanse and sheer volume of the sea. Where Ngai’s ‘ugly’ feelings have, as she says, ‘duration’, here the sea has spatial extent instead of a temporal one, and the emotives hint at something more unsettling than balanced. The sea ‘ben alweie mevynge and may noght reste for he fa[i]leþ atte fulle oþer meveþ and shedith himself aboute’ (for it fails entirely or moves and sheds itself about).86 Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomaeus’ oceanic terminology is interesting because his translations into English capture the way he is trying to think about the ocean and to work with words that he knows his vernacular audiences will understand. One word he uses to describe oceanic changeability is its ‘walowynge’.87 ‘Walowynge’ of the sea is due to the wind and because it is always moving in itself. These qualities,
he points out, ‘smyteþ togeders and shoveþ and putteth everyche oþere now upward, now donward’. The reason why it ‘saveþ his [its] owne substaunce fro peril of corruptcioun’ is because it is ‘mevable withoute reste’. Even though its substance may not be exactly ‘corrupted’, the sea is nevertheless mixed and its parameters unclear in that it is always ‘rennynge’ and not containable by itself. Trevisa also uses particular terminology to describe the sea’s associative characteristics in that it is ‘fonginge’ (taking, susceptible) and ‘commynycable’. The water takes on the qualities of the earth through which it passes, sometimes salty or sweet, clear or turbid, thick or thin ‘For watir hath no determinate qualite, noyþer colour noyþer savour, and þat for he shulde be able to fonge [take] eseliche alle colours and savours’. Later Bartholomaeus begins a chapter on the abyss believed to be below the earth’s surface, a place for waters to gather together before reemerging. He says ‘Abissus is depnesse of water unsey’ (unseen) and, because an abyss is so primal and the first thing to be made from nothing, it is the ‘fonger’, the receiver ‘of shappes and formes and þat by moste ordinate ȝifte of God [by means of the most properly directed gift of God]’. Abysses intrigue Bartholomaeus because of Genesis; he cites Saint Augustine in these passages who claimed that they were the first matter without form and shape. The abyss, Trevisa’s translation continues, is called ‘watir, for it is fletynge [flowing] and rennynge and also for it fongeþ [takes] al manere fourmes and shappes’. The abyss is so deep that it can always accept any amount of water and, he adds, it is ‘commynycable’. He does not explain this term, but the connotation from these and other passages seems to be that it ‘communes’ with other waters elsewhere and with other entities, such as lands, in diverse locations. He concludes on the abyss by saying ‘it was called water for ablenesse to take upon it forme and shape, for by that ablenesse it might take all manner forme and shape and qualitie’. Water’s distinguishing feature of ‘ablenesse’, a responsiveness to other things and forces, is also one of the principal characteristics of the ocean. The sea’s ‘walowynge’ causes itself to foam, thus becoming another substance, it mingles gravel into itself, it ‘shoveþ’ fish, and it is moved by the winds, and it in turn also moves and even ‘bredeþ’ winds.

The sea is neither positive nor negative as a whole in Trevisa’s Bartholomaeus. The sea’s ‘walowynge’ may ‘shoveþ fysshes’, but it also is ameliorative in this effect; it ‘amendþ ham [the fish] and makith ham bettir’. The moon and the tides, and the dog-star Canicula (Sirius) affect the sea, which in turn cleans itself, and is generative, producing more animals and fish than the land as well as, paradoxically since it is itself soft, bringing forth hard things, both alive and dead, such as shellfish and precious stones. It helps with sicknesses, can change its bitterness to sweetness when it passes through its underground caverns, and it nourishes its animals. The ocean may cast up mists and clouds that ‘maketh dymnes and derkenesse’, but it also ‘bateþ [abates] þe hete’ of the sun. It is so changeable that it has ‘no colour of his owne’; it can be yellowish, white and clear, or black. It likewise has mixed effects on ships, some bad and some potentially beneficial. For example, it ‘bereþ up shippes and puttep ham to clyffes and brymmes’ (seashores), but it also ‘bereth hem [them] with him [it] and holdep ham streyte’. He notes oceanic perils but, while some are due to its waves, it can be dangerous mainly because of other elements that affect it or are near it. Winds make it larger, the shore and rocks can imperil ships, and mists can make navigation
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difficult. Ships can be endangered, but the peril can also be, he points out, because they are ‘feeble’ in themselves or because pilots are not proficient. Indeed, Bartholomaeus invariably insists on carefully detailing both the sea’s negative qualities and more positive ones. This mixed quality extends to the very definition of the sea itself because, although it might be called different names, it is ‘al one see’, an ocean that can always bring people who are separated back together again. It ‘helpeþ in nede, and is socour in periles, and spede and shortnesse of waies, and profit and wynynge of travaillynge [travelling, working] men’.100

Trevisa’s translation repeats and sums up many of the qualities in the chapter on the synonym pelagus:

_Pelagus_ is þe brede [breadth] of þe see withoute clyf [shore] and withoute haven […] And þat haþ moste depnesse and unstablenesse and contynuel mevynge, and gendreth and feedith whales and oþir diverse wonderlful fisshes, and bre[d] eth many vapoures and fumosites [fumes], and haþ þerof þiknesse and myste, and takeþ many diveristees of colours by dyversitees of wyndes, and gadreþ above a fome of [because of] smytynge and betynge of wawes, and crieþ and maketh grete noyse. And a criynge see and an unpeisible is perilouse.101

Literary writings make similar observations about the sea, including the fact that it is impossible if not foolish to make general statements about it because it is not one entity. The _Boece_ for instance, suggests that it is imprudent to ‘despise the see’ and its ‘manasynge with flodes’.102 In the ‘Miller’s Tale’, Nicholas happily and intentionally manipulates John’s poor scientific knowledge about the sea and scripture when he tells him the world, including his young wife, Alison, is about to be drowned in a second flood. It is a sign of John’s ignorance and blind faith that his imagination leads him to envisage ‘Noees flood come walwynge as the see/To drenchen Alison, his hony deere’.103 The sea can quite innocently take the sun’s rays into its depths when it sets, but quite often its depths are less benign and more indistinct. It can hold marvels and wealth in its depths, but even though Chaucer’s Boethius says that Homer might sing about the clearness and brightness of the sun, even its brightness cannot ‘breken or percen the inward entrayles of the erthe or elles of the see’.104

In some literary works, the sea gives rise to milder senses of worry and even a lack of concern. In a few, melancholy shades into a less strong and shorter lived emotion of fruitless desire. Such is Antiochus’ attempts to ‘restrayne’ the sea in the ‘Monk’s Tale’.105 The sea is even more ambiguous and subtle in the ‘Parson’s Tale’. It might be a great tempest, but Chaucer says that when it comes to sin, a wave might engulf a ship, but the same damage can be caused by ‘smale drops of water, that entren thrugh a litel cre-vace’.106 Consider also Chaucer’s other frequently cited descriptions of the sea’s effects in the ‘Franklin’s Tale’, the story of the lady Dorigen, her husband Arveragus, and the young squire Aurelius. Arveragus, who first gains Dorigen’s pity through his worthiness and obedience to her, travels over from Brittany to England for adventure. In the two years he is away, Aurelius declares his love for Dorigen. Dorigen’s rash promise to grant Aurelius her love involves the sea and its shore so that the emotives circulating among the three characters are tied to the ocean’s threat but also its ‘unstablenesse’.
Readers notice the link between feelings and ocean in Dorigen’s strong complaints at the beginning of the tale when Arveragus has left. She spends time looking out to the ocean, searching for a ship or barge that might be carrying her husband back to her. At other times, she casts her eye down to the ‘grisly rokkes blake’ and ‘into the see’, despairing over the dangers they might present to his voyage. She considers the rocks ‘rather a foul confusion/Of werk than any fair creacion/Of swich a parfit wys [perfect manner of] God and a stable’. When she makes the promise to be Aurelius’ love, she says she will do so only if he removes all the rocks, which sends him into despair that seems to have no resolution. So far the tale accords with the stronger courtly emotions of pity, faithfulness, love both husbandly and passionate, of being forlorn, and of dangerous melancholy. But it is the sea’s changeableness that ultimately enables Aurelius to answer her promise. The ocean’s inconstancy impinges on Dorigen’s constancy to her husband, distorting it. Aurelius learns, by means of his brother’s scientific arts and the unusual and ancient learning of a certain magician, the time period in which the tide will obscure the rocks. The conclusion of this work is that ‘It semed that alle the rokkes were aweye’. In fact, Aurelius has been right to pray to the moon for help because, as he describes Lucina, she ‘of the see is chief goddesse and queene’. Dorigen’s first reaction to beholding the rocks’ absence is to wish to commit suicide, but the story eventually provides a series of exchanges among the men so that she is freed from her promise with her husband.

Oceanic metaphors in literature include a speaker not caring whether he (traditionally male) floats or not, a metaphor which is interesting to trace. Floating can occasionally be quite positive, as when Troilus and Criseyde, finally together, float ‘in blisse’ or when Troilus feels the same floating upon learning he will see his love again. It is a sign of love but also of internal conflict and uncertainty in the canticus in which he likens himself to being tossed ‘to and fro’: ‘Al sterelees withinne a boot am I/Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,/That in contrarie stonden evere mo [more]’. He does not know what ails him. In Chaucer’s complaint, Anelida and Arcite, false Arcite is said not to know nor care whether Anelida ‘flete or synke’. In the author’s other complex allegory, the Parliament of Fowls, the narrator is so ‘astonyeth’ by love – ‘The dredful joye alwey that slit so yerne [slides away so quickly]’ – that he also does not care whether he floats or sinks.

In sum, although connections between the scientific analyses of the sea and literary descriptions are not always explicit, the sea is clearly affective in both discourses. In scientific discourse, it interacts with other objects large and small such as the moon, shores, vessels, and marine creatures. Its very substance is characterized by continual internal change and transformation, and it is associative in that it gives rise to other things such as mists and winds, and is in turn altered by other entities. In Middle English literature, this mutable openness often serves as a metaphor for strongly passionate emotions such as melancholy and futile desire, but it also characterizes uglier feelings of potentially dissimulating kinds. Perhaps the most radical of all instances of this kind is when the sea calls epistemological distinctions into question. We are left, for example, with a moment in the ‘Man of Law’s Tale’ when, after sailing through the Strait of Morocco, Constance washes up on the shore of North England in ‘oure occian’. Despite this sense of familiarity, upon reaching the beach, she seems to
be ‘so mazed in the see/That she forgat hir mynde’. The sea – ‘walowyngne’ and ‘commynycable’ – here causes amnesia and temporarily erases a speaker’s identity so that Constance cannot remember who she is or how she got there. Indeed, the sea has made it so that ‘what she was she wolde no man seye’. The phrase suggests that Constance might be withholding her identity (she will not tell anyone who she is), but it also implies that the sea leads to questions about not only who someone is but also what something is.

Notes

1 Medieval scientific analysis of the ocean is often overlooked, many significant histories claiming that the Middle Ages did not think of the sea scientifically, and that the sea and shores were not studied scientifically until the eighteenth century or even later. See, for example, A. Corbin, The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750–1840, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994; M. S. Reidy, Tides of History: Ocean Science and Her Majesty’s Navy, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009; and J. R., Gillis, The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012.


5 Corbin, The Lure of the Sea, p. 9.


12 Etymologies, 8.10, 8.11.

13 Etymologies, 8.14.

14 Etymologies, 8.15.


16 Canterbury Tales, VIII.947–50.

17 Canterbury Tales, I.402.

18 Canterbury Tales, I.400.

19 Boece, 1.m2.20–1, 4.m5.6–7, 4.m6.11–5.

20 Boece, 1.m4.5–7.

21 Boece, 2.p2.43–6.
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22 *Boece*, 2.m1.3–6.
23 *Boece*, 2.m3.13–6.
24 *Boece*, 1.m7.2–9, 4.m5.24–5.
26 *Boece*, 1.m2.1–2.
27 *Boece*, Bo 1.p2.29; 1.m5.55–6.
30 *Boece*, 1.m4.5–7.
31 *Boece*, 2.m5.18–24.
32 ‘The Former Age’, p. 22.
35 ‘Pilgrims Sea-Voyage’, p. 27.
36 ‘Pilgrims Sea-Voyage’, p. 46.
37 ‘Pilgrims Sea-Voyage’, p. 49.
38 ‘Pilgrims Sea-Voyage’, p. 68.
40 *The Book of the Duchess*, pp. 73–4. The *Book* goes on to describe how his queen, Alcione, cannot sleep, so she prays to Juno, who sends to Morpheus and his son to fetch the body of Ceyx and bring it back to Alcione to prove he is dead, at which point she dies. In the *Canterbury Tales*, the sinister character of Saturn claims drowning in the sea for himself in the ‘Knight’s Tale’ (I.2456).
41 *Canterbury Tales*, VII.3069.
42 *Canterbury Tales*, VII.3101–4.
43 *Canterbury Tales*, II.68.
44 *Canterbury Tales*, II.463.
45 *Canterbury Tales*, I.485, II.491.
46 *Canterbury Tales*, II.479, II.1109–10.
47 *Canterbury Tales*, II.829–30. Other references to isolation due to the ocean occur in Chaucer’s works, as when Ariadne is left ‘in an yle amyd the wilde se’ in the *Legend of Good Women* (F.2163).
49 *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, 35.
51 *Canterbury Tales*, I.276.
52 *Canterbury Tales*, I.59.
53 *Legend of Good Women*, F.621.
54 *Legend of Good Women*, F.641, F.646.
56 *Legend of Good Women*, F.644.
57 *Legend of Good Women*, F.655.
59 *Boece*, 2.p2.43–5, 2.m3.13–5, 2.p5.60.
60 *Boece*, 2.m2.3–4.
61 *Boece*, 2.m8.1–15.
62 *Alliterative Morte Arthure*, *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthure and Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. L. D. Benson and E. E. Foster, TEAMS, Kalamazoo, MI:
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Medieval Institute, 1994, http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/benson-and-foster-
king-arthus-death, I.754.
64 Romaunt of the Rose, B.3773–6.
66 Troilus and Criseyde, I.606.
67 Troilus and Criseyde, III.1744.
68 Troilus and Criseyde, III.1758–61.
69 Troilus and Criseyde, V.640–4.
70 Troilus and Criseyde, 2.1–6.
71 Kyng Alisaunder, ed. G. V. Smithers, vol. 1, Early English Text Society, o.s. 227, London:
72 Kyng Alisaunder, 6186. It is unclear whether the body of water is actually the sea or a lake.
73 Kyng Alisaunder, 6205, 6207. See also 6166–7.
74 Kyng Alisaunder, 6198–9.
75 Canterbury Tales, VII.3267–72.
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96 On the Properties of Things, p. 662/34.
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105 Canterbury Tales, VII.2587.
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107 Canterbury Tales, V.859, V.863.
108 Canterbury Tales, V.869–71.
109 Canterbury Tales, V.1296.
110 Canterbury Tales, V.1046.
111 Troilus and Criseyde, III.1221, III.1671.
112 Troilus and Criseyde, I.415–8.
113 Anelida and Arcite, 182.
114 Parliament of Fowls, 7. The same phrase of disregard appears in Chaucer’s ‘Complaint Unto Pity’, 110.
115 Canterbury Tales, II.505.
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Bibliography

Mutable, associative, and ugly


