

This summer, I was granted the opportunity to conduct research abroad in London, thanks to the generous support of two Bowdoin College funds: a Faculty Scholar Award and the Grua/O'Connell Research Award. I had initially planned on taking my research trip in January, during the long winter break between semesters, but due to the unfortunate timing of the COVID-19 Omicron variant (and my bad luck in catching it) I was forced to postpone until summer. But this trip was well worth the wait! From July into early August, I spent nearly three weeks in London, strolling through the city's streets, markets, gardens, libraries, tea shops, Underground stations, and, of course, innumerable museums and historical sites.

I also discovered a major silver lining to the trip's postponement, as I was able to connect my experience in London to an English course on Chaucer that I took during the spring semester. So, in addition to walking in the footsteps of characters from the urban fantasy books I'd studied and researched at Bowdoin, I got to explore a similarly mythical London by visiting the remnants and palimpsests of sites from Chaucer's life and writing. Witnessing the ways in which modern London was layered atop its own medieval history was striking, and resonated strongly with themes I had been exploring in my research, writing, and classes. I even managed to hop over to Paris on the Eurostar one weekend to peruse the Musée de Cluny and its unparalleled collection of medieval artifacts. And since being in a foreign country provided incredible motivation and creative inspiration for me to write, I returned to the States having made tangible progress on several short story drafts that I hope to one day submit to literary magazines or writing contests or MFA applications. Now that my world has expanded so far beyond Portland and Boston, I am excited to continue writing in Maine about the city I call home, while seeking out further opportunities to learn and grow from experiences abroad, and I am grateful to have been so benefitted, both personally and academically, by my trip to London.