MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear members

The main item of business in this newsletter is the call for session proposals for threads for the 2016 London Congress (below). There is – as you might expect – a London thread, together with eight other lively and enticing topics. Proposals for “open” sessions are also welcomed: indeed, encouraged. There are also varied formats: paper panels, roundtables, seminars, and – following their success at this year’s Congress – poster sessions. Please note that proposals should ONLY be sent to ncsproposals@slu.edu. Please also note that this time you may submit a maximum of just TWO proposals, and that they must be for different types of session.

The Biennial Chaucer Lecturer for the 2016 Congress, elected by the Trustees from suggestions proposed by the membership at large, will be Stephanie Trigg.

This past summer’s Congress in Reykjavík, Iceland was a great success. 440 members presented at the Congress, and over 500 attended. The feedback that we received via the post-Congress survey was overwhelmingly positive. I want to take this opportunity to thank once again Síf Ríkharðsdóttir, the brilliant Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee, who did a stunning job of organizing events and handling the complex logistics of a big conference, and I thank all her team, who worked so hard to provide an excellent experience for all of our delegates: Ármann Jakobsson, Haraldur Bernharðsson, and Margrét Guðmundsdóttir. I would also like to thank Holly Crocker and Glenn Burger, the co-chairs of the Program Committee, who did an outstanding job of shaping the program and managing its complex evolution. I applaud also the entire 2014 Program Committee: Alastair Minnis (ex officio), Laura Ashe, Anthony Bale, Seeta Chaganti, Síf Ríkharðsdóttir, Peter Travis, and Daniel Wakelin (Organizer: Graduate Workshop). I would also like to thank Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir, who co-ran the Graduate Student workshop with Dan Wakelin. A special thank you to Jessica Rezunyk, the Society’s Administrative Assistant, who dealt with so much in the run-up to the Congress and handled all the updates to the Congress website. Thanks also to James Simpson for delivering the splendid 2014 Chaucer Biennial Lecture. I would like to thank warmly Alastair Minnis, our past President (2012-14), for all his work on behalf of NCS. His 2014 Presidential Lecture lives on in our memories (and will be published in SAC 37, with appropriate images). And I welcome, on behalf of NCS, our energetic and experienced new President, Susan Crane.

Some quick updates:

The financial health of the Society is excellent: as of 11/10/2014 we have $514,843.98 in the
endowment. Our main income is from membership dues and royalties, largely from Project MUSE.

At their biennial meeting in Reykjavík this July, the Trustees determined that 5% of the endowment (about $25,000 p.a.) should be used to fund an NCS Postdoctoral Fellow. Saint Louis University has generously offered the Society matched funding + fringe and benefits, for three years in the first instance, to bring the value of the Fellowship up to $50,000 p.a. See below for further news about this position from the President Susan Crane. The ad, with a deadline of Jan 15, 2015, is at the end of this Newsletter. Please spread this news widely and encourage applications from suitable candidates.

Project MUSE is in the process of digitizing and putting online all the back issues of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* (they are currently only available online back to 2008). This will be completed by 2018. Earlier this year, JSTOR invited NCS to enter into an agreement to put the complete run of *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* online; we are about to sign the agreement with them, and we will work to begin digitizing the complete catalog of issues of *SAC* for JSTOR. They may be able to get them up more quickly than Project MUSE.

*SAC* 36 is being printed now; we expect copies to be sent out by the University of Notre Dame Press to current members in mid to late November. Please continue to submit articles to *SAC*, so that we can maintain the high reputation of the journal.

Lynn Staley, one of our Trustees, is spearheading a remarkable and timely initiative that has established bridges between the Society and secondary-school / high-school teachers, and that will result in teachers having a closer relationship with the Society and a greater presence at the next Congress.

I wish you all a great autumn/fall, or spring, wherever you are in the world.

Ruth

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**A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NCS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP**

As current President of NCS, I am pleased to announce the launch of the New Chaucer Society Postdoctoral Fellowship. President Carolyn Dinshaw first envisioned the postdoc and proposed it as our primary funding goal at the Portland congress in 2014. This summer our endowment value hit the target for generating the award, and President Alastair Minnis announced at the Reykjavik congress in 2016 that the first award would be made for the academic year 2015-16.

The postdoctoral award was deferred in 2014 until the Society’s endowment could sustain a $25,000 withdrawal each year without long-term loss in the endowment’s value. In short, with its current value of just over $500,000, the endowment has become a “postdoc machine.” Keeping the withdrawals to 5% per year, we can expect (markets willing) that the endowment will sustain an endless series of similar withdrawals in the future. Our annual withdrawal of 5% can fund either a one-year award of $50,000 to be offered every other year, or a rather meager annual award of $25,000.

In a remarkable development since the Reykjavik congress, our Executive Director Ruth Evans has negotiated a co-hosting arrangement with Saint Louis University, the Society’s current home. Rather than just providing the “fringe” (health benefits, space, etc.), SLU will match our $25,000 as well, bringing the total value of the award to $50,000 plus benefits, and allowing us to offer,
for the next three years, an award that compares well with postdoctoral awards offered by foundations such as Mellon and by U.S.A. universities.

The first NCS Postdoctoral Fellowship is announced in this newsletter, with an application deadline of January 15. Please circulate the announcement to recent Ph.D.s in the Society’s fields of research, Chaucer and his age.

Susan Crane
NCS President

NCS LONDON 2016: CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

The NCS Program Committee for the 2016 Congress taking place in London has determined that this program will comprise two kinds of sessions: sessions tied to particular thematic threads (see below) and independent (“open”) sessions. We invite proposals for sessions of either type with a deadline of December 1, 2014. All proposals should be sent to ncsproposals@slu.edu.

A session proposal should include a brief description of the session (approx. 100 words), the intended thread affiliation (if any), and an indication of its format. It should also contain a short bio of the proposer (2-3 sentences).

Sessions may be proposed in the following formats: paper panels, roundtables, seminars, or poster sessions. A brief description of each genre of session can be found below the thread descriptions. Please note that each thread will contain sessions of each type. We also encourage members to submit sessions on pedagogy, particularly in relation to thread topics.

After these sessions and their organizers have been established, a general call for individual papers and posters will go out to the membership in early February 2015. Members may submit proposals to no more than two sessions, of different types.

We look forward to putting together the 2016 program, and we appreciate all your help with the process.

Emily Steiner and Kellie Robertson
Co-Chairs, NCS 2016 Program Committee

THREADS

1. London: Books, Texts, Lives (organized by Bruce Holsinger and Marion Turner)

This thread will examine the many roles of London – as city and spectacle, as site and sight, as inspiration and mental landscape – in shaping literary culture and artistic imagining, both in Chaucer’s world and in our own. Sessions might explore theories of space and place; relations among bodies, texts, and city spaces; urban and domestic built environments; the life of things in the city and its texts; the senses and the city; cognitive approaches to space; London books, scribal culture and urban reading communities; urban geography and physical boundaries (walls, the river, Southwark and Westminster, wards and parishes); the afterlives of London in literature, culture, and the arts.
2. Medieval Media (organized by Will Robins and Katherine Zieman)

Media Studies has been a fast-growing field in the humanities, with inquiries tending to focus on mass media forms of communication prominent in late modern culture. Yet many intriguing innovations in media theory move away from modern gadgetry to consider more broadly how information is constituted and how it moves within systems, complicating simple notions of agency and materiality. Medieval Studies has much to offer scholars in these fields, who often think only as far back as print. Within Medieval Studies, questions about media provide opportunities for new dialogues among manuscript studies, literary theory, visual studies, textual criticism, linguistics, cognition, and literacy studies. This thread invites consideration of the phenomena of medieval media (manuscript books, performances, images, sounds, etc.) or post-medieval media (print, digitization) in light of ecologies and processes of perception, communication, circulation, cognition, and participation, including the material, aesthetic, and socio-cultural dynamics such processes reveal.

3. Error (organized by Anthony Bale and Steven Kruger)

Proposals for sessions on the theme of Error, including but not limited to: erroneous groups, such as Jews, “Saracens,” and heretics; interfaith perspectives on error; erroneous “races” and bodies; error in relation to queerness, sexuality, and the normal; mistranslation, misattribution, and misinterpretation in medieval texts; doctrinal error, correction, and censorship; the detection and definition of error (as opposed to heresy); cultures of purgatory and self-reform; erroneous and exemplary behavior in hagiography and conduct literature; artistic representations of inappropriate or transgressive behavior; literary culture as a stage for error and its regulation; scribal error, errors in Chaucerian manuscripts; and printer’s errors; Dantean error and Spenser’s Error; erroneous post-medieval understanding of medieval texts; our own scholarly errors: “getting it right,” embracing error within our methodologies, and positing alternatives to positivistic scholarship.

4. Scientiae (organized by Kellie Robertson and D. Vance Smith)

Since Foucault, we have assumed that practices of knowledge are necessarily practices of power. But what practices underlay medieval theories of knowledge? This thread offers opportunities for examining the pressures under which late medieval epistemologies flourished as well as how individual disciplines self-consciously imagined their own modernity. Sessions might address: scientific taxonomies, natural and moral philosophies, visual geographies, medieval humanisms, religious and mystical frames of experience, skepticism, institutions and the schematization of power, secularization and sacralization of knowledges, and the discursive formation of sovereignty. Taken as a whole, these sessions would contribute to a re-thinking of the intellectual landscape of Chaucer’s world and how this geography may have changed in the decades following the poet’s death.

5. Chaucerian Networks (organized by Peter Brown and Shayne Legassie)

The concept of “network” has a long, multifaceted history in the humanities and social sciences and in scholarship on Chaucer and other medieval authors. We invite proposals for sessions that consider the various networks that sustained the careers of Chaucer and other late-medieval writers, as well as sessions that examine the methodological assumptions that underpin traditional and emergent conceptions of “network” in the study of medieval literature and society. Possibilities include:

- patronage and social networks in the Age of Chaucer
late-medieval networks of intellectual, cultural, and economic exchange, especially those that gave rise to new interpretive communities, or that promoted dialogue across established linguistic, religious, ethnic, social, or institutional divides

- medieval paradigms that anticipate later notions of “network”
- conceptions of “network” that developed in other disciplines (anthropology, ecology, medicine, computer science, etc.) but that might be useful to Chaucerian or Medieval Studies.

6. Ritual, Pageant, Spectacle (organized by Tamara Atkin and Emily Steiner)

We invite proposals for sessions on any aspect of medieval performance focusing on England and the British Isles, c. 1300-1550. We hope to sponsor sessions on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to the following: 1) The place of play (the cultural role of drama, its various sites and location, or its location in cities and towns); 2) Pageantry and civic life (drama and city politics, staging protest and critique, and propaganda); 3) religious ritual (liturgy, sacramentality, emotion and gesture, miracle, wonder and doubt); 4) The culture of spectatorship; 5) Court spectacle (royal pageants, ceremony, and the staging of kingship, including cross-Channel spectacle); 6) Periodization and performance; 7) legal dramas (trials, inquisition, punishment, proclamations and enactments of law); 8) Texts in plays/plays in texts.

7. Corporealities (organized by Jonathan Hsy and Katie Walter)

This thread seeks sessions exploring the norms, forms, and manifold possibilities of corporeality and the ways we think about bodily variety writ large. In particular, sessions might think about the non-“natural,” artificial or synthetic bodies constituted variously in medieval notions of the body politic, the spiritual body (of Christ), and community, as well as the forms of (human and non-human) corporeality constructed through the vehicles of theology, law, medicine, history and government. This thread will ask how diverse modes of embodiment shape our understanding of medieval culture; so too will it ask how modes of embodiment shape our own movements through a profession that seeks to better understand and rethink the past. This thread welcomes sessions that will address the complex intersections of race, disability, skin, parchment, environment, monstrosity, and embodied difference – in the age of Chaucer as well as the present.

8. Literary Forms (organized by Arthur Bahr and Anke Bernau)

Form, formalism, aesthetics and the distinctiveness of something called “the literary”—all these have been objects of renewed engagement and contestation in recent years. Sessions might:

- delve more deeply into one or two key aspects of form (such as meter or rhyme), or on topics such as genre or alliterative poetry;
- explore how literary effects emerge from the intersection of textual form with other kinds of form (such as manuscripts, or specific socio-cultural formations);
- ask what and how “literary effects” actually are;
- consider which different aesthetic categories operated or emerged within late medieval literature, and what sensory experiences they came out of, or gave rise to;
- consider the relation of literariness to value.
We would also welcome a poster session that use the constraints of the poster form itself as a way of investigating the formal strangeness that so much medieval literature displays.

9. Uses of the Medieval (organized by Kathleen Davis and Hannah Johnson)

The Middle Ages have been recuperated, co-opted, exploited, and invented anew with each succeeding era. Few other scholars wrestle with such large questions of conceptualization, method, and first principles as do medievalists, even as we are aware of the ideological attachments that cling to our efforts. This thread encourages inquiry into wide-ranging methodological and disciplinary issues concerning the ideological uses of Chaucer or the medieval in diverse contexts. Sessions might examine how either Chaucer or the category of the medieval more generally serves as the theoretical scaffolding for a variety of intellectual models, such as philosophical claims, disciplinary formulations, or philosophies of history and/or forms of rationality. For example, some sessions might examine how the formation, or the forgetting, of the Middle Ages underlies discourses of modernity or anti-modernity; questions of alterity and ontology; or claims about epistemology and method.

SESSION TYPES

Paper panel: A paper session showcases scholarly work in the form of extended presentations of 20 minutes each. A paper panel should include no more than 3 presenters total (either 3 papers or 2 papers and a respondent) and should allow for at least 30 minutes of open discussion.

Roundtable: The goal of a roundtable is to focus discussion on a narrow topic, theme, or question, such as “John Shirley,” or “Chaucer’s ‘Retraction.” Roundtables should include no more than 5 presenters and allow for at least 30 minutes of open discussion.

Seminars: The goal of a seminar is to generate extended conversation about a topic (e.g., “Re-Orienting Disability”), before, during, and after the NCS meeting. Participants are encouraged to circulate and discuss materials in advance of the seminar. Seminars should include no more than 7 presenters and allow for at least one hour of open discussion.

Poster sessions: Poster sessions are groupings of posters on a particular topic; each thread will have a group of posters associated with it. During the conference, all posters will be displayed in a single timeslot, with presenters in attendance to discuss their work and answer questions.

NB: NCS tried out a poster session for the first time in 2014, and the membership deemed it a great success. Posters usually include narrative, illustrations, tables, graphs, and similar presentation formats. The poster should concisely communicate the essence of the presenter’s research and/or showcase a particular artefact and the researcher's findings. Colorado State University has published useful general information on poster sessions, which can be accessed here: [http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=78](http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=78).

Some handsome example posters are available by following this link: [http://www.lifeandliterature.org/p/poster-session.html](http://www.lifeandliterature.org/p/poster-session.html)

A note on pedagogy sessions: A pedagogy session can take the form of a paper panel, roundtable, seminar, or another innovative form (interview, debates, etc.). It should address topics or questions relevant to teaching medieval literature and culture at a variety of academic institutions.
IN MEMORIAM: ALFRED DAVID (1929-2014)

Alfred David, the eighth President of the New Chaucer Society (1990-1992), passed away on January 17, 2014 at his home in Portland, Oregon. He is survived by Linda, his wife, and Benjamin, his son and his daughter-in-law Margot.

He graduated from Harvard College, where he went on to take his PhD, and taught at Indiana University for 34 years, until his retirement in 1994. The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer’s Poetry (1976) set a new course in Chaucer criticism by surmounting the critical divisions in the field. He edited the text of the Romaunt for the Riverside Chaucer and co-edited the Minor Poems for the Chaucer Variorum. Al published widely cited articles in PMLA, Speculum and elsewhere. But he had literally millions of students as co-editor of the medieval section of the Norton Anthology of English Literature, which contained several of his translations from the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman, and where he facilitated the appearance of Seamus Heaney’s landmark translation of Beowulf. Under his editorship, the Norton included Marie de France, Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich as equal to any in the canon, and refashioned medieval English literature as British, including Celtic languages and traditions as part of its mission.

Al was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1929. His immediate family was able to emigrate in 1938. They settled in Houston, but many relatives perished in the holocaust. This experience is an understated or unstated leitmotif in his writing. His article on physiognomy and how we interpret it begins with the Miller’s nose and other noses in Chaucer and then moves on to the faces of characters in eighteenth century novels to police criminal portraiture in the nineteenth century and to racial stereotyping in the twentieth century with its lethal results. His extraordinarily subtle reading of the Priores and the Jews is sympathetic without forgetting. Early in his career, he translated from the German some Grimm fairy tales that appeared in his collection of The Twelve Dancing Princesses and Other Fairy Tales. As a young scholar in London, Al was introduced to Martin Stevens, since a common friend thought they would have much in common. As it turns out, both had grown up in Hamburg, had played in the same playground, and had escaped by ship from Germany, as well as both becoming noted medievalists. In the Festschrift for Martin Stevens, Al dedicated his essay to “a fellow survivor of the Ark.” One of the most interesting essays Al wrote in the 1990s was “Anglo-Saxon Attitudes,” a critique of the monocultural assumptions of the critics of Heaney’s Irish verbal choices in the translation. His survey of the implication of scholarship on the poem in national and racial assumptions is as much a stern reproach as a defense.

Al’s ability to make poems and stories come to life was almost magical and his gentle integrity came through in everything he wrote, said and did. At his retirement, the Lilly Library mounted an exhibition entitled “Chaucer in the Lilly Library: A Celebration of Words,” curated by Linda, who advised and collaborated with Al on his projects before and after his retirement. For his 50th Harvard College reunion volume, he stated that he wished to be remembered as “a father, teacher and scholar, in that order.”

John Ganim
OTHER CONFERENCES AND CALLS

Call for Papers: Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies
Binghamton University
The Pre-Modern Book in a Global Context: Materiality and Visuality
October 21 and 22, 2016

The year 2016 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CEMERS) at Binghamton University; in celebration of fifty years of research in medieval and early modern studies, CEMERS will host a conference on the materiality and visuality of the pre-modern book (from late antiquity until 1600).

Papers are invited on all aspects of the book as artifact in a global context: the study of the production and circulation of books in the Mediterranean Basin and across the Eurasian landmass; codicology and the making of books; paleography and textual transmission; the transitions from papyrus to parchment and the scroll to the codex; and the current state of technological analysis. Topics may also include: the book as commodity; network theory and the itineraries of textual artifacts; geographical locations for the use of paper; the origins of moveable type and the itinerary of the printing press; the transition from script to print; the uses of paper in specific book cultures; the use of wax tablets; the history of libraries; the history of scriptoria; the transmission of non-textual information (music, maps, etc.) in books; and visual culture and book illumination. The conference aims to bring together the sub-disciplines currently involved in the history of the book in order to facilitate inter-disciplinary dialogue. Papers and sessions that synthetically address the current state of the field are especially welcome.

Abstracts for papers and paper sessions are invited; papers should be twenty minutes in length. Send abstracts (with a brief cv) to cemers@binghamton.edu. For information, contact Marilynn Desmond, Director, CEMERS, mdesmon@binghamton.edu.

Deadline: April 15, 2015

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SEVENTH ANNUAL CANADA CHAUCER SEMINAR
University of Toronto
SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 2015

The seminar provides a one-day forum where scholars, from Canada and elsewhere, come together to discuss current research on Chaucer and on late medieval literature and culture. The 2015 gathering will include keynote papers by Paul Strohm (Columbia) and Emily Steiner (Pennsylvania), and several sessions of conference papers.

Proposals are invited for 20-minute conference papers on any aspect late medieval English literary culture. Submit one-page abstracts by January 10th 2015 to: william.robins@utoronto.ca and sarah.star@utoronto.ca
Crossing Borders in the Insular Middle Ages, c. 900-1500  
Keltologie, Philipps-Universität Marburg, 8-10 April 2015

Keynote speakers: Prof. Helen Fulton (University of York), Prof. Dr. Erich Poppe (Philipps-Universität Marburg) and Dr Sif Ríkharðsdóttir (University of Iceland)

We are delighted to announce a symposium at Philipps-Universität Marburg on the role of cross-border literary borrowings in the construction of political, national, regional and cultural identities in the British Isles, Ireland and Iceland across the long period c. 900-1500. Proposals for papers are invited on processes of translation and adaptation across insular vernacular languages and/or Latin; discussions of broader cross-border thematic influences and correspondences; lines of transmission and textual distribution; the role of ecclesiastical and secular institutions in cross-border insular literary contact; perceptions of other insular peoples and constructions of otherness/ similitude; cross border manuscript and book circulation; literary engagements and intersections with cross-border material and visual culture; linguistic borrowings across insular languages.

This is intended to foster discussion about contemporary methodologies in comparative literary studies by international scholars working in Celtic Studies, English and Norse. We hope that these conversations will make an important contribution to a growing field of research into the shape of pre-modern cultural and political mentalities.

Proposals are also welcomed from doctoral students and early career scholars, and we hope to have small subsidies available for accommodation costs.

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words by 2 January 2015 to Dr. Victoria Flood at flood@staff.uni-marburg.de.

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MID-AMERICA MEDIEVAL ASSOCIATION XXXIX  
COLLECTIVITY & EXCHANGE  
with a keynote by Dr. Pamela Sheingorn

Papers are invited on a range of topics, including the conference theme of “Collectivity & Exchange,” for the annual meeting of the Mid-America Medieval Association, which will convene on Saturday, 28 February 2015, at the University of Missouri-Kansas City.

Collectivity might be imagined expansively to include not just temporal but also ephemeral and spiritual communities. Exchange might also be considered in various forms, from economic and material to ideological and philosophical.

Please send proposals of 250 words by 1 December 2014 to:
Dr. Virginia Blanton (blantonv@umkc.edu)
Department of English
University of Missouri-Kansas City
5121 Rockhill Road
Kansas City, Missouri 64110 USA

Download the Call for Papers: http://midamericamedievalassociation.org/MAMA-2015-CFP.pdf
Telling Tales: Manuscripts, Books and the Making of Narrative

The next biennial conference of the Early Book Society will take place at the University of Oxford, UK, from lunchtime on Thursday 2 July 2015 to mid afternoon on Sunday 5 July 2015.

We are now seeking proposals for papers. Papers should be no more than 20 minutes long. Please send abstracts of under 300 words to the conference’s email address earlybooksoc2015@ell.ox.ac.uk by Sunday 30 November 2014.

As always for the conference of the Early Book Society, the theme can be interpreted narrowly or broadly.

The topic certainly invites special attention to the material written records of different genres of narrative – verse, romance, chronicle, biography and more. It might consider the ways that written forms serve a narrative function – whether page-layouts were modified for chronicles and annals, whether collections of documents were compiled to tell stories, whether images in books are important components of storytelling, whether poems on monuments recount lives. The topic also invites participants to tell different kinds of stories about early books. In particular, it invites us to reflect on our storytelling. What is the role of biography – of the author, of the ‘celebrity’ scribe, of the idiosyncratic reader – in the study of early books? How sure can we be of cause and effect, of chronology and dating, of different kinds of paleographical, codicological and bibliographical evidence, in studying these books? Are history and narrative the best models for ‘book history’ or might studies of manuscript and print serve literary criticism, linguistics or philology in other ways?

Finally, papers which concerns books in or around Oxford are welcome. But in general papers on any aspect of the history of manuscripts and printed books from 1350 to 1550, including the copying and circulation of models and exemplars, style, illustration, and/or the influence of readers and patrons, artists, scribes, printers, are welcome.

Accommodation and most meals will be available at St Anne’s College, Oxford. Most lectures will take place there too, but part of the conference will take place in the newly renovated Weston Building of the Bodleian Library, which reopens officially in March 2015. There will be ‘masterclasses’ with manuscripts on show, a visit to the exhibition and some optional visits ‘behind the scenes’ to departments of the library. We are grateful to Centre for the Study of the Book in the Bodleian for co-hosting the conference and making these things possible.
Medieval Thought Experiments: Poetry and Speculation in Europe, 1100-1450
Monday 13 & Tuesday 14 April 2015
New College, Oxford
www.medievalthoughtexperiments.com
Keynote speakers: Prof. Vincent Gillespie (Oxford), Prof. John Marenbon (Cambridge)

In the high and late Middle Ages, fictional frameworks could be used as imaginative spaces in which to test or play with ideas without necessarily asserting their truth. The aim of this conference is to consider how intellectual problems were approached – if not necessarily resolved – through the kinds of hypothetical enquiry found in poetry and other kinds of fictive texts. We hope to encourage an exploration of the relationship between poetry and speculation and the medieval understanding of *speculatio*, and we use the anachronistic term ‘thought experiment’ to provoke particular debate around two related questions:

(i) to what extent can hypothetical and speculative texts be understood as ‘experiments’, as frames within which ideas can be tested rather than necessarily asserted?
(ii) how far can speculation be understood not merely as an intellective process, but also as something affective and sensitive? In this respect we draw on both meanings of the medieval Latin *experientia*: not just ‘experiment’, but also ‘experience’.

We welcome papers that consider why a writer might choose a fictional or hypothetical frame to discuss theoretical questions, how a text’s truth content is affected and shaped by its fictive nature, or what kind of affective or intellectual work is required to read a speculative text. We hope that this conference will explore what happens to theoretical truth-claims in a wide range of hypothetical texts – allegorical dream-visions (such as the *Romance of the Rose* or *Piers Plowman*) as much as philosophical dialogues (such as those of Peter Abelard and Ramon Llull). This conference aims to bring together scholars working across the spectrum of medieval languages and academic disciplines, including (but not limited to) literary studies, intellectual history, philosophy, and theology.

Papers may wish to consider some of the following questions:

**Kinds of Meaning.** How do fictional frames generate meaning, and how is this influenced by genre, mode, or context?

**Space.** What rules govern the imagined spaces of medieval thought experiments, and what issues do spaces raise?

**Truth and lies.** How are philosophical fictions used, abused, or condemned? When is it acceptable to lie in order to arrive at truth?

**Imagination and intellect.** What kinds of knowledge are accessible via different mental faculties?

**Speculatio, speculum, specula** How is the act of speculation represented or described in medieval texts, and how does this relate to the senses, in particular to sight?

Please submit abstracts for papers of up to 20 minutes in length to medievalthoughtexperiments+proposals@gmail.com by 10 November 2014.

The registration fee for this conference will be £60, with an optional dinner in New College on the Monday evening at an additional cost (to be confirmed).

Please note that there will be a small number of travel bursaries available for graduate students and early career researchers giving papers at the conference (up to a value of £200). When you submit your abstract, please state if you would like to be considered for a travel bursary.

Enquiries can be directed to the organizers at medievalthoughtexperiments+enquiries@gmail.com.
RECENT PUBLICATIONS


Pugh, Tyson. *Chaucer’s (Anti-)Eroticisms and the Queer Middle Ages*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2014.


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**Feminized Counsel and the Literature of Advice in England, 1380-1500**
By Misty Schieberle

x + 224 p., 156 x 234 mm, 2014
€ 75 / $109.00

NCS MEMBERS: € 60 / $87.00

**Probable Truth**
*Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-First Century*
Edited by Vincent Gillespie & Anne Hudson

xiv + 549 p., 9 b/w ills., 156 x 234 mm, 2013,
€ 135 / $196.00

NCS MEMBERS: € 108 / $157.00

**Dreams, Medicine, and Literary Practice**
*Exploring the Western Literary Tradition Through Chaucer*
By Tanya S. Lenz

x + 212 p., 2 b/w ill., 156 x 234 mm, 2014,
€ 70 / $102.00

NCS MEMBERS: € 56 / $82.00

**The Making of the Vernon Manuscript**
The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. A. 1
Edited by Wendy Scase

xv + 334 p., 62 b/w ills., 41 col. ills.,
€ 110 / $160.00

NCS MEMBERS: € 88 / $128.00

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OTHER NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ROBERT THORNTON MEMORIAL APPEAL

Robert Thornton (c1400-1470), compiler and scribe of the two Thornton Manuscripts (*Lincoln Cathedral MS 91 and BL Add 31042*) has been forgotten in his home country, and his tomb has been lost as a result of Victorian rebuilding.

An appeal has now been launched to set up a memorial in his parish church of Stonegrave Minster in North Yorkshire, near the tomb of his parents and close to his burial place.

Donations are invited to provide a memorial that will restore the memory of an important figure in the history of medieval English literature. Donations can be made via [http://www.ampleforthbenefice.org/StonegraveMinster.html](http://www.ampleforthbenefice.org/StonegraveMinster.html).

For further information contact Rosalind Field at [mailto:RTStonegrave@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:RTStonegrave@yahoo.co.uk)

VIRGINIA TECH’S DANIEL W. MOSSER HONORED WITH EMERITUS STATUS

BLACKSBURG, Va., Sept. 30, 2014 – Daniel W. Mosser, professor of English in the [College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences](http://www.clahs.vt.edu) at Virginia Tech, has been conferred the title of “professor emeritus” by the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors.

The title of emeritus may be conferred on retired professors, associate professors, and administrative officers who are specially recommended to the board of visitors by Virginia Tech President Timothy Sands. Nominated individuals who are approved by the board of visitors receive an emeritus certificate from the university.

A member of the Virginia Tech community since 1985, Mosser’s scholarship added to the understanding of medieval English literature and manuscripts through his work on Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

He was the author or co-author of seven peer reviewed books (including those in digital format) and more than 30 peer reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and reviews. Mosser was the co-editor and project chief of DIMEV, a digitized and expanded database edition of the Index of Middle English Verse, and co-editor and project chief of the Thomas L. Gravell Watermark Archive, a database that collected and annotated thousands of European and American watermarks.

In the classroom, he taught History of the English Language for 29 years along with a variety of undergraduate and graduate courses on medieval literature. Mosser was an active member of several professional organizations, including the Bibliographical Society of America, Bibliographical Society of Virginia, New Chaucer Society Bibliographical Society, The John Gower Society, Early Book Society, The Medieval Academy, Early English Text Society, Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research Collections, and The Southeastern Medieval Association.
JOIN THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
DIRECTOR OF THE ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR THE HISTORY OF EMOTIONS
FACULTY OF ARTS

The University of Western Australia (UWA) is a member of Australia’s prestigious Group of Eight and ranked among the top 100 universities (88th in the world) with a broad and balanced coverage of disciplines in the arts, sciences and major professions. For the past 100 years, UWA has contributed significantly to the intellectual, cultural and economic development of the State of Western Australia and the nation as a whole.

Applications are invited for the position of Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (CHE). The Director will occupy a professorial position within the Faculty of Arts at UWA.

The Centre is based at UWA, with nodes at The University of Adelaide, The University of Melbourne, The University of Queensland and The University of Sydney. The Centre has developed a vast range of collaborative links to international institutions in Asia, Continental Europe, the UK and North America and has established partnerships with such arts industries and community groups as the National Gallery of Victoria, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Musica Viva, and the Zest Festival. Besides its wide-ranging research projects, the Centre maintains a nation-wide program of community outreach and education events.

The appointee is expected to be:

• an academic leader, both in the CHE as a whole and in the University
• a productive and original researcher and research mentor,
• an energetic and collegial director of the Centre’s core activities,
• able to lead the Centre in new research directions,
• able to communicate the value and vitality of the Centre’s research to the public, in the media and throughout the education system
• able to undertake research at the highest international level on a history of emotions project studying an aspect of Europe 1100-1800, in the disciplines of history, literature, performance studies or music,
• able to oversee management of the whole Centre of Excellence.

Contact: Deputy Director of the Centre for the History of Emotions, Professor Jane Davidson, email: mailto:j.davidson@unimelb.edu.au.

Closing date: Monday 24 November 2014

An attractive and flexibly constructed remuneration package will be negotiated including generous superannuation, leave provisions and fares to Perth (if applicable) for the appointee and dependants along with a relocation allowance.

Application Details: Applications must be submitted online. Full details of the position’s responsibilities and the selection criteria are outlined in the position description and applicants should clearly demonstrate they meet the selection criteria.

TO APPLY: http://jobs.uwa.edu.au/executive
Saint Louis University

NEW CHAUCER SOCIETY POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP

The New Chaucer Society and the Department of English at Saint Louis University, a Catholic Jesuit institution dedicated to student learning, research, healthcare, and service, jointly announce a one-year residential postdoctoral fellowship for 2015-16, to be held at Saint Louis University. Candidates for the New Chaucer Society Fellowship must have received their Ph.D. degree between January 1, 2013 and January 1, 2015, and should have a research project for 2015-16 in the Society’s areas of interest, namely Chaucer and his age. The successful candidate’s main responsibility will be to work on his/her research project. The Fellow will teach one undergraduate medieval course for the Department of English in the spring semester. In addition, the Fellow may be invited to offer an occasional workshop, lecture, or seminar on his/her area of research.

The term of appointment is nine months, from September 1, 2015 through May 30, 2016. Fellows are required to be in residence at SLU during this time. The fellowship carries a stipend of $50,000 plus benefits, health insurance, and a budget of up to $1000 towards moving expenses.

Applications should be made by email attachment to Prof. Ruth Evans revans19@slu.edu, or by post to Ruth Evans, NCS Executive Director, Department of English, Saint Louis University, Adorjan Hall, 3800 Lindell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63108. Applications, consisting of a single PDF file, must include a curriculum vitae, cover letter, statement of research plans, and a writing sample of 20-30 pages. Please ask for two letters of recommendation that comment specifically on the candidate’s research plans for 2015-16 to be sent by email to Prof. Ruth Evans revans19@slu.edu, or by post to her at the Department of English, Saint Louis University, Adorjan Hall, 3800 Lindell Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63108.

Saint Louis University is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity employer (AA/EOE) and encourages nominations of and applications from women and minorities.

The deadline for applications is January 15, 2015. For further information, please email revans19@slu.edu.